



# ISAR IN FOCUS

Initiative for Social Action and Renewal *in Eurasia*

Volume 3, Issue 4

Winter 2001

## A Thirst for Information

*We look forward to every issue – let there be many more of them! In our region, your information is like a drink of water in the desert.* – Ecology Club, Novgorod, to editors of *ISAR-Moscow Bulletin*

In the information-saturated US, it's easy to forget how valuable access to information can be for individuals in remote parts of the FSU wishing to connect with people in other parts of the world. Given the isolation and difficulty of communication in the FSU, the importance of information resources for NGOs cannot be underestimated.

Irina Belashova, ISAR-Kyiv, says that of the 4,700 recipients of their publication *Chista Khata*, a remarkable 13 percent (over 600) responded to a reader questionnaire. Expressing a common theme, one respondent wrote that *Chista Khata* is "the only publication in Ukraine that keeps the Ukrainian environmental community together and makes it feel like a community." Irina explains that most people in Ukraine lack funds to buy or subscribe to publications, which creates a real information vacuum for those who need it most.

ISAR's outreach programs aim to improve NGO access to information and increase public awareness of the third sector. As a result, production of publications, and more recently websites, is a priority for all the ISAR field offices. The eight offices currently produce five bulletins and six journals, as well as newsletters, factsheets, how-to manuals, directories and other publications. In addition, ISAR-Moscow and ISAR-DC offer CaspInfo, the Caspian Information Service, a bi-monthly e-mail listserv pertaining to environmental problems in the Caspian region.

ISAR offices also maintain small libraries of books on environmental education, organizational management, public relations and fundraising, and ISAR small grants programs support production of many NGO books and publications. The largest ISAR information program, ISAR-Azerbaijan, maintains an NGO Resource Center with a library of over 700 books plus video materials in Russian, Azeri and English. The center facilitates communication between local NGOs and international partners by providing the NGOs with free access to computers, e-mail, and Internet resources.

In this issue of *ISAR in Focus* we introduce you to the publications of the ISAR network. Please feel free to request a copy of any of these publications or view them on-line. In future issues, we plan to profile selected ISAR publications so that you, our readers and supporters, can get a better sense of the information that ISAR's NGO clients soak up like water in the desert.

Tamara Kowalski, Editor

## ISAR Caspian Seminar Looks Beyond Oil and Gas for Environmental Solutions

Astrakhan, Russia, a town located 50 kilometers north of the Caspian Sea, recently hosted ISAR's seminar, "Beyond Oil and Gas in the Caspian: The Role of NGOs in Finding Sustainable Solutions to Economic Development and Environmental Protection."

Twenty-five NGO representatives from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan met from January 26-30, 2001 to attend training sessions on alternative energy, marine bioresources and aquaculture, sustainable agriculture, and recreation and ecotourism.

*(continued on next page)*

## ISAR in Focus

is the quarterly newsletter of ISAR,  
Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia

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### ISAR Mission Statement

ISAR promotes citizen participation and the development of the nongovernmental sector in the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). Our offices in the United States and Eurasia support citizen activists and grassroots nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in their efforts to create just and sustainable societies.

ISAR's programs emphasize information exchange, cooperative activities and networking. ISAR works to facilitate partnerships between and among NGOs in Eurasia and the United States, and to educate the public in the US and Eurasia about the unique role that grassroots organizations play in shaping a positive transformation in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

### Become a Member of ISARI

Your tax-deductible membership of \$35 (\$45 for organizations) supports ISAR's programs and entitles you to a one-year subscription to ISAR's quarterly publication, *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia*. For more information on membership, contact the membership coordinator at membership@isar.org or visit the ISAR website at www.isar.org.

In the course of the seminar, participants decided on the general principles of NGO cooperation to promote environmentally sound economic development for the Caspian region. Concrete project ideas were established including a joint tourism project between Iran and the Astrakhan oblast, an investigation into development possibilities for solar, wind and biomass energy projects, and an agreement on technology transfer from Russia to Turkmenistan to support commercial sturgeon breeding.

Representatives of the Astrakhan regional administration, the Caspian Fisheries Research Institute, the Caspian Environment Programme of the World Bank, Shell Oil, USAID and other local and international organizations also attended. Their participation provided new perspectives and ideas for cooperation.

This event was the third in a series of meetings based on themes critical to environmental protection in the Caspian Basin. The three-year program supports and strengthens cooperative activities among environmental NGOs in the Caspian Basin by providing forums for discussion and joint action, funding for cooperative projects, and technical and e-mail support. The project is supported by funds from USAID, the Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Family Associates, the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the Academy for Educational Development. It is a joint project of ISAR-DC, ISAR-Moscow, ISAR-Central Asia, ISAR-Azerbaijan and the Horizonti Foundation.

## Azerbaijan Activists Arrive in DC for ISAR's Partnership and Exchange Program

ISAR-DC's US-Azerbaijan NGO partnership program for environmental and women's issues hosted two activists in January and February. Kamilla Dadasheva, a specialist on domestic violence, arrived in Washington on January 24th. Her organization, the Azerbaijan Gender Association, Symmetry, conducts surveys and works to raise awareness of the widespread problem of domestic violence in Azerbaijan. A lack of financing along with social mores that deny the seriousness of domestic violence have hindered the development of shelters, crisis centers and hotlines to support victims of domestic violence in Azerbaijan.

During Kamilla's two-week internship she met with domestic violence activists in and around Washington, DC, and Carbondale, Illinois, to exchange ideas on the challenge of launching support programs in Azerbaijan. Kamilla discussed the problem with US NGOs that have established women's shelters and crisis centers to serve their local communities, as well as with organizations that work on the national and international level to

**ISAR—Moscow*****ISAR-Moscow Bulletin***

Lubov Luneva, Irina Pirogova (eds); quarterly, 40 pp, Russian; B/W with color cover; e-mail version and archives on-line  
<www.isarmos.ru/bulletin.htm>

**Focus:** environmental NGO news; funding; accounting and legal advice  
**Funding:** John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

***Caspinfo******(Caspian Information Service)***

Aleksey Knizhnikov, Ekaterina Kozherchuk (eds); bi-weekly, annotated text of new documents is available in print, on-line, or by listserv in Russian or English; full documents, primarily in Russian, can be requested for free. To subscribe send e-mail with "subscribe" in text to: [caspinfo@ecoline.ru](mailto:caspinfo@ecoline.ru), or visit <www.ecoline.ru/caspinfo>

**Focus:** Caspian environmental issues and activities of local NGOs; Caspian oil and gas news  
**Funding:** USAID

**ISAR—Siberia*****Medvezhii Ugol (The Bear's Den)***

Yulia Chernaya (ed); monthly, 4 pp, Russian; 2-color; expanded 28 pp version quarterly; archive on-line  
<www.nsu.ru/community/nature/books/mu>

**Focus:** news updates, grant announcements, interviews, articles on environmental themes  
**Funding:** C.S. Mott Foundation

***Siberian Environmental Vestnik (Bulletin)***

Aleksander Dubynin (ed); quarterly, 80 pp, Russian; B/W with color cover; on-line  
<www.nsu.ru/community/nature/books/vestniks.htm>

**Focus:** a joint project of ISAR-Siberia, the Ecology Club of Novosibirsk State University and the Siberian Ecological Center; environmental information from Siberia and relevant world news  
**Funding:** Open Society Institute

**ISAR—RFE*****Notes from the East***

Olga Ancha (ed); bi-monthly, 48 pp, Russian; B/W with color cover; available on-line <isarrfe.trainet.org>

**Focus:** NGO management, relevant federal and regional legislation; NGO success stories and resources  
**Funding:** USAID

***Listya v Ladonyakh (Leaves in the Palms of Your Hands)***

Anton Semenov (ed); quarterly, 40-60 pp, Russian; archives on-line  
<isarrfe.trainet.org/leafs>

**Focus:** environmental education; theory and practice; RFE environmental issues, role of NGOs, information on new organizations and publications  
**Funding:** Rockefeller Bros. Foundation



ISAR-Siberia logo

**ISAR—West NIS*****Ednannia Monthly Bulletin***

Igor Neschetnyi (ed); monthly, 6 pp, Russian; available on-line  
<www.ednannia.isar.kiev.ua>

**Focus:** upcoming events; local environmental initiatives; funding sources  
**Funding:** US Embassy

***Chista Khata (A Clean House)***

Marina Malik, Irina Belashova, Helena Gubar (eds); bi-monthly, 4 pp, Ukrainian; full-color; available on-line  
<www.ednannia.isar.kiev.ua>

**Focus:** Local Environmental Action Plan; comparisons with LEAP programs in CEE countries (Macedonia, Bulgaria, Poland); funding sources, scholarships, and exchanges  
**Funding:** USAID

**ISAR—Central Asia (Almaty)*****ISAR-Central Asia News***

Zarema Imenova (ed); monthly, 10-17 pp, Russian, English; e-mail version available, to subscribe e-mail [root@isar.almaty.kz](mailto:root@isar.almaty.kz) or [zarema@isar.almaty.kz](mailto:zarema@isar.almaty.kz)

**Focus:** ISAR news, local NGO news; announcements for grant programs, NGO meetings, consultations and seminars; partnership information  
**Funding:** USAID

**ISAR—Atyrau*****Transcaspian Bulletin***

Svetlana Krasnozhen (ed); bi-monthly, 12 pp, Russian; available on-line at  
<www.ecoline.ru/isar/transcasp> or e-mail [isar-svetlana@nursat.kz](mailto:isar-svetlana@nursat.kz)

**Focus:** Caspian environmental activities and issues; environmental monitoring, transnational corporations, environmental legislation, and public hearings  
**Funding:** USAID

**ISAR—Baku*****Third Sector News***

Elmira Abdullaeva (ed); bi-monthly, Azeri, Russian and English; color; includes 2-page insert, *Hand to Hand*, on NGO-business relations in Azerbaijan; subscribe to on-line version by e-mailing [elmira@isar-az.org](mailto:elmira@isar-az.org)

**Focus:** NGO activities in Azerbaijan; resources for local NGOs  
**Funding:** USAID

***NGO Directory***

Nargiz Kerimova (ed); quarterly, 60 pp, Azeri and English; spiral binding, B/W with color cover; archives available in English on-line at  
<www.isar-az.org/directory\_index.htm>

**Focus:** contact information for local NGOs and descriptions of NGO activities  
**Funding:** USAID



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Non-profit Org.  
US postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 4969  
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*(Azeri exchange continued from page 2)*

change laws and societal attitudes toward domestic violence. In addition to learning about the history and techniques of anti-domestic violence practitioners in America, Kamilla was able to gain practical knowledge, such as how to conduct trainings for police officers and design attention-grabbing brochures to raise community awareness.

The second exchange participant, Nurlana Javanshir, arrived in DC on February 13th to begin her two-week program. She represents the Children's Ecological Organization, Gulum, one of the only NGOs in the Caucasus that designs environmental education programs for pre-schoolers.

Nurlana met with NGOs and government officials in Washington, DC, and in Bellevue, Nebraska. She was hosted in Nebraska by the ECO Institute, which, like Gulum, conducts environmental education projects for young children throughout Nebraska. Nurlana met with environmental education organizations that operate on the local, national and international level, including educational program coordinators at the National Zoo in Washington and the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Nurlana was most impressed by the partnerships forged among US NGOs and government institutions.

## **Strategic Planning Session in Moscow Brings ISAR Staff Together**

In early February, Alice Hengesbach, Michelle Kinman, Eliza Klose and Kate Watters from ISAR-DC traveled to Moscow to hold a staff retreat, the next step in ISAR's year-long strategic planning process. The purpose of the retreat was to develop an interview guide in Russian and English appropriate for use in interviews with staff, board, grantees and other ISAR stakeholders in both the US and FSU.

Through questions designed to capture ISAR's special strengths and opportunities—following an approach called Appreciative Inquiry—these interviews will help create a strategic vision for the future. The highlights of the interviews will serve as the raw material for discussion at an ISAR "Summit" in May.

The Moscow meeting allowed staff from all nine ISAR offices to gather together for the first time in four years. The pleasure of comparing notes on current activities and beginning to plan jointly for the future was heightened by the chilly winds of Moscow's deepest snow in decades.

Funding for ISAR's strategic planning has been provided by the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Trust for Mutual Understanding and the Lippincott Foundation.