

International Eurasia Press Fund ^{1/}

Quadrennial report for 2011-2014

Introduction

The International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) was constituted by a group of journalists and intelligent individuals, and registered with the Azerbaijan Ministry of justice as an International Non-Governmental Organization in 1992. At the end of 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Union was accompanied by conflicts on national issues. Conflicts in Baltic States and in states on Dniester, in Chechnya, Georgia and Uzbekistan were the political incidents attributed to collapse of the USSR. The conflict over the Nagorniy Karabagh territories started in February 1988, initially on national, then on military basis, speeded the process of collapse of former Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis were displaced from their homeland; and lives were lost including women and children. Despite, outside world couldn't get enough information about these issues yet. Objectivity in reporting was not observed in the global mass media. Therefore a group of friends came together to create an organization that would assist in providing objective firsthand information to the global media communities; so, International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) was established. IEPF firstly purposed to work in the conflict zones taking information from these regions to other global outlets and to journalists who seek breaking news. IEPF was among a small number of organizations that actually interacted with the sufferers of the harsh conditions, particularly the internal displaced persons; IEPF was at the districts of the conflicts getting first-hand information as to the actual events on grounds. Therefore, as the demand for the service of the organization increased, because of the role IEPF was playing, there was a high interest from abroad from journalists to come observe for themselves the stories coming out from the regions. IEPF helped arranged several trips to conflict zones – Karabakh regions, for these journalists despite the limited resources, both financial and human. The journalists who were interested in the issues were mainly journalists from post-Soviet republics, Europe, and from the post Baltic regions. IEPF was headquartered in Baku, and so, the trips were coordinated from Baku, but visits were made to the unoccupied areas of the border territories, including close proximity districts to the disputed Nagorno- Karabakh territories. As IEPF had based its activity in the conflict zones, various challenges of the displaced persons were identified. The working team of the organization was easily noticeable in the conflict districts, for that reason there was a continuous approach to IEPF by these displaced persons to help meet other needs in areas of health, legal challenges, social and psychological needs, etc. Therefore, in the absence of appropriate civil society addressing all these other issues, IEPF started assisting the IDPs and the communities in the conflict areas to meet their needs. The strategy was to increase national and local advocacy on the challenges of these categories of persons. It was based on this added role played by IEPF, and also with the good experience of working with the communities and districts, that IEPF expanded its function to adequately fill the gaps for these communities and to a larger extent, the whole Azerbaijan. Over all these years, the activities of IEPF has evolved to not only

^{1/} Due to a technical error in the online reporting system of the NGO Branch, the organization's report was incorrectly posted to a future reporting period. As a result, although the NGO submitted the 2011-2014 report on time in 2015, it was not presented to the Committee at an earlier session due to a system error. It is therefore being presented at this session to be taken note of.

focus on media, despite that the base is media –as all the initial staff are journalists, but IEPF has branched into 4 main activity directions that are: 1. Media and Civil Society; Development; 2. Refugees and IDPs issues; 3. Community Development; and 4. Peacemaking Actions and Conflict Resolution.

Aims and purposes of the organization:

At the creation of IEPF, besides the conflict in the South Caucasus, there were several regional conflicts especially in the post-Soviet Space. Therefore, IEPF long term strategy was to support global peace irrespective of which part of the world where there is conflict. With the long-term strategy in mind, IEPF crafted the following aim to guide its operations: The aim of IEPF's activity is to collect objective information about armed conflict regions and to distribute them as well as to study and analyze the regional conflicts in the historical, political and in other aspects with the purpose of their peaceful resolution. Because of real danger of arising in Nagorno-Karabakh as regards to escalation of international armed conflicts with intervention of the third side, the peaceful solution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem is a priority direction of IEPF's activities. Due to the strategic function of IEPF, its objective was defined to meet a particular problem existing at a point in time. Presently, IEPF operates in the 4 main activity directions, with each direction functioning as a department, planning and coordinating its own distinctive activities. Working on media and civil society development, IEPF tries to promote independent and free media. To achieve this purpose, IEPF media department frequently participates in world press freedom events, release occasional statements on the state of journalism in Azerbaijan and also publish materials –both prints and online that support the practice of professional journalism. IEPF also contributes to various surveys on the state of media in Azerbaijan and also supports the development of new media in Azerbaijan. In the area of Refugees and IDPs issues, IEPF regularly conducts advocacy for the categories of persons. The challenges of IDPs are frequently talked about on the IEPF website and on the pages of mainstream Newspapers. IEPF has got office location at regions where IDPs are predominantly residing and that has helped IEPF in acquiring a good knowledge of their challenges -socially, physically and psychologically. Besides the IDPs, IEPF work on the level of advocacy for the refugees from abroad in Azerbaijan. Through the responses to surveys collected from refugee groups from Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechen, and Pakistan residing in Azerbaijan, IEPF has initiated several advocacies with our international partners dealing with the issue. Community Development has also formed a fulcrum of all that IEPF is doing in the hinterlands of Azerbaijan, particularly in the conflict zones. IEPF is helping in the post- conflict reconstruction of the communities; through several projects that are primarily in assisting the communities with job creation, and their self- sustainability. Considering that a significant part of IEPF activity is on regional conflict, the organization has made its activities to revolve around peace. Therefore, it is only proper then to say that there is a systematic effort for all IEPF message, either directly implied or indirectly, to be about peace. During the early years of the organization, the project “Peace at home Peace in the Country Peace in the World” was carried out, and ever since, this has remained the motor of the organization. Besides IEPF has held and participated in various regional peace initiative, like conducting the first ever NATO conference in Azerbaijan (December 2002), and then joining in the Mine Clearance Operation in Azerbaijan territories. IEPF joined the project implemented by UNDP “Mine Action Program” in 2000, and since then IEPF plays active role in developing this program. And also with the project “Establishing and Functioning of Azerbaijan Mine Victims Association (AMVA) in 3 districts of

Azerbaijan” (USDoS,WRA/2006-2008) started to help mine victims.

Significant changes in the organization:

During this quadrennial IEPF became a member of UN ECOSOC with General Consultative Status and IEPF delegates in 2014 visited the UN Headquarter office in New York. The outcome of the visit to various UN offices including the office of the Chief of NGO section, ECOSOC, DESA was that IEPF was open to whole new possibilities on how its functions can be strategized to compliment the UN main activities. The trip spurred IEPF to become the member of ECOSOC from Azerbaijan with a General Consultative Status. Since that moment, joining in United Nations events has always remained a top priority for the organization. In November 2011, during the visit of IPI delegations to Baku, IEPF was able to achieve an agenda through the Baku Declaration, which is to establish an IPI Baku regional Initiative in Azerbaijan. This new role provides a new opportunity for IEPF in supporting local media organization to establish greater democracy in Azerbaijan through the promotion of free media, do media developments and supporting professional journalism in Azerbaijan and carry out this experience in different countries. Furthermore, in the same year, Mr. Andrei Abramov, Chief of NGOs Branch, DESA-ECOSOC made a visit to Azerbaijan by invitation of International Eurasia Press Fund. He met with the Head of the Local Executive Power and got acquainted with IEPF’s humanitarian activities and projects conducted in the region. In July 2011, the project “Improvement of Vocational Training Center (VTC) in Tartar through the Construction of Additional Facilities in Center” implemented with financial support of US Department of States and has been serving to the community development in the region. In 2012, IEPF representatives made two trips to the USA in order to continue our activities in promoting sustainable and equal development in Azerbaijan and the region. IEPF has made pursuing achieving the MDGs in Azerbaijan a top priority. For this purpose, the organization has led other national and regional NGOs in propagating MDGs, measuring the index in Azerbaijan; IEPF contributed in online forums during the preparatory process to RIO+20, and also through organizing meetings with various UN agencies in Azerbaijan, IEPF continues to present CSOs standpoint issues concerning MDGs such as eradicating extreme poverty and equal development. From the 22-24 June 2012, IEPF delegations participated in IPI World Congress and General Assembly held in Trinidad and Tobago. At the General Assembly, the Chairman of the IEPF was elected into the IPI Executive Board as the 28th member of the board. IEPF is the member of International Peace Bureau from 2000. In September 2013, the head of the IEPF was elected as a member of High Council of the IPB and as a representative of the 18 countries, included Caucasus, Middle Asia and Near Eastern countries. All these highlighted events had helped define the IEPF vision, particularly becoming the member of ECOSOC. Because the status with the ECOSOC gave us the idea on pursue the priorities on “Sustainable development and the realization of the MDGs at the set goal for 2015. IEPF has strategized its action around the MDGs. As a consequence of that effect, IEPF is a champion of MDGs in Azerbaijan, also in region among the civil society organizations.

Contribution of the organization to the work of the United Nations:

IEPF has worked with the United Nations in Azerbaijan since its first mission to the country. Actually, UN Azerbaijan has always been the model for our organization activities, primarily in our civil society development activities. It is clear that IEPF shares UN core activity direction which is peace building, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance. It is with this in focus

that IEPF has always joined in all UN processes in Azerbaijan. It is also for this purpose that IEPF strived to become member of the United Nations ECOSOC. To join as member, IEPF intention was to become more active in promoting UN mandates in Azerbaijan and also in sharing best practices from Azerbaijan with the UN. And after becoming a member with General Consultative Status these activities have been continued more strategically and result-oriented. Nationally, IEPF has continued to promote the UN with the local NGOs, and the Civil Society organizations. Particularly, IEPF has made priority the promotion of democracy in Azerbaijan without necessary being political or affiliating with any political party. Human rights, gender equality and the advancement of women rights, governance, economic and social development, all these are kept in focus in all of IEPF action plan.

In 2013, IEPF within the framework of multilateral cooperation strategy and successful operation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration and the American State Department, paved the way for the implementation of the new program for the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. Over the last few years, thanks to the successful cooperation with UNICEF, agreement for the implementation of the “Youth Advocate Program” to more than 14 districts in 2014 opened a wide range of opportunities on the implementation of the project as a model in other countries. IEPF connected to the platform of the activities with the objectives of the Sustainable Development and in March 2013 became a member of the Major Group and Stakeholders Branch of the United Nations Environmental Program. In July 2013 IEPF with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Northern Alliance for the sake of the International Cooperation and with the participation of more than 20 NGOs in the CIS region and representatives of the Azerbaijan government organized an international event on “Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals” which defines the contours of SDG Post 2015 and the preparation of the “Baku Declaration” were the pioneer in the former Soviet Union. The program and the declaration which adopted at the end of the meeting were presented for the discussion to the UN High Level Segment meeting.

Participation in meetings of the United Nations:

In February 2012, IEPF representatives participated in the Session of the NGO Committee of ECOSOC of which IEPF report was considered. The report was subsequently approved and passed. IEPF also took the opportunity to participate in the fiftieth session of the Commission for Social Development of the ECOSOC division United Nations resumed for 2012 on the 1st of February until 10th of February. The meeting was follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the 24th special session of the General Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General on the social dimension of the New Partnership for Africa Development; poverty eradication; preparation for and observance of the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. At the session, IEPF made an oral presentation titled: Youth-Poverty and Unemployment: Displacement as a Main Cause of Unequal Opportunities among Azerbaijani Youths and High Level of Youth Unemployment. In line with similar organization approach, IEPF sent an oral statement to ECOSOC for consideration during the Substantive session of 2012, High- Level segment: annual ministerial review substantive session of 2012, which was scheduled in New York, 2-27 July 2012. The statement was approved by the General Assembly and subsequent adopted as a UN document,

translated into the 6 UN official languages. The paper outlined the organization focuses on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger among victims of war through encouraging cooperative and communal agriculture as an effective way to support communities in eradicating extreme poverty. IEPF on July 03, 2012, organized a side event during the High Level Segment 2012. The theme of the event was “meetings of donors and partners in sustainable and inclusive development” and it was in accordance with the general theme: “Promoting productive capacity and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals”. At the event, UN agencies such as UNHCR, UN DPI, UNICEF, UNDP sent top representatives, while CSOs and country mission of Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, United States and Uzbekistan also took part. The meeting brought together global partners and stewards working on community development issues foster network and development a mapping of priority areas to concentrate in eradicating poverty among communities through sharing best practices, consequently, IEPF produced a policy paper that was shared with respective stakeholders. In 2013, September 23-26, IEPF attended the session of UN Commission on Sustainable Development on the topic of “Forward – High Level Political Forum” in New-York and joined the intergovernmental process as the first NGO representative in High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with representatives of 193 member states and UN, intergovernmental agencies, international organizations, key figures of national and local NGOs. IEPF took an active part in preparing the final document which reflected social, economic and ecological aspects, and was presented to be adopted in High Level Political Forum.

Cooperation with United Nations bodies:

In November 2011, IEPF invited Mr. Andrei Abramov, Chief of NGOs Branch, DESA- ECOSOC to visit to Azerbaijan. During the visit he met with several officials from Azerbaijan Republic and participated in the event organized by State Support Council for NGOs. Mr. Andrei Abramov made visits to the Terter region of Azerbaijan and got acquainted with IEPF’s humanitarian activities and projects conducted to the IDPs in the region. Mr. Abramov advised that IEPF enters into partnership with National UN agencies and that IEPF should get a specific focal point issue to focus on; maybe social issues or sustainable development issues. And the way of specializing is to base on country problem like for example human rights, protecting vulnerable, taxation, water problems, sanitation, etc. In July 2012, IEPF organized a side event during the High Level Segment 2012. Chief of NGO Branch, UN DESA Andrei Abramov, representative of the US Mission in UN Kareen Newman, chief of Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS Jan Harfst, director of the Executive Office of the United Nations Refugee Agency Udo Janz, UNICEF representative Subajini Jayasekaran made speech during the event and appreciated the works of IEPF in the region. In 2012, IEPF expanded its cooperation with UNICEF in Azerbaijan. UNICEF and IEPF partnered in implementing the project “Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program (AYAP)”. IEPF is part of the Working Group dealing with the issues of refugees and IDPs put together by the UNCHR office. In the group IEPF identified its support towards assisting IDPs on Livelihood through programs related with vocational training and micro credits. IEPF Vocational Training Center established to provide adequate service and training for IDPs and war victims who pass through the specified trainings on carpet weaving, computer and advertisement design, agricultural practices, and bakery. On April 18, 2012, the main representative of UNCHR, Mr. Dag

Sigurdsson, visited the Vocational Training Center in Terter to assess the place, and also familiarize with the services that center is providing. In the frame of the cooperation with UNICEF, IEPF has restarted “Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program “Youth in Action” beginning from 20 December 2013 which is based on previous project “Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program”. With the agreement signed, both sides agreed to start the activities from the next year, 2014. The project itself is logical continuation of Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program which was implemented in 2012. The new project will cover more 14 regions of the country (Goygol, Naftalan, Gandja, Mingachevir, Fuzuli, Khojavend, Agdash, Ucar, Lachin, Zardab, İmişli, Saatli, Kaurdamir, and Shirvan) and by this the coverage of AYAP project is extended to 21 districts of the country. The project was developed as a model project and it was suggested and promoted in other countries as one of the international model projects. With the initiative of UN Public Information Department, International Eurasia Press Fund held an event in Tartar Vocational Training Center of IEPF. The event of “Let’s say no to domestic gender based violence” was held on 8 March on International Women Day. Citizens from villages and settlements of Tartar districts, community activists, education workers, doctors, police workers, and housewives participated at the event to express their opinions about this issue. During the event all civil society organizations show their support to increase the awareness of local people about domestic violence and other sensitive issue.

In May, 2013, in the frame of UN Development Program and with the cooperation of International Organization for Migration, International Eurasia Press Fund has organized a regional consultation about post 2015 development, migration, and human traffic issues in Tartar and Barda districts.

Initiatives taken by the organization in support of the Millennium Development Goals:

IEPF is very familiar with the MDGs and the target to achieve them by 2015. In most action, like seminars and workshops, IEPF try to incorporate the issues surrounding MDGs. IEPF has got a strong media department, therefore, most times, the strategy in achieving the MDGs is to do advocacy through the media. In general, IEPF have addressed the various goals like: achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; and ensure environmental sustainability. However, IEPF has actively been involved in of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; and develop a global partnership for development. The head of programs department of IEPF travelled twice to Brussels, first in 3-4 October, and then 18 November, 2012 to participate in the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) project titled: Dialogue on Migration and Asylum in Development. One of the main focuses of the project is to enhance cooperation and foster synergies between European NGOs members of ECRE that are active outside Europe as well as between European NGOs and local CSOs in third countries. IEPF as member of the ECRE network regular supports ECRE in providing update on situations concerning refugees and asylum seekers particularly related to Azerbaijan. In order to play this function effectively, IEPF regularly meets with the relevant agencies such as IOM, UNCHR and various local NGOs such Refugees Women Center (RWC) dealing with the issues on refugees and asylum seekers and also with the refugee communities. The Azerbaijan Mine Victim Association (AMVA): established by IEPF for the mine victims of Azerbaijan, in 2012 continued to assist its members. About 15 mine victims were assisted with various problems in the areas of legal, medical and financial assistance. In Tartar, Goygol and Goranboy regions of Azerbaijan IEPF

Community Mine Action Team (CMAT) continues to do mine clearance operations. IEPF mine clearance operation is directly monitored and coordinated by the Azerbaijan National Agency on Mine Action (ANAMA), the state agency mandated with the task. The mission of clearance team is to insure suitable mine free environment that will help the population to come back to their homeland as well as promote social- economic development of the region. CMAT continues to base its operation in Tartar regions of Azerbaijan; it has made significant expansion of its operation in neighboring Goygol and Goranboy regions. In 2013, CMAT cleared a total of 6.178.617 million sq. meters of land, in the process, 34 mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) were identified. In 2013, the support to achieve Millennium Development Goals has been the main priority of IEPF. In March IEPF has discussed coincident interests with ANPED (Northern Alliance for Sustainability) and has made a decision to launch the cooperation with ANPED to implement the activities concerning Millennium Development Goals. In April 2013, the representatives of IEPF has attended 65th Session of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and has held several meetings with UN strategic agencies, media groups settled in Geneva. The representatives also held fruitful negotiations with partners of IEPF, representatives of networks which IEPF is member, leadership of “C-media” organization which conducts activities in the direction of improvement of journalists’ human rights, Executive Director of ANPED, regional coordinator of UN Environment Programme on the affairs of Partnership, Environment and Health. Propagation of Sustainable Development Goals is among the priorities of IEPF in Azerbaijan, Central Asia and Caucasus. Representation in the discussion process of Sustainable Development Goals of these regions is not at the desired level. For this purpose organization has led the national and regional NGOs of Azerbaijan and other post-soviet countries in the field of the propagation of Millennium Development Goals. IEPF has organized international workshop with ANPED on the topic of “Post- 2015 Sustainable Development: New Economy” in June. The workshop was significant for coming together more than 20 CSOs from 10 post-soviet countries. Concerning the key issues of sustainable development in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia IEPF made a great contribution to establish a regional platform of CSOs. For this purpose IEPF has continued to participate in high level events in 2013.

Additional Information

In 2014, IEPF has continued to reach-out and expand our collaboration with the United Nations. In January 2014, IEPF became a member with General Consultative Status of UN ECOSOC. And in May 2014 IEPF reclassified in the UN ECOSOC as a member with General Consultative Status. IEPF is involved in the work group of UNHCR which is dealing with Refugees and IDPs Issues. In this group, IEPF shows its support by providing vocational trainings and distributing micro-credits. In 2013, with the support of Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, in the frame of “Strengthening the Capacity of Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to become engaged in IDPs Reintegration”, IEPF conducted surveys in order to identify the needs and to improve the social conditions of Refugees and IDPs and to strengthen the interactive processes. Since January 2014, IEPF has been implementing “Strengthening the Capacity of Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to become engaged in IDPs Reintegration” project by the support of US Department and cooperation with IOM. With the agreement signed, both sides agreed to start the activities from the next year, 2014, IEPF started to implement “Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program “Youth in Action” from the January of 2014. The project itself is logical continuation of

Azerbaijan Youth Advocate Program which was implemented in 2012 and 2013. The new project covers 14 regions of the country (Goygol, Naftalan, Gandja, Mingachevir, Fuzuli, Khojavend, Agdash, Ucar, Lachin, Zardab, İmişli, Saatli, Kaurdamir, and Shirvan) and by this the coverage of AYAP project is extended to 21 districts of the country. The project was developed as a model project and it was suggested and promoted in other countries as one of the international model projects.