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# ScholarForum

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

## Education



### Regional Focus: **SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Personal accounts of studying abroad

Essays and creative works by NSP grantees and alumni

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## Welcome to the 12th issue of *Scholar Forum*!

“Education, education, education”—the vote-winning mantra coined by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair to help sweep the Labour Party to power in 1997—highlights the increasing attention that politicians such as Blair and U.S. President Barack Obama are paying to education. Societies can ill afford to let educational development fall out of step with a country’s needs. For politicians and the public, it is becoming increasingly clear that education is crucial to a nation’s political and economic development in an increasingly integrated world.

The home countries of many OSI scholars are frequently the subject of ongoing international and national critiques of educational policy. In Central Asia, claims of corruption are rife as wages for teachers are barely enough to help them make ends meet. Those affected most by reforms (faculty, school administrators, parents and, of course, the students themselves) are often not consulted, thereby excluding the opinions and interests of those closest to the system.

This edition of *Scholar Forum* presents a selection of ideas, reflections, and critiques on the current state of education in a number of countries. From an alternative look at Burmese education, to an analysis of devolved school autonomy in Kyrgyzstan, the impassioned calls to rationalize and reform education systems are hard to ignore.

Our regional spotlight focuses on Southeast Asia, an area rich with challenges and opportunities for our grantees and alumni. We contrast a light-hearted look at a New Year’s celebration water fights in Laos with an experience of personal and academic liberation for a Burmese grantee, in an effort to highlight the contrasting experiences that shape the personal development of our scholars in this region.

We hope you enjoy reading the contributions in this edition: please do not hesitate to contact us with your thoughts and comments on any of the articles via [scholarforum@sorosny.org](mailto:scholarforum@sorosny.org) and to update us on your activities as OSI alumni for the 13th Edition, published in 2010.

With very best wishes,  
Network Scholarship Programs

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.

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[www.soros.org](http://www.soros.org)

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Best friends in the classroom in a rural primary school, Naryn Region, Kyrgyzstan.  
photo: Antonina SANTALOVA

# Education

## School Autonomy in Kyrgyzstan: Headteachers' Perceptions and Behavior

Antonina SANTALOVA, Kyrgyzstan  
Global Supplementary Grant Program 2008-2009  
University of Oxford

Recent policy reforms in Kyrgyzstan have created a devolution of power into the hands of schools. The logic of decentralizing education assumes lower levels of school governance are a key to improved performance. Local bodies are perceived as in the best position to define and make necessary changes. Education experts, such as Levin, writing in 2003, also cite decentralization as a way to empower parents and allow them to help determine how education should be provided to their children. School autonomy thus opens schools to the local community and promotes democratic participation.

However, this thinking requires managers who are capable of taking advantage of this increased autonomy. Whether there are enough capable people to take on these roles is an important question.

There are no official statistics on the shortage of headteachers in Kyrgyzstan. Appointments of school leaders are arranged through district educational authorities. However, there is strong evidence that there are not enough people aspiring to be teachers. The resulting staff shortages help contribute to a shrinking pool of potential leaders in Kyrgyzstan's schools. The situation has been exacerbated by the rapid aging of pedagogical staff and extensive labor migration among

leaders to take on headteacher positions or to continue in this role as the education system is decentralized.

So far the research indicates that there are fewer problems in schools that have more autonomy. In these schools, headteachers seemed to take a more proactive position in coping with teacher shortages than their colleagues in schools where headteachers had no staff management power.

Headteachers that had limited autonomy over school budgets said such restric-

**“There is strong evidence that there are not enough people aspiring to be teachers”**

25-35 year-olds to neighboring Kazakhstan and Russia.

My PhD research was designed to examine the willingness of Kyrgyz school

tions constrained their ability to make staffing decisions, pursue teambuilding, and carry out leadership in their schools. All of the headteachers interviewed wished

to be granted the power to award extra pay to teachers to strengthen their teambuilding efforts and improve classroom performance:

*There are teachers who put their hearts and souls into teaching and those who teach 'indifferently' if not to say worse. It's a pity that I have no means to reward good teachers.*

—Headteacher School KB5

Furthermore, policy authorizing school leaders to generate

However, low salaries at all levels of teaching significantly outweighed all other factors contributing to the small pool of leaders willing to consider headteacher posts.

*[The] first thing that needs to be done to motivate both heads and teachers is a pay increase. It is not possible to live on the money that we get.*

—Deputy headteacher, School KB8

Despite low remuneration, my research indicates that school autonomy policies generally encourage a pool of potentially

strong leaders to pursue headteacher positions, while the centralization of financial and staff management discourages leaders from furthering their careers as headteachers. ■

## “Policy authorizing school leaders to generate additional income empowers headteachers”

additional income empowers headteachers. Headteachers with this authority said they felt inspired and set ambitious targets for schools, staff, and themselves.

### Let's Learn to Express our Thoughts

Baktygul TULEBAEVA, Kyrgyzstan

OSI Chevening Program 2008-2009, University of Edinburgh

When we talk about education at school, the first thing that comes to mind is reading, writing, and mathematics. In general, we get a basic education, which is very important. However, there is one important thing that a number of countries, including some from the former-Soviet Union, do not take into consideration in their education system: teaching people how to express their thoughts.

It was not until I arrived in the UK that I came to appreciate what was lacking in some educational systems. I began to question my own study habits and my ability to express my thoughts. During tutorials, I compared myself with western students, who freely expressed their ideas on any given topic. I noticed that other students from former Soviet countries and my peers from Asian countries were struggling as well. It became apparent that the barriers were not just linguistic, but cultural and social too. We

struggled not because we could not understand the topic well, but because we were simply not used to expressing our thoughts. Most Asian countries have cultural norms that reflect respect for the elderly and an acceptance of what they say. From the Soviet time to the present day, there is a clear hierarchy of power between teacher and student. I do not remember my teachers asking what I thought about any of the issues we were discussing.

Moreover, both secondary school and

## “I began to question my own study habits and my ability to express my thoughts”

university programs do not include creative writing. In this context, the definition of a good essay is one made up of “clever ideas of clever people,” with students not including what they think about a particular issue. This style of teaching and learning does not foster the development of free thought or critical thinking.



DAAD-OSI Scholars join a training session in Fulda, Germany  
photo: Anna STEPANESCO

School programs in many Asian countries and states from the former Soviet Union are designed in such a way that a student knows the map, remembers the historical dates, and demonstrates that they

teach students the art of critical thinking; on the contrary, it prevents them from expressing their thoughts.

It is important to introduce certain subjects on essay writing or open discus-

**“The barriers were not just linguistic, but cultural and social too”**

have completed the homework. I remember how our teachers would give good marks to those who repeated what was written in a book or what the teachers had told us in previous lessons. Completing the assignments a bit differently using one’s own words would result in much lower marks. These kinds of attitudes do not

sions in basic, secondary and high school programs for children to develop their consciousness and express their ideas. This develops critical thinking, self-empowerment, and self-confidence. Knowing something is one thing, but having the skills to effectively use that knowledge in practice and apply it in new ways is key.■



Baktygul TULEBAEVA

## Corruption at Public Universities

Drini IMAMI, Albania  
Global Supplementary Grants Program 2008-2009  
University of Bologna

Similar to other developing and transitioning countries, Albania’s public education sector is marked by corruption. It can range from funding investments and procurements to “petty” but pervasive corruption such as students paying professors to pass a test or to get a better grade.

According to a survey conducted by Student Government, a student representative organization in Albania similar to the UK’s Student Union, about 20 percent of students admit to paying money at least once to pass an exam. Despite recent attempts to fight corruption by student organizations, the media and to some extent, public institutions, teachers taking bribes for passing grades continues to be a problem with painful consequences.

Corruption at a public university may mirror other forms of corruption in society outside the classroom and can be caused by factors like low wages that contribute to corruption in other sectors. The consequences of corruption in higher education, however, are worse. Students who are future leaders, politicians, lawyers, journalists, and entrepreneurs get

used to a corrupt culture. If a professor—often seen as a moral reference point by students and society—is corrupt, what’s to prevent others from behaving similarly? Corruption within education has a knock-on effect and fighting it should be a priority for civil organizations and movements.■

**“Students who are future leaders, politicians, lawyers, journalists, and entrepreneurs get used to a corrupt culture”**

*For more information on the Student Government in Albania, please see the following website:  
[www.studentet.info/modules/news/article.php?storyid=696](http://www.studentet.info/modules/news/article.php?storyid=696)*

## In Defense of the Social Sciences and Humanities

Hanna GNEVKO, Belarus  
DAAD-OSI Program, 2008-2010  
Hochschule Fulda, Germany

It is a common fallacy of many post-communist states to believe that it is not worth investing in the humanities and social sciences. Governments in transition countries tend to count on the natural sciences as a driving force for progress. As a result, a major part of funds allocated for educational purposes flows into the advancement of computer science and engineering, with the social sciences and humanities left to fend for themselves.

**“The social sciences provide people with skills to strengthen the rule of law”**

Yet providing adequate financial support to the development of the social sciences and humanities is no less important in attaining long-term goals of change. The social sciences provide people with indispensable knowledge and skills to strengthen the rule of law and promote good governance. By studying the social sciences, students, researchers, and policymakers can understand the principles of a functioning civil society and the importance of respecting human rights.

It is also of particular importance for governments to ensure that sufficient funds are invested into linguistics to facilitate productive intercultural exchange. Viewed from a different perspective, policymakers and educators should encourage citizens to take

an interest in social sciences and humanities. It is crucial that post-communist governments increase financing for social sector projects and jobs to provide more employment opportunities, better incomes, and a higher job security for people who study the social sciences and humanities. Without such actions and policies, it may become increasingly common, particularly for men as bread winners in Belarus to give up the idea of devoting themselves to the social sciences or humanities. ■

OSI Master of Social Work Scholars at the Spring Conference  
photo: Nail NASRITDINOV



## Theological Education and its Impact

Anonymous (name withheld at the author's request)

After I finished high school in 1988, I had little hope for the future. Unexpectedly, and for reasons that were unclear at the time, I did not get high enough grades in my final exam to enable me to enter either medical school or the technological institute, which I believed were the best courses of education and guarantees for my future.

My high school teachers had assumed that I would receive a high grade. The only reasonable explanation for this failure was because I had a Karen name, the ethnic group that has challenged Burma's military government. As I was also a Christian from the middle class, the government had two other reasons for wanting to prevent me from continuing my education.

My case provides a clear example of how economic, social, religious, and political factors can have a huge impact on a student's future.

**“Far from being able to use religion to cut myself off, I became more socially and politically aware”**

With no hope of a higher education and unable to get a good job that would secure my future, I stopped pursuing my education in the Burmese education system and turned to Bible school to become a Christian minister. Initially, I thought this would engage me only with spiritual matters and keep me away from social and political affairs. However, the education I got from the theological institute changed my perspective. I became aware that far from being able to use religion to cut myself off, I became much more socially and politically aware.

Biblical studies made me aware of both the strengths and weaknesses of Christianity. Social studies also made me understand people's suffering and how to help them.

Comparative religious studies allowed me to see the strong points of other religions and how to create a dialogue with them. I've learned how to discuss social change in an objective manner. Pursuing religious studies has erased all my former religious prejudices and narrow-mindedness.

Courses in feminism have opened my mind to an awareness of gender discrimination, patriarchy, and the place of hierarchy in society. This had the greatest impact on my choice of pursuing my PhD in Religious Studies with the ultimate aim of promoting equality in society. ■

## Moving Forward? The Social Sciences in Georgia

Ia IASHVILI, Georgia  
Faculty Development Program 2008-2009  
University of Montana

Education has always been a priority in Georgian society, but some areas were given more priority than others.

Under Soviet rule, the social sciences and their investigation of social problems by nature contradicted Soviet ideology. The state provided low levels of financial support to scholars and students

(NGOs) in Georgia. These new institutions were one of the first signs of transition from a totalitarian regime to a civil society. Through their activities, they indirectly supported the development of the social sciences. International financing enabled social researchers to mobilize and conduct independent surveys, research which

**“Although universities are undergoing serious reforms, they still have less funding than international NGOs”**

and thus their choice of interests was limited. In addition, the strict isolation of Soviet scholars from their Western colleagues created an academic vacuum.

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgian scholars found themselves in an even worse situation. An almost total disruption of the education system prevented university educators from conducting research with symbolic salaries not meeting teachers' basic needs.

The 1990s marked the establishment of many nongovernmental organizations

simultaneously contributed to their universities and social science departments. International experience in the field filtered to students and colleagues through

a combination of theoretical courses with the development of practical skills.

Although universities are undergoing serious reforms, they still have less funding

available for research than international NGOs, which often have selective interests in ongoing reforms and can limit the scope of research diversity. In this context,

**“Under Soviet rule, the social sciences and their investigation of social problems by nature contradicted Soviet ideology”**

post-Soviet governments can benefit by pursuing reforms to help expand the scope of research and give increased priority to supporting the social sciences. ■



Palestinian Rule of Law Program scholars entertain their peers during the 2008 Summer School Culture Night  
photo: Nail NASRITDINOV



## New Approaches to Literary Translation Teaching in Georgia: The Progressive Role of the Discipline for Language and Culture

Khatuna BERIDZE, Georgia  
Faculty Development Program, 2008-2009  
University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign

Translation theory can play a major role in the development of both language and culture. The theory forms a basis for the further advancement of literary translation and can be seen as a bridge between cultures. Literary translation has played a major role in the preservation and revival of the Georgian language and literary processes during Georgia's major periods of colonization under the Tsarist Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

The development of translation theory as a discipline runs parallel to the revival of literary translation as a cultural exchange

Both general vocabulary and linguistic terminology within the Georgian language did not develop much during the Soviet period. One of the reasons could be that the Institute of Linguistics in the Georgian Academy of Sciences was mainly occupied with publishing Russian-Georgian dictionaries, in contrast to the Russian Institute of Linguistics, which developed bilingual dictionaries of Russian with other major languages.

In post-communist Georgia, a long-standing stagnation in the development of literary translation has recently become chaotic. One example of this is the inconsistent approach to the selection of literature for the Georgian website for literature, poetry, prose, and essays ([www.lib.ge](http://www.lib.ge)).

In order to integrate Georgian scholars into Western scientific institutions, it is mandatory to teach students Western theories of translation. Scientific conceptions should be expanded for the development of the discipline, which is currently based on Russian theories alone at the BA, MA and PhD levels. This adaptation involves developing a new curriculum and syllabi, including new electronic courses by tutors and translating contemporary Western theories of translation into Georgian.

**“Literary translation has played a major role in the preservation and revival of the Georgian language”**

process. Nobody doubts the role of literary translation in the ideological formation of any culture. However, its development is in need of a consistent and conceptualized approach.

Many scholars of Western translation studies have paid much attention to research methodology. During my scholarship visit to the United States, I witnessed the effective functioning of translation centers. In contrast, no such centers have been funded in Georgian universities and the teaching of the discipline has recently been minimized.

To reach this goal, a translation research center should be established with the aim of cooperating with similar departments in Europe and the U.S., exchanging scholars, attending conferences, publishing papers, getting involved in cultural networking projects and carrying out joint research. The center should also facilitate the translation and publishing of Georgian literature into English, and ultimately revive translation critique. In this respect, both government and faculty need to take action to establish a center and ensure its adequate functioning. ■



## The Education Factor

Davit GANJALYAN, Armenia

DAAD-OSI Program, 2008-2010

Hochschule Fulda

Translated from German by Zoë BROGDEN

Armenian culture has always had a history of balancing elements of the oriental and the occidental world. When one looks at everyday culture, it is on the whole much more influenced by the neighboring oriental cultures, for instance in food and music styles, but in Armenia's inherited culture, Western characteristics are clearly seen. Cultural history in Armenia began after the founding of the Armenian script in 406AD. The script became the basis of education and science throughout the Armenian Middle Ages. The integration of Greek culture and the new script into the Christian tradition was carried out by the Armenian Apostolic Church, founded in 301AD. Thus, the link between identity and education was formed.

Armenia's independent educational structure has traditionally functioned as a perpetuation of identity until its replacement through 70 years of a Soviet system, which did have both positive and negative aspects. A system of state-financed primary, secondary and technical schools and universities was established providing free education. Obligatory attendance up to the 8th grade provided a high level of literacy across the country. An academic education was within reach of many, but the one-sided world outlook had a terrible effect on the development of the personality in the educational process. No toleration was shown for opinions which deviated from socialist doctrine, and creative essays and studying methods were forbidden. Social and cultural studies and the humanities served the propaganda machine of socialist ideology.

In today's Armenia, as well as in the whole South Caucasus region, when one comes into contact with the interconnected factors of economy, culture and politics, then culture is the basic necessity for economic and political advancement, as advancement results from the cultural context. Culture is thus the condition on which one must understand mod-

ern politico-social challenges. Culture is undergoing constant change and adapts in reaction to new political and social contexts. The essential factor allowing such flexibility is education.

After the collapse of communism, the need to find a new basis for educational reform emerged. In the absence of independence, education in Armenia was, from the historic-political standpoint, focused on refinding Armenian identity.

In response, two concepts for education emerged. The first concept focused on education in a historic sense, which

strongly contributed to formation of an ethnic identity. This concept of education has historical roots and was revived again after Armenia gained independence in 1991.

The second concept for education in Armenia focuses on how gaining independence changed the social frame of reference in which education found itself. Education was no longer just about ethnicity, but also about the unity of a people, state, and territory. The education system now had to respond to the new dynamics. Education can help face the new challenges brought by the socio-political challenges of the time. In this respect, it must play an overarching role, forming the basis on which the state can develop and enabling a transition from regional isolation to one of regional integration. Such a perspective could help settle ethnic conflicts in the South Caucasus.

Since 2004, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have become members of the

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The central tenets of the policy include democracy, upholding a joint respect for human rights, the rule of law, sustainable economic reforms, advancements in conflict resolution and intensive regional collaboration. In order to achieve these goals, a collective consciousness based on war must be put aside, going above the vote-winning idea of a common enemy to address the actual nature of the conflict.

Steps are being made on all levels of schooling and are important advancements towards achieving the aims of the ENP.

**“In today's Armenia, culture is the basic necessity for economic and political advancement”**

One salient example of this comes from the demands set under the Bologna Process, which all three Caucasian countries joined in 2005. As a result, the Caucasus is striving to bring research and teaching up to the required standards. Considerable value is placed on communication in native tongues, but also on foreign languages. Learning other languages widens viewpoints over national borders and enables the Caucasus to gain a much-desired closeness to Europe. In addition, learning

**“Education is no longer just about ethnicity, but also about the unity of a people”**

resources in Russian and official native languages are often old and form an all-too limited selection of learning materials.

A lot is demanded from education, but only this is the door to a modern world: the current education reform process in the Caucasus is thus of enormous significance. ■



# Regional Focus: Southeast Asia

**PERHAPS** one of the most striking aspects of Southeast Asia is its rich diversity. Between the region's arguably more developed countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, there are states like Burma, Cambodia, and Laos that face a variety of very different challenges. The United Nation's Human Development Index places these last three countries at the bottom half of its development measures. Based on the 2007 Index, Burma had a per capita GDP of just over \$1,000 per month, and a 20 percent mortality rate before the age of 40—the highest ratio in the region.

of all international scholars. If the statistics for the UK are any barometer, far fewer students from Burma, Cambodia, and Laos are able to take advantage of higher education in the West.

After breaking from colonially-imposed systems, countries such as Burma, Cambodia, and Laos are facing common educational challenges. Studies by UNESCO show all three countries are marked by budget constraints, teacher shortages, low teaching standards, and large disparities in access to education between urban and rural populations.

**“All three countries are marked by budget constraints, teacher shortages, low teaching standards, and large disparities in access to education”**

How does the region's diversity of development levels impact education? A 2008 overview of United States universities shows Southeast Asian students comprise around 30 percent of the international student body. Although China has by far the largest representation, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam all occupy places within the top 20 countries of origin. In similar fashion, although the majority of non-EU students in the UK hail from China, Malaysian students featured in the top five, comprising 3.4 percent

Perhaps nowhere in the region is this more compounded than in Burma, where the military junta squeezes educational funding and excludes some ethnic groups altogether. The following articles highlight a variety of views on the region, but share the hope—particularly among our Burmese writers—for sustained improvement in the future. ■

Zoë BROGDEN  
NSP Program Coordinator

## Lack of Education Leading to a Failed State

ZAW ZAW

OSI Burma Project/Southeast Asia Initiatives  
Program Area Specialist

For me, one of the best things about pursuing higher education has been that it has helped me distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Obtaining a university degree is not just about getting a decent job, earning a living, and obtaining social status. It is also a process that helps you learn to treat people with respect, embrace pluralist thinking, and think critically and logically. It is these aspects of education that can also play an important role in building a nation.

All of my siblings stopped pursuing higher education just after they finished the 10th standard when they were around 16 or 17 years old. My mother and father, like many Burmese parents, believe that just knowing how to read, write, and count is enough. Once Burmese kids have these skills, parents often ask them to join a family business and end their formal education. Other factors limiting educational obtainment include the

fact that few incentives and guarantees are offered for graduating students in the private and public sectors. Moreover, access to education is most limited in impoverished rural areas where families cannot afford official and unofficial fees. Some of the military generals who have ruled Burma for more than 20 years haven't obtained a formal education.

Nearly all of Burma's universities and

GDP on education. In comparison, the Burmese junta spends 333 percent more on the armed forces than they do on education. A significant number of students do study abroad. However, very few foreign graduates come back and work in the country.

Today, Burma's education system is near collapse. The failure of the education system has had an unimaginable impact

**“Access to education is most limited in impoverished rural areas where families cannot afford official and unofficial fees”**

colleges have been closed for extended periods since students helped lead the 1988 democracy movement. The military, which crushed the movement and has governed the country for nearly 21 years, relocated colleges and universities to remote areas. The regime spends 0.6 percent of the country's

on my country. Burma urgently needs to reform its education system. In the long run, improvements in education will be the key to solving the country's main problems: poverty, political deadlock, human rights abuses, and ethnic tensions. ■

A girl visits sacred statues  
photo: Meriem GREY



## The Role of Education in a Country's Long-Term Development Strategy

MARIA, Burma

University of the Philippines, Los Banos Campus

*"Education is the lifeblood for a nation's future economic growth and prosperity"*

—Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General  
(The Doha Forum, 11/30/2008)

To sustain an economy, research and development, or R&D, is vital. Higher education can play a crucial role in providing the skilled engineers, designers, and technicians who can carry out research and adopt new technologies for practical use. Most Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries have reformed their education policies so that education is a key component in their long-term development strategies.

Singapore is a good example of how upgrading education levels has contributed to long-term development. The economic

recession of 1985-86 led the Singaporean government to form an economic committee to chart new directions for future economic growth, with the aim of Singapore becoming a developed nation by the 1990s.

The government stressed several recurrent themes: upgrading the education level of the population, nurturing a pool of skilled personnel in key technologies, and developing the innovative and creative skills of the work force. In 1996, the then prime minister announced the government's intentions to turn Singapore

into the "Boston of the East," with Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology serving as models for the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University.

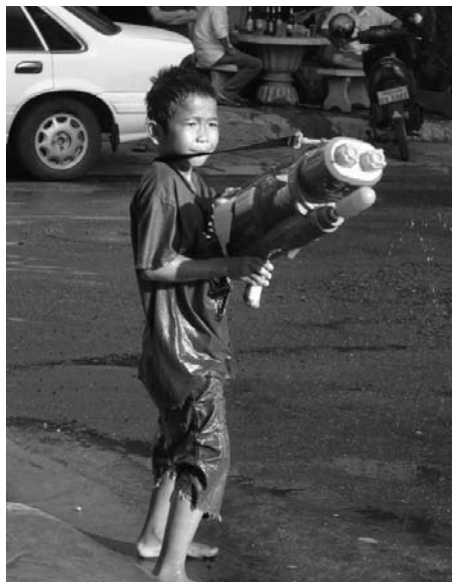
Neighboring Thailand began education reforms after suffering greatly in the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The economy has now reached recovery and witnessed dramatic educational reforms through the 1999 Educational Act. Thailand's reforms have emphasized the role of education in turning Thailand into a knowledge-based society.

Myanmar, or Burma, provides a striking contrast to the education-based policies of its neighbors. While 40.2 percent of the household population has primary education and 18 percent middle school education, the numbers of citizens obtaining high school (8.2 percent) and university education (4.2 percent) are very small. As a signatory to the 2000 Global Education for All Declaration, the junta formulated a national Education for All National Action Plan in 2003 which outlines educational requirements and reforms up to 2015. According to the Ministry of Education in 2008, because education has a direct relationship with productivity, investing in education is an important strategy for

national development.

Singapore and Thailand place significant value on education for each country's a long-term development and have achieved economic development through educational reforms. Myanmar has a low emphasis on education and has spent less on it in comparison. Myanmar needs to develop its education level and has introduced educational reform since 2003 and set the role of education as one of the most important elements in the country's long-term development strategy. ■

**"Thailand's reforms have emphasized the role of education in turning Thailand into a knowledge-based society"**



## New Year in the Land of a Million Elephants

Meriem GRAY, Uzbekistan  
OSI Chevening Program, 2002-2003  
University of St. Andrews

Have you ever been treated to the pleasure of having someone pour a bucket of ice cold water on your head? If not,

photo: Meriem GREY

then you probably haven't ever experienced New Year's in Laos.

The festivities in Laos to mark the arrival of a new year get much less attention from tourists and the media than Thailand's Songkran—a bright, vibrant and loud New Year's celebration. But Laos, Thailand's eastern neighbor, boasts its own rich New Year's tradition called Pi Mai Lao.

Laos—known in antiquity as the "Land of a Million Elephants," and to

Indochina War-era journalists as the “Land of a Million Irrelevances,” celebrates Pi Mai Lao for three days in April. Pi Mai Lao mixes ancient religious traditions with the absolute havoc of everyone throwing water on everyone else. Residents clean their houses and get dressed up in new clothes. Lao families flock to local temples where they gently cover Buddha statues and images with layers of floral petals and jasmine scented water. They give offerings of food and drink and burning incense. These traditions are still faithfully observed by people all across Laos. Yet the reflective traditions are giving way to more and more emphasis on the water throwing, which is also done in Thailand and has become the main focus of celebrations there.

Many say the changing spirit of Pi Mai Lao has been influenced by Thailand. Thai TV gets beamed into Laos, broadcasting the wild water-tossing celebrations there, and inspiring the usually quiet and laid-back Lao people (perhaps the most laid back people in the region) to arm



Monks collect water during Pi Mao Lao, the water-filled New Year celebrations in Laos  
photo: Meriem GREY

people) were dancing seductively to music pumping out of almost every house. After

through the sea of soaked people. Lao Police watched over the chaos but made no attempt to interfere. Everyone was having a great wet time!

As I sat back, soaked to the bone, to watch the sun set over the Mekong River at the end of the day, I felt happy and lucky. For the first time in many years, I had released my inner child and allowed myself to get drunk on pure fun.

Forget the New Year’s countdown in London. Forget Times Square. Forget all the New Year’s parties you’ve ever been to. Come to Laos for New Year’s and, like me, you just may experience your best New

## “It felt like there was no end to the water in land-locked Laos”

themselves with water guns, hoses, and buckets of water.

It’s my second year living in Laos, and I should admit during my first Pi Mai here, I couldn’t quite force myself out of the house and face the water attack. This year, I persuaded myself that “When in Rome...”, and within seconds I was soaked to the bone, splashed with talcum powder and smeared with black paint. Young and old, Lao and foreigner, lined up along the main road with buckets of ice cold water to pour on every person who happens to walk, bike, or drive by. People were running out in front of the motorbikes and cars to stop them, soaking the vehicles and people inside with water. Young ladies, boys, and even “lady boys” (or “Katoey”, or transgender Lao

being soaked by an old lady who giggled like a girl as she dumped a bucket of cold water on me, a monk passing by on a tuk-tuk (motor-taxi) shot me in the back with his water gun. Without any hesitation, I pulled my super-soaker water gun up to

## “Young and old, Lao and foreigner, line up along the road with buckets of ice cold water to pour on every person who happens to walk, bike, or drive by”

my shoulder and shot right back, joining the biggest water fight of my entire life. It felt like there was no end to the water in land-locked Laos. Dozens of trucks full of wet teenagers throwing water were driving

Year’s celebration ever. “Sabaidee Pi Mai!”—Happy Lao New Year!■

*Meriem GREY has been working in Laos on HIV/AIDS and Malaria-related issues for a relief and development NGO.*

## Enjoying Freedom in Another Land

GREEN PAPAYA

Burma Supplementary Grants Program, 2008-2009

When I first saw my temporary home, I immediately fell in love with it. It's a dorm room that I'll live in for the next four years during my pursuit of an education in the United States. Room 203 has a major bonus for me: it's a big room with a huge window! I have always wanted a bigger room. Back home in Burma I was sharing a tiny room with my younger brother and sister.

Every room in the dorm is brightened by various pieces of art: posters, paintings, and signs. I also thought about adding some colors to my room. The first image that stuck in my mind was Buddha, the symbol of peace. The next thing on the wall was my favorite poem, "The Quiet Land," which has been hiding in the pages of my diary. If I displayed the poem at home, it's possible that police with shiny steel handcuffs would soon appear, as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi—Burma's leading political opposition leader who has been under house arrest for years—wrote the poem. The poem portrays the fear of living under the military junta's rules. Every act which sheds light on this fear makes the junta unhappy, with most Burmese afraid of the consequences.

In my dorm room thousands of miles away, I know the junta can't punish me. But the poem alone can't quench my thirst for exploiting this moment of freedom. I have Suu Kyi's photo and the red "Free Burma" banner there too.

When I go back home, I will return to my tiny room. My favorite poem will be tucked inside an old diary again. I won't only enjoy the spacious room while I am here, but also the taste of freedom. ■

## OSI Burma Project/ Southeast Asia Initiative

Established in 1994, the Burma Project aims to increase international awareness of conditions in Burma and help the country make the transition from a closed to an open society. In the late 1990s, the project expanded into Southeast Asia, with the fall of Indonesia's General Suharto in 1998 and the country's ensuing democratic transition compelling the project to devote more attention to Indonesia. The Burma Project began supporting local Indonesian organizations working toward an open society, including the TIFA Foundation ([www.tifafoundation.org/](http://www.tifafoundation.org/)).

In addition to activities in Burma and Indonesia, the Burma Project/Southeast Asia Initiative primarily supports organizations with a regional concentration, but, where circumstances prompt special concern, it may support more localized projects. To date, the Burma Project/Southeast Asia Initiative has supported programs in Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

For more information on the program and an extensive list of external resource links, please visit: [www.soros.org/initiatives/bpsai/a](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/bpsai/a)



"We move to live on the coast in Brighton and that is how happy I am about it" as entered into the UK Mid Year Conference Photo Exhibition  
photo: Ekaterina ZHUKOVA

## Burma Resources

**BurmaNet News** is an online newspaper that offers general coverage of news and opinion on Burma from around the world.  
[www.burmanet.org/news/](http://www.burmanet.org/news/)

**The Burma Studies Foundation** was established in 1986 to promote the study, understanding and appreciation of Burma including its people, society, art, literature, language, history, religion, and culture.

[www.grad.niu.edu/burma/webpags/foundation.html](http://www.grad.niu.edu/burma/webpags/foundation.html)

**The Voices of Burma '88** is an online showcase for the exhibit and catalogue commemorating the mass pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988 and celebrating the only period of free expression in Burma since military rule was established in 1962.

[www3.soros.org/burma/Voices88/index.html](http://www3.soros.org/burma/Voices88/index.html)

**The Karen History and Culture Preservation Society**, a nonprofit, nonpolitical organization, operates the Museum of Karen History and Culture, which is dedicated to researching, preserving, and promoting the history and culture of the ethnic Karens of Burma.

[burmalibrary.org/docs3/karenmuseum-01/karen\\_history\\_and\\_culture\\_preser.htm](http://burmalibrary.org/docs3/karenmuseum-01/karen_history_and_culture_preser.htm)

**The Online Burma/Myanmar Library** database functions as an annotated, classified, and hyperlinked index to full texts of Burma documents on the Internet. It houses a growing collection of onsite articles, conference papers, theses, books, reports, archives, and directories.

[www.burmalibrary.org](http://www.burmalibrary.org)

**The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** promotes and protects the rights of children through education, advocacy, and health programs.

[www.unicef.org/infobycountry/myanmar.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/myanmar.html)

# Personal Accounts

Grantees' stories of living and studying abroad

## Egyptian Bazaar

Magda (Nutsa) KOBAKHIDZE, Georgia  
Georgian Scholarship Program  
for Education Professionals, 2008-2009  
Columbia University

Revaz BAKHTADZE, Georgia  
Faculty Development Program, 2006-2007  
George Washington University

“Merhaba, Madam, where are you from? ... Greece? Italy? Spain?”

The confused salesman looked at me and smiled as if I were his closest relative. I replied, “I am Georgian: Gurji” (Gurji is Georgian in Turkish). I hardly managed to finish the phrase when the delighted salesman began again: “Gurjistan-Turkey...friends. Saakashvili, Shevardnadze...” and the language knowledge of my new friend ended here.

Such conversations are repeated thousands of times in the Egyptian bazaar. It lies in the heart of Istanbul. For centuries, spices were brought in from Egypt, hence the name Egyptian or Spice Bazaar. Oriental sweets and jewelry, nargiles and women's scarves, Turkish tea and parrots sit side by side. It's striking that this “inconsistency” does not bother shoppers at

“The **bazaar** itself is a **symbol** of Istanbul, where church and mosque, veil and jeans, **antiquity and modernity**, come **together**”

all, who form something like an oriental mosaic as they move about the stalls and displays. The bazaar itself is a symbol of Istanbul, where inconsistency is a part of the culture, where church and mosque, veil and jeans, antiquity and modernity, come together.

The medium between a visitor to the bazaar and its culture is the salesman who engages customers in a dialogue and lets them taste the first bite of this astonishing synthesis. Though, this bite may be bitter if you are not a skilled negotiator. There



Spices in Istanbul's Spice Bazaar  
photo: Magda KOBAKHIDZE

is always room for a price change, from 100 lira to 25 (or even 10 depending on your diplomatic abilities), but the pleasures and challenges of bargaining are likely to make your pockets empty after an hour or so.

I finished my trading activities and left the bazaar, delighted and tired, before a polite voice said: “Merhaba, Madam, are you Greek? Spanish? Gurji?”

Defenseless, I turned back, smiled, and replied: “Special prices for you madam, only for you...” ■

## Thoughts on Volunteering in the United States

Alexandra VASILE, Romania  
Undergraduate Exchange Program, 2007-2008  
University of Arkansas

Looking back on my volunteer experience in the United States, it helped me learn a lot, not only about my strengths and weaknesses, but to know myself better. I made a point of choosing a diverse range of activities in the first semester because I wanted to make the most of what the University of Arkansas campus, my host university, and the city of Fayetteville had to offer. The activities I pursued ranged from doing research for the Clinton House Museum to preparing Indian food for hundreds of students at the annual Diwali Banquet on campus. I enjoyed all of them, but some more than others.

If I think about the extent to which my service was helpful to the community, I can say that in volunteering you do not always have to impact the lives of thousands of people in order to feel like you have made a difference. One example is my work at the Diwali Indian Banquet. Because the event was a festival and I helped prepare and hand out meals, I cannot say I helped make major changes or had a dramatic impact on society. After all, it was just a celebration. However, seeing such a diverse group of students get together for a couple of hours and just taking pleasure in working and spending time together was truly wonderful. This banquet was a chance for students of many races and ethnicities, who would have otherwise not socialized with each other, to learn about one another.

My other activities had a more direct and obvious impact on

the Fayetteville community. I participated in a project getting students together to redecorate the Ozark Literacy Center, which now enables Hispanic children throughout the Fayetteville-Bentonville area to learn English in a safe and welcoming environment. However, I would never say that one volunteering activity was somehow intrinsically worth more than the other just because they had varying levels of impact on the community.

Being in the United States and volunteering here made me reach a number of conclusions. Romania has many things to learn from the United States in terms of attitudes toward volunteering. At home, volunteering is viewed as a hobby, very much

**“You do not have to impact the lives of thousands of people in order to feel like you have made a difference”**

like attending a concert: many people participate just to feel good about themselves and do not put in as much effort as they should. Instead of thinking “It’s important I show up, even if I don’t really do anything,” they should approach it like an actual job, with tasks and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled.

I believe this sense of commitment by volunteers has a direct relationship with public attitudes toward volunteers. I cannot speak for the United States as a whole, but people in Fayetteville love volunteers: they are praised, and they receive thanks for participating and donating their time. Most Romanians still view volunteers as upper-class individuals who offer their time because they have nothing else to do. That is not true. Most of my volunteer friends could easily use that time to earn money, but choose not to. They believe in the projects they work on, and should be respected for it.

At the same time, what I found wonderful in the United States was that people believed that they could actually play a role in improving society. I believe that we, as people, need to have more confidence that even small projects can make a big difference, and that if we really believe in a project, we should donate a small portion of our time to it. It should not matter if it pays. Volunteering is well known for its intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards.

“The health of civil society can be tested by the extent to which people are willing to be involved in their community,” noted the prominent philosopher, Hilary Putnam. I fully agree. I believe that a society’s worth should be measured, among other indicators, by how many citizens are truly active in matters related to their community. I believe that active citizenship means taking responsibility and helping people. After all, civic duty requires you to get out and do things in the community.

For all future volunteers, I’d recommend recording your memories in a journal. Looking back at what you’ve accomplished over the course of a year will make you realize that every act of volunteering matters. ■

Dancing at the 2008 Summer School  
photo: Nail NASRITDINOV







“A few months ago, I was in Dresden, which is, in my opinion, one of the prettiest cities in Germany. Particularly striking for me was the contrast between the old GDR and newer parts of the town. Such a contrast is a reflection of life. Life is so different and is full of good and beauty, juxtaposed with not so beautiful sides. I’ll never forget this city, particularly the opera house: a monument which will always stick in my mind.”

Mamuka ANDGULADZE, Georgia  
DAAD-OSI Program,  
University of Saarland 2007-2008

## The Library Where Angels Dwell

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

One of my best memories from my years of studying in Berlin are the days spent in “Stabi,” or the Berlin State Library at the Potsdamer Platz.

It must have been a special place indeed, if we could stay there every day from nine o’clock in the morning until nine o’clock at night, after commuting for an hour with a heavy laptop in our back-

almost every Berlin city guide.

The interior of the library is impressive, expressive, and worth exploring. There are no heavy walls or doors and readers just glide through a vast open reading hall. Sometimes you stop to wonder how the ceiling is hanging there at all. Levels of balconies, reading cabinets, corridors, galleries, unexpected turns, and

fields, hills, forests, and clouds.

When we tired of writing our endless master’s theses, we would have coffee and chocolate croissants or simply go explore the Stabi to discover new parts of it. I believe any Stabi-dweller had his or her own favorite corner, a “secret place” for studying or hiding away to send an SMS.

As I was frequently among the last to leave (there is something mysterious about empty libraries ...), when I exited the library into the night, I often knew that another visit was not too far away. With a feeling of fulfilled

packs and a huge folder in hands. Even though we would sometimes escape to “study” in our neighborhood Starbucks, the next morning we were on our way to the Stabi again ...

It’s one of the most interesting modern libraries in the world and featured in

stairwells of all shapes and sizes are all harmoniously kept together under a massive roof with lamps reminiscent of clouds.

Always occupied first are the balcony tables on the upper floors. When the Stabi is full (and it usually is) it seems like one huge “reading landscape” with

duty, happy faces, and the very same heavy laptop and folder, other students and I would go catch a movie in the SonyCenter or a concert at the Berlin Philharmonic, or maybe go shopping in Potsdamer Platz or wait for a movie star on the red carpet during the Berlin Film Festival. ■

“It seems like one huge ‘reading landscape’ with fields, hills, forests, and clouds”

# Features

## Scholar Profile

Neineh PLO and May Oo MUTRAW  
Burma Supplementary Grants Program  
Indiana University

Burmese PhD scholar May Oo Mutraw and recent graduate Neineh Plo have had a fruitful collaboration on a project to encourage Burmese ex-patriots and exiled scholars to return to Burma and reconnect with their homeland.

The two scholars created the Going Home Program because they felt there was a strong need for them and other scholars of Burmese origin to return to Burma to help rebuild, educate, and reconnect with the population. Neineh and May Oo saw that the disconnection between exiles and the native population could be bridged by organising groups of Burmese exiles to return during their summer vacations or by having them donate books and school supplies for displaced people. During a summer trip in 2009, the scholars created a short documentary film entitled *Going Home Where We Belong*, which highlighted the work done during the project. For May Oo, making the documentary had a dual



May Oo presents during the Project  
photo: Neineh PLO



May Oo in Karen State  
photo: Neineh PLO

purpose: to promote the program and Burma amongst the wider U.S. population and to target members of the Burmese diaspora who may be interested in joining the project. The use of film as an outreach tool came as a natural step for Neineh, who has a strong interest in the arts and media.

Both scholars hope the film can highlight the independence of Burmese abroad in what May Oo coins a “call for sensitivity.” Frequent looks of pity and the receipt of charity are two reflections



Neineh goes into Karen State  
photo: May Oo MUTRAW

To view the information sheet about the Going Home Program, please visit [www.kwekalu.net/advert/Publication2GoingHomeIII.pdf](http://www.kwekalu.net/advert/Publication2GoingHomeIII.pdf)

To read commentary by both scholars on current events in Burma, go to [ieds.blogspot.com/](http://ieds.blogspot.com/)

## Open Access: a Natural Alliance with Education

Zoë BROGDEN  
NSP Program Coordinator

Movement from restricted academic environments to societies with open, free-thinking approaches to teaching and learning is a central tenet of the Scholarship Programs mandate and is put into action in the freedom successful scholars have during their scholarship time. But how “free” is Western education overall?

Creation of knowledge through critical thought and access to resources is often limited or historically has been constrained in many academic cultures in the home countries of Scholarship Programs scholars. Yet academics in the West also face a variety of restrictions on their access to knowledge.

The open access movement was partly established in response to students and researchers who were growing frustrated with their lack of access to scholarly work,

particularly when the work and research had been funded with public money provided by taxpayers. The pioneers of the open access movement, such as the signatories of the 2002 Budapest Open Access Initiative, are working to help academics break away from traditional journal and textbook publishing models and develop self-archiving and active online collaboration protected through alternative forms of copywriting.

Since its inception seven years ago, the Open Access movement has worked to establish a myriad of useful internet-based tools for open journal creation, publishing, archiving, and collaboration. Leaders in the field include the Directory of Open Access Journals ([www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)), which lists all freely accessible online journals; the Directory of Open Access Repositories ([www.open-doar.org](http://www.open-doar.org)), which charts the growth and number of repositories containing fee-free academic material; and Connexions ([cnx.org](http://cnx.org)), which, in addition to provid-

ing a repository for self-archiving, provides a secure online platform for joint collaboration on working papers and development of courses and textbooks for a fraction of the cost.

Those who truly believe in the power of the Internet as a learning tool have been taking advantage of its potential and placed their lessons in a multimedia format for the global community of internet users. OpenCulture ([www.openculture.com](http://www.openculture.com)), for instance, provides perhaps the ultimate in distance learning: a list of free audio lectures broadcast from academic institutions. The site offers scholars lectures on almost anything ranging from “The American Novel Since 1945” to a set of biochemistry lectures. ■

*For more information on the open access movement, please visit OSI's Information Program website: [www.soros.org/initiatives/information](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/information). A comprehensive list of educational resources and educationally-focused open access sites is available at the Scholarship Programs website: [www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/links](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/links)*

## INTERVIEW

### Coffee with ... Evgeny Morozov

Zoë BROGDEN, NSP Program Coordinator

In late May, Zoë Brogden, scholarship coordinator at the Network Scholarship Programs, caught up with Open Society Fellow Evgeny Morozov at the OSI Office in New York. An OSI-sponsored alum from the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), Evgeny is currently enjoying the final few months of his tenure as one of the first Open Society Fellows, where he has been doing research for his book on how the Internet influences civic engagement and regime stability in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian societies.

Relaxed and gregarious, Evgeny talked candidly about his academic and professional career over the past few years and his plans for the future after OSI.

NSP: Evgeny, can you give us some reflections on your scholarship time at AUBG?

EM: Well, it was instrumental in launching my career. I had a four-year scholarship at AUBG, so I guess that was my first exposure

to full-time liberal arts education. It was four great years spent with a lot of interesting people from all over the region. It was the first time I met a lot of people from the former Soviet bloc and that was really fundamental in shaping my own interests and how I think about and relate to the region in general.

**“My OSI scholarship time was instrumental in launching my career”**

Blagoevgrad was a very small, very charming town, which was good because there weren't too many distractions. I studied economics and business, not that I am using any of that now, but it was still a very interesting exercise. I enjoyed the Balkan element of the scholarship more than anything: just being in Bulgaria and living with people from the region was very interesting and introduced me to a lot of issues facing the region.

NSP: How did this change your thinking when you returned to Belarus?

EM: It didn't! I went on to another one year program after that in Berlin, studying philosophy, and from there I joined an NGO, Transitions Online, an OSI grantee. It helped me in that I definitely saw what I did and didn't want to be. When I was studying business, I was really into it. I had six or seven courses, a pretty heavy workload, then I had an internship at JP Morgan in London and I hated it. It was very positive in showing me what I don't want to do, so I decided to take a year off and do philosophy, which was very useful.

NSP: What was the most formative experience you had at AUBG?

EM: Well, I guess being surrounded by so many smart people from all over the region and with all of us facing the same professional and personal challenges and trying to figure out where we fit. I think the beauty of a scholarships program like that was bringing the brightest people from the Caucasus and Central Asian region together. Just being exposed to them was very useful. In a sense, all of them, including me, had very big egos so putting them all together was a very good idea in grounding us and giving us a sense of reality!

NSP: What advice would you give to current and incoming scholarship holders?

EM: That's a tough one. It's very hard to try and package advice based on what I've been doing. For me, it's been a series of rather lucky coincidences which have me sitting here right now. I'd say think outside of the box, particularly when it comes to professional development. I think it's not a bad idea to study my case here as I deliberately decided to stay away from pursuing further business studies and following my peers into traineeships in big consultancy firms and banks. I decided to wait and see what other opportunities there were. I didn't have the answer at the very beginning, but after 12 months of very active thinking in Berlin, I actually put things together quite nicely. So I'd say don't jump into decisions you don't want to take too fast!

NSP: Tell us more about your current work and your OSI Fellowship project.

EM: My project is based on studying the role that the Internet plays in authoritarian societies, and on developing a book on how

Fellowship has a very generous travel budget ...

NSP: How many hours a day do you spend in front of the computer?

EM: Fewer and fewer actually ... I'm not a big fan of technology. I actually like reading books, trying to do some sustained thinking. I actually made the decision not to join Facebook back in 2003 so that it doesn't eat too much of my time, and I still haven't. I have absolutely no fascination for technology for technology's sake. I travel a lot and I enjoy that a lot more than sitting in front of the computer.



Evgeny MOROZOV

NSP: Looking at your website ([www.evgenymorozov.com/](http://www.evgenymorozov.com/)), you have so many articles written for so many different online journals, blogs and portals: how do you keep track of them all?

EM: It's more a matter of setting up the right detection systems, so to speak. Unless you manage to put yourself in the right place in the system, it's very hard to get a perspective on what's happening. I try to identify people who are responsible for a particular niche who I can trust to let me know what's happening. Once I've identified them, I just have to follow what they are reading and what they are linking to and I'll more or less benefit from their filtering to get to what they think is important. I'm trying to identify the curators in each field and then follow them. You can't follow it all. Much of my time is spent trying to identify experts in the field.

NSP: Your Open Society Fellowship is coming to an end this year: What's the next step?

EM: I have a fellowship with Yahoo at

Georgetown University for one academic year starting in the fall. I'll continue writing and blogging, but also teaching two classes on cyberwarfare and global politics at the graduate school.

NSP: Evgeny thank you for your time and best of luck at Georgetown!

*For an in-depth look at Evgeny's profile and for more information on the Open Society Fellowship, please visit the website [www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship/focus\\_areas/grantees/morozov\\_2008](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship/focus_areas/grantees/morozov_2008)*

*Evgeny's personal website is [www.evgenymorozov.com](http://www.evgenymorozov.com)*

*For more information on Transitions Online, visit [www.tol.cz](http://www.tol.cz)* ■

## “Think outside of the box, particularly when it comes to professional development”

the Internet shapes global affairs; on cyberwarfare, the impact of the availability of data on transparency, and the impact that social networking and blogging has on social activism. I've been writing on these issues for newspapers and magazines for a while now, with some of the insights coming from journalistic work and others coming from interviewing experts in the field. In a few weeks, I'll be heading to Egypt to meet with key bloggers and activists, asking them about their work and how the Internet shapes what they are doing. I'll be doing the same thing in China and Venezuela, and I was in Russia in January. The Open Society

# Alumni Updates

OSI awards full and partial scholarships to around 800 scholars per year from 30 countries. Our pool is wide, but the space to feature updates on our alumni is, unfortunately, limited.

Below are a few snippets on the current activities of CNOUS, Edmund J. Muskie Scholarship/Alumni Grant Program, Soros Supplementary Grants Program, and Undergraduate Exchange Program grantees.

We encourage all former grantees to contact us here at Scholar Forum with an update on their life after their scholarship time: we hope to publish many more updates in the next edition.

## Edmund J. Muskie Scholarship / Alumni Grants Program (AGP)

### 2002, 2007-8

**Aida ALYMBAEVA (Kyrgyzstan):** Aida was recently selected to sit on the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan Board while simultaneously directing the Social Research Center of the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek. Aida's AGP project, "Policy Brief," comprised a series of seminars, also published in a series of articles and on their website, co-funded by the Aga Khan Development Network. The articles, all by scholars in the region and including one by a Global Supplementary Grants Program scholar from the University of Edinburgh, cover topics such as civil society, migration, Islam, and corruption.

For more information on Aida's work and that of the Social Research Center at AUCA, please visit [src.auca.kg/index.html](http://src.auca.kg/index.html)

## UEP

### 1997-1998

**Alexander KUKSA (Belarus):** University of Arizona, Tucson: Alexander currently works as project coordinator at International Trucking and Forwarding, in Brest, Belarus. In 2004, he completed the Community Connection Program at Bryant College in the United States and received a Diploma in Transport Management in 2007.

### 1995-96

**Nada GROŠELJ (Slovenia):** Randolph-Macon Women's College, Lynchburg, Virginia: Nada Grošelj obtained a joint BA degree in English and Latin in 2000 at the University of Ljubljana and a PhD in Linguistics in 2005 with a thesis entitled "The Problem of Syntax in Translating Slovenian Poetry into English." Since 2005, Nada has been teaching at the university and working as a freelance translator, rendering works of fiction and scholarly texts from English, Latin, and Swedish into Slovenian, and from Slovenian into English. Nada also publishes scholarly articles, papers, and reviews focussing on translation issues, classical writers, and classical mythology. For her translations of Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* and of Manguel's *History of Reading*, she received the national Slovenian "Best Young Translator" award in 2007 for translations into Slovenian.

## Palestinian Faculty Development Program

### 2006

**Karam ADAWI (Palestine):** Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts: Karam participated in the Wisconsin Society for Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Health & Rehabilitation Conference in April 2009, focusing on policies to improve quality of life for patients with cardiovascular diseases.



Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death in Palestine, which lacks policies and strategies to address the problem. The conference provided Karam with an invaluable opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss strategies to reduce mortality and improve patients' quality of life.

## CNOUS

### 2001-2002

**Farkhad ALIMUKHAMEDOV (Uzbekistan):** Farkhad is a faculty member at the Department of Political Science in the Suleyman Demirel University in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

### 2003-2004

**Aigerim BAIUZAKOVA (Kazakhstan):** Aigerim is currently a lawyer at the Samruk-Kazina Fund Joint Stock Company in Kazakhstan.

### 2007-2008

**Zulaika ESSENTAEVA (Kyrgyzstan):** Zulaika is working with the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan in the Public Health Programs and has been very active in liaising with grantee organizations within the health and social sectors. In March 2009 she also performed in and promoted the Bishkek version of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, a benefit event to support shelters for victims of gender or sexual abuse in Kyrgyzstan.

**Lukmonjon ISOKOV (Uzbekistan):** Lukmonjon was hired by Handicap International, the organization from which he completed his internship, to oversee projects integrating persons with disabilities into the workforce in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

**Zhanna KARIMOVA (Kazakhstan):** Zhanna is currently working in the Department of Political Science and Sociology at the Kazakh National Pedagogical University.

### 2005-2006

**Ruslan RAHIMOV (Kyrgyzstan):** Ruslan is a coordinator on migration at the Social Research Center of the American University of Central Asia (AUCA). Though he received his Master's from Lyon 3 in Public Administration, he is helping to develop the Department of Anthropology at AUCA, as well as simultaneously completing his PhD in social anthropology in Paris.

**Bates ASSILBEKOVA (Kazakhstan):** Bates is now working with the UNHCR in Almaty, assisting operations for refugees and asylum seekers. During her program in France, she interned with the NGO *Premiere Urgence* where she researched and supported the humanitarian and geopolitical situation concerning displaced persons in North Korea and Chad. In May 2009 while at the UNHCR, she submitted an OSI Alumni Grant Program proposal with several alumni from other NSP programs. The proposal follows up on a Ministry of Education decree by seeking to support a training program for professionals in Kazakhstan wanting to teach part-time in universities.

## SSGP

### 1998-1999

**Lorenc XHAFERRAJ (Albania):** Lorenc is working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana, Albania, as a desk officer in the European Department.

### 1999-2000

**Gordana KEKENOVSKA-KOLAROVA (Macedonia):** Gordana is working at the Opera and Ballet of Skopje, Macedonia, as a soloist opera singer.

### 2002-2003

**Erdenetuya TSEND (Mongolia):** Erdenetuya is a teacher at the University of Culture and Arts Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and a chorus conductor.

### 2005-2006

**Biljana BILALOVIC (Macedonia):** Biljana is a performer at the Association of Artists Cultural Centre: "Media Artes" in Ohrid, Macedonia

## 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 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, or founding a professional association. Grants will also be considered for initiatives that support the NGO and non-profit sectors, further social justice, and/or support the creation of classroom materials and other projects related to OSI's mission.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI website [www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus\\_areas/alumni/guidelines](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas/alumni/guidelines) or by sending inquiries to the following address:

Open Society Foundation  
Alumni Grant Program  
Céline Keshishian  
Cambridge House, 5th Floor  
London, W6 0LE  
Email: [ckeshishian@osf-eu.org](mailto: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 of the preceding year, with applications due in May.

# Contribute to the next Scholar Forum!

**Cover Topic: The Politics of the Environment**

**Regional Focus: Central Asia & Mongolia**

The 2010 Scholar Forum invites all NSP scholars and alumni to contribute content such as personal essays, research synopses, thought and/or opinion pieces, pictures, and recipes. Articles can be published anonymously upon request, and submissions in German or French from our DAAD and CNOUS fellows are welcome.

The [scholarforum@sorosny.org](mailto:scholarforum@sorosny.org) mailbox is open all year round to receive your submissions!

## **COVER TOPIC: The Politics of the Environment**

Despite the controversy over the verifiable scientific evidence of global warming, the effects of a changing climate cannot be ignored. With the momentum created by environmental advocates such as former U.S. vice president Al Gore, and the global activism generated by the United States's refusal to sign the Kyoto Agreement, most of the world is increasingly sensitized to the need to consider the impact of lifestyles and development policies based on haphazard use of resources and poor management of hazardous waste.

The next Scholar Forum seeks your thoughts and commentary on several key questions underlying the multifaceted issue of climate change, climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation, and local versus international policy formation. We pose our questions below, but as always, we are interested in your own questions and aspects you think need special emphasis.

**Morality:** Who should decide which countries and governments need to reassess their economic aims? Do developed states have

responsibility or authority to define fundamental changes for developing world economies? Or is this a new form of environmental imperialism?

**Democracy:** Some populations are more directly on the frontline of climate change than others. How can these populations improve their representation on the world stage? Have you witnessed how external interests influence local decisions on land use, natural resource management, water distribution, agricultural or industrial development?

**Sustainability:** Recent years have seen the rising prominence of organic food production and an emphasis in advanced economies on sustainable agricultural practices. Should sustainability, as a development goal, take precedence over shorter term growth that can generate faster investment returns? In your home community, have traditional methods of farming and agriculture changed as the international emphasis on sustainable practices has increased?

**Migration and Cultural Shifts:** Changing climates may force groups from the land which has been their home and the source of their livelihood for centuries. Are there major cultural changes, perhaps even new conflicts, which can be predicted from changing patterns of human migration? Will there be both positive and negative consequences? How should governments respond?

These are just a fraction of the key questions in the debate over the potential impact of the changing environment and the interplay of human geography and politics. Your thoughts on these or other related topics are welcome.

Maximum 750 words

## **REGIONAL FOCUS: Central Asia & Mongolia**

Scholar Forum last visited Central Asia & Mongolia in 2001 when articles captured grantee thoughts from unique cultural customs to the history of Lake Issyk-Kul. In 2010, as debate still surrounds the level of Central Asia's progress on many issues, we would like to hear from OSI scholars and alumni on current trends and thinking in the region.

Maximum 400 words

## **Personal Accounts**

We welcome any personal thoughts you have in your experiences abroad during your scholarship time: your reflections, photographs, and recipes are welcome.

Maximum 300 words

## **Alumni**

As always, we relish hearing about activities of our alumni: from your current working position and academic career, to calls for collaboration in an event or conference, please feel free to send us a short note for publication in late 2010.

## **Website Suggestions**

Where are you on the Web? We'd love to list any new websites you have found which may be of interest to the wider community, as well as blogs you contribute to regularly or have established.

## **Your Views ...**

Many of the articles published in Scholar Forum contain opinions which may provoke your thinking and stir your critical voice. The Your Views column will feature your thoughts and responses to the articles shown in this issue.

Feel free to send any opinions to the editors' [inbox:scholarforum@sorosny.org](mailto:inbox:scholarforum@sorosny.org)

We look forward to you exercising your democratic right to respond!

Send all submissions, queries, and feedback to [scholarforum@sorosny.org](mailto:scholarforum@sorosny.org)

## **OPEN SOCIETY FELLOWSHIP**

The Open Society Fellowship supports individuals seeking innovative and unconventional approaches to fundamental open society challenges. The Fellowship funds work that will enrich public understanding of those challenges and stimulate far-reaching and probing conversations within the Open Society Institute and in the world.

For detailed information on the Open Society Fellowship and for grantee profiles, please see the website and send all enquiries to the address below: [www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/fellowship)

Email: [OSFellows@sorosny.org](mailto:OSFellows@sorosny.org)

# Research Publications

Building on the wealth of knowledge and critical inquiry OSI scholars create during their scholarship time and beyond, Scholar Forum would like to invite research scholars, particularly our PhD and Faculty fellows, to submit a short version (750-1000 words) of a working paper to be published in the next edition.

Entries could be directly related to thesis research or a journal article in “pre-publish” phase which you would like to present to the wider OSI academic community. This is an invaluable opportunity to have your papers reviewed by OSI and external academics, as well as to gain valuable constructive feedback from other Scholar Forum readers.

## Guidelines

Please follow the structure below for article submission:

### Title of Research

**Introduction:** give a brief synopsis of the research and how it related to your scholarship (i.e. research for thesis / MA / working paper / independent research article).

**Analysis:** Please make the body of your text as concise as possible, without introducing too many research areas: you may wish to concentrate on

expanding the research to date on one aspect only to give more space for analysis and commentary.

**Conclusion:** summarize the research outlined in the Analysis section and give recommendations for further research

## Tips

- Although some articles may be scientific, please keep tables, charts and diagrams to a minimum.
- The OSI audience is intellectual, but please make the research descriptive and accessible to all—qualify abbreviations and explain detailed concepts.
- Please keep footnotes to a minimum.
- All entries will be reviewed by experts at OSI and partner university faculty where possible.
- Due to space constraints, entries will be reviewed on a competitive basis and authors may be asked to abridge the submission in collaboration with the editor.
- Please feel free to enquire with the editors if you have any questions, or submit your work to [scholarforum@sorony.org](mailto:scholarforum@sorony.org)

# 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 Southeastern 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. ReSET projects involve groups of junior faculty participants from the region and international teams of resource faculty. The program also incorporates ReSET Seminars and ReSet Challenges.

HESP invites region-based academic institutions and groups of academics with a commitment to promoting teaching to submit Concept Proposals for multi-year ReSET projects.

For more details about the program and eligibility requirements, and to download applications, please visit the website at: [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/reset](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/reset) or by contacting [oshtokvych@osi.hu](mailto:oshtokvych@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.

To achieve its goals, fellowships are available for junior faculty and local scholars holding an internationally-competitive post-graduate degree (usually from the United States, the European Union, Canada, or Australia) and who are working, or willing to work, at an AFP partner department.

Detailed information including eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application forms are available from the OSI website: [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/afp](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/afp), or by sending inquiries to [afp@osi.hu](mailto:afp@osi.hu)

## HESP Mobility Programs: Student Mobility

The program supports visits to or from a HESP network institution by students enrolled at higher education institutions in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe; the former Soviet Union; and Mongolia. For a list of qualifying institutions and complete program guidelines, please see: [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/mobility/grants/student](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/mobility/grants/student)

## Southeast European Student Initiatives

The Southeast European Student Initiatives (SESI) aims of 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 Southeastern Europe. For more details and a list of student networks, please see: [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/sesi](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. For a complete program description please see: [www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/carti](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/hesp/focus/carti)

# 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](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship)

## **Afghan Communications Scholarship:**

Provides fully funded fellowships to qualified citizens of Afghanistan.

## **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 Master's degrees in the social sciences and humanities at institutions in France.

## **DAAD-OSI Program:**

A joint scholarship program in Germany for graduate students and junior faculty from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine who are pursuing advanced studies 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 Moldova and Tajikistan who are positioned to become leading scholars in the social sciences and humanities.

## **Faculty Development Fellowship Program:**

A non-degree program that offers up to 15 awards for faculty teaching social sciences and humanities in the Caucasus and Central Asia 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 Asia, Australia, the European Union, and North America.

## **OSF Maastricht Scholarship:**

This program offers European Studies fellowships at Maastricht University to scholars from Georgia, Moldova, and the Ukraine.

## **OSI/Chevening Scholarships:**

One-year Master's 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 visit 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.

## **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.

## **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](http://www.iie.org/srf))

## **ScholarForum**

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