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SPOTLIGHT

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Muskie Seeks to Keep People Safe in Next Major Quake

In 1988, a devastating earthquake struck the northwestern region of Armenia, killing at least 25,000 people and leaving more than half a million homeless.

Gohar Hovhannisyan, an alumna of the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program, was 17 at the time. "I distinctly remember the earthquake," she recalled. "The sense of confusion, the fear with which people ran out from the buildings into the street and their unwillingness to return."

Now a researcher with Armenia's National Academy of Sciences, Hovhannisyan believes the quake's tragic impact could have been mitigated with better planning. She sees the incident as a striking example of how unplanned urban growth, negligent construction practices and a lack of public awareness can increase a community's vulnerability to disaster.

Since completing her master's degree in environmental science at Ohio University in 2002, Hovhannisyan has spent the last decade conducting research at the National Academy's Institute of Geological Sciences. In recent years, her work has focused

on assessing earthquake risks in Yerevan, Armenia's capital. In January 2013, she received a Careers for Alumni in Public Service (CAPS) award, which provides a stipend to Muskie alumni working in the public service sector in their home communities.

Hovhannisyan currently leads a project that assesses the vulnerability of buildings in Yerevan using damage data from the 1988 earthquake along with new data the team has collected. The project has modeled two different earthquake scenarios for the city, calculating potential damage to buildings as well as population and economic losses.

Hovhannisyan says this type of study is new in her country. In the past, Armenian researchers focused on assessing the ground, soil, and tectonic factors related to earthquakes. They didn't review the risks of harm to buildings and human lives, something analysts around the world now incorporate in their recommendations to urban planners and developers.

Hovhannisyan says more and more Armenians are living in big cities that could be hit by future quakes,

and the Armenian government needs to accurately examine and communicate the extent of the risks. She hopes her research will impact how average Armenians think about earthquakes and the structures around them.

"For example, when buying or constructing a new house, their decision will not be based mainly on the nice view from the window," she said, "but first of all on the seismic safety of the building and its reasonable location."

At the completion of the research project, Hovhannisyan and the team will submit their recommendations to the Ministry of Emergency Situation Services on how to minimize damage should another major earthquake hit the country.

Hovhannisyan anticipates the team's work will extend beyond the capital to assess seismic risk in other cities and regions of Armenia, in addition to helping decision-makers improve disaster response planning.



Hovhannisyan discusses an earthquake model

Muskie Connects Businesses to New Opportunities

Volodymyr Shemayev, a 2012 Muskie fellow from Ukraine who studied economics at the University of Montana, is working to help American small businesses access new opportunities overseas. During the academic year, Shemayev volunteered at the Montana World Trade Center, where he advised firms like MorTan Inc., a medical equipment company, on ways to promote their products in Eastern Europe.

Shemayev also worked with the Northern Rockies Regional Center, LLC, to market Montana as a center for investment.

He created a Russian section of the company's website detailing the U.S. government's EB-5 visa program, which is designed to attract foreign investors by providing a path to U.S. citizenship. Shemayev also reached out to chambers of commerce, trade centers, and industrial holdings in Ukraine and Russia to promote investment opportunities in Montana.

Shemayev is currently completing academic training at the Houston offices of Interpipe, a Ukrainian steel pipe manufacturer. He hopes to link Interpipe

with the Montana World Trade Center to promote the company's products to buyers in Montana's oil extraction industry.

Shemayev looks forward to finding a new role with an international consulting company or major Ukrainian holding company when he returns home. "After one year of school and six months of academic training at the World Bank and North American Interpipe, I became passionate about improving productivity and applying information technologies to develop my country," he said.



Shemayev discusses opportunities with a colleague

Muskie Focuses on Innovation, Wins Future Leadership Award

From consulting for a Ghanaian university to analyzing customers for a Silicon Valley startup, **Evgeniya Kalenykh**, a 2012 Muskie fellow from Russia, has focused on innovation and technology management in her studies at the University of California Berkeley's Haas School of Business.

Last year, Kalenykh was named one of six winners of the 2012 INFOCOM Future Leadership Award for her paper on information technology trends. The competition, which is part of an annual Information and Communication Technology conference in India, has drawn more than 1,000 submissions in

recent years from over 70 business schools around the world.

Kalenykh believes her paper won because she identified key trends, such as the need for companies to present meaningful insights in an age of abundant information. "I wrote about

the importance of seeing and sensing the big picture in the terabytes of data that we are now able to obtain," she said.

Kalenykh is now leading a team of 15 peers to prepare for the Haas Tech Challenge case competition in November 2013. The event will bring students from top business schools to Berkeley to tackle a case on the "consumerization" of Internet technology.

Despite her focus on technology management, Kalenykh says it's only part of what she's learned as a Muskie fellow at Haas. "The overall ecosystem of UC Berkeley has contributed tremendously to my experience," she said. "I was able to meet with scientists and engineers

from our departments and laboratories and understand the latest ideas and developments across a variety of fields, from clean technology to cognitive science."

Kalenykh credits her Muskie experience with revamping the way she approaches and addresses challenges. "My goal remains the same — to empower individuals and organizations in emerging economies to achieve more," she said. "We were forced to think about the meaning of our lives, and the impact that each one of us can make to resolve the world's business challenges. This helped me realize what true sustainable leadership means, and why it is important to pursue it."



Kalenykh on campus at the University of California Berkeley

Fellow Learns from Community Service at Head Start

Dildora Toshpulatova, a 2011 Muskie fellow from Uzbekistan who recently completed her degree in education at Texas A&M University, enjoyed volunteering with the Head Start program at South Knoll Elementary School in College Station, Texas. A federal initiative, Head Start aims to prepare young children from low-income families to succeed in school.

As a volunteer, Toshpulatova observed and assisted two teachers who led a class of four- and five-year-olds with physical and learning disabilities. Each day Toshpulatova joined the class for morning greetings and sessions in which the children learned numbers, dates, letters and songs. She also assisted with activities like art and cooking, joined the children during play time in the schoolyard and accompanied them on field trips to local parks.

"It was amazing to see the teachers patiently attend to the needs of each child each day and keep a warm and friendly atmosphere," Toshpulatova said. "I liked that the teachers, in addition to teaching the kids literacy skills such as counting

and letter recognition, put emphasis on developing their social and emotional skills such as self-regulation and communication."

Toshpulatova says her time in the Head Start classroom helped her develop new and creative ways to teach young

children with special needs. "This experience has taught me that caring for and supporting disadvantaged kids can make a big difference in their lives," she said. "I hope I will have an opportunity to share and take advantage of this experience in my future work when I return to Uzbekistan."



Toshpulatova at the Texas A&M University graduation ceremony

Alumnus and Advisor Collaborate to Improve Instructional Quality

Robert Khachatryan (Muskie 2009) is committed to improving the quality of instruction in the Department of Education Management and Planning at Yerevan State Linguistic University, where he serves as Department Chair. The Department has made significant progress in recent years, in part by enlisting the help of Dr. John Nalbandian, a professor of public administration at the University of Kansas and Khachatryan's advisor during his Muskie fellowship.

In 2011, Khachatryan won a Muskie Mentor/Advisor Exchange (MAX) award to support continued collaboration with Dr. Nalbandian of Kansas. With funding from the award, Nalbandian traveled to Armenia and delivered training for students and faculty on collaborative leadership in governance.

"This [first trip] was highly successful as there was certainly a need for creating a platform for students and educators to get and share best practices, circulate knowledge and information," Khachatryan said.

To sustain the university's collaboration with Nalbandian, Khachatryan also applied for a fellowship from the Open Society Institute's International Higher Education Support Program. The award from the Open Society Institute supported Nalbandian's return travel to Armenia and ongoing mentorship between Nalbandian and three professors in the Department, all of whom were focused on sharing learning from previous international study experiences with students in Armenia.

During his next trip to Armenia, Nalbandian led the Department in a series of exercises to identify expectations that faculty have for each other and for Khachatryan as Department Chair. The exercise culminated in a psychological contract, defining responsibilities of each faculty member in the Department and outlining how faculty should support one another in their work.

Nalbandian also led the Department in a strategic planning exercise designed to turn the hopes and fears of team

members into a multi-year action plan. Khachatryan credits this process with helping him to align university curriculum to the needs of the labor market and the global economy.

After meeting the faculty in Armenia, Nalbandian continued to mentor them virtually by providing feedback on syllabi and helping to refine case studies for use in their courses. "They had other work experience that can translate into a case study," said Nalbandian. "I helped them to gain a better sense of what a useful case study would be."

Although the formal interaction funded by the MAX award and the Open Society Institute has concluded, Khachatryan and Nalbandian continue to maintain their personal and professional relationship. "The collaboration with Dr. Nalbandian has had a long-term measurable impact on... the teaching of social sciences at the university. The successful transformation of [our] reform-minded [Department] has served as a model for other departments to emulate."



Nalbandian speaks with administrators at Yerevan State Linguistic University

Muskie Alumna Continues to Learn from Influential Leaders

Gulya Kolakova, a 2002 Muskie alumna from Turkmenistan, has contributed to regional development in Central Asia since completing her public policy degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Kolakova's work in the public and private sectors has taken her to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan and recently, back to Washington, DC.

In fall 2012, Kolakova spent six weeks at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University through the Central Asia-Caucasus Young Leaders fellowship program, a partnership between SAIS and the Rumsfeld Foundation. As one of ten fellows selected, Kolakova met with U.S. policymakers, journalists, business leaders and politicians, including former U.S. President George W. Bush, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, former U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney, and former U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director James Woolsey.

"Listening to the opinions of U.S. officials about current [issues in] China, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Middle East and Central Asian countries added to my knowledge of how the world is governed today," she said.

Before her fellowship at SAIS, Kolakova led the procurement department at one of the largest supply firms in Afghanistan, an Afghan-owned company. She also worked for the government's Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), providing assistance to business owners and promoting investment. In her role with the organization, Kolakova trained and monitored local staff and built relationships with a range of stakeholders, including government and donor representatives, private companies, associations and NGOs.

"Many people have a negative image of Afghanistan," she said. "However, none of the other Central Asian countries have agencies like AISA, a one-stop shop for business owners, where they can get support with any issue to help their busi-

ness to succeed. I truly loved this job as I saw tangible results of my efforts."

Since returning to Turkmenistan, Kolakova has worked on oil recovery and fuel procurement in the private sector and is currently freelancing with the World Bank office in Ashgabat. Her career has also included stints with the World Bank in Kyrgyzstan and the United Nations Development Program. Kolakova credits her success to the opportunities provided by her Muskie fellowship and the analytical, problem-solving and research skills she gained in her coursework at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

"Once I completed the Muskie program and returned home I knew that all the doors will be open for me," she said. "I would like to advise the fresh graduates of the Muskie Program to return home, get a job and by using knowledge obtained in the U.S., help build democracy and good governance in their home countries that will gradually lead to economic and social development."



Kolakova with former President George W. Bush

Muskie Returns to American University for LL.M. Anniversary Celebration

Ludmila Lavrova, a 1994

Muskie alumna, returned to her American alma mater, the American University Washington College of Law, in October 2012. Lavrova served as a round table leader at an international conference celebrating the 30th anniversary of the International Legal Studies Program (LL.M.).



Muskie alumna Ludmila Lavrova

Lavrova has been active in the Russian legal arena since completing her Muskie fellowship. In May 2012, the St. Petersburg Chamber of Attorneys, which includes more than 5,000 lawyers, honored Lavrova with an annual award "For Highest Professional Achievements." Lavrova also received the award in 2008 and 2010.

Muskie Leads Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education

Mikayil Jabbarov, a 1996 Muskie alumnus, was recently appointed Minister of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In his new position, Jabbarov leads the Ministry and oversees the implementation of national education policy. As Minister, Jabbarov also works with Azerbaijani educational institutions, bodies and organizations to develop strategic plans and monitoring practices with key national and international stakeholders and partners.



Mikayil Jabbarov,
Muskie alumnus
and Minister of Education,
Republic of Azerbaijan

While earning his Master of Laws degree at the University of the Pacific's McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, California, Jabbarov studied transnational business practices. Upon returning to Azerbaijan, Jabbarov worked as a lawyer in the private sector before entering the civil service in 2002. He has held several leadership roles within the government, including President of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, and Head of the State Department of the Historical and Architectural Reserve of Icherisheher, which protects a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Baku.

"We are very pleased to see an alumnus, particularly one as skilled as Mr. Jabbarov, appointed as Minister of Education," said Chris Jones, Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Baku. "We are proud of Mr. Jabbarov's achievements and look forward to working with him to strengthen the already close partnership between the Ministry of Education and the U.S. Embassy."

Muskie Alumni Take On Leadership Roles in Georgia

Muskie alumni have long played prominent roles in Georgia's government. The country's 2012 parliamentary elections and the redistribution of power between the two leading parties have put new faces in government positions, including several Muskie alumni.

David Usupashvili (Muskie 1997) became chairman of the Parliament of Georgia.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili (Muskie 1997) serves as the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development. Prior to his appointment, Kvirikashvili served as the General Director of Cartu Bank.

Khatuna Gogaladze (Muskie 2006) now leads the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection.



Khatuna Gogaladze,
Muskie alumna and
Minister of Environment
and Natural Resources
Protection, Republic of Georgia

David Lezhava (Muskie 2001) and **Giorgi Tabuashvili** (Muskie 2000) received Deputy Minister of Finance appointments. Lezhava leads foreign relations for the Ministry and Tabuashvili is responsible for treasury.

Tamar Beruchashvili (Muskie 1996) was appointed to the position of Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Beruchashvili previously served as Deputy State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

David Onoprishvili (Muskie 1993) heads the Budget and Finance Committee of the Parliament of Georgia. Formerly, Onoprishvili served as chairman of the board of the Muskie Alumni Association of Georgia.

Muskie Alumna Appointed Deputy Minister of Health in Moldova

Svetlana Cotelea was recently appointed Deputy Minister of Health in her home country of Moldova.

In her new position, Cotelea will oversee the Moldovan public health sector and prioritize policies and interventions related to disease control. Cotelea will also direct efforts to address prevalent risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol use, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.



Svetlana Cotelea speaks with a colleague

As the first woman to hold the position of Chief State Sanitary Doctor in Moldova and the country's second female Deputy Minister of Health, Cotelea will continue to strengthen the leadership role of women in Moldovan public administration and policymaking at all levels. She also plans to improve the quality of public health services by equipping facilities with modern technology.

Cotelea received her master's degree in public health from Kansas State University in 2011. "We are delighted and proud to see one of our alumni entrusted with the responsibilities that go with being a deputy health minister in Moldova," said Brent Israelsen, the Assistant Public Affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau. "We are certain that the experiences and insight she gained as a Muskie scholar will serve her well in her new job."

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Submission guidelines:

If you are interested in making a submission to the Muskie Messenger, please send all text and pictures to muskie_messenger@irex.org by December 31, 2013. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State and IREX reserve the right to edit submission content. Not every submission will be printed.



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Make a Better World

ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES

U.S. Government sponsored exchange alumni are eligible to take part in various Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) supported conferences and training activities. In addition to events that support large audiences, individual alumni may apply for small grants that fund community service activities, conferences, publications, research trips, training programs, and other professional development activities.

ECA Alumni Programming for Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program Alumni

International Exchange Alumni Website: The International Exchange Alumni Website is an online community by and for alumni of U.S. Government sponsored exchange and training programs. The content of the site is updated every day and alumni are encouraged to submit information to the website for posting. Features of the website include: calendar of upcoming alumni events, job listings and career development information, searchable database of alumni who have registered at the site, grant opportunity listings, alumni news, research tools, and opportunities to network and engage with other alumni through projects and competitions.

The ECA Alumni Small Grants Program: Alumni may apply for a grant of up to \$3,000 for an individual or \$6,000 for a team of multiple alumni to conduct a community development or professional development project. Project ideas include: coordinating a community service project, launching a pilot program at an NGO, or organizing a training program for professional colleagues and/or other alumni. Applications are accepted annually.

Project Smile: Project Smile is a community development program benefiting underprivileged groups, including youth, the elderly, and the disabled in Eurasia. Each grantee will receive up to \$300 for an individual or \$600 for a team of multiple alumni to perform public service in their community. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Alumni Events: IREX and the U.S. Embassy organize alumni events in all 12 countries in Eurasia. These events include workshops, conferences, trainings, roundtable discussions, networking, movie nights, seminars, and lectures. Larger scale events include job fairs that allow alumni to have their resumes reviewed, learn more about the current job market in their home country, and meet with potential employers. IREX local offices and the Embassies encourage alumni to actively participate in the development and implementation of such events.

About the Muskie Program

The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State, and implemented by IREX (the International research and Exchanges Board). Since 1992, the Muskie program has provided opportunities for master's level study in the United States to nearly 5,000 of the most talented citizens from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Through their academic studies, internships, and community service, fellows immerse themselves in their local communities, interact with Americans, and make direct connections with American universities, businesses, social-service organizations, schools, and other institutions, allowing them to develop a deeper understanding of U.S. values and ideals, such as democratic leadership.

Goals

Promote mutual understanding, build democracy, and foster the transition to market economies in Eurasia through intensive academic study and professional training. Returning Muskie fellows contribute professionally, engage in democratic processes in their home countries, and strengthen relationships between the United States and their home countries.

Additional Information

For more information about the Muskie Program, please see <http://www.irex.org/programs/muskie>.

