




# **THE BEARR TRUST ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020**

**The BEARR Trust**

**Supporting vulnerable people in  
Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the  
Caucasus**



## Highlights of 2020

- **BEARR won a five-year grant to continue and to further develop our activities from 2021 to 2025.**
- **We maintained our charitable work during the Covid pandemic by switching to remote working and online participation.**
- **We awarded 11 grants, totalling over £30,000, to projects supporting women in rural Central Asia and the South Caucasus.**
- **More than 300 civil society organisations responded to BEARR's survey on the impact of Covid-19 in the region.**
- **More than 100 people throughout the region took part in three webinars that replaced BEARR's annual conference.**
- **We launched a bi-monthly online newsletter linked to BEARR's new website [www.bearr.org](http://www.bearr.org) and intensified our use of social media.**

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## Letter from the Chairman, Nicola Ramsden

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic The BEARR Trust moved online in 2020. The Trustees met remotely throughout the year, and regular BEARR events, from the Annual Lecture to the Annual Conference, were run as webinars. BEARR's new website and linked bi-monthly newsletter, which were launched before the outbreak of the pandemic, provided a timely boost to our mission to raise awareness of health and social welfare challenges facing vulnerable groups in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Helped by a new generation of volunteers with video editing and social media skills, we were able to widen the range of content we could share. The Small Grants Scheme – funding projects to support women in rural areas of Central Asia and the South Caucasus – had been announced early in 2020 and was able to go ahead as planned.

An important initiative in 2020 was a survey of CSOs working on health and welfare issues in our region, organised by BEARR's Small Grants Officer, Anna Lukanina-Morgan. We used the information gleaned from over 300 responses to design three webinars to replace our traditional Annual Conference, and to choose the theme of the 2021 Small Grants Scheme: projects to combat social isolation.

The other highlight of 2020 was our successful application to a private foundation for a five-year grant worth up to a total of \$375,000 (£288,000), starting in 2021. The grant will allow BEARR to extend the Small Grants Scheme and to develop new approaches to evaluating projects with greater local participation. Coming towards the end of a challenging year, the grant award felt like a strong endorsement of BEARR's approach to supporting local community groups. The financial stability brought by multi-year funding was also welcome.

My fellow Trustees continued to give significant time to running the organisation *pro bono*. Despite the disruption to home and working lives caused by the pandemic, the Trustees were able to produce newsletters, organise events, plan budgets, and undertake the strategic thinking that underpinned our application for future funding. Credit is also due to BEARR's resourceful Information Officers – Sophie Vandyck, succeeded by Louisa Long in 2020 – as well as to Anna Lukanina-Morgan and to our Moscow Representative, Igor Timoshin. Skilled volunteers again made a significant contribution to BEARR's work: translating and interpreting, researching, supporting social media, and examining the accounts.

I would like to thank all BEARR's financial supporters, especially the regular contributors to BEARR's Friends scheme. We were grateful for Just Trust's continued support of the Small Grants Scheme in 2020, and for the decision of Tushinskaya Trust to transfer its residual assets to BEARR.

In 2021 we are due to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BEARR's foundation by Jill Braithwaite in 1991. This last year has shown that BEARR maintains its capacity to adapt, and to identify and respond to need. With a secure core of funding for the next five years, we are looking forward to a new phase of our work.

## About The BEARR Trust

The BEARR Trust is a UK-based, English-registered charity that helps vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

### History of The BEARR Trust

The BEARR Trust was formed in 1991 and formally constituted in 1992 to act as a bridge between the health and welfare sectors of Britain and the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union.

During the 1990s The BEARR Trust became a pioneering support organisation for new grass-roots voluntary groups in the region, sharing knowledge, skills and contacts with the aim of:

- advancing education and training, both academic and vocational
- protecting and preserving good health, both physical and mental
- relieving and rehabilitating those suffering from physical or mental disabilities.

### Where we work

Our work focusses on the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

### The BEARR Trust's objectives and activities

The BEARR Trust's main purpose now is to promote and support cooperation between small health and social welfare civil society organisations (CSOs) within the region and with those doing similar work in the United Kingdom.

The BEARR Trust has two main strands of activity, which we characterise as **supporting** and **sharing**. Our **supporting** activities are based on grants for small-scale health and social welfare projects. Our **sharing** activities consist of networking and information services, including regular newsletters linked to content on our website, conferences, lectures, and workshops. Our partners include CSOs, academics, research institutions, professionals, and students.

Our supporting and sharing activities are connected and mutually reinforcing through our system of project reports and evaluation, and follow-up conferences or workshops. They are designed to:

## The BEARR Trust Annual Report and Accounts 2020

- encourage innovation, imagination and independence in organisations committed to reform in the health and social welfare sectors
- provide flexible and light-touch small grants to assist selected organisations to launch or extend partnerships
- share connections and help organisations working in the region to identify potential partners
- share experience, ideas, good practice, and lessons learned
- lobby with and on behalf of organisations that share our aims.

The BEARR Trust is the only UK-based charity working in this region that combines grant-giving and networking services: BEARR was a pioneer and remains unique.

### **Public benefit**

When planning our activities for the year, the Trustees have considered the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

### **The Global Goals**

Our work also sits within the broader framework of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (the Global Goals), which emphasise collaboration across all sectors of government and society. The seventeen Global Goals are interrelated, and BEARR's work is relevant to several:

- Good Health and Wellbeing
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Reduced Inequalities
- Partnerships for the Goals.

## Achievements and Performance in 2020

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, BEARR made good progress with its **supporting** activities in the form of the Small Grants Scheme, and with its **sharing** activities, including information and networking, which adapted rapidly to online participation.

### The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme

Since 2006, The BEARR Trust has operated a Small Grants Scheme (SGS) through which we have made awards to small health and social welfare groups in the region. Up to and including 2020, BEARR has awarded more than 100 small grants throughout the region, totalling over £250,000.

The SGS aims to support and encourage CSOs to:

- share experience and learning among CSOs with relevant aims
- disseminate good practice more widely in the region
- facilitate cooperation with and/or coordination among CSOs and other organisations working with relevant groups
- improve awareness, influence policy, or engage public institutions in addressing the relevant issues
- propose other, imaginative, ways of achieving the SGS's aims.

### Administration of the Small Grants Scheme

Grants are awarded annually, and details of each year's themes, and how to apply, are published on our website ([www.bearr.org](http://www.bearr.org)), on social media and in our newsletter. The BEARR Trust will match-fund up to half of a project's cost, subject to a maximum decided from year to year depending on available resources.

We are committed to ensuring that our Small Grants Scheme is **simple** in terms of process, **accessible** to the smaller community organisations that we aim to support, and **open** to new organisations with which we have not previously had a relationship. In designing the 2020 call for applications we took account of responses to a survey of former grantees

Over the years, BEARR grants have covered diverse health and social welfare themes, often building on subjects discussed in our annual conferences. Themes have included mental health; attitudes to disability; drug dependency; homelessness; human trafficking; skills training for refugees and displaced people, and prevention of violence to women and children. Reports of completed projects are posted on the BEARR website.

## **Monitoring and evaluation of projects**

BEARR asks grant recipients to complete a simple monitoring form as soon as their project is completed. A project's duration is normally six months, so we have quick feedback about their activities. More detailed project reports are then commissioned as articles for the BEARR newsletter and annual report: these publicise the project and enable others with similar interests to make contact and exchange experience. We ask grantees to be candid about how their projects went — we want to demystify the process and encourage an open and honest approach to learning from things that did not go as well as hoped.

The rapid feedback gives us some assurance that a grant was used as intended, and longer project reports help us to describe to our own donors how their money was spent. However, accountability to funders is only part of the monitoring and evaluation process. Following a review by BEARR Trustee Megan Bick, we are now aware that evaluation also raises ethical issues of power and purpose. As a result, we aim to improve accountability to the communities being worked in.

We want to avoid mechanical auditing in favour of an iterative process that helps our grantees to reflect on their projects, recognise their achievements, and adapt to the changing needs of their communities. The pandemic delayed development of our experiments with peer evaluation, and also affected project visits. Visits to projects in Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine that were planned for May and June 2020 had to be postponed. Despite this, charity cyclist Luke Grenfell-Shaw, cycling from Bristol to Beijing between waves of the pandemic, managed to visit two BEARR-funded projects in Moldova, run by the League of Polish Women in Chisinau and Zhenskiye Initsiativii in Tiraspol. Luke's impressions are published on BEARR's website.

## **Sources of funding for the Small Grants Scheme in 2020**

The principal source of funding for this year's Small Grants Scheme was a grant from a private foundation, increased by a grant from Just Trust and donations from individual BEARR supporters.

## **Theme of the 2020 Small Grants Scheme: strengthening the position of women in rural communities in Central Asia and South Caucasus**

Unlike 2019, when the Trustees offered grants to organisations working in any of the countries which BEARR covers, the 2020 Small Grants Scheme was limited to countries in Central Asia and South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The theme built on experience with the 2019 projects, which had addressed the problem of violence against women and girls. The Trustees decided to focus in 2020 on the position of women in rural areas.

Projects had to address issues in one of the following areas:

- Public participation
- Information and skills for economic security
- Preventing domestic violence

We received 77 applications, from all 8 eligible countries: Armenia 11, Azerbaijan 4, Georgia 17, Kazakhstan 4, Kyrgyzstan 3, Tajikistan 27, Turkmenistan 2, Uzbekistan 9. 11 were rejected because they did not meet the technical criteria.

We awarded 11 grants, totalling over £30,000, to organisations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The projects are summarised below. Full project reports were published in BEARR's newsletters and can be read on BEARR's website

### **Summary of projects supported by the 2020 Small Grants Scheme**

Grants were provided in May 2020, shortly after the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic had begun to be felt globally. Consequently, all of the 2020 recipients were forced to adapt or restrict their activities in some way, including by moving training sessions online, reducing participant numbers and holding events outside where possible. Recipients showed great resilience and resourcefulness, which can be seen in their project reports on BEARR's website. However, as a result of the restrictions and delays caused by this unprecedented year, several of them have not yet completed their projects.

#### **Nurjolber**

Naryn region, Kyrgyzstan



We awarded a grant of £2,800 to Nurjolber for their project to raise awareness of domestic violence and support women in the rural Naryn province to escape such violence through entrepreneurial training. Nurjolber organised training for 30 unemployed young people in the principles of entrepreneurship as well as practical assistance with the development of their small businesses and financial planning. The training included a seminar during which a number of successful businesswomen shared their knowledge and experience with participants.

## Sarchashma

Khujand and the Sughd region, Tajikistan



We awarded £2,213 to NGO Sarchashma for a project training women's councils in southern jamaats of Tajikistan on women's legal rights and raising awareness about domestic violence through seminars working with men and boys as well as women and girls. Sarchashma has been working on projects preventing domestic violence since 2013, but had limited resources. With BEARR's funding, the NGO was able to organise several activities focussed on the Eva B jamaat of Ghafurov District and the Gulyakandoz jamaat in Jabbor Rasulov. These included training for 13 female activists from women's councils and 83 women from jamaats on how to be safe from violence and on national law on the prevention of domestic violence.

## NGO Center

Vanadzor, Armenia



We awarded £2,998 to NGO Center in Armenia for their project "Women for good governance", which aimed to promote gender-balanced, needs-based local self-government. Beneficiaries were young people from four communities in the Lori region: Dsegh, Dzoragyugh, Mets Parni and Hartagyugh. The programme trained participants to carry out and analyse surveys, followed by practical courses on local government activities, leadership, media literacy, and advocacy. Suggestions for local government have already been adopted in local government annual work plans, indicating encouraging progress for the local communities involved.

## **The Association of Public Assessors of the Republic of Tajikistan (APART)**

Tajikistan



We awarded a grant of £2,980 to APART for its project, "Homes without violence!", which involved training for paralegals and articles and information booklets on Tajik law relating to the prevention of domestic violence. Additionally, participants looked at the impact of the lack of higher education and early marriage on women in the region. Participants developed recommendations aimed at preventing domestic violence in the future, including the publication of three articles.

## **Partnership for Education and Communication (PEC)**

Tbilisi, Georgia



BEARR awarded PEC £2,986 towards its project aimed at strengthening the position of marginalised rural women who continue to face significant obstacles in terms of participation in local businesses and community decision-making.

Activities included the development of an innovative online mentoring and networking platform to bring together beneficiaries, local decision-makers, CSO actors and entrepreneurs. It quickly became a hub for long-distance counselling and networking to access job opportunities. It continues to be widely used. Because training was moved online, more women than envisaged – 120 from four municipalities (Khelvachauri, Senaki, Kharagauli, Dusheti) – were able to come together for training on leadership, public participation, entrepreneurship and developing marketing strategies for rural women's local produce.

## International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), Armenia

Yerevan, Armenia



We awarded £2,470 to ISHR, Armenia for a project with three intertwined elements: raising awareness of gender equality and women's position in society as key to poverty reduction; supporting family entrepreneurship in a single village; and creating a new, community-run NGO. Despite exceptionally difficult conditions caused by Covi-19 and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, ISHR was still able to hold interactive training sessions with 10 rural women and girls discussing human rights and gender equality. One outcome was the formation of an assistance group to advocate on local issues such as female employment. Training for women and their husbands on setting up and managing small businesses was provided online.

## PO MIR – Offices for Development

Sughd region, Khujand, Tajikistan



We awarded £2,978 to PO MIR - Offices for Development for their project 'Women's Joint Work – Effective Foundation for Preventing Domestic Violence'. The project sought to increase female participation in resolving domestic violence issues through educational events, economic initiatives and media coverage. PO-MIR worked with the Women Leaders' Association (WLA) to organise workshops on different entrepreneurial skills for women and girls who had experienced domestic violence. The workshops' results were presented at a final forum where representatives of crisis centres, NGOs, and public authorities

working to prevent violence discussed joint initiatives to combat gender-based violence and how to adapt work practices during the pandemic.

We are delighted to have awarded PO MIR another grant for 2021.

### **NGO Bonuvoni Pyanj**

Pyanj province, Tajikistan



We awarded £3,000 to Bonuvoni Pyanj for a project focusing on raising awareness of domestic violence within 10 communities in Pyanj province.

The project involved training local NGOs and 60 of their representatives to respond to incidents of domestic violence quickly and adequately. Bonuvoni Pyanj also distributed an informative poster-calendar to approximately 300 families in the district. The organisation also held 10 meetings with approximately 30 different stakeholders (police, prosecutors, jamoats) where they discussed how to respond to cases of domestic violence in the most efficient and sensitive way possible.

### **Women Fund for Development**

Gali, Abkhazia/Georgia



We awarded £1,995 to Women Fund for Development for a project to create initiative groups in three rural communities in Abkhazia, namely Chuburkinji (Gali region), Bedia (Ochamchira region) and Chxortol (Tkvarcheli region). Members received training, partly online, on leadership, effective communication, and civic activism. Through regular discussions, the groups identified the most pressing issues facing the community and began advocating for change. For example, poor roads are a key challenge facing the rural population, making it difficult for medical assistance to access

the area and for the children and teachers to get to school. The initiative group in Bedia raised this issue with local authorities. As a result of their advocacy and persistence, the most severely damaged part of the road was recently fixed.

### **Civic Initiatives Support Center (CISC)**

Fergana, Uzbekistan



We awarded £2,998 to CISC for its project to improve services for victims of domestic violence in the Fergana region of Uzbekistan.

This included training for staff at rehabilitation centres working with women and families and their partner organisations on how to recognise and effectively address cases of domestic violence. CISC was delayed in starting its project and still plans to hold several more seminars. However, they have already held two seminars bringing together local authorities, journalists, and rehabilitation centre staff. They have also begun a study into prevailing attitudes towards domestic violence among specialists at various organisations and levels.

### **Women and Modern World Social Charitable Center (WMWSCC)**

Shamakhi, Azerbaijan



We awarded £3,000 to WMWSCC for a project focusing on training for doctors, police, youth activists and NGO leaders to promote awareness of domestic violence and the relevant laws in Shirvan rural districts of Azerbaijan.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has sadly greatly limited the organisation's activities. One training session has been held so far and WMWSCC hopes that more will be possible soon.

## **Design and launch of 2021 Small Grants Scheme**

The BEARR Trust's 2021 Small Grants Scheme sought applications from across the region for projects to reduce the social isolation of people living with disadvantage, a problem made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and referred to by respondents in our survey of CSOs in August 2020 (see below).

We did not specify the beneficiaries: instead, applicants were asked to describe the problems faced by the people they wished to help. Previous BEARR grantees were also invited to apply for some additional funding to help improve their organisational resilience as they adjusted to working under Covid-19 conditions.

We invited projects that would:

- involve partnership with, or extend collaboration to, other local organisations
- have an imaginative or unusual approach to reducing social isolation
- try to extend provision of support to other groups of people facing disadvantage or marginalisation resulting from their age, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or because of geography.

We received 227 grant applications. Over 60 % came from Ukraine, with at least one application from every other country in BEARR's region.

## **Survey of CSOs 2020**

In August and September 2020, Anna Lukanina-Morgan, BEARR's Small Grants Officer, conducted a survey of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus to find out how their work had been affected by Covid-19 and the measures taken to combat it.

The call to take part in the survey was shared with BEARR's Small Grant Scheme applicants 2015-2020, and publicised on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and the websites of our partners.

We received responses from 328 CSOs based in 12 countries, mostly small (49% with fewer than 10 staff) and medium (29% with 11-20 staff members) and assisting with access to healthcare and education (53%). They painted a vivid picture of an increased demand for services and reduced resources, but also of innovative practices which had enabled many CSOs, although not all, to continue their work.

The key findings were published in BEARR's newsletters and on the BEARR website. We used the survey results to plan the November 2020 webinars (see below) and the 2021 Small Grants Scheme. As well as informing BEARR's

subsequent activities, the survey results were a useful resource for academic researchers. BEARR trustee Dr Charlie Walker drew on the extensive testimonies of individual CSOs in an article on welfare in the former Soviet Union submitted to the journal *Europe Asia Studies*, due for publication in 2022. The Trustees decided to conduct a further CSO survey in 2021.

## 2020 Annual Conference webinars

BEARR's traditional annual conference in London, usually attended by participants from around the region, was replaced by three webinars held in November 2020. The webinar topics were chosen after studying the CSO survey reported on above.

The webinars were recorded and are available to view on BEARR's YouTube channel. Full webinar reports by BEARR Trustees Biljana Radonjić Ker-Lindsay, Janet Gunn and Megan Bick were published in BEARR's newsletters and on the BEARR website

### Webinar 1: Civil society support for persons with disabilities

The first webinar explored how service-providing and advocacy disability CSOs are supporting persons with disabilities and their families in the EECCA region during the Covid-19 crisis. Particular attention was paid to their activities to address Covid-19's impact on community inclusion and to promote equal rights for persons with disabilities amidst lockdowns, social distancing and economic downturn. The webinar featured three speakers from different parts of the EECCA region:

- Gulmira Kazakunova: **Ravensto**, Union of People with Disabilities, Kyrgyzstan.
- Maia Shishnashvili: **Movement for Changes**, Georgia – an NGO which supports young adults with disabilities.
- Anna Bitova: **Centre for Curative Pedagogics**, Russia – an organisation helping children with mental disabilities and autism.

### Webinar 2: Civil society and migrant labour

The second webinar considered the role of civil society in supporting migrant workers: a vulnerable group not hitherto much in The BEARR Trust's focus. It considered the particular challenges that the pandemic has thrown up for migrant workers in the EECCA region, and how civil society organisations are

assisting them. The following speakers, drawn from the legal and academic world as well as CSO practitioners, presented on the challenges faced:

- Khadicha Abysheva: Chairperson of the board of the **Legal Centre for Women's Initiatives, Sana Sezim**, Kazakhstan.
- Valentina Chupik: Executive Director at international non-profit organisation, **Tong Jahoni**, Uzbekistan.
- Daniel Kashnitsky: Junior Researcher, **Higher School of Economics, Moscow**, Academic Relations Coordinator, Regional Expert Group on Migration and Health.
- Dina Musina: Development Manager, **Civic Assistance Committee**, Moscow.

### **Webinar 3: CSOs and innovation in a time of pandemic**

This online discussion looked at the ways in which CSOs have adapted their practices and methodologies to rise to the challenges of the pandemic, the key lessons they have learned and the needs that remain to be met. The speakers were drawn from different CSOs across the EECCA region:

- Kristina Spirina: **Winds of Changes**, Ukraine.
- Kurbongul Kosimova: **Najoti-Kudakon**, Tajikistan.
- Anastasiia Stytsenko: **Youth Volunteer Organisation: Leadership**, Kyrgyzstan.
- Birodar Mirzaev: **Civic Initiatives Support Center**, Uzbekistan.

### **Annual Lecture 2020: Tom de Waal on 'Europe's Eastern Partnership/Russia's "Near Abroad" – living with powerful neighbours'**

In most years The BEARR Trust's friends and supporters and others with an interest in our region get together at the premises of the EBRD in central London to hear a talk on a topic of current interest by an eminent expert, after which we enjoy chatting over drinks and snacks kindly provided by our hosts. In 2020 it was not to be. Instead, on 7 July 2020, The BEARR Trust held its Annual Lecture online for the first time. The lecture reached an audience of nearly 70 people. We missed the convivial drinks afterwards, always an excellent opportunity for members of the audience to engage further with the speaker, but enjoyed seeing our friends on the Zoom screen!

A full report by BEARR trustee Janet Gunn was published in the BEARR newsletter and can be read on the BEARR website.

## Publications

BEARR has produced a regular **newsletter**, edited by BEARR Trustee Ann Lewis, almost from its inception. This developed from a simple black-and-white newsheet to a full colour biannual magazine issued in print and electronic format. It was supplemented for a decade by a monthly Bulletin drawing attention to coverage of news and events on the BEARR website. Together these publications provided an in-depth chronicle of BEARR's activities, the projects we have funded, and health and welfare developments in the region.

An archive of these publications is available on the BEARR website.

From early 2020, with the launch of BEARR's new website, both publications were replaced by a new bi-monthly newsletter distributed by Mailchimp to a list of subscribers. This format allows us to draw readers' attention to a wider range of material on the website.

**BEARR news and events** and **news from the region** remain the bedrock of the newsletters, and we also include longer articles and book reviews, and report changes to BEARR's staff, Trustees and volunteers, acknowledging the contribution they make to BEARR's activities. In 2020 we used the newsletters particularly to track the effects of Covid-19 in our region, with both ad hoc reporting and in-depth analysis.

The first issue in the new format, in February 2020, focussed on domestic violence, with a report on our November 2019 conference on that theme and a companion piece on issues of masculinity. It also featured an article on domestic violence in Russia, and reports from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Georgia and Azerbaijan on projects dealing with violence against women and girls supported by BEARR's 2019 Small Grants Scheme.

Domestic violence continued to be a key theme throughout the year, with further **project reports** and news items from across the region. From April that theme became intertwined with the pandemic, as domestic violence was exacerbated by the Covid-19 restrictions imposed in much of the region. We carried reports from CSOs we had supported and partner organisations like HealthProm on how they were affected; analysis of the situation in various countries and articles on the effect of Covid-19 in Russian prisons and on migrant workers throughout the region. The newsletter was also used to launch our survey of the effects of Covid-19 on CSOs across the region.

Other highlights in the 2020 newsletters included reports of the Annual Lecture given by Tom de Waal and of the three webinars held in November, and the announcement of the 2021 Small Grants Scheme on the theme of reducing the social isolation of people living with disadvantage.

We are indebted to our volunteer Nathan Dampier for three major reports on the progress of Covid-19 and official reactions to the pandemic. The first two were snapshots of a fast-changing scene, as statistics and other information became available. The third focussed on the less-studied effects of the pandemic on rural communities in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

The effect on labour migration was covered in more detail in an article by Janet Gunn, BEARR Trustee. Written in June 2020 when Russia was in lockdown, the report highlighted the precarious situation for many of the 12 million-plus migrant workers in Russia, often left without work or pay, and stranded away from their home countries.

To obtain a glimpse of the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on partner CSOs in the region, we asked some of those working on domestic violence issues how they were coping. We published on the BEARR website replies from Sezim Crisis Center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Tolerspace in Kyiv, Ukraine; and Winds of Change in Odessa, Ukraine.

The BEARR Trust admires the resilience of all those making such efforts in difficult circumstances, and we hope they will be able to recover and keep up their work, perhaps using an enhanced set of tools, in 2021.

## **Website and social media**

2020 saw a host of digital developments for BEARR in terms of its website, social media and use of digital platforms, catalysed by the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic which encouraged us to adapt and move more activities online.

In January 2021, BEARR appointed Ali Lantukh as its first dedicated Digital Trustee. Ali has since launched a revamp of BEARR's communications strategy and has recently started work on a comprehensive digital strategy.

### **Website**

In 2018 BEARR had finalised its new brand and visual identity, which provided a starting point to begin work on our new website. The website was launched in February 2020, and we have witnessed a steady growth in traffic in terms of users and visits to the website month by month.

The most notable changes in users are proportional increases in the 18-24 age bracket – most likely students – and in the older age brackets. Taken together, these trends suggest that the new website's visuals and user experience (ease of use) is attracting a more diverse audience.

In terms of geographical reach, approximately 50% of our users and sessions held come from across the US, the UK, Ukraine, and Russia. A substantial percentage also comes from Central Asian countries.

## **Social media**

Since September 2018, BEARR has been developing its social media strategy.

In December 2020, we set-up a YouTube account, predominantly to store recordings of all of our online events and ensure that they are easily accessible to the public. Our account has had 488 views and has 20 subscribers to date (June 2021). Clips of these recordings were also shared on Twitter and were well received.

BEARR continues to use its Twitter and Facebook accounts to promote events, share news of past and present grantees' projects and work, and interact with other organisations in the health and social welfare sectors, among other things. As of June 2021, the accounts had 293 and 1187 followers respectively.

In April 2021, BEARR launched an Instagram account to coincide with our 30th anniversary photography competition. This platform has been especially helpful in promoting the competition as well as connecting with younger people interested in the region in which BEARR operates. It has also helped us to connect with present and former grantees and promote their activities visually. BEARR's Instagram profile now has 108 followers.

## **Impact of online events**

The online events described elsewhere in this report appear to have driven increased engagement with our website via weblinks in the recording descriptions and on email updates to attendees.

## Structure, Governance and Management

### Constitution and regulation

The BEARR Trust is constituted by a Declaration of Trust dated 27 April 1992 and Supplemental Deed of Variation dated 14 December 1995.

The BEARR Trust is regulated by the Charity Commission of England and Wales. Its registered charity number is 1011086.

### Patrons

The BEARR Trust has a number of distinguished Patrons:

Vladimir Ashkenazy,  
Elena Bashkirova Barenboim  
Robert Brinkley CMG  
Lady Ellen Dahrendorf  
Myra Green OBE  
Bridget Kendall MBE  
Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG  
Michael McCulloch  
Mike Simmonds  
Rair Simonyan  
Dr Robert van Voren, PhD, FRCPsych (Hon),  
Sir Andrew Wood GCMG

### Trustees

The board of Trustees reflects a wide range of experience and relevant expertise. There were no changes in the trustee body in 2020.

Trustees who have served at any time during the period from 1 January 2020 until the date of the approval of this report are:

Megan Bick  
Jane Ebel  
Ross Gill  
Janet Gunn  
Ali Lantukh  
Marcia Levy  
Ann Lewis  
Biljana Radonjić Ker-Lindsay  
Nicola Ramsden (Chairman)  
Michael Rasell  
Charlie Walker

## **Appointment and training of Trustees**

Trustees are appointed by a resolution of the Trustees. Potential Trustees are sought through recommendation by existing Trustees, or through advertising. Since 2014, new Trustees have been appointed for a period of three years, renewable by mutual agreement.

All Trustees are given a copy of the Charity Commission publication, 'The Essential Trustee: An Introduction', and are referred to the full version of this document on the Charity Commission website and to The BEARR Trust's annual report and accounts. New Trustees are given an induction pack consisting of The BEARR Trust's governing documents, minutes of the most recent meetings of Trustees, and process notes prepared by Trustees and volunteers, describing all aspects of BEARR's operations. Trustees are made aware of BEARR's governance policies, covering conflicts of interest, automatic disqualification of Trustees, data protection, management of volunteers, monitoring and review, risk management, safeguarding, and financial controls. The BEARR Trust maintains a register of interests and declarations relating to automatic disqualification, in line with Charity Commission recommendations, that all Trustees are required to sign.

## **Trustee meetings and roles**

Meetings of the full trustee board are held every two months. Sub-groups of Trustees meet more often to manage specific tasks such as conferences, workshops, publications, and the Small Grants Scheme. Individual Trustees take responsibility for different functional areas, such as fundraising, finance, volunteer management, digital development, and data security.

## **Volunteers**

A significant amount of BEARR's work is done by volunteers, including by Trustees who manage operations *pro bono* in addition to their trustee duties. The Information Officer, the Small Grants Officer, and the Moscow Representative are the only people who receive fees for their work.

In 2020, as in previous years, we relied on volunteers for many important tasks: preparing and examining BEARR's financial accounts, translating for publications, interpreting on the webinars, and supporting social media. Volunteers regularly give over 100 days in total to BEARR each year, and their efforts, as well as additional time given by Trustees, help to keep overhead costs low.

We aim to ensure that all volunteers have clear roles and feel supported by their managers, whether a trustee or the Information Officer. BEARR provides interesting opportunities for volunteers of any age and at any stage of their career, including students and recent graduates. We particularly welcome volunteers with knowledge of the region and/or of its languages.

## Networks

Networking is a key aspect of BEARR's charitable work, which depends on maintaining an active network of Trustees, Patrons, supporters and volunteers. We connect with other charities involved with countries in our area of interest through our website, newsletters, annual and regional conferences, and workshops.

Our annual lecture and our London conference are usually occasions when we can meet and engage with supporters — especially members of our Friends scheme — beneficiaries, donors and other contacts. Although we regretted not being able to meet people as normal in 2020, the webinars and online annual lecture enabled more people to participate, from a much wider area.

We are also keen to develop cooperation with the academic community in the UK and in the region, including organising joint events where possible.

## Planning

All the Trustees participate in planning. We use a broad framework of objectives established for a five-year period, and then set an action plan for each year.

### Five-year framework for 2016-2020

- Ensure stable multi-year financing from multiple sources, including foundations, companies and individuals (the Friends Scheme).
- Maintain an adequate pool of competent volunteers.
- Develop and, if possible, expand the Small Grants Scheme, ensuring more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of projects.
- Expand networking activities, including by organising an annual workshop in BEARR's region.
- Ensure that BEARR's information technology, website and social media presence effectively and efficiently support our grant-making and networking activities.

### Action plan for 2020

- Raise an additional £20,000 per annum, preferably on a multi-year basis.
- Maintain an active network of Trustees, Patrons and volunteers.
- Ensure that all volunteers have clear roles and feel supported by their managers.
- Ensure BEARR makes effective use of the possibilities offered by information technology and social media.
- Develop cooperation with the academic community in the UK and in the region, including through joint events.
- Organise the London conference.
- Organise a workshop in Central Asia on the theme of combatting violence against women and girls

- Organise one or two public lectures.
- Issue six bi-monthly email newsletters and a printed annual report / almanac.
- Run a scheme offering small grants to CSOs and evaluate the 2019 Small Grants Scheme.
- Progress a project to evaluate the impact of Small Grants Scheme projects since 2007.
- Plan a further Small Grants Scheme in 2021.
- Formulate BEARR's objectives for 2021-2025.

Most of these aims were achieved. Although the pandemic prevented us from holding physical meetings, the Trustees were satisfied that the rapid move to online events had worked well.

### **Five-year framework for 2021-2025**

At the end of 2020 the Trustees agreed a new five-year framework for BEARR's activities, coinciding with the period of our new multi-year grant. This now takes account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and of climate change.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The BEARR Trust's Objectives 2021-2025</b> <b>Global challenges and new ways of working with civil society</b></p>
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<p>The challenges and opportunities for grassroots CSOs focusing on health and social welfare</p>
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- The consequences of climate change, including the mass displacement of people, will create health and social welfare challenges.
- Covid-19 will exacerbate existing inequalities regarding health and social welfare.
- Public and governments' expectations of CSOs to step up support to vulnerable communities will increase, mostly at a local level.
- Service-providing CSOs will have difficulties in reaching out to vulnerable beneficiaries in a safe manner.
- With reduced face-to-face contacts, CSOs will need to find new ways of networking and campaigning effectively.
- Financial sustainability will continue to be an important challenge.
- Public awareness of health and social welfare challenges – and public engagement and generosity – have increased.

<p>How BEARR can support grassroots CSOs and people living with disadvantage</p>
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- Continue to raise awareness of health and social welfare issues facing vulnerable groups and those CSOs supporting them in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- Support CSOs to obtain relevant tools and equipment to provide services safely

- Help CSOs to develop digital skills and to adopt new technologies for networking, campaigning and fundraising
- Support our existing network of CSOs to collaborate more effectively, creating hubs in different countries as platforms for learning and developing local leadership
- Continue to provide small grants directly to grassroots organisations and work with partners to support civil society in other ways

What BEARR will do to enhance its own capacity to support health and social care CSOs

1. Ensure stable multi-year financing from multiple sources, including foundations, companies, academic collaboration and individuals (the Friends Scheme).
2. Enhance volunteering by providing interesting and rewarding opportunities for people with experience, academics, students and young people to volunteer time and skills.
3. Evaluate, share lessons learnt and ensure sustainability of its flagship Small Grants Scheme: assess its achievements since 2007 and share best practices, including on monitoring and evaluation, with other practitioners and academics; identify opportunities for follow-up funding.
4. Enhance partnerships with academic experts in order to position and leverage BEARR as a useful information and best practice resource.
5. Ensure that BEARR's information technology, website and social media presence provide transparent and inspiring descriptions of how we promote better health and social welfare.

### **Action plan for 2021**

This supports the new five-year framework:

- Raise an additional £20,000 in external funding, with multi-year commitments where possible
- Maintain regular contact with civil society organisations, including through surveys, in order to tailor BEARR's activities in response to evolving needs
- Run a scheme offering small grants to civil society organisations, and evaluate the 2020 Small Grants Scheme
- Prepare an overview of grant-funded projects since 2007, and design a data archive
- Design a scheme for small grants in 2022 in the light of information received from civil society organisations throughout the year

- Issue six bi-monthly email newsletters and an online and printed annual report / almanac
- Maintain a flow of up to date and informative content on BEARR's website and social media channels
- Extend BEARR's use of online communications for meetings, webinars and public lectures
- Organise an annual conference or webinar series
- Organise two or more public lectures
- Develop cooperation with the academic community in the UK and in the region, including through joint events and the development of a data archive
- Maintain an active network of Trustees, Patrons and volunteers
- Ensure that all volunteers have clear roles and feel supported by their managers

## Risk management

The Trustees have considered the main risks that might prevent BEARR from fulfilling its charitable objectives. In general terms, BEARR's operations are not large or complex, and **governance and operational risks** are managed by appointing Trustees who contribute a wide range of appropriate knowledge and experience, and by recruiting skilled part-time administrative officers. The Trustees are therefore confident that they can both identify risks and make an informed assessment of new opportunities that might arise.

The Trustees have concluded that the main risk facing BEARR is **financial resource risk**, primarily the dependence on one funder for a significant part of BEARR's income. Over the five years 2016-2020 BEARR's activities were underpinned by the receipt of a multi-year grant totalling \$250,000, paid in instalments of \$50,000 per annum. The grant covered the full range of BEARR's activities and was the most important source of funding for the Small Grants Scheme.

In 2020 BEARR was awarded a new five-year grant from the same funder, worth up to \$75,000 each year from 2021 to 2025, and again covering all BEARR's activities. This has renewed BEARR's financial stability, ensuring that the Small Grants Scheme should continue at least until 2025. However, the annual grant is partly conditional on other fundraising by BEARR, so the amount received each year could vary.

The Trustees will continue to manage financial risk by planning an affordable programme of charitable expenditure, and by committing only to expenditure that can be amended in the light of future income flows. Since our most important source of funding is a US dollar-denominated grant, this includes considering changes in the US dollar exchange rate. We aim to mitigate this exposure by continuing to seek diverse sources of funding, ideally on a multi-

year basis. We forecast cash flows bi-monthly, and we observe a policy of maintaining a level of free reserves sufficient to fund at least one year's core expenditure.

The Trustees have further identified a possible **external and regulatory risk** through the spread of repressive legislation that could prevent us working with civil society organisations in certain countries of our region. This in turn could eventually impact the willingness of funders to support BEARR. The Trustees routinely monitor developments affecting civil society in the region and ensure that relevant news reports are featured in BEARR's bi-monthly newsletters.

## Safeguarding Policy

In 2020 the Trustees adopted the following safeguarding policy:

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, especially children and vulnerable adults, from any harm that may be caused through activities delivered or funded by The BEARR Trust. This includes harm arising from the design and implementation of BEARR programmes, and the activities of third-party organisations in receipt of BEARR grants.

This policy sets out the commitments made by The BEARR Trust and informs BEARR Trustees, staff, volunteers, and grant beneficiary organisations of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

### Definition of safeguarding

Safeguarding in its broadest sense means protecting people and the environment from unintended harm.

For the purposes of this policy, we use the definition adopted by the Department for International Development, which refers to safeguarding as *“preventing and responding to harm caused by sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment or bullying”*<sup>1</sup>.

### Policy statement

The BEARR Trust believes that everyone with whom the Charity comes into contact, regardless of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or nationality, has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Preventing and responding to harm is at the core of our mission to support vulnerable people in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. We seek to achieve this by supporting community organisations within the region to

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<sup>1</sup> DFID (2020), [Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding for external partners](#)

continuously improve approaches to safeguarding, as well as through The BEARR Trust's own actions.

### BEARR Trust responsibilities

The BEARR Trust will:

- Ensure that all Trustees, staff, and volunteers are familiar with and know their responsibilities within this policy.
- Ensure that all third-party beneficiaries of BEARR grant support are aware of this policy and know their responsibilities within it.
- Carry out due diligence on third-party organisations receiving grant support from The BEARR Trust. We recognise that this must be compatible with the accessible design of our grant-making process, which aims to support a wide range of 'grassroots' civil society organisations (CSOs), many of which may have limited initial capacity.
- Share awareness of, and good practice in relation to, safeguarding, and encourage third-party beneficiary organisations to adopt effective approaches to safeguarding.
- Review beneficiary organisations' approaches to safeguarding through project monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure that there is a process in place for safeguarding concerns to be raised and that safeguarding concerns are followed up on promptly.

### Trustee, staff, volunteer, and third-party beneficiary responsibilities

All Trustees, staff, and volunteers within The BEARR Trust, and within all CSOs in receipt of BEARR Trust grant (and their staff and volunteers) **must**:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that promotes safeguarding and prevents abuse.
- Report any concerns regarding safeguarding violations to The BEARR Trust.

All Trustees, staff, and volunteers within The BEARR Trust, and all CSOs in receipt of BEARR Trust grant (and their staff and volunteers) **must not**:

- Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18.
- Sexually abuse or exploit children or vulnerable adults.
- Subject any child or vulnerable adult to physical, emotional, or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children or vulnerable adults, including child labour or trafficking.

### Reporting safeguarding concerns

The BEARR Trust will ensure that safe, appropriate, and accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to volunteers, staff, and third-party beneficiary organisations and the communities they work with. The BEARR Trust will also accept complaints from members of the public, partners, and official bodies.

Concerns should be reported immediately to the Chairman of The BEARR Trust. Reported safeguarding concerns will be considered by the Trustees at the earliest opportunity.

### Review

The BEARR Trust is committed to continuous improvement. This policy will be reviewed by Trustees at least annually and will be supplemented with process notes and best practice as appropriate.

## FINANCIAL REVIEW 2020

Despite the challenging and unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, BEARR's finances proved resilient in 2020. The charity incurred a modest deficit of £4,500, smaller than the deficit in 2019 and lower than the projected outturn at the start of the year.

### Income

Income in 2020 was £58,328, around 10% lower than in 2019. Our largest source of income was from a charitable foundation, which awarded BEARR a multi-annual grant over five years from 2016. This is denominated in US dollars and is worth \$50,000 per year, with the value to BEARR fluctuating depending on the dollar: sterling exchange rate. In 2020, the relative weakness of sterling meant that the grant yielded £39,373, some £2,133 more than in 2019. During 2020, we were successful in securing a further five-year grant of up to \$75,000 per annum, offering stability and scope for expansion over the next few years.

In addition to this major grant, we secured a grant of £3,500 from Just Trust. We also received £1,520 in regular donations from BEARR's Friends Scheme; in addition to some £10,633 in general donations. As well as several individual donations, these included the generous transfer of £6,470 from the Tushinskaya Children's Hospital Charity Trust, following the winding up of the charity.

We were unable to hold our normal conference and lecture in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. While this reduced our normal events income, we raised £1,199 through online lectures and webinars. The accounts for 2020 also include payment of £2,076 from the UNDP for the conference that we held in Moldova in 2019.

### Expenditure

Charitable expenditure was £62,878 in 2020, compared with £73,131 in 2019.

The largest item of expenditure was on our Small Grants Scheme, which accounted for £30,638. This was somewhat lower than expenditure on the Scheme in the previous year (£38,147), partly reflecting a smaller field of applicants during the pandemic and the fact that we were unable to transfer funds to one of the beneficiaries. Over the five years up to and including 2020, BEARR has supported community CSOs with some £147,000.

Events expenditure was substantially reduced to £1,597, reflecting the shift to online delivery. Remaining expenditure included fees paid to our Information Officer, Small Grants Officer and Moscow Representative, as well as website, newsletter and administration costs.

Charitable expenditure accounted for around 94% of BEARR's total expenditure of £62,878. We are able to operate with low overheads thanks to the voluntary work of our Trustees and volunteers in delivering much of BEARR's activity.

### **Restricted and designated funds**

BEARR had no restricted funds in 2020. However, we account internally for grants and donations that were intended for a specific purpose: in 2020, these related to the Small Grants Scheme.

### **Foreign currency**

All funds received in foreign currency (principally, the large grant received in US dollars) are converted to sterling on receipt. BEARR held no foreign currency balances at the end of 2020.

### **Reserves policy**

The BEARR Trust maintains unrestricted cash funds at a level sufficient to cover BEARR's operating costs and to pursue BEARR's principal objectives for at least one year. Unrestricted funds are monitored through regular budgets and cash flow forecasts, including accounting for funds that are designated for specific uses. BEARR has no investments.

Cash reserves at the end of 2020 were £41,650 (compared with £46,201 at the end of 2019).

## Receipts and Payments Accounts 2020

For the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

### Section A: Receipts and Payments

	2020, £	2019. £
<b>A1. Receipts</b>		
Donations	10,633	12,887
Friends' payments	1,520	1,035
Grants	42,873	47,229
Income from events	3,275	3,431
Other	27	53
Sub-total	58,328	64,634
<b>A2. Asset and investment sales</b>		
Total receipts	58,328	64,634
<b>A3. Payments</b>		
Charitable expenditure	59,399	68,212
Fundraising and publicity	1,766	1,476
Governance	1,504	3,317
Other	209	126
Sub-total	62,878	73,131
<b>A4. Asset and investment purchases</b>		
Total payments	62,878	73,131
<b>Net of payments</b>	<b>-4,550</b>	<b>-8,497</b>
<b>A5. Transfers between funds</b>		
Total transfers	0	0
<b>A6. Cash funds</b>		
Cash funds at year end	44,071	46,201
Liabilities (see Section B)	-2,421	0
<b>Total funds available</b>	<b>41,650</b>	<b>46,201</b>

### Section B: Statement of assets and liabilities at end period

	2020,£
B1. Cash funds	44,071
B2. Other monetary assets	
Gift aid debtor	2,898
B3. Investment assets	0
B4. Assets retained for the charity's own use	0
B5. Liabilities	0
Payment for Moscow Representative (payment pending)	2,421

Approved by the Trustees on 3 June 2021

Signed by the Chairman, Nicola Ramsden

### **Independent examiner's report to the trustees of The BEARR Trust**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of The BEARR Trust (the Trust) for the year ended 31 December 2020.

#### **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charities Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

#### **Independent examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- (2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Carolyn Davis  
High Thrushbank Cottage  
Loweswater  
Cockermouth  
Cumbria  
CA13 0RU

Date: 1 August 2021

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