

THE **Bradley** HERALD

UN Millennium Development Goals

"If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito..."

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WE CAN AND WE SHOULD!

In 2000 the world decided to get more serious about solving the most important issues for all humanity. All 191 United Nations member states signed a resolution according to which they pledged to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by the year 2015.

At that time I was studying at a high school in the U.S., where I had a chance to be involved in discussions about these issues. Those discussions inspired me, and I came back to Armenia determined that I could do some good work.

I started by founding an NGO that contributes to educational reform, youth empowerment, regional peace, and community development. I also took advantage of many opportunities to attend international conferences, which further motivated me and made me feel even more determined to solve global issues.

One of the congresses in which I took part was the 3rd World Youth Congress, Scotland 2005 where, together with 600 young activists from 120 countries, I was involved in a unique collaboration of young people who want to make a difference. The congress that empowered youth to "be the change" and contribute to sustainable development, also inspired us to go back to our home countries and effectively work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Having gathered knowledge and enthusiasm from this congress, I realized the need to



Hasmik Harutyunyan '00 is interviewed by the Press at the MDG Drawing Exhibition in Gyumri, Armenia

promote the MDGs. Therefore, when the FLEX Alumni Grants Program 2006 was announced, Mary Barseghyan '02 and I decided to write a project "Millennium Development Goals and Youth" to increase awareness about these goals. Fortunately, the project was recommended for funding by American Councils and the State Department.

So, starting in 2006 our NGO staff and FLEX alumni began conducting research and collecting information about what actions need to be taken in Armenia in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals based on statistics provided by local and international organizations. We contacted dozens of NGOs and international organizations, and had a fruitful meeting with the deputy minister of foreign affairs of Armenia, during which we discussed ways to make the MDGs in line with Armenia's own development goals. As a result we compiled folders on each goal, which contained information on each goal, statistics for all countries, including Armenia, and specifically in the Shirak region, actions that need to be taken to achieve the goals, and most importantly why and how young people should get involved in achieving the goals. The folder on "eradicating extreme poverty and hunger" will concentrate on the human poverty in Armenia. According to National Human Development Poverty Survey, conducted in spring 2003, it was shown that human poverty is more widespread in rural areas. During our seminars on this goal, we worked on ways that young people can contribute to a national project to reduce poverty in northern regions, particularly in the Shirak region.

Project highlights include the publication of the first Armenian booklet about the MDGs and youth, and the seminars we conducted for 210 high school students in six schools in the three Shirak region cities of Gyumri, Maralik, and Artik. From September through December 2006, we met with each group 24 times, covering all eight goals through PowerPoint presentations, discussions, games and other interactive activities. On top of this, the students were enthusiastic and wanted to contribute to reaching the goals personally. They planned and carried out small action projects in each city. They also shared information with family members, friends and other people in their towns, further

FUTURE LEADERS EXCHANGE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



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Letter from the Editor



Dear FLEX Alumni,

MDGs: does the acronym mean anything to you?

The Millennium Development Goals: eight goals and 18 targets were created in 2000, and the heads of state and governments of 191 countries signed the declaration, committing themselves and their nations to reaching the goals by 2015. (Find the goals opposite this column.) The goals are clearly ambitious, and while progress has been made over the past seven years to promote health and education in the world's poorest countries, experts say that if these goals are to be met, governments and individuals need to do more.

When 11 FLEX alumni from five countries (see list page 14) returned from the Scotland World Youth Congress in 2005, where the MDGs were at the top of the agenda, they brainstormed about how they could realize the motto of the congress "be the change." Led by Emiliya Assadova '02 of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, they began working on this special issue of *The Bradley Herald*. They view this newsletter as a "wonderful platform" for raising alumni awareness on these tough issues, and inviting them to join the effort of seeking development solutions.

Our first goal is to educate you, FLEX alumni, so that you will be inspired to educate others to help reach these critical global development goals. We offer you ways to "be the change" — the abbreviated version of Mahatma Gandhi's teaching "we must be the change we want to see in the world." You'll read about the efforts of FLEX alumni to educate their peers about the MDGs. You'll find links to many useful Internet resources that offer concrete suggestions on what can and needs to be done by young people to reach the goals. I'd like to also remember the efforts of our older alumni. In Ukraine, in particular, FLEX alumni have been promoting the MDGs since 2002.

It is not too soon to think about connecting to the next World Youth Congress, which will take place in Quebec, Canada, August 10-21, 2008 (<http://www.wyc2008.qc.ca>). Organizers expect 600 youth leaders from 120 countries, plus they promise a huge virtual Congress with webcams, live chats, blogs, discussion forums, podcasts, and videos. Individuals and organizations are invited to join the Action Festival, which will be a lead up to the Congress. See the site for details.

When we compare the living standards of people in Southeast Asia and sub Saharan Africa with those of people in the countries of Eurasia, we see that the citizens of Eurasian countries are relatively well off. But we must look deeper and think about more than just our own prosperity or that of our city or country. Eradicating extreme poverty, stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases, and ensuring primary education for all children — these are huge tasks and require a global commitment. It will take money, but it also requires creative engagement and youth participation in developing and implementing policies. Reports show that peer-to-peer education is the most effective way to reach young people. And this is something that FLEX alumni do well.

The next issue of the alumni newsletter, scheduled for publication in May-June, addresses the topic of career paths in the business sector. A special appeal to alumni from the first years of the program: we ask those of you who are already working in key management positions in the corporate sector to share your career advancement advice with fellow alumni. For details, write to bradleyherald@actr.ru. In that issue, we also hope to showcase Global Youth Service Day projects, and will report on the conference in India that FLEX alumni from Tajikistan and Kazakhstan have been invited to attend. The fall issue of *The Bradley Herald* will highlight alumni's summer learning experiences: summer schools and institutes, conferences, camps, and alumni grant projects. Maybe we'll also be able to report on alumni Millennium Development initiatives!

Mary Shea
Editor

Millennium Development Goals

**Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**

Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

**Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education**

Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

**Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women**

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015

**Goal 4: Reduce child mortality**

Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

**Goal 5: Improve maternal health**

Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

Target 7: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

**Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability**

Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

Target 11: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

**Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

Target 12: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system

Target 13: Address the Special Needs of the Least Developed Countries

Target 14: Address the Special Needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States

Target 15: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

Target 16: In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries

Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Source: United Nations, 2000

Thrown Out of My Comfort Zone in Tanzania

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International Student Week in Tanzania 2006 (ISWT) was certainly one of those conferences that not only broadens one's knowledge and increases understanding of the world, but also had a profound life-changing impact. It took place halfway across the globe, past the equator in the city of Dar Es Salaam on the beautiful coast of the Indian Ocean. This conference, the initiative of students of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and its constituent colleges, aims to create an arena for students from different parts of the world to address various global issues. ISWT aims at inviting fellow university students to discuss various world issues.

As FLEX finalists, all of us had a major international experience when we found ourselves in a completely new environment in the USA. Some of us have experienced major culture shocks, others have adjusted promptly. However, most of us would agree that due to the wonderful pre-departure orientation, we more or less knew what to expect, and how to behave and react to the environment. Certainly, some of our expectations weren't met, and others were exceeded, but nothing from my FLEX year was quite as disturbing as my first day in Tanzania.

For the first time I felt to have been thrown out of my comfort zone. I felt like my aura was shattered by everything that surrounded me. Perhaps such confusion was due to my limited knowledge of daily life in Africa or the lack of understanding of the developing world, but it was an awkward feeling and I wanted to get rid of it promptly. It seemed like someone was squeezing my heart as I watched Tanzanian daily life out of the window of a taxi on my way from the airport to the University of Dar Es Salaam. And that was mere daily reality of our world.

My first thought was: how could the world be so unfair? Never mind that I grew up in a developing country full of economic and political challenges, this was far from it. That was my first encounter of genuine massive poverty while realizing that this wasn't the worst scenario either, but this was enough to revolutionize my understanding of poverty. Shaky homes without running water, electricity, or gas. Cooking maize or rice on firewood to feed up to 10 children, some of whom will not survive until age 10 due to malaria or HIV inherited from their parents. One day, as a part of our program, we visited an orphanage for children from the streets. I will never forget their shiny, happy eyes, full of faith and desperation. I saw the conditions they live in, sharing one bed for two, but for them, it was a drastic improvement from what they've experienced on the streets. I shall never dare to call myself poor again...

To my own surprise, it took me only a day or so to get the shattered pieces back together and start building a puzzle of my new perception of the world. And that was mainly due to the wonderful people, who are certainly the most valuable asset of this impoverished continent... They are friendly, intelligent, enthusiastic, welcoming, understanding, most inspiring and patriotic. But as I got to know them better, I was even further amazed. Many of them have never left Tanzania and lived most of their lives facing multiple daily challenges: from obtaining food to maintaining basic hygiene. Nevertheless, they had a very advanced perception of the world around them and were certainly much stronger and more mature than typical students from the Western world.

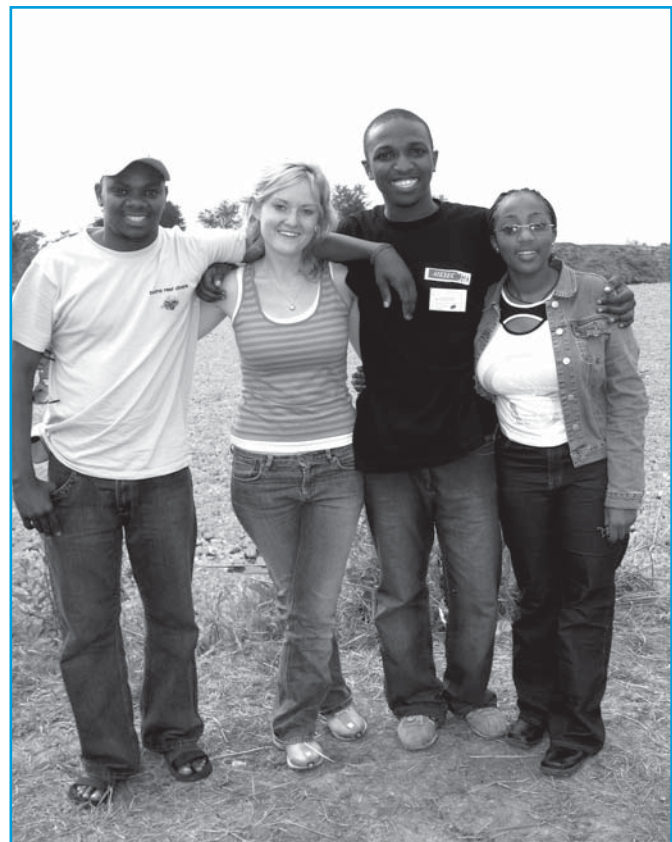
The topics we discussed during the week ranged from the impact of HIV-AIDS and malaria on the developing world, Africa's application for a permanent seat in the Security Council, to the role of globalization towards equal and sustainable development of the world. It was so rewarding to see these future leaders of Africa express their sincere

aspirations, share their worries, and critically analyze their situation. I cannot help but admire their expressed desire to maximize their own potential rather than beg for aid from the developed world. I certainly had a lot to learn from my colleagues representing various universities from Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, the U.S., Ecuador, and Tanzania, of course.

This experience also shifted my perception of my Motherland. I once showed a book about Kyiv to one of my new Tanzanian friends. As he admired the beauty of Orthodox cathedrals and some of our typical streets, I gained an ever new, unique appreciation for what I often took for granted. But this "new love" was drastically different from the one I had earlier acquired as a FLEX student. When I came back home, I first flew to Moscow and then took a train to Kyiv and both cities seemed like a paradise full of privileged people. I've had that feeling about Europe before, but never about "my corner of the world." It was the first time I genuinely felt guilty to have always been so advantaged and lucky without fully appreciating it.

After ISWT, I also visited Khartoum, Sudan—one of the most conflict-torn and ethnically divided countries in the world. I noticed that the shock I experienced there was much milder. I have already begun to build up "immunity" against my vulnerability when witnessing massive human suffering. However, this doesn't mean that I became indifferent or cold-hearted; I rather changed my outlook and began to think constructively on what I can do to maybe save just a few persons from such misery.

It is difficult to express all the feelings and thoughts that made the ultimate difference during this trip to Africa, but I shall advise every one to go and experience it themselves. I can guarantee that your priorities will be shifted, new values and goals established, and new dreams envision. You will simply be a different person on your flight back! ■



Valeriia Zasedatielieva '03 with New Friends in Tanzania

Career Path Leads to Sudan

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I've been away from Tajikistan for almost a year. Now I would like to share with you where I am, how I got here, and how my U.S. experience helped me to go further in reaching my goal in developing my career.

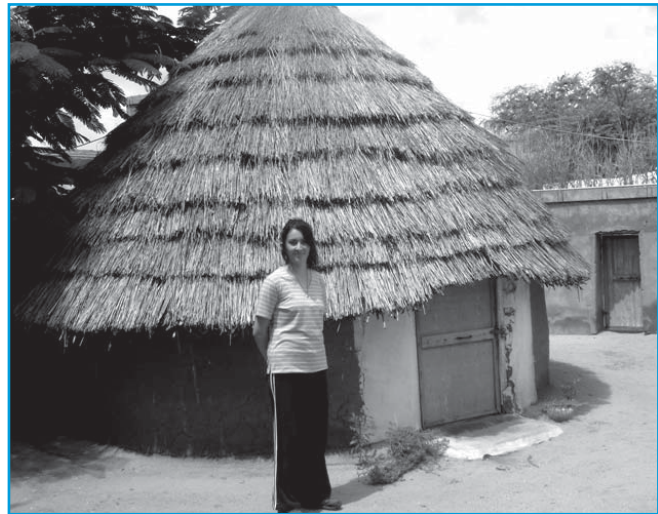
I am very happy to do the work I've been doing in the humanitarian field, as I see that I can be useful to others, and that the work is enjoyable. I left my job as finance officer in Mission East, a non-governmental organization with operations in Tajikistan, where I'd been working for about five years. First, I moved to North Darfur, Sudan, and this past December I moved to the city of Yei in southern Sudan.

I was inspired by a couple of my friends who were working here and now are very successful professionals. I, of course, didn't have any guarantees that I would get a job, but I wanted to test my destiny.

I arrived in Sudan in the beginning of March 2006. While being here I discovered that Sudan is a unique country, officially an Islamic country, but so free at the same time. Women don't have to wear black clothes and cover themselves completely. The food is very nice, although in some rural areas it's very difficult to get fruits and vegetables. Arabic language was also new and very easy to learn for me. English is very important here, as this is the main language people speak in the offices other than Arabic.

I had an interview with Mercy Corps, an American NGO, for a position as a finance/administration officer. After waiting for about one and a

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Parvina Gafurova '01 in Sudan, North Africa

half months to learn the results of the interview, I was offered the job and am now part of a very multi-cultural team of people from former Yugoslavia, Tajikistan, Iran, Canada, U.S., Afghanistan, Palestine, and other countries, all working together.

Living here, being alone without knowing where to go and where to start, was not easy, but I can say with gratitude that my experience in the U.S. as an exchange student helped me a lot. I learned to cope with difficulties and face new challenges. ■

Springtime Reveals Need for Nature Protection

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As a FLEX alumna, I am spending most of my time trying to help reach the Millennium Development Goals. Of course I can't focus on all of those goals, but I do my best and work hard on some of them.

I think that the issue of environmental problems and environmental pollution is very sharp in my country and the region I live nowadays as well as in the whole world. I live and study in Sumy, Ukraine, but I grew up in little town of Krasnopillya. The population is not big but there are several ponds, rivers, and a lot of parks and forests. It is really a picturesque place. But every spring after the snow has melted, we observe a very sad picture. The banks of the rivers and ponds are covered with garbage and various kinds of cans. We see the same in the local parks. I don't understand people who do that, mainly during summer vacations. While leaving trash behind, they don't realize that they harm themselves. They can't even imagine that some of that trash can reach

the water and next year those people will swim in polluted water. They pollute their own lives. That is why it is so important to understand those problems and try to avoid them in the future. We have to prevent their occurrence.

My mother is an ecologist. And she usually organizes groups for cleaning streets, parks, and ponds in our town. My friends and I always help her. Recently we have cleaned the land around the pond. Eight people collected rubbish on the banks, put it in the plastic bags and took it away. Now this land looks very clean. But I can definitely say that when the swimming season starts, the pond will be polluted again. Our local deputies should fine people who don't pick up their trash. That's the only way for them to understand their error.

Last autumn we also went to the woods in our town to take care of anthills, because some species of ants are rare in my country. A lot of people destroy anthills or burn the forest, not thinking about the consequences. Many insects die as a result of these actions. That is why we fenced in the anthills, so that other people would be aware that these are the homes of rare insects. Protection of our nature, which is so vulnerable and vitally important, is a key activity that every citizen must understand. ■

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spreading the impact of our efforts.

But the most impressive achievement of our project was the MDG drawing exhibition, which was not even part of our original proposal. During our seminars, students drew more than 60 pictures relating to each of the goals. Our team decided to honor the students' dedication to the project, and on January 30, we organized a public exhibit of their work, which was visited by more than 150 people. In addition to showing their drawings, we displayed photos of the project and showed a PowerPoint presentation specifically about water protection, as environmental protection is still a problem in Armenia.

This project stimulated students' interest in the MDGs and helped them feel that they can be key participants of this global process. The essays they wrote at the end of the project attest to this. By gaining knowledge through lectures, discussions, and informational

booklets, these young people have been inspired to take action for the benefit of our country.

Our organization is also negotiating with UN officials and other funders to support similar projects for university students and young professionals in the Shirak region, as well as in the Lori and Tavuch regions.

The project is particularly important for me, because by implementing it, I am making my own contribution as a young leader to achieving the MDGs. I realize that each of us has the energy and capacity to not only predict the future but also develop it. We can't just leave it to the governments, we need to believe that if we really WANT we CAN take the challenge and participate in making the world a better place for all its citizens. ■

The World is Too Round to Sit Silently in the Corner

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While you might think that I came up with a pretty fancy title for this article, I hope that on reading it, you will understand and agree with my statement. The story began like this. As an active FLEX alumna and a delegate to the 3rd World Youth Congress in Scotland in 2005, I was inspired by the other young people I met there and the actions they lead around the world. I became friends with fellow delegate Fabio from Italy. Little did I know that he would be the starting point for my international cooperation on MDGs. Having heard about all my initiatives together with FLEX alumni, he recommended me to one of his German friends, who in turn proposed that we cooperate to write an MDG project and apply for a European Commission youth grant.

Later I learned that my new German friend belongs to a German organization, Loesje, which encourages young peoples' creative expression, mainly through posters and photos. It is catching on in many European countries. <http://www.loesje.org/> I also found out that in order to apply for the project, we would need other partner youth organizations. That was easy. It's not a secret that many young people — especially FLEX alumni — have friends all over the world. This connection is very valuable, especially if you are looking for a good project partner. To better represent Central Asia, I turned to Zhibek Karamanova '03, who is part of the FLEX Alumni Association in Kazakhstan. Today our project involves five youth NGOs representing Germany, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Nepal.

The project's simple name united all of us. We also thought it would appeal to other young people, as well as to the selection committee at the European Commission. Do you have any suggestions on how to name a youth project involving five different countries and targeting young people and MDGs? Well, I'm sure that FLEX alumni would come up with many creative responses to this, but the name we thought up was "The world is too round to sit silently in the corner." And the main aim of the project was to spread information about the Millennium Development Goals to young people through local information campaigns in Kathmandu, Nepal (The World Youth Peace Propagation Forum); Almaty, Kazakhstan (FLEX Alumni Association); Tashkent, Uzbekistan (MDG Youth Network); Riga, Latvia (Creative Group "Mystyle ART"); and Berlin, Germany (Loesje International).

As soon as our project was approved, each team selected eight active members from their organization to participate in the first planning meeting. Our Uzbek team hosted the first project-planning meeting for group leaders in

Tashkent in January. In addition to introducing our organizations and ourselves, we offered the three group leaders from Nepal, Germany, and Latvia a chance to listen to Uzbek folk music and watch national Uzbek dance — all done by gymnasium students. We developed plans for country groups, a project agenda, and worked on the upcoming training workshop to take place in Germany in March. Our Uzbek group accepted the task to prepare games, which would introduce the ambitious MDGs in fun and easy-to-remember ways. I had to lead one of the workshops on how to develop and deliver the message on MDGs. During this session, my colleague and I gave good examples from information campaigns around the world, like the "ONE" campaign in the U.S. and "Make Poverty History" in the U.K.

Finally, the exciting day came when we met our "MDG mates" in Berlin. Our first impressions of the city included a million buildings covered with graffiti, people rarely speaking English, and the city's rich and controversial history that filled every street and corner. Our common purpose was to share the organizational experiences, learn more about MDGs, and understand what role young people can play in achieving them. During those ten days in Berlin, we created original promotional and educational materials, using new skills learned during the photo and creative text writing workshops. All our creations would later be used for our national information campaigns. One of our trainers, Mr. Ted van Hees, taught us about organizing large-scale campaigns, like the ones at Oxfam Novib (Netherlands). We also went out onto the streets, taking photographs that we could use later for our MDG posters. We also wrote some creative text on MDGs and became almost professional designers during layout sessions. To show the results of those creative days of hard work, we held a final exhibition party, where we presented our posters with photographs and slogans — all written by us. The guests appreciated our unique expression of society's modern

problems and also how together in just over a week we created such appealing artwork.

Since that March meeting, we have all returned to our home countries and started developing our own information campaigns for youth on MDGs. We have set a goal to complete wonderful and creative campaigns this summer. We will then collect all this positive experience into one handbook, which you will be able to find on our project website www.mdg.loesje.org. It will be a good MDG resource for young activists around the world, including examples from both developed and developing countries.

The Uzbekistan MDG youth network team that traveled to Berlin plans to present our efforts to other interested volunteers. We want to pass on this exciting experience and energize them even more to work on MDGs. Among the new ideas for the local information campaign in Uzbekistan are special handbooks, brochures and posters on the importance of involvement of young people in achieving the MDGs in our country. We want to create MDG corners at local universities, and make these materials available there.

I hope that this article brought some positive ideas on how each of us can start making a difference already today. If we sit and hope for someone else to do this, we will already be too old to do it and will blame ourselves for not making our contributions to the achievement of MDGs. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, executive director of the UN Population Fund, reminds young people, "You are the future, as all like to say; and even more importantly, you are the present."

And if you want to find out more about what young people in Uzbekistan are doing to achieve the MDGs or to learn more about the goals, visit our very resourceful website: www.un.uz/youth ■



Emiliya Asadova '02 (Tashkent) and Zhibek Karamanova '03 (Almaty) Enjoy the Berlin City Tour between MDG Workshops

UN Millennium Development Goals

To Make Sure MDGs are Achievable, You Must Know About Them!

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There has recently been a lot of talk about the promise that world governments had made: to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. It is widely argued whether the eight goals are achievable by the agreed deadline. A number of countries still fall behind the provisions for a variety of reasons. However, I seek not to tackle this complicated issue in this article. My purpose is to discuss the role of FLEX alumni in helping to achieve the MDGs.

One of the obstacles to achieving the Goals is the general unawareness about what they actually are. It is a safe assumption that FLEX alumni are advocates of change not only in their communities, but also globally. These individuals apply the cross-cultural vision gained through the program experience to promote democratic principles in their countries. It is also true that FLEX alumni have the energy and enthusiasm to initiate and ensure change. It can thus be inferred that FLEX alumni are perfect agents to help achieve the MDGs. In fact, many community projects initiated by FLEXers deal directly with achieving some of the Goals. Working with needy children, HIV/AIDS awareness projects, environmental education efforts - all fit in the broader Goals, such as Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education, Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS and Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability, for example.

In order for FLEX alumni to help achieve the MDGs, they need to learn about them. Some of us have heard about them, yet this is clearly not enough. Therefore, I would like to propose a step-by-step guide for every FLEX alumnus/alumna to familiarize him or herself with the Millennium Development Goals and further contribute to achieving them. These steps are adapted from a great number of publications, some of which I received at the 3rd World Youth Congress in Scotland in summer 2005. By the way, I was one of about a dozen FLEX alumni who attended that conference, and I know that many who were in Scotland are now leaders in various national and even international

efforts. Among the topics on the Congress agenda was the campaign to achieve the MDGs, which includes a step that I am taking in this article: raising awareness among my peers!

These are just a few ideas about how you, as an advocate of change, can raise awareness about the MDGs and further help to achieve them. You can choose to follow all of these steps or just one. You can also choose to come up with your own ideas. You have a choice! You can sit back and wonder whether the MDGs are achievable or get involved to make sure they are! The choice is simple: get involved! ■

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the MDGs, get to know what they are! This can easily be done by researching online (e.g. <http://mdg.takingitglobal.org>, <http://www.unicef.org/mdg/>, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>), going to a library or simply asking a peer, who has relevant knowledge.

Step 2: Once you are familiar with the MDGs, teach others! You can join an existing group of FLEX alumni/classmates/friends, working with MDGs awareness campaigns, or even form your own. You can then work together on educating more people.

Step 3: One of the things you can do alone or with your group is to organize a large meeting at your school or university. Gather interested peers to discuss the MDGs and recruit more people to your group. You can organize a meeting for fellow FLEX alumni (other programs' alumni could also join) and discuss what projects could be implemented in relation to MDGs.

Step 4: To tell the broader community about the work you are doing, you can write articles for print media and also submit them online at such sites as: <http://panorama.takingitglobal.org>.

Step 5: Once the school/university/FLEX meeting goes successfully, you can organize an even bigger meeting for the broader community. High school/university students, members of youth organizations, representatives from NGOs and government can be invited. At the meeting you can all discuss how to cooperate and work together to help achieve MDGs in your community. Remember, it is one of the Goals to develop a partnership!

Step 6: Get creative! You can organize theatre plays, shoot video clips, hold art contests - all to present the MDGs, so that more people get to know what they are and how they can help to achieve them. Again, this can be done either in your groups or together with others.

Reality Check

*Blessings
Anonymous*

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who won't survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 20 million people around the world.

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, especially in the United States.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer God's healing touch.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.

You are so blessed in ways you may never even know. ■

Happy United Days

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I got a call one summer morning from the non-governmental organization (NGO) in whose youth group I participate. The NGO is called The Community Centre of Jewish Culture "Zvi Girsh," but in fact it deals with a much wider range of issues, mostly multicultural relationships and anti-discrimination.

The director asked me whether I would like to volunteer as a youth leader and I agreed, even though I was a little bit surprised and nervous about being given this "power." Then, sometime later, in my new capacity I received an application form from the organization "United" about their conference on anti-discrimination and anti-racism organized in Switzerland. The official name of the organization is United for Intercultural Action and it is a European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees (www.unitedagainstracism.org). So, I filled out the form and applied.

I will skip the boring details about my waiting and dreaming, and fast forward to getting on the plane and traveling from frosty Moscow to the land of roses, green trees, sweaters, and no fur jackets, called Switzerland. The conference took place November 14-19, 2006, in Vaumarcus, near Neuchatel (CH). The conference brought together about one hundred participants rep-

resenting most European countries to explore the topic "All Different, All UNITED."

Each day's workshops and sessions were based on the theme of anti-discrimination; however, the focus of each session was different, such as racism, discrimination against refugees and immigrants, fascism and anti-semitism, islamophobia, etc. We did not discuss the topics in general, but compared each country's situation with those of others' and tried to think of new ways to solve problems.

Some of the information was hard to bear and discuss. While hate crimes are happening in all countries, it is not a secret that Russia and Western Europe have different scales of discrimination and politics regarding minorities. I am not trying to exaggerate the situation in modern Russia, as exaggeration only leads to general disbelief. I only think that the tendencies in my country and the silence about it are horrifying. So far, I am only learning to understand the political and social situation in Russia, but the absurd nature of some actions seem obvious.

Throughout the conference we also had to split into groups and learn about one topic on a deeper level. I was in the group on "Anti-fascism: the past is present in the future." The majority of group members were citizens of former USSR countries. One of the participants from Ukraine even brought the real diary of a skinhead. You see, to fight against some force you have to understand it in all its tiny details. The author used all sorts of demagoguery, speaking about "The cleanliness and justice

of the Absolute Darkness," "the great and holy Slavs," and "the sinful nature of the Blinding Light and other nationalities," trying to sound symbolic and patriotic.

Real patriotism is not about supporting the politics of your country and your president and the feeling of stupid superiority some people try to show in comparison to other nations. It is just the opposite: the love for the best sides of your country, such as culture, nature, and language, and the ability to criticize it for the wrong stuff it does sometimes. Each of us has his/her own ideas about how to help solve at least some of the problems. I think it would be very useful to organize some special centers or at least corners where people could just bring their problems or concerns about discriminatory situations in Russia. So far most Russian hate crimes are considered as simple hooligan actions. This shocks me.

My fellow conference goers were awesome people. Too many stories to tell, too many memories to share! Some of my friends say that the more you meet people while traveling, the easier it gets to say good-bye to them. But for me, it seems that new meetings and trips only get more exciting and the farewell conversations and looks only get sadder. Thanks to "United" and thanks to the participants, thanks to Switzerland and its warm and kind people. This week was one of the happiest for me. Only I wish there would be no hate crimes and discrimination in the modern world and we could have had a different topic and purpose for our meeting. ■

United Nations from the Inside

*Olga Bukach '04
Vladivostok, Russia/ Smyrna, DE
oltchab@mail.ru*

Last spring I had a chance to influence the work of the United Nations — though the UN was not real. The 56th Session of Model UN of the Far West (MUNFW) was conducted in San Francisco, CA, April 21 –25, 2006. For four days over 450 college and university students from the U.S., Philippines, Canada, and Russia debated in Model UN committees, representing official positions of more than 60 countries. The only Russian delegation was composed of participants of Model UN of the Russian Far East (MUNRFE) — the largest student self-governed organization of the region. Eleven MUNRFE members represented official positions of the United Arab Emirates and Romania, while two advisors of the delegation acted as President and Chairperson of the Security Council.

56th MUNFW Session was devoted to achieving Millennium Development Goals, which were discussed in the General Assembly, Third and Sixth Committees, UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, ECOSOC, and UNESCO, while the Security Council dealt with an international military crisis. Representing Romania in the Third committee, I had a unique experience, debating issues of combating child and maternal mortality and achieving gender equality with more than 50 people from other parts of the world. Different opinions, different positions, and, of course, different approaches for tackling the problems — all of this made debates in the committee rather hot and sometimes even led to unexpected results and decisions. However, the major tendency, noted by delegates in all committees, was the desire to reach consensus and come to a common solution, even if it meant proposing simple measures. The main concern raised by the number of delegates questioned the effectiveness of proposed ways to deal with existing challenges, since proposals lacked specifics and concrete measures aimed at eliminating the problem. Those concerns were addressed by the statements, that too specific and concrete measures

could result in unwillingness of many states to join the resolution in order not to take too many obligations upon themselves. Recalling United Nations resolutions which I studied while preparing for the Conference, I had to admit that it was the way real UN formulated its decisions. To be frank, it doesn't make you feel much better, but at least gives you general understanding why six years after adopting the Millennium Declaration, indicators throughout the world are still so unexpectedly low.

The importance of education was a unifying conference theme. Reducing rates of child and maternal mortality, achieving gender equality, ensuring sanitation and access to fresh water, combating money laundering — all those agenda items turned out to be closely linked with lack of education and, as a result, almost all resolutions included clauses, encouraging member states to promote education in certain sphere(s) and/or to raise effectiveness of existing educational programs.

Though our colleagues were consensus-oriented, we found that promoting our ideas was a tough thing to do. The idea had to be transformed, combined with those of others, discussed with territorial blocks — EU for me — and promoted in other blocks, such as the African Union or G77. Only then was it possible to include the idea into the resolution. While understanding the necessity of achieving compliance with the Millennium Declaration and elaborating ways to achieve MDGs, delegates didn't forget about the national interests of the countries they represented. In fact, this made the whole process of negotiation as close to discussions at the real UN as possible.

Editor's Note: Olga Bukach '04 is now the assistant managing director of the Model UN club at the Russian Far East State University (MUNRFE). She recently participated in a Parliament Debate Tournament and President's Council in Komsomolsk-na-Amure, and taught at an advanced leadership school in the same city. Currently, she studies in the French and English Linguistics Departments at Far East State University and coaches Russian teams that are preparing for the 2007 Model UN Conference in San Francisco. Olga further plans to initiate a summer school project Summer Assembly. ■

Alumni Beat

The FLEX alumni network across Eurasia is led by a team of 21 Alumni Coordinators, who work for American Councils part-time – a minimum of 15 hours each week, and often many more — to support alumni in their cities, regions, and countries. They have limited funds made available from the U.S. State Department to help alumni develop and implement events and projects. They also manage listservs to share information about jobs, educational opportunities, and alumni events. To sign up to receive information by email, contact the FLEX Alumni Coordinator for your country/region. (See addresses on the back cover.)

This winter, Alumni Coordinators have focused on recruiting active alumni to serve as volunteer FLEX Alumni City Representatives in more than 100 cities across Eurasia. This expanding network means alumni can connect with more projects and activities in an increasing number of cities and regions. To find out if there is a City Rep in your area, or to become a City Rep, contact your Alumni Coordinator.

In this Alumni Beat, you'll read about some of the outstanding projects, which took place this winter in each of the countries in which American Councils administers the FLEX alumni program.

Armenia

On December 8 and 9, amateur actors from the FLEX Alumni Association and American University of Armenia (AUA) performed Thornton Wilder's farce *The Matchmaker*. The team rehearsed for over two months. When they finally played to a full house of almost 300 both evenings, the audience responded with delight to the characters' scheming attempts to find their perfect mates. AUA English teacher Melissa Brown directed the English language production. The 16-person cast included nine FLEX alumni. FLEX Alumni Coordinator Sonya Armaghanyan '04 did an outstanding job as the project's stage manager. In addition to offering Yerevan English speakers an entertaining glimpse of American life in the late nine-



Gevorg Avetikyan '04 (L) Demonstrates his Theatrical Talents in The Matchmaker by Thorton Wilder

teenth century, the drama project brought in more than \$1,300, which has been used to support the children's playroom at the Fanariyan National Oncology Center, as well as the AUA Department of English Programs Experimental English Classes. Alumni purchased educational games, toys, and other items to brighten the Center's playroom.

Azerbaijan

The Avian Influenza Awareness roundtable attracted 22 FLEX alumni from Baku. They participated in a discussion and reception at the residence of the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Azerbaijan Jason P. Hyland on February 5. U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Colleen Graffy, visiting from Washington, D.C., introduced the program to the 57 guests in attendance and made opening remarks. Participants learned about the effects of bird flu and ways that various organizations are attempting to combat it in Azerbaijan and worldwide. Representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Medical Corps (IMC), World Health Organization (WHO), PRAGMA, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Ministry of Health and U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan held discussions and gave briefings about their work on the bird flu issue. Following the roundtable discussion and reception, alumni met to talk about the outcomes of the roundtable, inform other alumni and youth NGOs about the dangers, and brainstorm programs and activities that will educate and inform citizens of Azerbaijan on a community and national level. Alumni, informed about the bona fide threat of avian influenza, immediately began conducting outreach presentations and educational seminars at schools on this issue in February.

Belarus



Vadzim Marasanau '06 and Volha Smirnova '06 Raise Funds in front of the Miraculous Tree

For the second year now, Minsk alumni organized the Miraculous Christmas Tree charity drive project, which helped give hundreds of local orphans a bountiful Christmas and New Year. This year, alumni teamed up with Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), a student organization at Belarusian National Technical University. Volunteer organizers decorated a Christmas tree with pictures of the children from the Ivenets orphanage and their holiday wishes. Customers of Hippo hypermarket, where the tree was located, were asked to make a child's dream come true by purchasing a present and placing it under the tree. The tree and the venue were donated by the store's administration. Twelve FLEX alumni and SIFE volunteers staffed the tree

everyday from 10-9 from December 22-27 and encouraged shoppers to donate a gift. The Belarusian National TV channel caught wind of the charity drive and covered the project on the evening news on December 26. More than 300 presents were donated, which provided presents for not only the Ivenets orphanage, but also for orphanages in Navinky, Baraulany and Zhdanovichy.

Georgia



Eka Rostomashvili '06 and Miranda Kemoklidze '06 Selling Hot Drinks at the Shardeni Street Action

Continuing a favorite alumni tradition in Tbilisi, on December 24 about 30 alumni joined the "Shardeni Group" -- a coalition of students and recent graduates from various universities -- in holding the annual Shardeni Street charity drive action. The aim of this year's action was to raise funds by support provincial orphanages in Dusheti, Martkhopi, and Saguramo. In advance, donations of photos, books, and Christmas presents were collected and then on the day of the street action, the public was invited to purchase the exhibited pieces at affordable prices to support the charity effort. Exotic sweets, tea, coffee, and mulled wine were also available. The event attracted many young people from Tbilisi, government officials, and representatives of the international community. They raised over \$1,600 on the day of the action, plus another \$5,000 through other donations. As organizers explained, their goal was to "convince society that even with a very small donation they can improve the state of these children and make them feel important and remembered, they are not left alone in this country and that New Year and Christmas brings miracles for everyone."

Kazakhstan

FLEX alumni organized the first meeting of the Contact Club in Almaty on November 25, 2006. The club brings together foreigners and locals for cultural exchange, language practice and community service. The Almaty club is modeled on the Kyzylorda Contact Club, which was started by a Peace Corps volunteer and the Kyzylorda English Language Teachers Association in 2000. Twenty university students, as well as several international visitors, joined the FLEX alumni for the first meeting. After discussing the goals of the Contact Club, everyone in the room introduced him/herself, and then divided into groups to brainstorm recreational and community service activities. Since that first meeting, the club has been holding meetings and events each month. In December they participated in theatrical training and raised money for a local orphanage.

Alumni Beat

Kyrgyzstan

This fall, FLEX alumni in Kyrgyzstan began cooperating with an organization that aims to enrich the lives of the local elderly population, Babushka Adoption Center. They attended the Center's meetings and took part in fundraising activities. With the holiday spirit in the air, alumni began brainstorming ways to give the elderly in their community an unforgettable gift. Gulnisa Asymova '05, wanting to use her knowledge of Spanish language and culture, teamed up with other alumni and the Babushka Adoption Center, to organize a Spanish Fiesta fundraiser. On December 8, Boris Pilipenko '99 and Gulnisa performed the salsa and meringue for the more than 200 visitors of the Spanish Christmas party. Their imagination and efforts helped the Center to raise more than \$1,500 for the elderly. But they wanted to do more. So alumni decided to bring young visitors to the elders. Through the Smile Project, they worked with children at the Sokuluk Orphanage to prepare a New Year's celebration. Alumni made holiday cards with the children, helped them to learn New Year's poems, and organized a performance for the celebration. Then on December 23, alumni, orphans, and the elderly celebrated the holiday together, by taking part in skits, singing songs, and sharing holiday cheer. All who participated received a treasured holiday memory.

Moldova

For the ninth year in a row, FLEX alumni and Peace Corps volunteers in Moldova organized the Odyssey of the Mind (OM) competition, an international education event, which puts the creative problem-solving skills of students from kindergarten through college to the test. Preparatory work for this event started in December with trainings for alumni judges, event organization, and logistical tasks. Selected to serve as Odyssey of the Mind Head Judges, Ludmila Bilevschi '97, Ana Ciudnaia '01, Marina Poneatovschi '95 and Ala Ursu '02 participated in training, where they designated their responsibilities, discussed fair and impartial ways to assess performance, and considered effective ways to lead teams. On January 20, the alumnae held a judges' training for 20 FLEX alumni volunteer-judges. Finally, on February 15, over 300 hundred students from 30 schools participated in the competition at the Children's Palace in Chisinau. To learn more about Odyssey of the Mind and why FLEX alumni support this project, go to <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com>.

Russia

A debate tournament and a city representative training conference in Moscow brought more than 70 alumni to Moscow on December 9 and 10. Alumni, who represented all classes from '96 to '06, came from Moscow, Volgograd, Taganrog, Saratov, Samara, Voronezh, Elista, Krasnodar, Kaluga, Tambov, Tula, Yaroslavl, Saransk, and Zarechnyy. In addition, an alumni team from Belarus represented the cities of Minsk, Grodno, Vitebsk, Gomel, and Brest. In the course of the three rounds of debate, experienced debaters who had participated in international tournaments were competing against total novices, and this served to increase the excitement levels



City Reps Svetlana Kade '06 (Krasnodar), Elena Ivanova '02 (Taganrog), Oleg Tsebekov '06 (Elista) and Volgograd Alumni Coordinator Elena Fomenko '03 Discuss Spring Projects

of the entire event. Then 18 volunteer City Representatives, who agreed to take leading roles in organizing events and communicating with alumni in their local communities, exchanged experience on organizing events and developing social partnerships. Both events met their initial goals: ensuring communication and exchange of experience between FLEX alumni and informing them about current alumni opportunities and resources. This resulted in motivating participants to get in touch with and organize activities for alumni in their own communities.

Tajikistan

Ilhom Aliev '05, Inomjon Igamov '05, Bahrom Ismoilov '05, Sitara Kasymova '06, Malika Khakimova '04, and Farkhunda Mirboboeva '05 led classes for the Discovery Through Art School for disabled children from the Chorbogh Orphanage February 6-10. Each day ten children between the ages of eight and 13 with physical and mental disabilities spent two hours learning the basics of art design from professional art teachers at the Professional Art School Academy. Alumni assisted the teachers and treated the children to lunch and a tour through the Dushanbe Exhibition Art Gallery. The children's creations are being displayed at the orphanage and the Art School. Upon the successful completion of the project, the teachers and alumni presented the children with boxes of art supplies. This is just the latest in a series of alumni activities designed to offer opportunities for creative expression and help increase the self-esteem for children with disabilities in Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan

Thirty-five FLEX alumni were among the 85 U.S. Government exchange alumni who took



Malika Khakimova '04 Assists a Young Artist

part in a Turkmenistan-wide alumni reunion at the end of January at the President Hotel in Ashgabat. The alumni attendees shared ideas and outlined plans for community development projects on health, education, minority groups and youth development, discussed strategies to develop the Alumni Association, and deliberated on the role of public relations in community development plan. Ene Tuyliyeva '01 gave a presentation about her achievements and experience while working as a public relations officer at Pittsburgh State University. Other alumni described events and activities they had undertaken in cooperation with participants from other programs. Regional Information Resources Officer from the U.S. State Department Mary Nell Bryant and Deputy Director to the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy for South and Central Asia from the U.S. State Department Katherine Van De Vate also attended.

Ukraine

Fifteen newly appointed City Representatives and five Alumni Coordinators from Ukraine



Reunion in Ashgabat Brings Alumni Together

took part in a training conference on January 26-27 in Lviv. The training was held to bring together Ukrainian City Representatives, familiarize them with the goals of the alumni program, and provide them with skills and information necessary to effectively carry out projects and involve more local alumni. Alumni Coordinators and guest speakers organized and led sessions on project management, fundraising and leadership. Special attention was also given to the importance of keeping in touch with alumni and updating information. Alumni Coordinator for Southern Ukraine Volodymyr Bilay summed up the enthusiasm that the City Reps took away from the conference. "Many of these alumni had never taken part in a FLEX conference before, some not even a re-entry orientation. They left the conference with what I think are amazing and original ideas that will really help to develop the alumni community and civil society in their hometowns!"

Bradley Bits

Would you like to see your name in the Bradley Bits? We are waiting to hear from you. Just send an update about your work, studies, or other achievements to bradleyherald@actr.u.

Class of '94

Russia

Yekaterina Vodopyan visited San Francisco, CA as an Open World Program facilitator for a delegation of environmentalists and reports that among the highlights were visiting a green workplace and riding in a hybrid car. She and her husband Bogdan have a daughter, Evdokia (Dounia), who is three. Yekaterina works in HR consulting, training and development, currently as a training manager for Kronverk-Cinema, a growing chain of movie theaters. kotoprovod@mail.ru

Class of '95

Russia

Osman Mazukabzov (Nalchik), concerned about the high costs of Internet in Kabardino-Balkaria, organized an online conference between Nalchik and New York. High Internet prices and decreasing numbers of Internet cafes in Nalchik were among the issues discussed. High level government officials and journalists participated. osman999@hotmail.com

Class of '96

Azerbaijan

Fariz Ismailzade coordinated the teams and participants of the Azerbaijani Business Case Competition in Baku in December. He was also invited to a conflict resolution workshop at NATO in Brussels, and recently attended a policy research workshop in Turkey. In January, he accepted a job at the newly created Diplomatic Academy at the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan. fismailzade@gmail.com

Minai Massimova was hired as the general manager of General Nutrition Corp (GNC) in Azerbaijan. minashka@yahoo.com

Russia

Anna Kharlamova Bara (Novosibirsk) received a Master's degree in history from the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary in June 2003. She then began working towards a PhD at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, where she currently resides with her husband and three year-old son. In 2006 Anna interrupted her studies for a traineeship in the European Commission (Brussels, Belgium), where she was a member of the Lisbon Strategy Task Force in the Secretary General of the European Commission. Anna.Bara@EUI.eu

Alexey Bulokhov (Novocherkassk), who is currently based in Minneapolis, MN, is working as the West Bus co-director for 2007 Soulforce Equality Ride. The purpose of Soulforce is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance. Last year Alexey rode the bus as an activist and this year he is one of the leaders in taking 50 young activists to 32 Christian college and university campuses to engage students, faculty, and administrators

in conversation about the damaging effects of homophobic doctrine. www.EqualityRide.com. fsagal@yahoo.com

Yuri Manjiev (Elista) completed a Fulbright Fellowship at New York University in 2005 and graduated with a Master's of Law in international taxation degree (LL.M.). He then joined Ernst & Young in New York, the company for which he had previously worked in Moscow. In November 2006, he took a job in London with a former New York University professor, who started a U.S. tax practice within KPMG LLP for U.S. clients doing business in Europe, including Russia, and for Europeans with operations in the U.S. Yuri is ready to consult with alumni interested in careers in tax consulting via email. He agrees to serve as a FLEX London city representative. He writes, "please send e-mails of the London alums and we'll see what we can do (beyond going to a pub together) to organize something useful!" y.mandzhiev.1@alumni.nyu.edu

Ukraine

Andriy Zozulinsky is currently living in Reutlingen, Germany. In February, he graduated from the Reutlingen University School of International Business with an MBA degree in International Business Development. He also works in Germany for Volz-Group as project manager for business development in Russia and Ukraine. andriy.zozulinsky@gmx.de

Class of '97

Armenia

Nona Abazyan defended her Master's thesis on the topic "EU-Armenia-Russia Triangle: Armenian Complementarity as an Inevitability for EU-Russia Interrelations in the South Caucasus." She completed the degree as part of a new English language social science degree program, Transformation in the South Caucasus, at the Center for Social Sciences, which brings students together from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia since September 2005. She is also employed by Reflection NGO, within the scopes of Your Right – Your Choice as the Civic Programs coordinator for Parliamentary Elections 2007, a rural community public awareness program which involves nine villages of Lori Region. donna@freenet.am

Kyrgyzstan

Medina Aitieva conducted and published research on bride kidnapping. She is a lecturer of sociology at American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in the sociology department.

Russia

Maria Ivanova (Uliyanovsk) is currently enrolled in the LLM program at the University of Alberta, Canada, and is writing a dissertation on the issues of the intellectual property protection in e-commerce in developing countries. marsileza@rambler.ru

Ukraine

Oksana Potapenko works as a communications officer for KPMG. In 2005 she completed a Master's degree in history of philosophy at National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Between 2003-2005, she worked as an assistant to a Member of Parliament. At the beginning of 2006, she joined the press service

of Kyiv candidate for mayor Vitaliy Klitchko. oharmony@yahoo.com

Class of '98

Moldova

Galina Mistreanu Oglebay is studying to receive a B.A. in hotel administration and finance at the University of Las Vegas. She was named Marketer of the Year for Fairfield Resort in 2004. Presently, she works as a Sarbanes-Oxley/Accounting Consultant for Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas and is in the process of being licensed as a Certified Public Accountant galina80@hotmail.com

Maxim Anmeghichean has been appointed Program Director of the Brussels-based NGO European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association. He was also part of the International Panel of Experts in Human Rights Law to develop the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Maxim serves as advisory board member of SHARP (Sexual Health and Rights Program) of the Open Society Institute (NYC). maxim@ilga-europe.org

Tajikistan

Aziza Baimatova was awarded an OSI/Soros scholarship to Central European University, Budapest, Hungary in 2004. She graduated cum laude in 2005, with a Master's degree in Gender Studies. Upon graduation, she worked as an intern for International Youth Network (IYN) headquarters in Aarhus, Denmark. She is now employed by American Councils in Dushanbe as an administrator for the Open World program for Tajikistan. alrami70@hotmail.com

Class of '99

Belarus

Natalia Kripinevich is working as a Citigold assistant at Citibank in Moscow. natik26@yahoo.com

Class of '00

Armenia

Tatevik Davtyan is now pursuing a Master's degree in development and governance from the Institute of Development Policy Management at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. In 2005 she completed a Master's degree in political science from Central European University. Tatevic.Davtyan@yahoo.com

Ukraine

Mykola Pekh (Lviv) participated in a Model UN competition at the Odesa National University and won the award for best speaker of the competition. mpekh@mail.lviv.ua

Class of '01

Belarus

Mariya Trimailova (Brest) is working on a Master's degree in real estate management at Royal Technological University in Stockholm. maria.trimailova@gmail.com

Class of '02

Kyrgyzstan

Urmat Imankulov is the director of the NGO Center for Youth Initiatives. Every

Bradley Bits

month he organizes debates for high school and university students. Learn more about this organization at www.e-debate.org. imankulov@gmail.com

Russia

Nikolay Porokhov (Yakutsk) donated 10 bags of clothes to the Moscow FLEX alumni clothing drive this fall by organizing his own clothing drive in his dormitory at Moscow State Linguistics University, where he studies translation. skaska13@mail.ru

Kseniya Semyonova (Cheboksary) conducted a series of workshops for 50 high school students at the Seagull camp in Chuvashia on December 9-12. The workshops included leadership games, resume writing, and job interview training, as well as linguistics days, and economics modeling. The main goal of this project was to teach children some basic things about languages and economics, to show them how economic processes function, using examples from the U.S. and western European countries. usksenka@yahoo.com

Ukraine

Olena Rabtsun participated in one of the largest and most important economic events in Eastern and Central Europe, the Economic Forum, in Krynica, Poland, which took place on September 6-9. She wrote and presented an essay on the topic of Europe in 2025. Elena's work focused on the problems of integration and globalization in Europe. olena.rabtsun@gmail.com

Class of '03

Georgia

Nini Abzalava was hired as a short-term contractor at the World Vision Mission to Georgia. nabzalava@yahoo.com

Russia

Aleksey Valyugin (Nizhny Novgorod) participated in the Education Without Borders conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in February. He was invited to attend after submitting his research paper, The Incentive of Education as an Indispensable Tool to Fight World Poverty. valyugin_alex@hotmail.com

Ukraine

Alla Myshalova, FLEX Alumni Coordinator for Lviv and western Ukraine, was chosen to intern at the Canadian Parliament through the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program. Detailed information on the CUPP program can be found at www.katedra.org. She was also awarded a scholarship to participate in the American Institute of Political and Economic Systems Conference in Prague this coming summer. myshalova_alla@yahoo.com

Class of '04

Kazakhstan

Assel Baltabayeva, **Marzhan Serekova**, and **Dinara Urazova**, students in the department of international affairs, participated in the Belarusian Model United Nations conference and hope to organize events for Global Youth Service Day in collaboration with the Belarusian Cultural Center. asselbaltabayeva@gmail.com, marzhan_s@hotmail.com, dinara_urazova@yahoo.com

Kyrgyzstan

Diana Mamatova won a Higher Education and Scholarship Program scholarship to fund her studies at the American University in Bulgaria. mamatovad@gmail.com

Class of '05

Azerbaijan

Gafar Ganizade opened The Internet Technologies Service Center (ITSC), an information technologies company in December.

Kazakhstan

Neilya Khairova became the chairperson of the Tatar Cultural Centre at the Zanger Youth Centre and helped to organize a charity concert at a local orphanage. rinell_kz@yandex.ru

Aiman Yedigeyeva was named the most active alumnus/a in Kazakhstan for December. Her achievements include establishing the Contact Club, actively participating in a fundraising activity for a local orphanage, and diligently updating the database of all FLEX alumni in Kazakhstan. She was also hired as a website designer for the Kazakhstan branch of *The Herald Tribune* magazine. a.kayirbek@gmail.com

Turkmenistan

Sabina Hojakuliyeva (Turkmenabat) organized a new club in January, the Good Club, to develop and support community services, fundraising activities, sports programs, and events that benefit orphans, the disabled, the elderly, and other people in need. She also leads a debate club. actassistant06@yahoo.co.uk

Zulfiya Orazova worked from September to December 2006 as a teacher of English for adults in Ashgabat International School. Currently she is a secretary-translator at Burren Resources Petroleum Ltd Oil and Gas Company. For three months, Zulfiya led a philosophy class for 15 local high school students on Saturdays. She also led a Leadership and Citizenship workshop for teenagers and adults. zulya_fsa@yahoo.com

Ukraine

Alina Manuilova designed and organized four workshops to develop creativity, imagination and artistic skills in the children at an orphanage in Kherson. Activities included art lessons, a poetry reading, and dance classes, all designed to encourage appreciation of art in its many forms. The goal of these workshops was to include the orphans in a Valentine's Day performance *The Neptune's Wedding* on February 14. prostobuyok@yahoo.com

Andriy Bryn (Lviv) was appointed president of the Lviv Regional Civic Youth Organization Young Power. This organization is a youth department of the political Party of Entrepreneurs and Industrials of Ukraine, which is a part of National Union Our Ukraine – represented in the Parliament. andriy_united@yahoo.com

Class of '06

Kazakhstan

Nursultan Yeleussinov was chosen to be the FLEX City Representative in Atyrau. Nursultan is the president of his school's English Club and published an article about his experiences in America in the NILE national newspaper. nurkan@list.ru

Kyrgyzstan

Kaliman Bayaliev painted the Serofimovskiy elderly house in Bishkek one day in the fall. She spent the whole day in the house, not only repairing the walls, but also talking to the elderly residents. This action was organized by the Resource Center for elderly people in Bishkek. justkaliman@yahoo.com

Aliya Kodjoshaliev received a full scholarship to study at Ohio State University. aliyakuzya@yahoo.com

Russia

Olga Chervontseva (Volgograd) organized a New Year's carnival at Volgograd State Pedagogical University. More than 300 students attended the event. chpbc@mail.ru

Turkmenistan

Kristina Safarova (Turkmenbashi) organized a wide range of events during January, including a weekly debate club, music club, teen club meetings, a movie night, a roundtable discussion about conflict resolution, and a presentation about Martin Luther King Jr. Day. kristy_31@mail.ru

Ekaterina Sultanova (Dashoguz) leads numerous classes, clubs, and movie nights at the American Corner in Dashoguz. In preparation for Valentine's Day, the drama club wrote an original script and then performed a play in English. yekaterina_sultanova@yahoo.com

All Classes

Russia

Aleksey Khokhulya '06 and **Alena Zirko '05** organized a bi-monthly English club for blind children in Novosibirsk. Alena also sang in the Creative Children Choir performance in Moscow, organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the fall. alex_hohulya@mail.ru, a_zirko@yahoo.com

Tajikistan

Ilhom Aliev '05, **Zebohon Alimova '06**, **Inomjon Igamov '05**, **Bahrom Ismailov '05**, and **Naimjon Sadulloev '06** participated in a Model United Nations International Conference, which took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on November 9-10, 2006. They were among over 150 students from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan who attended the conference, which was organized by Open Society Institute (OSI) and International Debate Education Association (IDEA) for students with outstanding leadership skills and good knowledge of current politics. These students, representing 43 different countries, negotiated issues relating to production and use of weapons of mass destruction. a_ilhomjon@yahoo.com, zam_azm@rambler.ru, inomjohn@yahoo.com, write2bib@yahoo.com, name16@mail.ru

ISFIT 2007: Georgian Alumni Head to Trondheim, Norway

Lana Chkhartishvili '04
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I participated in what is often called "the world's largest student festival" ISFIT 2007, which took place in Trondheim, Norway, February 15-26. It was a great experience personally and professionally. As you know, there are many student festivals that take place in different parts of the world and all of them suggest some interesting and "unique" offering to make their festival attractive to young people. I'd like to point out that ISFIT was beneficial in large part because the Norwegian students themselves organized it. Over 800 students from the town of Trondheim were involved in organizing this event for participants from all over the world. Students arranged for guests to experience a real cultural exchange: we lived with volunteer host families who offered us accommodations and breakfasts. The ten-day festival included 16 different workshops, taking place on different campuses of the famous Trondheim University. The program included seminars conducted by guest speakers and debates afterwards between students and professors from all over the world. Global Fiesta was one of my favorite events during ISFIT 2007; all participants had the opportunity to make a five-minute presentation about their countries and exchange cultural differences. During my workshop on press freedom, we had the opportunity to discuss this global problem and try to find solutions.

In fact, this year ISFIT hosted six FLEX alumni from Georgia: Mikheil Benidze '06, Maya Giorgadze '05, Nino Janiashvili '03, Ia Okhanashvili '05, Nino Samvelidze '05, and me. Ia Okhanashvili, who attended the workshop Students in Struggle, explained that her group talked about democratic development in differ-



Alumni Take a Break from the Global Fiesta (from left) Maya Giorgadze '05, Mikheil Benidze '06, Lana Chkhartishvili '04, and Georgian Friend

ent countries and about students' role in shaping the future well-being of their countries. They worked on Sudan issues and discussed other conflict regions in developing countries. She writes, "in my workshop the students from Palestine and Zimbabwe talked about different problems and we together tried to find solutions... we decided to make a website where all participants could post problems that are very relevant in their countries, and we together would do our best to help our fellow friends. I would like to thank all participants from my workshop, [...as they helped me] learn and understand more about the real situation in the world today."

Maya Giorgadze and her Defining Culture = Defining Identity? group looked at how minorities and native people are often excluded both politically and geographically. They tried to answer the question "How does this exclusion affect cultural diversity and should the international community interfere with cultural development?" during their workshop. Maya

writes that "ISFIT 2007 was one of the best experiences I have ever had. I met people from different countries and we exchanged our cultural experience. ISFIT 2007 made me think about whether who I am determines what I do? Or is it: what I do determines who I am?"

I highly encourage alumni to apply for this great opportunity. The next International Student festival will be held in 2009. The only cost you need to cover is travel, but even here, your local universities or organizations may be willing to assist you financially. Also, some students did receive travel grant support from ISFIT. Good luck and for more information please visit the website: www.isfit.org.

Editor's note: FLEX alumni from Azerbaijan and Moldova also attended ISFIT. ■

American Councils Closed Operations in Uzbekistan in 2006

On May 29, 2006, American Councils was informed by the Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan that it had instituted proceedings to liquidate the organization's representative office, accusing the organization of violating domestic regulations. After 14 years of operations in Uzbekistan, during which more than 2,700 talented high school and university students, teachers and professionals participated in ACCELS-administered exchange programs, American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS closed its operations in Uzbekistan.

American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS hopes that its activity will be reconsidered and that the organization will again be

invited to administer cultural and educational exchanges in the future. Until that time, FLEX alumni are invited to stay in touch by contacting the U.S. Embassy via e-mail: Tashkent-Alumni@state.gov or the website: <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/alumni>.

Currently the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan maintains a database for alumni of all U.S. Government exchange programs. More than 1,000 alumni are registered and receive updates from the PAS Alumni Coordinator. Alumni are also encouraged to participate in the online community for Eurasian alumni at the State Alumni website at <https://alumni.state.gov>. This website provides a number of services for alumni of USG Exchange Programs. It also allows FLEX alumni from different countries to keep in contact. ■

Introducing TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication

Yulia Oboznova '00
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 actrtest1@actr.ru

Any student who has participated in the Moscow FLEX testing in the past six years is sure to have had contact with me, because upon returning to Moscow after my FLEX year, I immediately started working at American Councils. My name is Yulia Oboznova and I was the FLEX Program Coordinator in Moscow since 2001.

I would like to talk to you about the value of networking among FLEX alumni. For the past six years, I have seen co-workers come and go, and new projects initiated and cancelled. Those that are most successful and have the best result are those where innovative and enthusiastic people are ready to work together for a common goal. The FLEX program thrives to this day because of strong alumni ties and positive personal relations among its constituents. It would be virtually impossible for the FLEX program to flourish without the support of open-minded and eager U.S. and Eurasian government officials, accommodating ministries, school directors, teachers, and host families, and of course, you – the dedicated FLEX alumni. The reason that FLEX works and is often called the best U.S. government exchange program that ever existed is because of the connections that we have and the positive goals that we work for – youth leadership, the development of civil society, and the hope for a more dynamic and informed group of future leaders.

Life has recently taken me on a different path. After graduating from Moscow State Linguistics University, the American Center for Education and Testing was more suited to my career aspirations. The center administers Educational Testing Services Language Proficiency, Academic, and Professional Certification tests. The test that I market is the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), an internationally recognized exam, used by approximately 8,000 companies to make recruitment decisions, evaluate language training programs, set concrete learning targets, and assign employees for conferences and training seminars held abroad. The purpose of the TOEIC test is to evaluate English proficiency for the global workplace and is often used as a standard for



Natalya Chizhikova and Yulia Oboznova '00 (R) Promote TOEIC in Eurasia

proving English language proficiency by human resources departments. It is currently available in several regions in Russia, and is expected to reach a landmark five million test takers worldwide in 2007.

Although I have only worked for the American Center and promoted the TOEIC test for the past year, I have found that my contacts from working with the FLEX program have been the most eager to talk to their employers, seek out sources for me, and be of assistance. I encourage you to ask for help and ideas from your fellow FLEX alumni. We are an association of over 15,000 members strong!

First and foremost, I would like you to know about the TOEIC test and consider its effectiveness in your business. Feel free to contact me directly with any questions or ideas as to how the TOEIC test can be introduced to businesses in Russia and other countries in Eurasia. For more information about the test you can visit our website: <http://www.englishtests.ru> or contact me at actrtest1@actr.ru. Thanks and remember that together everybody achieves more! ■

FLEX Family News

From Olena Vydro '03
 Kharkiv, Ukraine/Albuquerque, NM
 lena_5813@yahoo.com

During my FLEX stay I established really close ties with my host family. They treated me as their own child, even though they have three biological kids. The year indeed changed my life and perspective. But other than a lot of business and academic opportunities, it gave me lots of people who have become very dear,



Olena Vydro '03 (middle) with host brother and sisters

even irreplaceable in my life. Since I left, we have kept in touch. The summer after my FLEX year all five members of my host family made a very courageous step and flew to Ukraine. They stayed for a month, meeting my family and friends, and seeing Ukraine the way it is. And they absolutely loved it. This stay brought something really special to their family: they adopted a Ukrainian baby boy from a Kharkiv orphanage and took him home with them. It was such an experience going with them to the orphanage, and seeing this lucky baby finally get a strong loving family. All the kids immediately adored their baby brother, as he was as cute as can be. They took him home and named him Layne. He was very scared. At the age of 14 months, he could not even crawl, which is definitely a result of lack of attention. A year later I visited all of them again in the U.S., and the following year, too. In the summer of 2006 he was an absolutely different kid. He is very active, speaks English, and is joyful and full of tenderness and love. Our families have become really close, and we believe that is the real goal of a cultural exchange. Weird or what, but the day they signed the documents and took the



Mariya Karpova's Three Musketeers

baby home is the exact same day that they saw me for the first time, so we really are sure that all of that is much more than a coincidence. So I would love to thank FLEX for giving me such an opportunity of changing my life, and giving this baby Layne an awesome loving family.

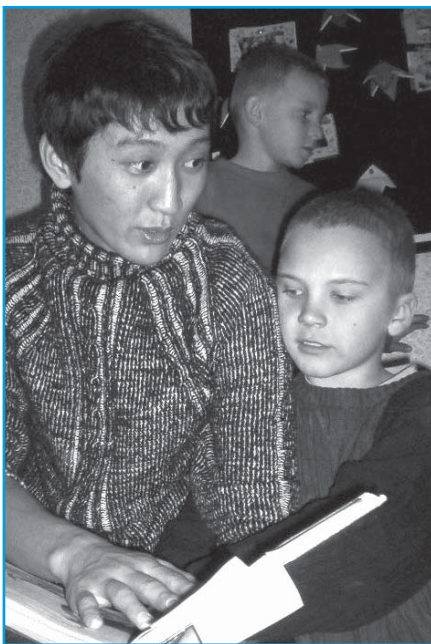
Maria Fefelova Karpova '95 graduated from Novosibirsk State Technical University and is working at home raising her three children Matvey (5), Alyosha (3), and Vika (8 months). karmashek@inbox.ru ■

Essay

Winning FLEX Alumni Photos Show the Faces of Community Service Across Eurasia

Gulnisa Asymova '05 from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan was awarded first place for her photo "Children – Our Future" in the 2006 Faces of FLEX Photo Contest. FLEX managers at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Washington, D.C., chose her photo from among more than 270 submissions to this year's alumni photography contest. Her photo shows Nurdin Nurmanbetov '06 reading to a little boy at the Sokuluk orphanage. Nurdin was one of the alumni in Bishkek who became part of the Scholastic's Read for Life global read-a-thon. Alumni joined teachers, librarians, and volunteers around the world, who read for 2,007 seconds to millions of children on December 8. The FLEX team of Nargiza Ajimatova '05, Bibinur Alibaeva '06, Gulnisa Asymova '05, Aliya Madylova '05, Tynys Myrsabekov '06, Nurdin Nurmanbetov '06, and Gulkair Obolbekova '06 read stories to a group of 17 children. This photo also serves to tell the much bigger story about the community service projects FLEX alumni do, and especially the creative ways they find to offer orphan children both educational activities and emotional support across Eurasia!

The second place prize went to Mikheil Benidze '06 of Tbilisi, Georgia, for the photo "I Remember." He took the picture during the November "We Do Remember" project, when Georgian FLEX alumni spent a day distributing gift baskets to and visiting with the elderly residents from Tbilisi's Satnoeba House. In Mikheil's photo, Mrs. Eter, one of the residents, reminisces with Lana Chkhartishvili '04 about her sports career as a runner. Satnoeba is home to many who were famous athletes, dancers, and nurses during WWII. The FLEX alumni chose to celebrate the American holiday of Thanksgiving and St. George's Day, which fell on the same day in 2006, by showing their support for the elder generation and expressing pride in their country's past and traditions.



Nurdin Nurmanbetov '06 Reads to a Little Boy at the Sokuluk Orphanage

Vadzim Marasanau '06 from Minsk, Belarus took third place for his photo "Halloween Celebration in Ivenets Orphanage." FLEX alumni, along with several students from the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts in Minsk, celebrated Halloween with children from a local orphanage. They are featured in Vadzim's photo conducting a singing contest.

Fourth place went to Zulfiya Orazova '05 from Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan for the photo "Art Class and Selbi" in which Selbi Durdiyeva '06 is shown leading one of the art classes, which she conducted for interested children at the Educational Advising Center in Ashgabat every Saturday. During this class, she taught the children how to use acrylics, work with cardboard

as a medium and exhibited artwork created by one of her students.

Inomdjon Igamov '05 is awarded fifth place for the photo "Discussing the Cultural Differences Between Tajikistan and the U.S.," during which a group of alumni met with Professor William R. Darrow from Williams College in Massachusetts at the IATP Dushanbe office to discuss the differences between Tajik and American cultures, traditions, and religions. Darrow, a professor of religion, was in Tajikistan researching the history of Tajik nationalism and identity.

And finally, Honorable Mention is awarded to Fuad Abasov '06 from Baku, Azerbaijan for his submission "Team-building Training: 'Free Fall' Activity" taken during a FLEX alumni team-building training activity organized by fellow alumnus Adnan Hadjy-zadeh '00 in cooperation with American Councils' Alumni Coordinator Ruslan Asadov '04. Hadjy-zadeh, a co-founder of "OL!" Azerbaijan Youth Movement, served as the trainer leading the exercises. The purpose of the training was to give alumni a better understanding of what it meant to work as a team, and encourage them in carrying out group activities and implementing projects, in developing team-building skills and staying connected to the values and purposes of the FLEX program.

See a slide show of all the winning photos at http://www.americancouncils.org/newsDetail.php?news_id=NzY=

In the near future, the Faces of FLEX Alumni Photo Contest website will be improved to protect it against hackers. The 2007 contest and submission instructions will be announced widely. In the meantime, keep the contest in mind and don't forget to take pictures at upcoming alumni events. You could be a winner! ■

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>
<http://www.millenniumcampaign.org>
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Home.aspx>
<http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/>
<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>
<http://www.conflicttransformation.org> — Alliance for Conflict Transformation
<http://www.ashoka.org> — Ashoka
<http://www.iyvs.org> — International Youth Volunteerism Summit
<http://www.changemakers.net/journal/300606/>
<http://www.sorce.info> — Students Organizing Conventions Everywhere
<http://www.unglobalcompact.org> — UN's Global Compact
<http://www.makepovertyhistory.org> — Campaign Against Poverty

MDG Links

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Profiles



Iryna Mazur

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Education: Kyiv National Linguistic University, 4th year of studies, Interpreter, major – Italian and English languages

Current place of work and title: Ukrainian Nationwide Youth Non-Governmental Organization Youth CAN, Acting Director

Highlights of your work: A definite highlight of my work would be Camp Rah-Rah (StartPoint) – a six-day long summer retreat that gathers over 100 active youth from all over Ukraine every summer. It's an exciting, fun, and motivational event during which participants attend classes on leadership, civic responsibility, diversity etc., and design their own community projects. Apart from that it's also a great time among the brightest people of Ukraine, songs, cheers, team challenges, talent shows, a lot of craziness, open-mindedness, and good friends.

My personal and professional goals/plans: I would like to improve professionally and get a good education in order to work for the betterment of life in Ukraine.

How I feel about the future of my country: After having worked with Ukrainian youth for two years now, I've realized that our country has a great future. I think that we have the brightest, smartest, and most active youth in the world. Young people do care about the future of our country; they really take action to change the world around and strive to improve life in their communities. I think that having such great young leaders really proves that Ukraine's future is in good hands.

Right now I'm reading: *Greed* by Elfriede Jelinek

The FLEX Program is important because: The FLEX Program inspires people, it helps them believe in themselves, it opens up the whole new world of opportunities and new friends, it brings together the smartest young people from many countries, it stresses the importance of being socially responsible, it opens people's minds, it helps in understanding cultural diversity, it makes people tolerant, it ROCKS!

What I'd like to say to fellow alumni: Dear fellow FLEX alumni, you are a really important part of the whole program, because it's you who prove everything written above, you prove that the FLEX Program is outstanding by projects that you implement, by initiatives that you do, by events that you organize, and by your every day life basically. So keep up the good work guys! I feel proud to be one of the FLEX Program alumni thanks to all of you!



Ardak Nurazkhanov

Hometown: Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan,
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Year returned home: 2000
E-mail address: nurazkhan@yahoo.com;
 ardak.n@prolog.kz

Education: East Kazakhstan State Technical University, Honors Diploma, Engineer-Economist-Manager

Current place of work and title: Prolog Central Asia LLP, Almaty, Business Development Director

Highlights of your work: management projects; development of new business directions for the company; establishment and promotion of an affiliated contract mining company.

My personal and professional goals/plans: In the short run, I would like to get a Master's degree in Finance from one of the leading business schools in the U.S. or U.K. In the longer run, I wish to participate in development of Almaty as a major financial center and to bring my contribution to sustained growth of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

A personal achievement I'm proud of: Today, I have made ten people laugh or smile ;-). More seriously, as years go by I tend to pride myself less and to be grateful to God for all achievements and successes.

How I feel about the future of my country: I have a strong confidence in the future of my country and give it a positive outlook. If all citizens serve it, then we will definitely deserve it.

The global issue of greatest concern to me and why: ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION. If only profit figures continue to drive local businesses and people, then we will soon need to implant exhaust filters into our noses.

The local issue of greatest concern to me and why: CORRUPTION. If we do not fight against it at different fronts and levels, then it may soon become a CORE-ACTION in our day-to-day lives.

An interesting FLEX alumni activity in which I took part/organized: FLEX alumni reunion in Almaty for 10th Anniversary of the program. It was not only an interesting and fascinating event. It was also the place where I met Ilya Krapivin '97, who became one of my best friends-for-life since then.

Right now I'm reading: *The Power of Kabbalah*, by Yehuda Berg.

How I have made use of my U.S. experience: In reality, I do NOT have to make a special use of it. It is ALREADY an important part of my life experience, so I live it rather than use it.

The FLEX Program is important because: It brings the world together down to one table. It is like with FOREX – people need it to buy and to sell things in different countries. The same with FLEX – people need it to talk and to listen to each other in different countries and cultures.

What I'd like to say to fellow alumni: Always DO what you DO DO well!!



Emiliya Asadova

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Year returned home: 2002
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 emiliya.asadova@undp.org

Education: Uzbek State University of World Languages, BA in International Journalism

Current place of work and title: United Nations Resident Coordinator System in Uzbekistan, Assistant to the UN Coordination Officer

Highlights of your work: I'm very proud that after my very productive two-year experience as the FLEX Alumni Assistant in ACCELS Uzbekistan, I'm now continuing to do the job I really like doing, which is working with young people. It's worth mentioning that if previously I had worked with FLEX alumni, who were familiar with the community service and volunteerism, I now work with even more young people on developing these two things. Moreover, we are raising awareness that "being the change" for good is the spirit that we as young people and young minds should be bringing to our countries. During my several months of work at the UN, I inspired many young people – our volunteers – to make their contributions towards achieving the MDGs in our country. Together with motivated youth we have started the MDG Youth Network in Uzbekistan.

My personal and professional goals/plans: These are interconnected, since I want to get more experience and new vision on how young people can help to achieve and address MDGs in Uzbekistan and overall continue working for the United Nations. But since I work in an international organization where people of many nationalities work together for a better future, I would like to continue being the change not only in my country, but maybe serve as the UN volunteer in some other developing country in Africa or Latin America. And finally, I would like to connect my wonderful international experience with a degree at the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica, where I will improve my Spanish and meet "agents of positive change" from all over the world.

How I feel about the future of my country: I'm 100% sure that Uzbekistan, although still a young independent country, has a great future and potential. I strongly believe that this will only become a reality if the majority of population, which is young people, will look into the future with hope and most importantly work really hard towards development of our country together.

Right now I'm reading: World Development Report 2007 *Development and the Next Generation* (published annually by the World Bank). Recommend it to all young people in order to understand present and future realities of our generation.

What I'd like to say to fellow alumni: We all, guys, have achieved a lot for and during our exchange year in the U.S., but let's make use of it and use our motivation and experience as the driving force towards achieving the even more ambitious Millennium Development Goals, which will mean a better future for all.

Future Leaders Exchange Offices in Eurasia

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http://www.actr.org/eic/uralsk/
http://www.actr.org/eic/ust-kamenogorsk/
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FUTURE LEADERS EXCHANGE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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