



ISAR IN FOCUS

ISAR: Resources for Environmental Activists

Spring 2004

Refocusing on Activism, ISAR Introduces New Programs

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are delighted to send out our first greeting to all of you in our new roles as ISAR co-directors. As most of you know, executive director Eliza Klose retired in 2003. While Eliza's everyday presence has certainly been missed, we are excited about leading ISAR into a new decade of initiatives.

During the transition of the last several months, the ISAR-DC staff has taken the time to step back from our everyday activities to assess our programs, our staff, and our relationships with our partners. An important part of that reflection was to look specifically at what ISAR's Washington office can offer to US and FSU environmental activists.

The result of our assessment and reflection is a new mandate and a number of exciting programs in the works for 2004. We have renamed ourselves ISAR: Resources for Environmental Activists, a name that directly speaks to the goal of our new mandate and to our mission to support environmental activists and their causes. In our new mandate we have also identified four focus issues and created three program areas that will allow us to delve into specific areas of great importance to us and our colleagues. Through our Environmental Advocacy Training Program, Environmental Monitoring and Research Program, and Environmental Media and Information Program we will address the issues of Nuclear Industry, Natural Resources, Environmental Health, and Energy. A more complete explanation of this mandate is included on the following page. As you will see from our program updates, we are already well on our way to making this new mandate a reality.

You will also see that many of our efforts are based on our continued partnerships with ISAR offices and other organizations overseas. Although we no longer operate offices in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, we are working with partner organizations in those countries to implement programs. We continue to work with ISAR offices in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. We see our relationships with these offices and organizations as the foundation of our environmental advocacy-driven mandate. At the same time, we look forward to strengthening our connections with US organizations and activists and to fostering connections within the international environmental community.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you who have shown your support and enthusiasm for ISAR and our work over the last several months. ISAR's twentieth anniversary event in November was a wonderful way to celebrate the past while welcoming the future. That future is rapidly taking shape. We look forward to your continued support in 2004.

Sincerely,

Alice Hengesbach and Lucy Henry
Co-directors

ISAR: Resources for Environmental Activists

Kiev—Minsk—Moscow—Novosibirsk—Vladivostok—Almaty—Atyrau—Tbilisi—Baku

ISAR's History

ISAR has been working in the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) since 1983. Throughout our twenty-year history, ISAR has evolved in response to the changing needs of civil society in the region. Begun as a group of concerned citizens working to break down Cold War animosity through cross-cultural friendships, our mission has developed into a needs-based and results-oriented approach aimed at increasing the scope and capacity of environmental activists.

1983	1993	2003
Forging Relationships, Facilitating Exchange	NGO Development, Small Grants	Resources for Environmental Activists

ISAR-DC's Mission

ISAR: Resources for Environmental Activists supports collaborative resolutions to the environmental threats faced by communities in the former Soviet Union by building advocacy skills, galvanizing international environmental campaigns, and increasing public participation in environmental policy-making. ISAR provides training, technical, and informational resources to environmental activists through our Environmental Advocacy Training Program, Environmental Monitoring and Research Program, and Environmental Media and Information Program. We focus on four issues: Nuclear Industry, Natural Resources, Energy, and Environmental Health.

Focus Issues

- Nuclear Industry
- Natural Resources
- Energy
- Environmental Health

Programs

- Environmental Advocacy Training Program
- Environmental Monitoring and Research Program
- Environmental Media and Information Program

ISAR in Focus
the periodical newsletter of
ISAR: Resources for Environmental Activists

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Environmental Advocacy Training Program

The Environmental Advocacy Training Program gives environmentalists an opportunity to become skilled advocates on behalf of the environment. While there are many talented environmentalists with high levels of scientific training working on environmental issues in the FSU, they are often unable to compete with wealthy corporations and insular government institutions. After 70 years of Communist rule, the balance of private and public interests remains greatly imbalanced. In order to level the playing field, environmentalists not only need the resources and the capacity to gather information but the ability to use that information for effective advocacy. Through ISAR's programs, those working on behalf of the environment gain needed skills in coalition building, lobbying, media advocacy, and other areas of advocacy. Activities include: Environmental Advocacy Fellowships; International Grassroots Partnership Programs; Advocacy Training Programs; and Advocacy Small Grants.

Environmental Monitoring and Research

Environmental monitoring and research programs are important in the former Soviet Union for many reasons. While many environmentalists in the FSU are highly trained in the sciences, their access to new technology, international partners, and outside research is limited. Without empirical information, environmentalists are often unable to engage in discourse with other, more powerful stakeholders.

Not only does ISAR give environmentalists the empirical tools to be effective by linking NGOs with the scientific community and vice versa, but the program also engages public participation in this process. Public participation is critical to creating a broader foundation of environmental awareness and civic accountability in the community. Activities include: Environmental Monitoring Projects; Scientific Partnerships (international and local); Environmental Research Projects; Technical Training Opportunities; and Community Monitoring Centers and Databanks.

Environmental Media and Information

In order to take environmental advocacy to a broader audience, ISAR's Environmental Media and Information Program ensures information sharing, cross-sector communication, international coalition building, and constituency development.

Environmentalists have thus far had little access to media outlets engaged in environmental issues. To respond to this problem, ISAR reinforces publications programs in our field offices as well as undertakes environmental journalism programs for the media and other NGOs.

In addition to working toward advocacy through the media, we also work toward bringing together stakeholders in environmental forums and cross-sector conferences. Activities include: Environmental Publications; Environmental Media Training Programs; and Environmental Forums and Cross-sector Conferencing.

Emphasizing Advocacy: Programs Offer Activists New Tools

Environmental Monitoring in Kentucky and Ohio Aided by Russian Nuclear Scientist

ISAR is continuing to work with two women activists, Corinne Whitehead and Vina Colley, along with the Siberian Scientists for Global Responsibility to evaluate, analyze, and process the results from a study conducted in November of 2003 in Paducah, KY and Portsmouth, OH. The study included a week of intensive monitoring of air, water, soil, and other organic matter around the periphery of the Paducah and the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plants. The results of this monitoring will be published as a basis for further independent study at the two sites and as a case study for future citizen monitoring initiatives. The Citizen's Monitoring and Technical Assessment Fund is sponsoring the project.



Russian scientist Sergei Pashenko, of Siberian Scientists for Global Responsibility, worked with ISAR in November 2003 assisting US activists in measuring radioactive contamination around uranium enrichment sites in Kentucky and Ohio. Photo by Lucy Henry.

Environmental Grantmaking in Russian Far East Thrives

2004 marks the third year for ISAR's environmental grantmaking program in the Russian Far East. As of the end of 2003 ISAR had supported 221 grants for a total of \$454,514. The program continues this year, with a total of 48 grants awarded to date for a total of \$97,551. The program is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Pipelines and the Public: Monitoring Big Oil

Through a grant from the Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation (FRAEC), ISAR was able to support the visit of two Alaskan environmentalists to Russia in the fall of 2003. Richard Fineberg and David Lacey, independent environmental consultants, traveled to Blagoveshchensk for a three-day regional seminar for NGOs and local administrative officials about the proposed Angarsk-Primorye Pipeline. The seminar was held in Amur Oblast, the future home of nearly a third of the proposed 4,000-km pipeline. The activists shared their experiences with pipeline development in Alaska and talked about ways the public can hold the government and the oil industry accountable for their social and environmental impacts. The FRAEC grant, which ended in December 2003, supported a public outreach project for the regions affected by the proposed pipeline.

Before attending the Blagoveshchensk seminar, Fineberg spent a week on Sakhalin Island, with the NGO Sakhalin En-

vironmental Watch, gathering information for an environmental impact assessment of the Sakhalin II oil and gas pipeline project. In his report, published in March, Fineberg documented that "Sakhalin II seismic examinations present incomplete, inaccurate and contradictory information, understate seismic risks, fail to provide documentation of site specific risks . . . and base their findings on hazards to people, but not to the environment." For more information about the report and the effort to protect Sakhalin's environment, visit www.isar.org/isar/seismic.htm.

Regional Seminar Program Promotes Cross Sector Cooperation

Since February 2003, the ISAR-Moscow office has facilitated a series of regional seminars to address nuclear issues. The participants of the 2003 seminars recently competed for small grants to implement cooperative projects developed at seminars in Gelendzhik and Ozersk, Russia. Fourteen grants, ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 were awarded to NGOs working in Siberia and Western Russia for a total of \$13,339. More regional seminars are planned for 2004, the first of which will be in Moscow, April 28-29. The Ploughshares Fund supports this two-year program.



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Exchanges, Fellowships, and Workshops Characterize New Programs

ISAR has begun preparing a series of **workshops for environmental journalists** in Kazakhstan. The workshops will take place in the cities of Almaty, Atyrau, and Ust-Kamenogorsk and will engage media professionals in discussion about how natural resource revenues are used for environmental management and remediation. This workshop is part of a larger ISAR initiative to encourage increased environmental reporting in Kazakhstan and to partner US environmental journalists with Kazakhstan environmental journalists as part of an exchange and partnership program. The workshops are being supported by the Open Society Institute.

In another new exchange, ISAR is looking forward to working with the **Open World Program** at the United States Library of Congress in the upcoming months as part of an environmental fellowship program. The Open World Program brings leading community members to the United States for ten-day fellowships. ISAR will be welcoming the delegates to Washington, DC for an orientation program and will arrange rewarding fellowships at US environmental organizations across the country for the delegates.

ISAR will also be conducting a **program for Kazakhstan women nuclear safety activists** in 2004-2005 as part of a joint effort with Kaisha Atakhanova of EcoCenter, a non-profit organization located in Almaty that is uniting environmental groups in the movement for a safe and healthy environment in Kazakhstan. The six women delegates will travel

to the US for a two-week program that includes an environmental orientation in Washington, DC and a visit to Santa Fe, New Mexico for seminars and a partnership program uniting the women with US women activists. This program is being supported by the Trust for Mutual Understanding.

Finally, ISAR welcomes **two summer fellows** to our Washington, DC office in 2004. Meghan Redd, a sophomore at Grinnell College, will assist ISAR with the development of an environmental activist directory of groups working on key campaigns in the former Soviet Union. Viktor Shestakov, a Master's Degree student at Indiana University, will be assisting with the production of an environmental advocacy handbook that will be published in Russian and will provide a comprehensive guide for Russian speaking activists seeking innovative and effective tools for protecting their environment. We look forward to welcoming Meghan and Viktor into the ISAR family!

Get Involved! ISAR Needs Your Support

Your tax-deductible contribution supports ISAR's evolving environmental advocacy programs and supports activists in the former Soviet Union who need information and support. We welcome general support contributions as well as donations to specific programs. For more information, write Olga Segars at olga@isar.org or visit www.isar.org.