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The Office for Central and Eastern Europe Initiatives






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The Challenge

The transformation of Eastern Europe and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) after the collapse of the Soviet Union has been much more difficult and painful than imagined. By 1997, incomes had declined to the point that 120 million people – about a third of the region's population – lived below a poverty line of US\$4 a day. Conditions in Ukraine, once an economic mainstay of the Soviet Union, reflect some of the challenges faced by these countries in their transition to democracy and a market economy.




In the eight years since Ukraine's independence, the country has fallen from 45 to 102 in the United Nations Development Program ranking of countries, according to indicators that measure the quality of life. Death rates have climbed and estimates of people living in poverty range up to 70%.

Unemployment, housing shortages, inadequate diets, smoking, alcoholism, and a crisis in health care have contributed to these statistics, as have severe environmental problems. Fallout from the Chernobyl disaster and high levels of air and water pollution mean that 70% of Ukrainians live in areas considered environmentally dangerous.

A massive effort, akin to that offered to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, is needed to help Ukraine and its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe in their struggle to rebuild their devastated societies.

The Response



The Office for Central and Eastern Europe Initiatives (OCEEI) was established in 1993 as a unit within IDRC to develop and manage Centre activities in the region. Its inception reflected a shift in Canadian foreign policy, which called for a Canadian presence and program of assistance in Eastern Europe and CIS countries to help in the transition process.

OCEEI is well placed to support this process. In working with partners in Central and Eastern Europe, OCEEI draws on IDRC's 29 years of experience in the developing world and its global network of contacts and resources. It also offers technical expertise, project management, help in building research networks, and support services. Its approach is based on enhancing the knowledge and skills of local researchers so that they can target and address issues of critical importance to their countries. For example, OCEEI has trained Ukrainian personnel to identify ways to reduce waste in polluting industries by conducting environmental audits. The training has led to the formation of a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization to carry out these audits. This kind of capacity building ensures that countries like Ukraine can capitalize on their own resources to move ahead in the new directions demanded by political, economic, and social reforms.

The Objectives

- To find innovative solutions to problems in Eastern and Central Europe in collaboration with local research partners.
- To undertake research that aims to enhance the quality of life for people in the region.
- To support the process of political, economic, and social reform.
- To foster links between societies in Canada and in Eastern and Central Europe.

The Results

- In 1991, Canada was the first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence and to extend an offer of technical assistance. The Environmental Management Development in Ukraine program, a massive clean-up effort for the Dnipro River Basin, was the first Canadian initiative in the country and continues to be the largest. (See Feature on page 5.)
- IDRC founded Cooperation House in Kyiv to provide logistical support and office services to a number of Ukrainian and Canadian organizations working on development projects in the country. Pooling resources and information under one roof saves time, money, and effort, and strengthens the organizations' impact.
- An environmental audit of a meat-packing plant in Vafutio found inadequate water supplies and an excessive discharge of fat and organic waste into the municipal sewer system. Measures introduced to solve these problems have saved the plant US\$79 000 in one year and cut down on pollution.
- Local and national stations in Ukraine, as well as an international television network, have broadcast a series of public education videos on the environment of the Dnipro River. Discussions have been held about airing the videos in Canada.
- A new program for pumping well water in Kherson, Ukraine, has eliminated the saline contamination of the city's water supply.





EMDU supported Ukraine's Institute of Colloidal Chemistry's development of equipment for cleaning tap water. This unit is designed for institutional settings like hospitals and daycare centres.



Vasyl Tarasuk, Director of Maintenance for the city of Zaporizhzhya's water supply and waste treatment agency talks to a recipient of one of the City of Edmonton's refurbished water meters. Edmonton's water utility donated 1400 water meters to an IDRC pilot project. Testing showed that as much as 40% of Zaporizhzhya's treated water is lost during distribution. Water pricing is such that customers pay for this inefficiency. Simply repairing leaks promptly and promoting water conservation could avoid the more costly expansion of water treatment plants to meet demand.

Future Directions

EMDU's achievements are important milestones in the cleanup of the Dnipro River. But the enormity of the task and the political and economic environment still pose tremendous challenges to the rehabilitation effort, which could take as long as 40 years. To signal Canada's commitment to the initiative, EMDU entered a second phase in October 1997. The second phase has narrowed the focus to areas with a greater chance of reform, such as water toxicology, public outreach, drinking water quality, and environmental audits centered on plants in the heavily industrialized Zaporizhzhya-Dnipropetrovsk corridor. (See Feature on page 5.)

OCEEI is expanding its programming beyond Ukraine as part of an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme to help rehabilitate the Dnipro River in Russia and Belarus through a Global Environmental Facility project.



Canadian and Ukrainian organizations working on development projects in the region can share resources at OCEEI's Cooperation House in Kyiv.

Further Reading

Report: webzine, "Rehabilitating the Dnipro River"
http://www.idrc.ca/reports/read_article_english.cfm?article_num=374

"Lessons learned from the EMDU project,"
 An address by Jean-H. Guilmette,

Director of OCEEI at the ECWATECH-98 Congress in Moscow
<http://www.idrc.ca/oceei/moscow.html>

Canada-Ukraine Monitor, "Rehabilitating Ukraine's Dnipro River: IDRC" <http://www.idrc.ca/oceei/article1.html>

OCEEI website: <http://www.idrc.ca/oceei/>

Water Rescue



The Dniro River is the Nile of Ukraine, providing irrigation, hydroelectric energy, a transportation route, and 70% of the country's drinking water. Its beauty inspired Cossacks of old to call it "God's Heaven on Earth." Today, however, pollution levels in the Dniro have created some hellish problems.

Radiation from the Chernobyl disaster, heavy applications of pesticides and herbicides, industrial pollution, and untreated sewage from municipalities have all combined to make the waters of the Dniro a toxic current. Its contamination has contributed to Ukraine's status as one of the most environmentally degraded republics of the former Soviet Union. Since Ukraine has limited sources of fresh water, cleaning up the river is one of the country's top priorities.

A program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and managed by IDRC is helping to do just that. The first phase of the Environmental Management Development in Ukraine (EMDU) program generated more than 60 activities, which ranged from cleaning polluted water and controlling water quality to providing technical and scientific assistance to Ukrainian personnel and educating the public about environmental problems. The program's initiatives include the introduction of "green" technologies to polluting industries, the use of environmental audits to improve water and energy management, and the completion of an important baseline water-quality study that lays the scientific groundwork for rehabilitating the river.

Zaporizhzhya, a city in southern Ukraine, was singled out for immediate attention because it suffers from severe problems with pollution and water availability. An estimated 50% of the waste water collected in the city bypasses treatment plants and is dumped into the Dniro. To help save water and reduce sewage, a pilot project installed 1 400 reconditioned water meters donated by the City of Edmonton. Experience shows that when water is metered, consumers are more likely to conserve water and pay their bills and authorities have a greater incentive to detect and repair leaks in water mains.

EMDU, however, provides more than the nuts and bolts of pollution control and water conservation – it also addresses the mechanics of institutional reform, namely overcoming the Soviet legacy of inefficient central planning and policymaking.



A Chernobyl victim receives treatment; Ukraine remains one of the most environmentally degraded republics of the former Soviet Union.

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Nearly 20 billion cubic metres of untreated effluent - the equivalent of one-third of the Dnipro's annual flow - is dumped into the river each year. Environmental audits can help to reduce this waste.



This legacy meant that there was considerable duplication of effort among Ukrainian institutions. Three agencies would typically be responsible for identical work, such as measuring water quality. Each used different standards, however, making comparisons impossible. Data was often hoarded, part of a culture of secrecy left over from the Soviet government. EMDU once had to buy satellite maps of Ukraine from Canadian sources because the Ukrainian versions were considered state secrets.

In contrast, EMDU has promoted collaboration and the sharing of information by bringing together Ukrainian experts who used to work independently. For example, three institutions cooperated in conducting the baseline water-quality survey and in developing a joint action plan based on their findings. EMDU also works to improve management practices in Ukrainian institutions and organizations. Its efforts with the Zaporizhzhya Vodokanal, the agency responsible for the water supply and waste treatment in the municipality, have made the city eligible for a loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to modernize its utilities. Finally, the program has helped Ukrainian authorities establish their own management committee to review and prioritize proposals for research projects on the river. The selected projects are then suggested to IDRC for funding.

This "learning by doing" strategy reflects IDRC's years of experience in helping people find their own solutions to problems in the developing world. EMDU has successfully transferred the approach to Eastern Europe, where existing scientific and technical capacity has accelerated the learning process. The model has been hailed by Ukrainian authorities, including Prime Minister Valery Pustovoitenko, and EMDU has been formally recognized in Ukraine's National Environmental Plan, adopted by the country's parliament in February 1998.

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**Ihor Iskra and
Myron Lahola**

Ihor Iskra (pictured here on the right), a Ukrainian engineer and IDRC Liaison Officer with the Environmental Management Development in Ukraine program (EMDU) describes the Dnipro as "everything for Ukraine: its life, irrigation, energy supply, drinking water supply, transportation artery, and so on." The biggest challenge he faces is changing people's attitudes so that they care more about the river.

Next to Mr. Iskra is Myron Lahola, the Director of IDRC's Kyiv Office. On leave from his job as an engineer with the City of Edmonton, Lahola sees EMDU as much more than cleaning up a river. "That implies that you're out there with shovels or something. We ultimately are concerned with cleaning up the river, but we're doing it more in the policy development, capacity building and technology transfer type of way."