

ScholarForum

Number 11 • Spring 2008

The Journal of the Open Society Institute's Network Scholarship Programs

Economic Development

Regional Focus: THE MIDDLE EAST

Personal accounts of
studying abroad



Essays and creative works by NSP grantees and alumni

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Welcome to the 11th issue of *Scholar Forum*!

Economic Development is the cover topic for this edition of *Scholar Forum*. With nearly one-third of the world living on less than \$2 a day, the need to lift people out of poverty has become a central challenge for governments and policymakers, the private sector, international organizations, and NGOs around the world. While some countries, including many in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, have had remarkable success in recent decades, much of the world continues to grapple with considerable pockets of extreme poverty. The emerging responses to this poverty are taking a variety of forms; from large-scale investments to microfinance initiatives; from education to health care. Contributors to this issue of *Scholar Forum* examine several strategies that not only spur economic growth but also encourage and strengthen open societies.

The Middle East is the regional focus for this issue. Led by the Palestinian Rule of Law Program and Palestinian Faculty Development Program, Network Scholarship Programs has expanded its reach in the region, most recently funding scholars from Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan in the OSI-Chevening Scholarship Program. The articles in this section seek to contribute to the vibrant political debates shaping the Middle East as well as to offer readers a bit of the region's flavor, literally.

Our six contributions to the Personal Accounts section cover studying abroad and going home, chronicling stories from Mongolia to Arkansas with several stops along the way.

We thank all of the contributors for their excellent submissions and hope you will enjoy this edition of *Scholar Forum*. We enthusiastically invite you to contribute to our next issue, which will feature Southeast Asia and Education as special cover topics. Please see the guidelines in the back.

The Open Society Institute's Network Scholarship Programs fund the participation of students, scholars, and professionals from Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, the Middle East, South Asia, and Burma in rigorous, competitive academic programs outside of their home countries. The goals of these programs are: to revitalize and reform the teaching of the social sciences and humanities at higher education institutions; to provide professional training in fields unavailable or underrepresented at institutions in the countries served; and to assist outstanding students from a range of backgrounds to pursue their studies in alternative academic and cultural environments.

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI builds alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. OSI places a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of marginalized people and communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1993 created OSI as a private operating and grantmaking foundation to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each Soros foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

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Spring 2008 · Number 11

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Scholar Forum is published by the Open Society Institute's Network Scholarship Programs. *Scholar Forum* is distributed to current and former scholarship recipients, host institutions, and educational professionals.

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Economic Development

The Georgian Way of Tackling Unemployment

Solar power in rural Thailand
photo: Michael SIEBURG

David JIJELAVA, Georgia
UEP, 2002-2003
University of Maine

The collapse of the Soviet Union was an immense shock for all of its member countries. The Georgian economy, however, witnessed the harshest fall in GDP output among all post-Soviet states. By 1993, Georgia's economy was only about 30 percent of what it was in 1989. Chaos and hunger flourished, criminal activities, ethnic cleavages, and a number of civil wars took place throughout the country. Unemployment was catastrophic. However, the head of the country, Eduard Shevardnadze, managed to

stabilize Georgia through his diplomatic experience and foreign support.

Moreover, the president managed to create jobs by increasing state bureaucracies. If you knew the right person, it was relatively easy to get a job in state agencies. And everybody knows everybody in such a small country. However, it was typical in Georgia for salary and pension payments to be delayed for months. What was even more striking was that salaries were hardly enough to get by. The country was buried in corruption and there seemed to be no way out of the grave situation. The first lady, Nanuli Shevardnadze, urged people to decrease monthly consumption to about \$5 per household, which she estimated to be realistic.

The Rose Revolution of 2003 changed things. Pensions and salaries were no longer delayed. Furthermore, there was a tenfold increase in the salaries of most state employees! But for some people things got even worse. An increase in salaries required a decrease in the number of state employees, thus leaving thousands unemployed. The efficiency of state bureaucracies increased substantially, but so did unemployment.

The new government had to do something about rising unemployment. Attracting investment, creating a liberal and flexible labor code, and launching

programs for retraining laid off employees were among the adopted strategies. Nevertheless, no matter how good your economic policies are and how successfully you implement reforms, it is impossible to create jobs in such a short period of time. Good policies and reforms are effective, but often their benefits are only fully felt in the long- and medium-term.

In a country with a per capita GDP of \$1100 and with 54 percent of the population living below the poverty line, some-

match with their company would be hired as full-time employees. The program recruited over 50,000 interns of all ages and professions. Everyone was free to choose a company where he or she wanted to work. At best, they would end up with a job. At worst, they would gain some experience, skills, and income. In the end, over 20 percent of those who started an internship were hired. Despite creating jobs for over 10,000 people, many skilled people remain unemployed.

The project was scaled up in 2007. The president announced that up to 100,000 individuals would receive the opportunity to work for four months in private companies.

The quick-fix offered by the Saakashvili government aided the lives of

many Georgian families. Effective collection of taxes and a five-fold increase in the state budget compared to the pre-revolution situation allowed the new government to assist unemployed citizens and to encourage private companies to test potential employees at the state's expense. There is a hope, however, that in the near future such state-sponsored programs will not be needed and the demand for skilled workers in the market will substantially decrease the unemployment rate. ■

“Good policies and reforms are effective, but often their benefits are only fully felt in the long- and medium-term”

thing more effective had to be done. Reforms that would allow people to earn money without waiting for the implementation of long-term projects were needed. Thus, the government came up with an innovative and interesting idea, the Presidential Internship Program. The program aimed to reduce unemployment by assisting private companies in hiring interns. The idea is that after three months of an internship, during which the government pays a stipend to the interns, those who are a good

Is More (Oil) Always Better?

Assel ABDRAKHMANOVA, Kazakhstan
DAAD-OSI Scholarship Program, 2004-2006
Humboldt University (Berlin)

There is an abundance of oil in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia. At first it might seem that there is nothing more to add to this fact than, “Thank Goodness!” Windfall oil revenues during this current period of high world oil prices have allowed these countries to sustain impressive growth rates and to carry out important social and economic reforms. However, the experience of other commodity-exporting countries like Algeria, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, and Venezuela demonstrate that large reserves of natural resources are no guarantee of the long-term prosperity of a nation.

“Dutch Disease,” a problem that has hobbled some resource-rich nations, is characterized by massive inflows of petrodollars into an oil-exporting country,

which leads to the appreciation of the national currency and the loss of competitiveness in other export sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture. As a result, capital and labor resources move out of these activities and into the booming oil economy and service sector. This, in turn, increases dependence on natural-resource exports even further.

Symptoms of Dutch Disease are already evident in Kazakhstan. In recent years, the national currency, the tenge, has appreciated against the U.S. dollar and growth rates in the non-oil industry have been slower than in the rest of the economy. While construction, retail trade, and financial services have grown rapidly, they do not directly contribute to increasing the country's export potential



Anar Ahmadov presents *Does Oil Hinder Democracy?* at Global Supplementary Grant Program conference in Dubrovnik
photo: Michael SIEBURG

or to increasing Kazakhstan's competitiveness in world markets. Furthermore, productivity growth rates are generally higher and innovation is more frequent in manufacturing than in extracting or service sectors. Therefore, if a dependence on oil and gas exports persists in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia these countries risk lagging behind other developing countries in terms of productivity growth and technological development, the main drivers of a nation's long-term economic prosperity.

In natural resource-rich economies, where the wealth is mostly inherited, dis-

tribution rather than the creation of wealth might become important. Such countries are often prone to corruption because different interest groups seek to gain access to the ready source of rent-

income. In some cases, the state can afford to be less accountable and can practice "fiscal pacification" by paying generous social payments and using resource revenues to keep the economy growing. In other cases, extreme income inequality and social conflicts can arise

in natural resource-rich economies. Thus, effective management of natural resources becomes especially urgent for transition countries like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia, where democratic traditions,

"Extreme income inequality and social conflicts can arise in natural resource-rich economies"

civil society, and a sound legal environment are still underdeveloped. Fortunately, the governments of these countries have prioritized the diversification of the economy which should lessen the dependence on natural resources for economic growth. ■

The Workings of Economic Development

Eldar MADUMAROV, Kyrgyzstan
DAAD-OSI Program, 2004
University of Oldenburg

One should always think of economic development as a way of improving the quality of life of the residents of a country. Although it is not easy to agree upon one universal benchmark to measure quality of life across nations, certain criteria must be considered. These include real income per capita, life expectancy, literacy rates, and so on.

The term "economic development" describes how a society changes with a focus on the economic aspects and impact of these changes. Economic development has doubtless become a catch-

certain level of technology is required to transform resources into goods and services. There are also fundamentals whose influence cannot be overlooked. These include such basic factors as geography and institutions. The former is believed to influence the development process in its initial stages while the latter is simultaneously an outcome and determinant of economic development.

Economic advancement is impeded by many phenomena, most of which are tightly interconnected. For example, income inequality is perpetuated within and across nations by cumulative causation: a poor country is less able to advance when the wealth gap relative to other countries is large. Brain drain, capital flight, and the absence of real incentives to progress can contribute to even greater inequalities.

However, as demonstrated by many countries in Southeast Asia, being poor is not always a curse. Well-chosen policies and impeccable implementation can lead to impressive results in the long term. Although it is nearly impossible to change the geographical factors of economic development, institutional components are to a large extent defined and determined by the peoples' will and their coordinated actions. A better awareness of this by the soft and hard sciences can definitely lead to positive changes. Hence, economic development should also be seen as a manageable process of creating the right incentives among the largest number of residents in order to create a better life. ■

"One should always think of economic development as a way of improving quality of life"

phrase among theorists and policymakers, and is seen as the right way to improve the living standards of a country.

What are the essentials needed to determine the process of economic development? There are two essentials that a society needs: a certain stock of labor and capital. Both of these are influenced by the birth and savings rates respectively. Additionally, a

The Mining Sector and Unplanned Settlements in Mongolia

Munkhbat, Orolmaa, Mongolia

Social Work Faculty Fellow, 2007

Host: Columbia University School of Social Work

Home: National University of Mongolia

The mining sector is a major contributor to the Mongolian economy. It accounts for about 17 percent of GDP, 65 percent of industrial value-added, and 58 percent of export earnings. The formal mining sector employs over 12,000 people and the informal (artisanal) mining sector involves many times that number. Many unplanned settlements are appearing in artisanal areas. Though often rich in gold resources, these areas are characterized by a lack of social infrastructure, a high level of poverty, and dangerous living conditions.

Both central and local governments suggest removing unplanned settlements by using administrative methods and pressure. They often do not take into account the reasons for the unplanned settlements, such as poverty and unemployment. According to a World Bank report, between 1998 and 2002, poverty in Mongolia fell from 43 percent to 36 percent. Nevertheless, the country's poverty rates remain high and unemployment continues to increase in the rural areas, despite increasing employment in the larger cities. Even having a job does not protect one from poverty because many individuals earn insufficient salaries.

Looking for jobs and money, people come to mining sites and live in unplanned settlements. As a result, many of them get injured, and sacrifice their health and even their lives.

It is time to protect these people. NGOs dealing with human rights and social issues should press the government to provide appropriate public services and to build the primary infrastructure currently

“Even having a job does not protect one from poverty because many individuals earn insufficient salaries”

lacking in unplanned settlements. The government should improve the drinking water supply and build small public baths and toilets. Compact mobile hospitals would also be appropriate, and permanent police stations are needed to protect settlers from crime.

Civil society needs to take strong, integrated action to pressure officials to help those in unplanned settlements because the government, so far, has shown little interest in doing this voluntarily. ■

Have You Ever Been to Tajikistan as an Ecotourist?

Valeriya TYUMENEVA, Tajikistan

DAAD-OSI 2004-2006

University of Applied Sciences in Eberswalde, Germany

“Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”- International Ecotourism Society

Tajikistan is a country of striking contrasts, unique landscapes, rare flora and fauna, and rich culture.

Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and nearly a decade after a bloody civil war that killed more than 60,000 people, Tajikistan remains the poorest of the former-Soviet Central Asian republics. Although in recent years

Tajikistan has experienced solid economic growth, the remote regions in eastern Tajikistan have seen little improvement. The absence of arable land for large-scale agricultural production limits economic possibilities (90 percent of the territory of Tajikistan is covered by mountains). As a result, many residents migrate to Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union for employment. In an attempt to open up the region and stimulate the economy while protecting its unique cultural and environmental heritage, the

French NGO ACTED, in cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and UNESCO, has initiated an ecotourism development project. The project aims to help the Murghab Ecotourism Association (META) work with a small group of Murghab (East Pamir) villagers as well as members of the district's pastoral community to establish a small handicraft producer group, Yak House.

Today, META has 57 members. In 2006, it provided tourist services to more than 130 tourists. This ranged from accom-



Satellites in Pristina
photo: Zoe BROGDEN

modation in local homes and yurts to providing transportation and tour guides. Ecotourism activities improve the economic position of tourist service providers and their beneficiaries by generating greater income and employment opportunities. In order to improve the quality of the services provided, META members participate in professional training programs focused on different issues, includ-

ing ecotourism business management.

An increase in tourist income also filters indirectly to other parts of the

the Murghab District and empowers women. In this way, ecotourism provides a route for economic develop-

“Ecotourism activities improve the economic position of tourist service providers”

community. By promoting local handicrafts and traditions and bringing revenue to women’s groups, Yak House contributes to the demarginalization of

ment that provides visitors with an authentic experience, brings benefits to the local population, and preserves natural and cultural resources. ■

Economic Aid and the Open Society

Mark NARRON
Program Officer, Soros Economic
Development Fund (former)

June 2007 marked the 60th anniversary of George Marshall's Harvard commencement address in which he unveiled plans for a European Recovery Program, an injection of some \$13 billion to war-torn European economies resulting in the fastest period of growth in European history. Of course, the Marshall Plan was not simply a philanthropic aid package. Nor, on the other hand, was it only a nar-

effect is the same, regardless of whether prosperity derives from oil, illicit activities, industry or aid. China, for instance, would have doubtless experienced more political instability had it not successfully stimulated export-driven manufacturing. And just as oil revenues have bolstered the closed monarchy of Saudi Arabia, they strengthen the transparent and accountable institutions of Norway.

The failure to consider political stability is precisely where some of the biggest blunders in economic development have occurred. The shock treatment prescriptions of privatization and deregulation

equal opportunities for women. Though seemingly contradictory, all of these policies use economic aid (or the withholding thereof) as an instrument for influencing the stability of recipient societies.

Private development donors, though relatively minor players, should bear in mind that they too, whether intentionally or not, produce political effects. Their efforts to alleviate poverty reinforce, to varying degrees, the political systems in which they are made. Assistance to victims of famine or natural disasters, which may be narrowly intended to relieve human suffering often provides much-needed symbolic and political legitimacy to local governments, even though such philanthropy is ostensibly apolitical.

To the extent that they are committed to open society values, donors must weigh the stability effect when choosing to work in closed societies. Add to this calculation the mounting evidence that aid is less effective when deployed in closed societies where it can be diverted by graft, absorbed by bureaucracy, distributed as patronage, concentrated in vanity projects, and misrepresented by propaganda. There are simply fewer consequences for the mismanagement of economic resources under a closed government. Moreover, where aid attempts to circumvent government altogether, tighter regulations on communications, travel,

“The Marshall Plan was a salvo in defense of open governance in Europe”

row and self-interested effort to rebuild European markets for U.S. exports. It was a salvo in defense of open governance in Europe and a means of undercutting the influence of communist totalitarianism amidst high unemployment, damaged infrastructure, and food shortages.

The Marshall Plan, in turn, drew on the Keynesian policy innovations developed during the Great Depression and the general acknowledgment thereafter that free markets alone could neither quickly nor sufficiently restore economic

enacted in Russia, for example, pried the country open without due regard for the accompanying instability, virtually ensuring a retreat under the increasingly closed but stable Putin regime. Therefore, how “economic development” is practiced is important for those who want more open government and greater institutionalization of civil liberties. The challenge for donors is twofold: first, to alleviate poverty and second, to do so without shoring up or inviting repressive governance.

The bilateral aid programs sponsored

“Economic well-being, or at least the perception of economic well-being, is an ingredient of stability”

confidence. These innovations, activist monetary policy, and government-sponsored education and employment programs epitomized by the New Deal, and later the G.I. Bill, also had the intention and effect of safeguarding the legitimacy of liberal democracy.

Economic well-being, or at least the perception of economic well-being, is an ingredient of stability. And to the extent that economic gains succeed in improving stability, they necessarily also preserve the political status quo. The stability

by the United States, for instance, can be explicitly pro-open government and pro-closed government at the same time. Aid to Pakistan and Egypt is partly justified on the grounds that an opening of those societies would invite unfriendly leadership. Similarly, the 2006 cuts in assistance to the Palestinian Authority were a direct response to democratic elections. On the other hand, the Millennium Challenge Corporation ties aid to a checklist of open society reforms such as protection of civil rights, action against corruption, and

enterprise, investment, and trade make it much harder to do so. (Russian charities, for example, pay income taxes exceeding 20 percent on all donations.)

In short, private donors and individuals have the luxury of acting solely on their compassion and values. They can, and should, learn from the Marshall Plan's example. To save lives, provide opportunities, and repair human dignity is good. But to do so in support of institutionalized civil rights, accountable government, and openness to the outside world, is even better. ■

Regional Focus:

the Middle East



Map based upon UN Map No. 4102 Rev.3. Used by permission.

The Middle East can be considered one of the most distinct areas in the world. Historically, the Middle East experienced powerful civilizations, including the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaics, Phoenicians, Persians, Nabateans, and the Caliphates in Medina, Damascus, and Baghdad. A discussion of civilizations that have appeared in this historic region cannot be summarized in one paragraph, as each has its own record of achievements. However, the region's heritage is very rich and visible to any visitor.

“Religion itself tells the history of this region and some of its civilizations”

The Middle East has also experienced different waves of religious domination, from Judaism to Christianity to Islam. The common point shared by these religions is that all of their prophets lived in the region. Accordingly, religion itself tells the history and development of this region and some of its civilizations.

Even the natural environment of the Middle East has a charming diversity, similar to its different ethnic and religious groups. The Gulf, a primary source of oil for the world, is distinct for its amazing desert. The Near East of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine is home to moderate weather across the four seasons, hosting a marvellous variety of fruit and vegetables, including its most famous tree, the blessed olive.

The uniqueness of the Middle East lies in its geographic location, its history and heritage, its natural resources, and attractive natural beauty. All of these components contribute to the mystery and charm of the Middle East. Yet, unfortunately, the wars, violence, instability, and political tension overshadow the region's positive attributes and work to portray the Middle East a region of unrest and bloodshed. Despite these conflicts and a long period of instability and violence, there is still hope for peace. ■

Mystery of the Middle East

Shaima Hussein, Jordan
UK Programs, 2006-07
University of Essex

The image of the Middle East around the world is usually connected with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and scenes of tanks, soldiers, and people throwing stones. For some, the image extends to the situation in Iraq, where increasing violence is shaping a

“Does an accurate image of the Middle East really only consist of violence?”

new map of post-Saddam Iraq. Yet does an accurate image of the Middle East really only consist of violence and political clashes?

The definition of the Middle East itself is not that clear. Does the map of the Middle East extend to cover Turkey and Iran? How about Pakistan and Afghanistan? There is a need to define the states which shape this entity.

Hezbollah's Arms

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UK Programs, 2006-2007
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The most controversial issue in Lebanon nowadays is Hezbollah's arms. In order to understand contemporary Lebanese politics, it is important to recognize Hezbollah's arms as the driving political force of the different Lebanese groups.

Given that the *raison d'être* of Hezbollah (or Party of God) was to resist

carried out by the weak. Oppression, the party believes, should be resisted by all means available, including force. Despite the success of Hezbollah as a political party, weapons continue to be portrayed in party literature as a crucial tool and source of identity for Hezbollah as a resistance party.

From an official point of view, no group beyond the direct control of the state is permitted to be armed. Hezbollah tried between 2005 and 2006 to legitimize its possession and use of arms. During a year of negotiations between the government

in order to strengthen its position with other Lebanese groups. But the July 2006 War on Lebanon changed all expectations. Popular support for Hezbollah as resistance dropped to its nadir.

After July 2006, the party was no longer able to achieve any progress in its favor on this issue. Widespread popular support for its resistance had diminished and was reduced to confessional support, where political support is based on religious affiliation, from the Shiite community and some of Hezbollah's allies.

The democratic way of solving such a problem could lead to the disarmament of Hezbollah. Thus, the party would be faced with difficult decisions including whether or not to accept disarmament. This would seem to be impossible. Hezbollah could start a war with the government and its allies. This type of asymmetrical war would likely favor the party. Or Hezbollah could try and gain time by creating a power vacuum until it could find a way to save its arms.

As events unfolded, Hezbollah chose the last alternative. It decided to use all of the possible ways that it could to under-

“Oppression, the party believes, should be resisted by all means available, including force”

the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and its belief in the illegitimacy of Israel occupying “Palestinian land,” the possession and use of arms are a main component of Hezbollah's identity. From its perspective, resistance to oppression cannot be

and Hezbollah, the government offered to temporarily allow Hezbollah to bear arms in hopes of finding a way to put the group under the state's control. Discussions on the arms issue did not progress. The party depended on popular support for its arms



Syria
photo: Dejan DOKUZOVSKI

mine the democratic process, which would lead to its disarming.

The chaos and non-institutionalized opposition led the government to deal with Hezbollah as an opposition force and not as a segment of the parliament. The party is playing for time until the coming parliament elections. This election's results may favor Hezbollah and its allies.

Not only are Hezbollah's politics motivated by the arms issue, but they are also motivated by factors such as the Israeli war in 2006, U.S. policy toward Lebanon, UN Security Council resolutions concerning Lebanon (1559, 1701), and the position of Lebanese groups toward relations with Syria and Iran.

In this context it is important to understand the following points:

- The goal of the last Israeli war was to disarm Hezbollah or to destroy its military force.
- The U.S. policy in Lebanon looks at the party as an armed terrorist organization and focuses on disarming it.
- The recent Security Council resolutions call for disarming Hezbollah.
- The perspectives on Hezbollah's rela-

tion with Syria are mainly built on historical experience, with Syria providing a transit route for arms from Iran.

- Other Lebanese groups consider the party's arms to be Syria's last chance to interfere in Lebanon.

In other words, Hezbollah's disarmament is a serious goal on international and local levels, but Hezbollah's position

is strengthened by its framing of disarmament as being connected to Israeli and American issues.

What is being asked today from the Lebanese government (whether it wants it or not) is to disarm Hezbollah. In principle it is simple, right, and logical, but in practical terms many circumstances make raising such a question a counterproductive matter that may have unpredictable results. Raising this issue may elicit many reactions from Hezbollah that are dangerous for Lebanon's delicate democracy and peace.

Hezbollah will continue to benefit from this chaotic situation to gain time and block the legal institutions until the next parliamentary elections. It may react violently if its arms are targeted without consent. The main question that remains to be asked is: what if, after two years of chaos, the parliamentary election leads to the same majority, which is in favor of

“Hezbollah will continue to benefit from this chaotic situation”

disarming? And what will the reaction of Hezbollah be in this case?

Hezbollah's weapons are the hottest issue in Middle Eastern politics now, and much international pressure is in favor of disarmament. However, no one is thinking about the results of such pressure on Lebanon. We need a calm international community that can deal rationally with such a dangerous issue for Lebanon and the whole Middle East. We can guarantee the peace of Israel by disarming Hezbollah, but what about Lebanon's peace? ■

The Current Political Situation in Palestine: An Optimistic Look

Mahmoud KITANEH, Palestine
Palestinian Rule of Law Program (2007-08)
Duke University

In 1994, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed an interim peace agreement with Israel. In this agreement, the Palestinians were given self-governance while the PLO recognized the State of Israel. Fatah is the dominant party within the PLO and has led the Palestinian resistance since the 1960s. In early 2007, Hamas, which is not a member of the PLO and did not recognize the peace agreement, participated in the Palestinian legislative elections and secured a majority of parliamentary seats. In light of this, Hamas continued resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. After Hamas won the legislative elections, an embargo and boycott were imposed on the Palestinian people with the intent to pressure Hamas into recognizing the interim peace agreements. This situation caused tension between Fatah and Hamas. In order to avoid internal fighting, Fatah and Hamas formed a unified government. Unfortunately, this arrangement was not sustainable. During the tenure of this uni-

fied government, Hamas took control of Gaza by armed force. In response to this, Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah leader, dissolved the unified government and formed an emergency government which hitherto has control over the West Bank.

Since this recent turn of events, numerous political pundits have commented on the Palestinian political split and its deleterious effect on the Palestinian cause. However, looking ahead, there

“To avoid internal fighting, Fatah and Hamas formed a unified government”

are positive long-term effects resulting from what has happened.

In order to gain domestic support, both Fatah and Hamas started to change their internal policies. Indicative of this is how Fatah has sought and implemented more active measures to coun-

teract corruption within its ranks, reform the security corps, and build state institutions. Simultaneously, Hamas has taken a less fundamentalist stance on many issues. For example, Hamas has become more tolerant of other political parties. It has also started to use political terms never used before, such as political pluralism, minority rights, political partnership, elections, and transparency. Hamas is also working hard to impose security in Gaza, which is known as a difficult place to govern.

After Hamas won the elections, it started to adopt a more pragmatic approach. This sentiment permeated its addresses to the

public. Hamas is growing more open to the notion of a long-term truce with the Israelis and establishing a Palestinian state in line with the 1967 borders. This gradual change is also reflected in its move toward employing political solutions to problems rather than resorting to violence, as evidenced in the ending of bombings inside Israel.

Since the beginning of the second Palestinian uprising (intifada), Fatah has never enjoyed political gains similar to those experienced in recent months. The neighboring Arab countries, Israel, and the international community increased their support for the Palestinian president.

Israel, by its own initiative, in order to support Fatah over Hamas, released 250 Palestinian prisoners and more meetings are being held between the Palestinians and Israeli senior state officials.

Finally, although this split will remain in the short-to-medium term, it will not endure forever because Hamas cannot rule under this embargo and boycott. Furthermore, Fatah is incapable of facing Israel by itself and the Palestinian people are not satisfied with this split. Eventually, the split will end but the positive developments that have occurred in the Palestinian political arena will remain. ■

The United States, Development, and the Middle East

Najeh SHAHIN, Palestine
Palestinian Faculty Development Program, 2007-08
University of Pennsylvania

One of the easiest ways to tackle the dilemma of underdeveloped countries is to say that their problems are the result of years of imperialism, which is still working in various forms to perpetuate dependency and leave countries vulnerable to exploitation. This is the core of many strands of Marxist and Islamist analysis that describe phenomenon of underdevelopment as a result of years of development. The problem is not that the Arab states have not developed but rather that they have been developing in a way that reproduces economic and political dependency and even deepens it with other elements like poverty, consumer behavior, and so on.

This theory neglects the fact that regardless of the role that the developed imperialist countries play, one should not neglect the fact that not all underdeveloped countries are performing in the same way.

The case of East Asia gives some hope to underdeveloped countries in the Middle East. Here some sort of a miracle really took place. I dare say that the Middle East has similar conditions to those that allowed East Asia to get on the track of modernization. Malaysia and Indonesia are Islamic countries that are inspiring models for states in the Middle East.

One might think that the Middle East has its own traditional way of life which only produces fanatical ideologies. However, one can recall in this argument the issue of the external factor, for it is hardly possible to explain the story of this area without considering the role of the United States in reinforcing extremism and fundamentalism on two important occasions. The first was when the United States supported the Mujahdeen and "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan and the second was when the United States invaded Iraq.

Though I am deeply convinced that of the damage to the psyche of those in the Middle East, I still have some hope that because of the large supply of resources and some heritage of tolerance it is not impossible to change the situation, provided that the United States starts to change the rules of the game. ■

Dejan and family in Syria
photo: Dejan DOKUZOVSKI



Recipe

Loobia Polo: Persian Green Bean Rice

Joseph Glicksberg,
NSP Program Manager



A family in Palestine
photo: Rachel AICHER

Ingredients

- One Large Onion
- 1 lb. Ground Beef
- 1 14 oz. Jar Hearty Tomato Sauce
- 1 Frozen Package Cut Green Beans
(not French Style)
- Vegetable Oil
- Cinnamon, Turmeric, Saffron
- 1 Medium-Sized Package of Basmati Rice
- 1 Large Container of Plain Yogurt

This dish is prepared in three steps. First you make a mixed meat, tomato, and green bean sauce. You then make rice. You then mix the sauce with the rice and let the mixture cook on the stove. It is usually eaten with cold, plain yogurt.

Making the Sauce

1. Coat bottom of a medium-sized frying pan with vegetable oil.
2. Add cut onion to oil in pan, stir on low heat until brown (about 10 minutes).
3. Add ground meat to onions in frying pan, mix and stir until brown.
4. Add bottle of tomato sauce to onions and meat mixture in frying pan.

5. Add spices generously to taste (saffron, turmeric, cinnamon).
6. Add green beans to mixture and keep mixing it well.
7. While simmering, taste mixture to see if you would like to add more spices.

Making the Rice

1. Boil a large amount of water.
2. When water boils, add basmati rice and put in a drop of vegetable oil.
3. When water boils again, taste the rice. When it is half-cooked, drain it in a colander.

Mixing the Sauce and Rice and Cooking

1. Dry the large pot you made the rice in. Coat the bottom of it with vegetable oil.
2. Mix the rice and the sauce together.
3. Put a ½ inch layer of rice/sauce mix in the bottom of the pot, cover, and cook until it has caramelized.
4. Add the rest of the rice/sauce mixture to pot and pat it down to pack it tightly.

5. Using a spatula, push rice, except bottom layer, away from the sides of the pot by ½ inch.
6. In the center of the top of the rice, make a tubular, column-like hole about 1 inch wide from the top to bottom using a spatula or rubber spoon handle.
7. Add a small amount of vegetable oil to top of column, so it trickles down to the bottom of pot.
8. Cover the inside lid of the pot with a cloth so it will absorb steam. Cover pot.
9. Cook on a burner on very low heat for about 45 minutes.
10. After 45 minutes, uncover pot, place a large plate on it where the cover was, and flip the pot over.
11. Rice should come out looking like a cake, with a hard shell on top (the bottom layer of the rice while it was in the pot) and on the sides. This layer is very good and is called *tadik*.
12. Let cool a bit and serve with spoonfuls of cold, plain yogurt. ■

Personal Accounts

Grantees' stories of living and studying abroad

For Everyone Who Is Thinking about Coming to the UK to Study

Battulga SERGELEN, Mongolia
OSI-Chevening, 2006-2007
University of Manchester

I spent 27 weeks in Manchester, an incredible city in a beautiful country. Although this might not be such a long time, I feel like the UK has inspired me and changed my thinking.

To be honest, I was a little scared when I first came to the UK because it seemed very difficult to live alone in a country where I had never been. Even though I had known where I would live and study before I arrived, I felt like I knew nothing.

But when I arrived at the airport, I realized that there was nothing to fear. British people are friendly, helpful, and good at understanding others. Though I

“The UK has changed my thinking”

came alone, I never felt isolated. There is always someone who can help with any problem related to academic or non-academic issues. That is why I feel safe and I am able to study hard.

When I first came here, I used to count the days until I could return home. Now it is completely different. As time goes by, I am really sorry my UK experience is coming to an end. Before I arrived, I read in the university arrival guide that “you will be proud to call Manchester home during your studies.” Now I realize what that means: I am confident that I will be proud of the time I have spent here for the rest of my life. ■

Life in Bulgaria

Biljana BILALOVIK
SSGP, 2005-2007
Macedonia

Living and studying in Bulgaria, which is culturally and socially different (if only slightly) than my home country of Macedonia, has been an experience full of curiosities, amusements, and learning.

Generally speaking, each day I learn a lot about the similarities and differences between the cultures and mentalities of Macedonians and Bulgarians. As a performing arts student with the career goal of becoming a cultural worker, I have always been fascinated by the possibility for

intercultural learning provided by direct exchanges. By studying people's behavior, I have drawn plenty of inspirational material for my artistic and educational work at the New Bulgarian University (NBU).

“I have drawn inspiration for my artistic work at the New Bulgarian University”

I consider myself very lucky to be able to study dance and music theatre at an institution that provides top quality education in my field. Although there is a considerable degree of dissatisfaction with the general conditions in the Bulgarian music and theatre scene, I have learned a great deal about the performing arts at the university, especially because of the subdivision of different genres within the curriculum.

In Macedonia, performing arts education is very much limited to studying acting. At NBU, I've had the unique opportunity to participate in a huge project called Three Penny Opera involving numerous professional performers and students. I was given the chance to play one of the bigger roles, which included acting, singing, and dancing side-by-side with experienced professionals. Because opportunities for students are rare in such large, quality productions, my role was an invaluable educational experience. ■

Dormition of the Theotokos
Cathedral in Varna, Bulgaria
photo: Michael SIEBURG



Academic and Social Life at Oxford

Ekaterina BELONOGOVA

UK Programs Oxford Nine-Month Research Scholarship,
2006-2007

A student blew his nose loudly, took his coat, and disappeared while the Professor was still speaking. The two-minute delay made my hair stand on end. This was my first, and far from most pleasant, impression of academic life in Oxford. I experienced several other situations that would not be appropriate at Russian universities, including one student who arrived late for a lecture and was still given handouts with a smile by the professor. This made me feel that the student is at the center of the Oxford universe. What I soon realized, as I became familiar with the idiosyncrasies of English academic life, was that what makes some English things strange also makes them efficient.

“Weather, food, and the lifestyle in the UK can kill your Russianness”

First, the educational style in Oxford has many advantages over what is practiced at Russian universities. In particular, a student’s creative energies can be channeled exclusively toward their area of interest. I was actually expecting a more theory-based approach to education. But after encountering a clash of ideas during numerous lectures and seminars, my views on many aspects of my research took shape, showing another side to my subject of interest, Russian literature.

I would describe the academic culture as easy-going, with a stress on self-motivation. Professors create a lively and friendly atmosphere. My research advisor encouraged me and supported an interactive approach. Tutorials became very intimate and dissertation-focused, which intensified my motivation. I could not help but boasting about the mistakes of 19th-century researchers, something which made me feel a little proud of myself.

Weather, food, and the lifestyle in the UK can kill your Russianness. Tales of notoriously dreadful rain and fog appear to be only fairytales. In general, the weather is fine, and was something I could talk about for hours with my English hosts, as we compared and contrasted the weather in the UK and Russia.

The food is pleasantly strange, but after my initial grumblings about tasteless couscous and never-ending sandwiches, I now realize that never in my life have I eaten such deliciously spicy Mediterranean couscous in a Spanish salad and mouth-watering tartlets with myriads of sandwich fillers, fresh vegetables, and strange but very tasty sauces!

The lifestyle and language are sources of amazement for me. Vacancies in a hotel appear to be not jobs but rooms. Scouts and porters call you darling or sweetheart. There are women who are



Bicycles in Oxford, England
photo: Michael SIEBURG

pregnant at the age of 40, yet I am 25 and have a five-year old. And my situation is not strange in Russia. Water taps are never mixed and you have to wash your hands very fast under one tap and then under another. Clothes are unique, as are the hairstyles of some people. I have even seen bank managers with mohawks. But one of the most striking things is the old men and women who can never be compared to their Russian counterparts, who sit on benches and gossip about everyone coming here and there.

Sports are not my cup of tea, but Oxford infected me with cycling, which is something you need after lots of international cuisine. The unforgettable cooking sessions in our shared kitchen opened new and impressive culinary horizons: my Russian borsch was truly memorable!

All of this is just the tip of the English cultural iceberg which was sometimes a bit dampened by the homesickness I felt for my child and family. However, I feel that by overcoming the difficulties and getting accustomed to the unique sides of Oxford life, I’ve grown enormously. There is nothing like living in a foreign country for enlarging your views and giving you a better appreciation of your home country’s virtues and sins. All of these sides; the academic, social, and personal, create a full circle and you begin to be afraid of missing each day and you try to make the most of your experience! ■

My Experience in the United States

Maher HANNA, Palestine

Palestinian Rule of Law Program, 2006-2007

“Only the alarm will wake me up tomorrow, and if I switch it off, I will probably miss my classes. Nobody will enter my room. They are all overseas, thousands of miles away, back in Palestine, and I am by myself, here in the United States.” And so began my unique experience.

Maybe it was a very simple, personal, and unimportant thought, but it was enough to express the mix of all my expectations and fears, excitement and sadness, hopes and worries, all in one reality: moving to the United States.

“The United States and Palestine are like a coffee machine and a car; the differences are much larger and obvious than the similarities”

As a law student, I spend much of my time studying how to brief cases. Yet, it is not easy to brief my experience. Thoughts, feelings, dilemmas, stereotypes, disappointments, depression, and happiness are much harder to explain and summarize than a dry legal text. Thus, when I try to summarize it, I do not know how to compare it with my experience back home. The United States and Palestine are like a coffee machine and a car; the differences are much larger and obvious than any similarities. Only if I take one piece of these two machines, and examine it by itself, can I compare them. Let me take the economy.

I used to think that there was no clear economic system in Palestine. For me it was a mix of capitalism and socialism as well as other systems and practices. Now realize that I did not know what pure capitalism even meant. For me, capitalism was a meaningless word, used by professors in economics classes and politicians who do not know exactly what they are talking about. I thought that the economy in the United States was basically similar to that in Palestine, just bigger.

Well, I could not have been more wrong. Individuals in the United States spend money they do not have hoping that they will get it in the future. In Palestine, individuals do not spend money, fearing they will need it in the future. This difference is based on two obvious rea-

sons: political stability and the banking system. There is also a third, hidden reason: culture.

In Palestine, political decisions by the occupying authorities that effect Palestine’s economy are usually taken on daily basis. As a result, current events are totally unpredictable. For example, Israeli authorities decide, on a day-to-day basis, which checkpoints to close and where to establish new ones. Even if you succeed getting to work today, nobody can assure you that tomorrow. People are not certain of having income for the next day. Therefore, many

save money for fear of not having an income in the future. In the United States, people are confident and depend

on the fact that they will be able to reach the same job tomorrow that they had today.

The American credit system also plays a role. The ability to have almost any amount of money, for a fixed minimum payback per month, makes an individual believe that he “owns” this money. The price is not an issue at all. Almost every bank and company is willing to give an individual a credit card. Just buy now, and you can pay later. In Palestine, there is no credit system. You have to pay all of your bills and costs almost immediately. Therefore, people buy only what they can afford with the money they actually have.

Moreover, cultural elements play a role. In general, American society can be described as an individualistic society. Everyone takes care of him or herself with little concern for others. In Palestine, the society works and acts as a group. The family provider has to guarantee his (or her) children’s future, support sisters and parents, and to take care of their group. Income is shared between the members of the group, rather than used for personal needs. From my experience, I know Palestinian society cannot, at least for now, become a capitalist society, not only because of banking laws or political issues, but mainly because of cultural differences. ■



Palestine
photo: Maher HANNA

U.S. Alumni of Mongolia

Ariunaa ENKHTUR, Mongolia Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2004 Randolph-Macon Woman's College

To study in the United States, even with a non-degree program, means a lot to me. That sunny day, on May 6, 2005, when the plane took off and beautiful, golden San-Francisco was far from sight, I did not realize that one day I would be so proud of my little U.S. experience. And after implementing the U.S. Alumni of Mongolia (USAM) project in 2006, I now understand that U.S.-educated Mongolians have the capacity and energy to make a difference in society.

I started work with the Alumni Project as a project coordinator at the Educational Advising and Resource Center in Ulaanbaatar. The project was funded by the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Mongolia. Although thousands of Mongolians since the 1990s have gone to the United States seeking education, an interactive network of Mongolian U.S. alumni was still absent and urgently needed. The main objective of the project was to establish a network of Mongolian U.S. alumni so that these



U.S. Alumni of Mongolia
photo: Ariunaa ENKHTUR

educated and energetic people could more efficiently make their contributions to society. We developed the U.S. Alumni of Mongolia website (www.earmn.org/usalumni) and organized the First National Conference of U.S. Alumni of Mongolia on October 28, 2006.

Lasting half a day with 131 alumni participants, the conference facilitated an exchange of ideas about future collaboration, establishing funds to support financially disadvantaged but academically strong

students from rural areas, and raising public awareness of U.S. alumni. Saranbaatar, a UEP alumnus (2000), initiated a rural support fund before the conference that was fully supported by conference participants. Saranbaatar told the conference that he had actually contacted alumni when he started the project and collected almost \$3,000 in donations from them. The conference and the prospect of further cooperation made me proud and excited to be an OSI scholarship alumna. ■

Homo-Capitalisticus

Vaidas LANAVICIUS, Lithuania UEP, 2000 University of Arkansas

It is hard to believe how difficult it is to change jobs, professional environments, lifestyle, country of residence, and so on. However, once the change is finalized, a totally new world opens in front of you.

My life has changed so many times. I always have short flashbacks to 2000 when I was granted an OSI scholarship to study in the United States. This was a major transition in my life. I am so grateful for this opportunity. It is when I transformed from a "homo-sovieticus" to "homo-capitalisticus." And it felt so great, opening my eyes wide and being able to say what I think.

The conversion from the collective to the individual has contributed to the

development of a personality that I have employed while working for the government of Lithuania, my home country, when it acceded to the EU. I launched myself fully into "Team Europe," teaching European Institutions at my old Alma Mater (Vilnius University), and completing my MA in European Union Politics and French Linguistics.

However, the individuality that was so appreciated at my beloved University of Arkansas gave me the strength to challenge myself again when I started working for Japan Airlines. I learned again to think for myself, and to look around

to see the world and all of its colors.

Having undergone these transitions in my life, I believe dictators and corrupt governments are afraid of thinking people. Without thinking there is no enlightenment. Without enlightenment, there is no

"Corrupt governments are afraid of thinking people"

progress. Without progress, there is no open society and, where there is no democratic open society, there is no development. Without being afraid to change, let us all take a challenge once again! ■

Special Reports

Presidential Elections in Armenia: A step forward or two steps back?

Anonymous (Name withheld on author's request)
Filed on March 25, 2008

On February 19, 2008, the fifth presidential elections since independence from the Soviet Union were held in Armenia. Of the nine candidates, the main rivalry was between Serzh Sarkisian, the current

interim report from OSCE observers said the vote “was generally compatible with the country’s international commitments” but noted that there had been some problems with the counting of ballots.

city center, peacefully passing government buildings guarded by riot police.

A number of ambassadors and lower-ranking diplomats have been removed from their posts for calling for free elections. Hundreds of members of the Republican Party, the party headed by Serzh Sarkisian, and some members of Parliament ripped up their party membership certificates as a sign of protest. According to the opposition, Manvel Grigoryan and Gagik Melkonyan, deputy ministers from the Ministry of Defense, declared that they are “with the people and will ensure that the army would not interfere in the process.”

The demonstration organized by the Republican Party at Republic Square to counter the opposition-led demonstrations ended in failure. According to reports, it lasted less than 40 minutes and concluded with many of the people brought in by the party joining the opposition demonstrations.

“Demonstrators claimed the vote was marred by ballot rigging, bribery, and other irregularities”

prime minister, and Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the first president of the republic. Official election results gave Serzh Sarkisian 53 percent of the vote and Levon Ter-Petrosyan 21.5 percent. Sarkisian’s total was enough to avoid a run-off.

While observers from the CIS declared the vote “ideal and democratic,” the first

Opposition demonstrators responded to electoral defeat with 11 days of mass demonstrations at Freedom Square in Armenia’s capital, Yerevan. The demonstrators claimed that the vote was marred by ballot rigging, bribery, and other irregularities. Thousands came to the square every day and held marches through the





In the meantime, hundreds of opposition supporters filed requests for a recount. On February 24, the Central Electoral Commission issued its decision confirming the preliminary results of the elections, without recalculating the votes because, according to them, “there was no time left for such recalculation.” On March 29, Levon Ter-Petrosyan filed a request with the Constitutional Court to void the Central Election Committee’s decision.

Early in the morning of March 1, riot police without any warning used lethal force to disperse the peaceful demonstrators, some of whom were still sleeping in their tents. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was taken away by force from Freedom Square. After Freedom Square had been cleared, a small number of protestors gathered in front of the French Embassy. This small group spontaneously turned into a mass demonstration that, according to the opposition, exceeded 400,000 people. Demonstrators demanded that the authorities free their leader and render the vote null and void.

President Robert Kocharyan that evening declared a state of emergency, decreeing that no demonstrations could be held and that the media should not disseminate any information not obtained through official channels. Riot police and troops dispersed the demonstration. According to opposition sources, troops and the police used shotguns with live ammunition (“real buckshot”) to disperse the demonstrators, though official sources denied this. During the clashes between the armed forces and demonstrators, official sources claimed that 8 died and 265 were wounded.

The state of emergency in Yerevan lasted until March 20, despite much international pressure on the Armenian government to lift it from the OSCE, the Council of Europe and its Commissioner for Human Rights, the EU, and the U.S. State Department. These and other international actors called on the government to allow freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and to begin a dialogue with the opposition. The Millennium Challenge Corporation, which has issued over \$200 million in funds to Armenia, warned that it would freeze the accounts

because its programs can only be implemented in a democratic environment. Condoleezza Rice, addressing the House of Representatives, remarked that the United States should “reconsider all funding programs for Armenia”.

Despite pressure from the international community and the fact that state of emergency has expired, the authorities continue

“Without any warning, riot police used lethal force to disperse the peaceful demonstrators, some of whom were still sleeping in their tents”

to repress members of the opposition. Most opposition leaders have been arrested and many others remain in hiding.

Serzh Sarkisian has said he will not resign, while Levon Ter-Petrosyan argues that the “opposition has not given up” and “will continue the struggle by all lawful means.” One thing is clear: even though the newly-elected president has signed a memorandum of coalition with three parties in Parliament, which allegedly gives him the backing of 125 out of 131 representatives, the authorities do not have enough resources to successfully administer the country’s political, economic, and cultural life. The distrust of the authorities remains and tension hangs in the air. ■

photos this page and opposite by author



Home Country Project Alumni Council: One step ahead...

Kristina Dzhadzarova, Bulgaria
Undergraduate Exchange Program (2005-06)

Undergraduate Exchange Program (UEP) alumni from Eastern Europe and Mongolia, partners at educational advising centers in Moldova and Bosnia, and Network Scholarship Program staff members Anne Campbell and Amanda Lindberg, gathered in Istanbul in September 2007 to establish Alumni Council that will serve an advisory board with the purpose of monitoring and evaluating current and future UEP Home Country Projects (HCP).

The Home Country Projects aim to give grantees the opportunity to gain experience leading community service projects. Upon returning to their home country, students are encouraged to implement a home project and to invigorate their academic and social environments.

Given the challenges posed by HCPs throughout the years, the Istanbul meeting sought to reach an agreement on the common goals and practices that might ease project implementation. This initiative came about after the recognition of the need for alumni to become more involved in sharing personal experiences, knowledge, and expertise on current fellows' project



HCPAC Conference participants
photo: Amanda LINDBERG

when the grantee returns home. This problem has sometimes led to grantees abandoning their initial project proposal and shifting to new activities. As a result, another major goal agreed on at the meeting was to establish a common framework for project proposal evaluation that would accurately gauge a project's potential for success in a local context.

An important outcome of the meeting included getting all participants to approve a set of responsibilities that

should be followed by each country representative. These include sharing information using the KARL network; aiding local coordinators on UEP advertising and recruitment; preparing an informational brochure of successful HCPs; organizing alumni events;

“This initiative came about after the recognition of the need for alumni to become more involved”

searching out additional funding; and maintaining an updated list of local NGOs. Through the implementation of these goals, the Alumni Council should have a direct effect on the successful implementation of future HCPs. ■

“Home Country Projects aim to give grantees the opportunity to gain experience leading community service projects”

implementation. The advisory board can also serve as a source of new ideas and practices.

The main issues discussed at the Istanbul meeting related to evaluation methods and financial planning aimed at effectively utilizing the stipend each grantee receives. Croatian representative, Anka Kekez, introduced common methods for monitoring and evaluation that can be employed by all country representatives. Anne Campbell led a session on HCP best practices. Participants discussed obstacles and difficulties in HCP implementation. These included dealing with a change of project ideas and insufficient time due to poor scheduling.

In the past, HCP proposals have been prepared while students are studying in the United States on their scholarship. This has led to situations where some ideas are unable to fit local contexts

Alumni Updates

Scholar Forum has revived a feature of earlier issues in which we highlight alumni achievements over the past year. Rather than provide alumni updates for all of our programs, we've selected three programs to highlight in this issue. Alumni updates for our other programs will be published in future issues of Scholar Forum as well as in the departmental newsletter, which you can subscribe to at our website: www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship

UEP Alumni Updates

2003-04

Razvan Amzu (Romania, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire)—Razvan is completing his MBA in Bucharest, and working as an Online Manager for a large online game shop in Romania.

Diana Iliescu (Romania, Ithaca College)—Diana has been writing and directing plays for the past several years in Bucharest, and this fall begins study at Universite Paris III-Nouvelle Sorbonne towards an MA in Theatre.

Polya Lesova (Bulgaria, Rutgers University)—Polya has worked for MarketWatch, a financial news website owned by Dow Jones, since January 2007.

Ion Miscisin (Moldova, Rutgers University)—Ion is pursuing a PhD in economics at Duke University.

Roland Mueller (Romania, Slippery Rock University)—Roland is working at an internship at the International Labor Organization at the United Nations in Geneva.

2004-05

Iva Glisic (Serbia, University of Vermont)—Iva was accepted to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection internship program and worked in Venice until December 2007.

Plamen Kolev (Bulgaria, University of Georgia-Athens)—Plamen studied for a Master's degree in Maastricht in the Netherlands on full scholarship.

Aneliya Kuzmanova (Bulgaria, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire)—Aneliya began a Master's degree in Central and South-Eastern European Studies at the University College London.

2005-06

Luana Badiu (Romania, New York University)—Luana began study at the University of Manchester to earn an MSc in Finance.

Elena Stavrevska (Macedonia, University of Washington)—Elena will be earning a Masters Degree on fellowship at CEU, studying International Relations and European Studies

Soros Supplementary Grant Program (SSGP) Alumni Updates

2002-2003

Jorida Frakulli (Albania, University of Rouse "Angel Kanchev", Bulgaria)—Jorida is working at the UFO University in Tirana, Albania as Associate Professor. Jorida had has been awarded the SSGP grant five times.

Ivana Spirkovska (Macedonia, Moscow State Institute of International Relations-MGIMO University, Russia)—Ivana is working at Deloitte & Touche in Moscow, Russia in the Audit Department. Ivana has been awarded the SSGP grant three times.

Anna-Maria Nyaradi (Romania, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)—Anna-Maria is completing her PhD in Art History at the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Anna-Maria has been awarded the SSGP grant three times.

2003-2004

Udval Badamkhatan (Mongolia, Rostov-on-Don State University, Russia)—Udval is a Training Specialist at the Enterprise Mongolia project which is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the UNDP in Ulaanbaatar. Udval has been awarded the SSGP grant two times.

2004-2005

Victoria Khurshudyan (Armenia, Russian State University for Humanities)—Victoria received her PhD from the Russian State University for Humanities in 2006. Victoria is now a project coordinator at Corpus Technologies (Eastern Armenia National Corpus) in Yerevan, Armenia. Victoria has been awarded the SSGP two times.

Alexander Berdichevsky (Latvia, Lomonosov Moscow State University)—Alexander is a science new editor for the News journal "Lenta.ru" in Moscow, Russia. Alexander has been awarded the SSGP grant three times.

2005-2006

Suela Dibra (Albania, University of Prishtina, Kosovo)—Suela is completing her MA degree at the University of Prishtina, and working as a psychologist at the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims in Prishtina, as well as teaching Psychology and Sociology at a middle school in Prishtina. Suela has been awarded the SSGP grant two times.

Shqiye Hajredini (Kosovo, State University of Tetovo, Macedonia)—Shqiye is practicing as a lawyer at the Internet Provider Company in Prishtina, Kosovo.

Almaz Sultanbekov (Kyrgyzstan, St. Petersburg State University, Russia)—Almaz is a Manager of Investment Projects Department at the Mercury Joint-Stock Company in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Vlatko Dimov (Macedonia, "Ovidius" University of Constanta, Romania)—Vlatko has started Masters studies on "International Relationships XIX-XXI centuries at the Ovidius" University of Constanta in Romania.

Biljana Tanurovska (Macedonia, University of Arts in Belgrade)—Biljana received her MA of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy at the University of Arts in Belgrade. Currently, Biljana is working as an Executive Manager of Lokomotiva (Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture) in Skopje, Macedonia.

Zarrina Achilova (Tajikistan, Moscow State Institute of International Relations-MGIMO-University, Russia)—Zarina is completing her study at the MGIMO and is scheduled to graduate in June 2008. Zarrina has been awarded the SSGP grant two times.

Elena Ivanova (Turkmenistan, Moscow State University of Railway Engineering, Russia)—Elena has graduated from the Moscow State University of Railway Engineering and received her Specialist degree in Psychology. Elena is working as volunteer at the Counterpart Consortium in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.. Elena has been awarded the SSGP grant two times.

2006-2007

Zhanna Saidenova (Kazakhstan, Institute of International Educational Programs (IIEP) of St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University, Russia)—Zhanna has started her Masters of Philosophy in Higher Education at the Erasmus Mundus Program at the University of Oslo in Norway.

Solongoo Bayarsaikhan (Mongolia, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)—Solongoo is working as a Lawyer at the Mongolian National Mining Association in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

OSI/CNOUS Alumni Updates

Anvar Serojitdinov (Kyrgyzstan, OSI/CNOUS 2003-2004)—Anvar received his Master's Degree on Geopolitics and International Relations at the Institute of Political Studies of Toulouse-Sciences PO Toulouse, France. Currently he is a PhD candidate at the University of Pierre Mendes France, Grenoble-II, France. He publishes a personal webforum "The School of Future Elite-Kyrgyzstan" (one of the HESP's invisible colleges in Kyrgyzstan) at the following URL: <http://sfe.fanforum.ru/>

2004-2005

Laura Turarbekova (Kazakhstan, University of Lyon 3-Jean Moulin)—Laura is pursuing a PhD in Philosophy at the University Lyon 3 Jean Moulin in Lyon.

2005-2006

Bates Assilbekova (Kazakhstan, University of Lyon 2-Lumiere)—Bates is working at the US Embassy in Kazakhstan as a grants coordinator (Democracy Commission Grants Program for Local NGOs) and alumni coordinator in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Rima Tkatova (Kazakhstan, University of Lyon 3-Jean Moulin)—Rima is pursuing a PhD in International Law at the University of Lyon 2- Jean Moulin in Lyon.

Sergey Uzhegov (Kazakhstan, University of Lyon 3-Jean Moulin)—Sergey is working at the International Money Laundering Combating Center as a coordinator in Almaty, Kazakhstan and also pursuing a PhD in Economics at the University of Sorbonne in Paris.

Ruslan Rahimov (Kyrgyzstan, University of Lyon 3-Jean Moulin)—Ruslan is a Research Fellow at the Social Research Center of the American University-Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and also pursuing a PhD in social anthropology at the School of High Research in Social Sciences in Paris.

2006-2007

Talгат Abdurahmanov (Kazakhstan, University of Bordeaux 2—Victor Segalen)—Talгат is completing his second Masters degree at the University Michel de Montaigne—Bordeaux 3.

Mullohasan Turaev (Tajikistan, Robert Schuman University, Strasbourg)—Mullohasan is working at the National Center for patent and information office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

HESP: International Higher Education Support Program

The International Higher Education Support Program (HESP) promotes the advancement of higher education within the humanities and social sciences, throughout the region of Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe, Russia, the States of the former Soviet Union, and Mongolia.

HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching

The Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching (ReSET) aims to develop and nurture teaching at the undergraduate university level. The program establishes a framework for the long-term collaborative development of scholarly teaching for qualified and dedicated regional and international faculty and creates opportunities for substantial contribution to the process of educational change in the region. ReSET projects involve groups of junior faculty participants from the region and international teams of resource faculty.

ReSET invites proposals for multiyear projects from region-based academic institutions, associations or individuals with demonstrated poten-

tial for and commitment to promoting teaching excellence and lending on-going support to individual faculty and departments in the region.

For more details about the program and eligibility requirements, and to download applications, please visit the website at: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/reset> or contact:

HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching
Open Society Institute
Október 6. u. 12., Budapest 1051, Hungary
Tel: (36-1) 235-6152 Fax: (36-1) 411-4401
Email: oshtokvych@osi.hu or mjo@osi.hu

HESP Academic Fellowship Program

The Academic Fellowship Program (AFP) contributes to higher education reform in Southeastern Europe, the former Soviet Union (excluding the Baltic States), and Mongolia and helps build inclusive academic networks locally, regionally, and globally. Recognizing that universities play a fundamental role in strengthening civil society, AFP has two main objectives:

- to assist reform-minded university departments in their efforts to achieve world-class academic stature and become models of innovation and reform; and
- to promote the return, retention, and professional development of promising local scholars.

To achieve these goals, fellowships are available for junior faculty and local scholars holding an internationally-competitive post-graduate degree

(usually from the USA, EU, Canada, or Australia) and who are working, or willing to work, at an AFP partner department. The program also offers fellowships for highly qualified international academics interested in consulting with those departments on reform plans.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI website: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/afp>, or by sending inquiries to the following:

Academic Fellowship Program
International Higher Education Support Program
Open Society Institute
Október 6. u. 12., Budapest 1051, Hungary
Tel: (36-1) 235-6160 Fax: (36-1) 411-4401 Email: afp@osi.hu

HESP Mobility Programs: Student Mobility

The program supports visits to/from a HESP Network Institution by students enrolled at higher education institutions in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe; the former Soviet Union; and Mongolia.

For a list of qualifying institutions and complete program guidelines, please see:

<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/mobility/grants/student>

Southeast European Student Initiatives

The SESI program supports cross-border student initiatives from the following Southeast European university student communities: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The aim of the Southeast European Student Initiatives (SESI) is to

empower students to address systemic changes in higher education. SESI supports the involvement of students in democratization of the educational process and in building transnational student alliances in South Eastern Europe. For more details and a list of student networks, please see:

<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/sesi>

The Central Asia Research and Training Initiative (CARTI)

CARTI is a regional HESP program that promotes the development of indigenous capacities for original scholarly and academic work and internationalization of scholarship in the region of Central Asia including, but not limited to, the post-Soviet states of Central Asia and Mongolia. In working to enhance independent research of university-based academics, CARTI is committed to innovation in, and enrichment of, university teaching in the humanities and social sciences, and emphasizes the role of research in the development of academics as scholars in the classroom.

CARTI provides advanced training and networking opportunities, and supports innovative scholarly work by motivated young academics in their home academic environment. Each CARTI fellow works in collaborative

partnership with a CARTI International Scholar. International scholars are advanced academics, prominent in the fields of scholarship of concern to the fellows' projects, representing universities outside the program's target region. International Scholars provide guidance and collaborate in conceiving of the fellows' research agenda and program. They also collaborate with fellows in the implementation of the projects, primarily by offering feedback and critique, but also through joint research activities, discussion of sources, methods, progress and findings of the research, and securing access to the relevant resources and facilities at their home institutions.

For a complete program description please see:

<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/carti>

Contribute to the next Scholar Forum!

Cover Topic: Education

The next issue of Scholar Forum will be published in 2009 and we're seeking submissions from all Open Society Institute Network Scholarship Program scholars and alumni. Essays, personal accounts, research briefs, photographs, short stories, poems, cartoons, recipes, and drawings are all welcome. If requested, submissions can be published anonymously.

Cover Topic: Education

We at Scholar Forum are interested in your ideas about education, from primary schooling through post-graduate study. Ensuring access to education is a central challenge of the 21st century. Countries that invest heavily in education are primed to reap considerable economic benefits. The ability to read and write is essential to functioning in a knowledge economy. Focus on math and the hard sciences can help promote technological innovation while a firm commitment to the social sciences and humanities promotes the important critical thinking skills needed for a healthy open society. As the Millennium Development Goals recognize, education is empowerment. The ability to expand education's reach to remote rural communities through the sprawl of a quickly urbanizing world will play a significant role in lifting people out of poverty and creating and strengthening open societies.

Below are some questions or topics to consider, but feel free to stray from these

suggestions, so long as you keep your article centered on the subject of education.

- In many communities, females are denied the opportunity to attend school. What impact does this have on women and girls as well as the larger community?
- Should education be free, or highly subsidized, by the government?
- Describe the role of education in a country's long-term development strategy.
- In many post-communist countries, the social sciences and humanities are poorly funded and not well supported. Defend the importance of the social sciences and humanities.
- What role can technology, especially the Internet, play in education? Please consider the Open Access Movement.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of study abroad? You might consider "brain drain," international networking and exchange, and the value of learning about another culture firsthand.
- Please compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of educational systems that promote a largely theoretical curriculum versus one that focuses more on applied, "hands-on" studies.
(Max. 750 words)

Regional Focus: Southeast Asia

We encourage grantees and alumni from Southeast Asia, as well as those famil-

Regional Focus: Southeast Asia

iar with the region, to submit stories, poems, photographs, drawings, cartoons, or recipes that represent this colorful and vibrant part of the world.

(Max. 400 words)

Personal Accounts: Essays and Creative Works

Please submit short personal accounts of your experiences living and studying in a different country. Photographs, poems, drawings, recipes, and cartoons are also welcome.

(Max. 300 words)

Alumni

Send us information about your current activities for the Alumni section. Also, please send information about upcoming alumni reunions or updates on previous gatherings.

Website suggestions

Please send us websites that you frequently visit to gather information about education or Southeast Asia.

Additionally, we are interested in your own websites or blogs, be they personal or professional.

Send submissions by email to scholarforum@sorosny.org. Include your full name, fellowship program and year, host university, home country, and gender with each submission. Please refer all questions to scholarforum@sorosny.org.

OSI NSP ALUMNI GRANT PROGRAM

The Network Scholarship Programs is pleased to offer the Alumni Grant Program. This program provides grants to NSP alumni to further expand the knowledge gained during their fellowship and to make a positive contribution in their home country. All grant proposals must be related to OSI's mission of supporting programs in the areas of educational, social, and legal reform, and of encouraging alternative approaches to complex and often controversial issues. Preference will be given to collaborative projects between alumni, across countries, and with host universities and to projects

that promote the development of a specific discipline in the region.

Types of grants may include organizing training programs, conferences or seminars in the applicant's field, forming an alumni association, founding a professional association, creating initiatives that support the NGO and/or non-profit sectors, creating initiatives that further social justice causes, support for creating classroom materials, and other projects related to OSI's mission.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI web-

site http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas/alumni or by sending inquiries to the following:

Open Society Foundation
Scholarship Programs
Alumni Grant Program
Céline Keshishian
Cambridge House, 5th Floor
100 Cambridge Grove, London W6 OLE
Email: ckeshishian@osf-eu.org

The competition for this grant is offered once a year, beginning in January of each year. The application is made available on our website in April.

Scholarships and Fellowships with NSP

The Network Scholarship Programs offers the following scholarships and fellowships. Programs are offered only in certain countries; please visit the NSP website for details and for application information. www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship

Afghan Communications Program:

Provides up to five awards for individuals from Afghanistan to complete a two year Master's degree in Communications at the University of Ottawa/l'Université d'Ottawa in Ottawa, Canada.

Alumni Grants Program:

Offers grants to NSP alumni to further expand the knowledge gained during their fellowship and to make a positive contribution in their home country.

CNOUS-OSI Program:

In conjunction with the French Government, this program offers up to 15 scholarships for students in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to pursue Masters degrees in the fields of social sciences and humanities at institutions in France.

DAAD-OSI Program:

A joint scholarship program in Germany for Central Asian, Caucasian, Ukrainian, Moldovan and Belarusian graduate students and junior faculty pursuing advanced study in the social sciences and humanities.

Doctoral Fellows Program:

The OSI Doctoral Fellows Program is designed to provide the highest research and teaching qualifications to individuals from Tajikistan and Moldova who are positioned to become leading scholars in their disciplines.

Faculty Development Fellowship Program:

A non-degree program that offers up to 15 awards for faculty teaching social sciences and humanities in Central Asia and the Caucasus to spend one semester at a U.S. university and one semester teaching at their home universities, each year for up to three years.

Georgian Scholarship Program for Education Professionals:

Seeks to build local capacity in the profession of education and to support ongoing educational reform in Georgia by offering up to six awards per year for study in the United States leading to a Master's degree in education.

Global Supplementary Grant Program:

Offers supplementary grants to students from selected countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union to pursue Doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at accredited universities in the European Union, Asia, Australia, and North America.

Maastricht University Scholarship Program:

The Open Society Foundation and the Maastricht University offers scholarships at the master's level in the field of European Studies. The scholarships are open for applicants from Georgia, Moldova, and the Ukraine.

OSI/Chevening Scholarships:

One-year Masters level awards, generally in the social sciences and humanities, for students and scholars to study at various institutions in the United Kingdom.

Palestinian Faculty Development Program:

Aims to increase capacity within the higher education sector in the West Bank/Gaza by supporting PhD and Short-Term visiting fellowships for faculty members from Palestinian universities at U.S. host institutions.

Palestinian Rule of Law Program:

Supports LLM degree studies for up to 10 Palestinian lawyers or law graduates annually at U.S. law schools and the Central European University.

Scholar Rescue Fund:

Supports scholars who are at risk in their home country by providing them fellowships at "safe" universities and colleges throughout the world. Scholars from any country may qualify. (For information please go to: www.iie.org/srf)

Social Work Fellowship Program:

Provides up to 10 awards for individuals from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to complete a two-year Master's degree in Social Work in the United States

Supplementary Grant Program—Burma:

Partial scholarships awarded to Burmese students worldwide who are currently unable to pursue their studies in Burma.

Undergraduate Exchange Program:

A non-degree program for university students in Southeastern Europe and Mongolia to attend university in the United States.

ScholarForum

Open Society Institute
Network Scholarship Programs
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019 USA