

ECA ALUMNI SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM 2004

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program, funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the US Department of State, engages alumni in their home communities by providing support for individual projects that continue to further the goals of their programs. We have awarded grants to alumni to organize community service projects, publish self-authored books and materials, invite US colleagues to Eurasia for collaborative projects, make research trips within Eurasia, and organize and/or attend regional seminars and conferences. The program is administered by the [International Research & Exchanges Board \(IREX\)](#).

During the last round of grants, alumni from the following ECA-sponsored programs won awards:

- Eurasian Undergraduate Exchange Fellowship (UGRAD)
- Regional Scholar Exchange Program (RSEP)
- Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues (CI)
- Russian-US Young Leadership Fellows for Public Service Program (YLF)

New Research into Indigenous Experience in Eastern Russia

In order to draw attention to the plight of indigenous people of the Siberian region, which makes up nearly 25 percent of the population in the Buryat republic, **Chingis Andreev (RSEP)** will organize the conference, "The Life Conditions of the Indigenous People of Buryatia at the Beginning of the XXIst Century and the Positive Experiences of Native Americans" in Ulan-Ude, Russia. The conference will highlight the social, economic, political and cultural developments and difficulties faced by indigenous peoples. A corresponding book containing conference materials will also be published. It is Andreev's hope that the conference and book will help further develop their traditional economy and culture as well as guarantee the political rights of these people.

Civic Education Brochures to Be Published in Tajikistan

Despite the development of legal and civic education in Tajikistan, the majority of Tajik citizens remain unaware of the country's legal system in general and their individual rights in particular. To counter this problem, **Muhabbat Beknazarova (RSEP)** will publish a series of legal and civic education brochures that will help the Tajik people understand their rights. The themes of the five brochures are: the base of democracy and civil society; the formation and organization of the Tajik parliament; the formation and organization of local state bodies; legislation of Tajikistan regarding political parties; and the rights and responsibilities of political parties. Beknazarova feels that the brochures will be particularly helpful in light of the upcoming Tajik elections.

Alumna to Work with HIV-Positive Inmates in St. Petersburg Prison

The spread of AIDS in Russia is at an all-time high, and there are not nearly enough resources to help those living and coping with the disease. This trend, combined with the limited resources available to people currently incarcerated in Russia, inspired **Jessica Blond (YLF)** to undertake a pilot project working with HIV+ prisoners at penal colony #7 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Blond, who will work with the Russian NGO "Imena," will raise the inmates' public health awareness, particularly with issues regarding HIV/AIDS, as most of the young men have never received treatment for their illness. She will also lead discussions on human rights and the Russian legal system. In addition, Blond will provide each inmate with a manual that includes relevant articles on HIV/AIDS issues, such as new treatment options and how HIV/AIDS issues are handled in other countries, as well as legal issues, such as how to be active in one's legal defense and a simplified version of the Russian penal code.

New Crisis Hotline to Add New Level of Service to Russian Women's Center

Following her fellowship in the US, **Anastasiya Ermolaeva (YLF)** opened the Women's Crisis Center in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. The center provides psychological and legal help to victims of domestic and sexual abuse. In order to better serve the Nizhny Novgorod community, which has a population of over 750,000 women, Ermolaeva will establish a women's crisis hot line, which will connect needy women with other social service organizations. In addition, Ermolaeva will develop and implement a training program for new crisis line volunteers. She will also visit other crisis centers in Moscow and Arzamas, Russia in order to make new contacts, network, and share ideas with other professionals in the field.

New Public Health Course Strengthens Distance Learning in Armenia

The public health community in Armenia is in need of continuous training and professional development. The rise in the use of the Internet provides a unique opportunity to reach the many members of this community, spread throughout Armenia. In a joint project, **Gayane Ghukasyan (CI)** and **Zaruchi Mkrtchyan (CI)** will develop and implement a web-based academic course on epidemiology and data management and analysis for students and public health practitioners in Armenia. This course will be targeted at Armenian public health practitioners interested in research and new diagnostic methods and will be available in both Armenian and Russian. Each individual, who successfully completes the course, will receive a certificate of completion.

New Text and Trainings Target Human Trafficking in Georgia

Although Georgia is currently listed as a source country for women trafficked to Turkey, Greece and the United Arab Emirates, the Georgian government has yet to enact strict criminal laws for those charged with trafficking, nor do they have a system to provide victim assistance to trafficked individuals. In order to help develop these systems, **Georgi Glonti (RSEP)** will prepare and publish 500 copies of a Georgian-language textbook entitled, "The Problems of Human Trafficking in Georgia: History and Realities." Glonti will develop a corresponding online course as well as related seminars for students and specialists throughout Georgia, including a specific training for police officers from the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, specifically directed at "Legislative Measures to Combat Human Trafficking in Georgia."

Local Government Capacity Development Project to be implemented in Baku

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, too few resources have been devoted to local government development in Azerbaijan. Through his Small Grant project, **Mehman Karimov (CI)** will implement the Local Government Capacity Development Project to help local governments in Azerbaijan improve their performance by enhancing their capacity for organizational management and transparency. The project will involve trainings for municipal employees, the development of mentor partnerships, as well as the publication of training materials and a promotional booklet.

Developing Depressed Local Communities in Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine

The towns comprising the Chernihiv Oblast are amongst the most depressed local communities in Ukraine. The region has a negative birth rate, and the initiatives set forth by the Ukrainian government to strengthen the communities have made little impact to date. In order to help the citizens of these communities become an active part of the redevelopment strategy, **Valeriy Kokot (CI)** will implement the Korjukivka Initiative, a pilot program that intends to further develop local partnerships between citizens and businesses in order to redevelop the local community through the establishment of a long-term approach to community capacity-building. The pilot program will include a series of trainings devoted to evaluating employment needs, examining institutional capacity, assessing project viability, establishing financial alternatives, and developing, monitoring, and evaluating projects. The manual "Approaches to Depressed Community Redevelopment" will be published as a result of this initiative.

Trainings to Support Sustainable Forestry to be Held in Vologoda, Arkhangelsk

Russia is a country rich in forests and natural resources. Unfortunately, all too often ecologists and loggers do not communicate about important issues regarding sustainable forestry. **Antonina Kulyasova (CI)** and **Maria Tysiachniouk (RSEP)** will work together in order to promote the

development of intersectoral partnerships and expanding dialogue between logging companies and local NGO and government representatives in order to allow greater participation in forestry and land management decisions. Tysiachniouk and Kulyasova, with the help of eight colleagues from the Yale University School of Forestry, will develop and implement several training workshops for representatives of local logging companies. Each company that successfully completes the training course will receive a certificate from the Forest Stewardship Council, an international NGO that maintains standards for sustainable forestry.

Alumnus to Train NGO Representatives in Project Design and Implementation in Kirov, Russia

Since the fall of the Soviet Union more than 10 years ago, more and more agencies offer grants to Russian NGOs and other organizations in order to further the development of civil society in Russia. Despite the numerous opportunities, too few Russian NGO representatives have the skills to conceptualize new projects, develop an appropriate grant proposal and see the project through to fruition. Using an Alumni Small Grant, **Marat Mulyukov (YLF)** hopes to alleviate this problem by offering a series of training courses to various NGO representatives in the Kirov region of Russia. Over 40 participants will be taught how to design, implement, manage and evaluate social programs.

Students Battling Xenophobia in Saratov, Russia

Saratov, Russia is home to more than 110 national groups, including Tatars, Azeris, Armenians, Chechens, and its people practice a variety of religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Unfortunately, this diverse region is also home to racially motivated vandalism and graffiti as well as anti-Semitic and ultra-nationalistic violence. To combat discrimination and racial violence, **Diana Odynets (FSAU)** will publish the book, "If You Get Offended Because Your Are Not Like Everyone Else," which will help students deal with ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and racism. The book is part of a larger project called, We Are Together!, that raises ethnic tolerance among school children in the Saratov region.

Alumni Hopes Educational Campaign Will Decrease Human Trafficking in Ukraine

Statistics indicate that more than 500,000 Ukrainian women have been trafficked since 1991. In order to alleviate this continuously growing problem, **Olga Pyshchulina (CI)** plans to undertake both a public relations and education campaign in order to reduce the negative impact that trafficking has on the dignity, health and welfare of women, men and children in Ukraine. The campaigns will teach children and young adults that they have educational and professional options in Ukraine and will highlight positive role models they can emulate. They will also learn their rights and know who they can turn to if they feel threatened. In order to accomplish these things, Pyshchulina will organize numerous roundtables for students, local and regional administrators, and social workers, as well as a social marketing campaign targeted at youth. She will also develop course curricula and publish the book, "Human Trafficking as a Security Problem."

Developing Pro-active Student Communities in Armenia

After returning to Armenia from her year at a US university, **Alina Rubenyan (FSAU)** wanted to find a way to encourage Armenian university students to be more active and involved on campus. To that end, Rubenyan developed a project called, "Activating Student Communities," which targets student councils from different universities throughout Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor, Armenia. Student council members will be invited to participate in a series of trainings on advocacy, leadership, community service, activism, and public relations. The students will also learn how to create and implement new projects and how to involve fellow students in campus activities. Finally, each representative who attends the trainings will be eligible to compete in a small grant program that will allow participants to carry out self-designed projects on campus. Rubenyan hopes that her project will encourage Armenian youth to become more active in student life.

Anti-Drug Education Program to be Implemented in Ukraine

The use of illegal drugs in Chernihiv, Ukraine is a growing problem that has resulted in the rise of violent crime, particularly juvenile delinquency, as well as an increase in the rate of HIV/AIDS infection. In order to curb the rise in drug use, **Valeriy Ryabukha (CI)** will implement a campaign for Ukrainian students to

educate them about the negative effects of drug abuse, alternatives to drug use, and how to deal with peer pressure. The campaign will involve the publication of an educational guide for parents, the implementation of the Education Against Drugs training seminar in schools throughout Chernihiv, the organization of a training of trainers program for students that will allow them to roll out the training seminars to other classrooms in Ukraine, and also the organization of an educational campaign that will teach educators and school representatives how to deal with students suspected of drug use.

Civic Education Training Courses to be offered to Sughd-Area Youth

Both the education system and the third sector in Tajikistan have been developing steadily since the fall of the Soviet Union. In order to continue this growth and inspire young people to support the further development of civil society, **Manuchehr Sadiev (FSAU)** will develop and administer civil education trainings in rural high schools in the Sughd region of Tajikistan. The courses will focus on several key areas, such as human rights, economic development and practical democracy. Sadiev will publish a related civil education text that encourages community participation, particularly among young people.

New Public Advocacy and Awareness Centers Serve Uzbek Community

Many people currently living in Uzbekistan are unaware of their rights as consumers, particularly in regards to publicly provided utilities. Through the Alumni Small Grants program, **Malika Saidkhodjaeva (CI)** and **Saurjan Yakupov (RSEP)** will implement a joint project to establish two Public Advocacy and Awareness Centers that will allow Uzbek citizens greater access to information regarding public utilities in Uzbekistan and encourage more transparency from the utility companies. The center will be complimented by a hotline for consumer questions, the creation of a database of information and legislation regarding public utilities, and the publication of monthly pamphlets regarding new legislation.

Importance of Fundraising Stressed for Uzbek NGOs

A survey conducted by the Samarkand Oblast Public Initiatives Support Center in 2003 indicates that 80 percent of the NGOs in Uzbekistan do not have a stable funding source, and that nearly 90 percent do not have paid staff or a devoted office space. Too few NGO representatives know how to look for new funding opportunities and apply for grants, so **Tanzilya Salimdjanova (CI)** will conduct a fundraising school for selected NGO representatives, establishing a local fundraising club where the local community can share new resources, and publish a manual on the fundamentals of fundraising, including practical recommendations specifically for Uzbek NGOs.

New Manual Encourages Community Development in Rural Tajikistan

Muallimsho Sinavbarov (CI) will publish and disseminate the manual, "Mobilization of Local Resources for Community Development in Rural Tajikistan." The goal of the manual, which will target local authorities, including NGO and business representatives, religious leaders, as well as women and youth, is alleviating poverty and increasing household income, mobilizing local resources, encouraging the further development of local businesses, and generally increasing local awareness of the potential community members. The content of the book will also touch upon important topics such as financial management, fundraising, the preparation of reports, and taxes, particularly with regard to their impact on community development.

Link Between Pesticide Use and Public Health Investigated in Armenia

While part of the Soviet Union, Armenia relied heavily on the use of pesticides in agricultural production, consuming nearly 25 times the amount of pesticide used in comparable Former Soviet Republics. **Artashes Tadevosyan (CI)**, an Assistant Professor of Public Health and Health Care at Yerevan State Medical University, will conduct an assessment regarding the effects of pesticide use on health in rural areas of Armenia. The study will be the first initiative launched through the new NGO, the Center for Environmental Studies, and the research will be used in the Tadevosyan's doctoral thesis. He hopes to identify whether or not the increased pesticide use in rural Armenia has led to an increasing number of cases of neurological disorders and asthma.

Alumnus Trains New Advisors for Youth Camp

Each summer for the past five years, Summer SYnergy, a camp for students in Smolensk, Russia, has brought together Ukrainian middle- and high-school students in order to teach them professional and personal development skills. The camp brings together nearly 100 students and 15 trained university student teachers each summer, allows university students to develop mentoring relationships with younger students, and teaches young people tolerance and encourages the spirit of fair play. University students often perform teaching and counselor roles, and as they grow older, there is a need to train replacement teachers. To that end, **Mykola Volkohon (FSAU)** will organize a teacher training camp this winter. Using funds from the Alumni Small Grant, professional educators from the US will travel to Smolensk in November 2004 in order to train the new student-teachers.

Teacher Training to Reach Underserved Ukrainian Educators

Despite the dramatic advancements in education over the past 20 years, many universities and schools in Ukraine still rely on the lecture-seminar method of teaching students. Unfortunately, few Ukrainian teachers have the resources to participate in formalized teacher training workshops. **Olena Zavalova (CI)** will prepare and deliver two training seminars that will allow junior and senior faculty from Ukrainian universities to enhance their teaching skills. The seminars, which will directly benefit 45 Ukrainian teachers and countless students, will advocate the use of innovative teaching methods, encouraging more class-participation and interaction between teachers and students.