

Crossroads Central Asia



Annual Report 2009



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Welcome from the Director

Reflecting on 2009 one of the days which stands out most clearly in my memory is December 3rd. On that day we celebrated the International Day for People with Disabilities with an on-site event distributing 34 wheelchairs in and around Shymkent. It was one of the most moving events I have participated in since working with Crossroads Central Asia. There were few dry eyes in the room as children, teenagers and the elderly alike received wheelchairs – some of whom had waited years for the gift of mobility.

A couple of representatives from the local press attended. One journalist's question interested me. Clearly surprised by the event, she asked, "How have you managed to keep giving despite the crisis?"

It's a good question. The surprise with which it was asked is particularly indicative of the impact of the global financial crisis upon Central Asia. The World Bank put it this way: since 1999 economic growth in Emerging Europe and Central Asia pulled 90 million people out of poverty and vulnerability. This crisis is estimated to drag 13 million back into poverty (World Bank, 2009). It is a crisis that has been felt here most acutely by those most vulnerable. Moreover, as the journalist indicated anecdotally, it is a crisis that has been felt also by the charities that have traditionally helped them.

Reflecting then on 2009 I am filled with gratitude and not a little wonder. As the effects of the crisis deepened in Central Asia this past year, our capacity to respond increased, not lessened. Completion of our new Goods Processing Facility (affectionately known by our team as "The Shed") has dramatically improved our ability to receive, process and ship goods.

Record levels of volunteers - local and international – joined us in our work. A greater volume of goods than ever before was received and shipped to organisations working with the poor across Central Asia.

This increase has only been made possible by the persevering generosity of individuals and corporate partners, who are themselves far from immune from the effects of the crisis. It is counterintuitive and deeply heartening.

This report is a snap shot of the past year's activities. It is about 12 months of trucks, boxes, sweat and paper work. But ultimately it is about people: men with tuberculosis, children with cerebral palsy, grandmothers immobilised by disabilities. These people, these disadvantaged, have each had their lives radically impacted by the different organisations Crossroads supports. In this report you will hear some of these stories and, I hope, hear some of their gratitude.

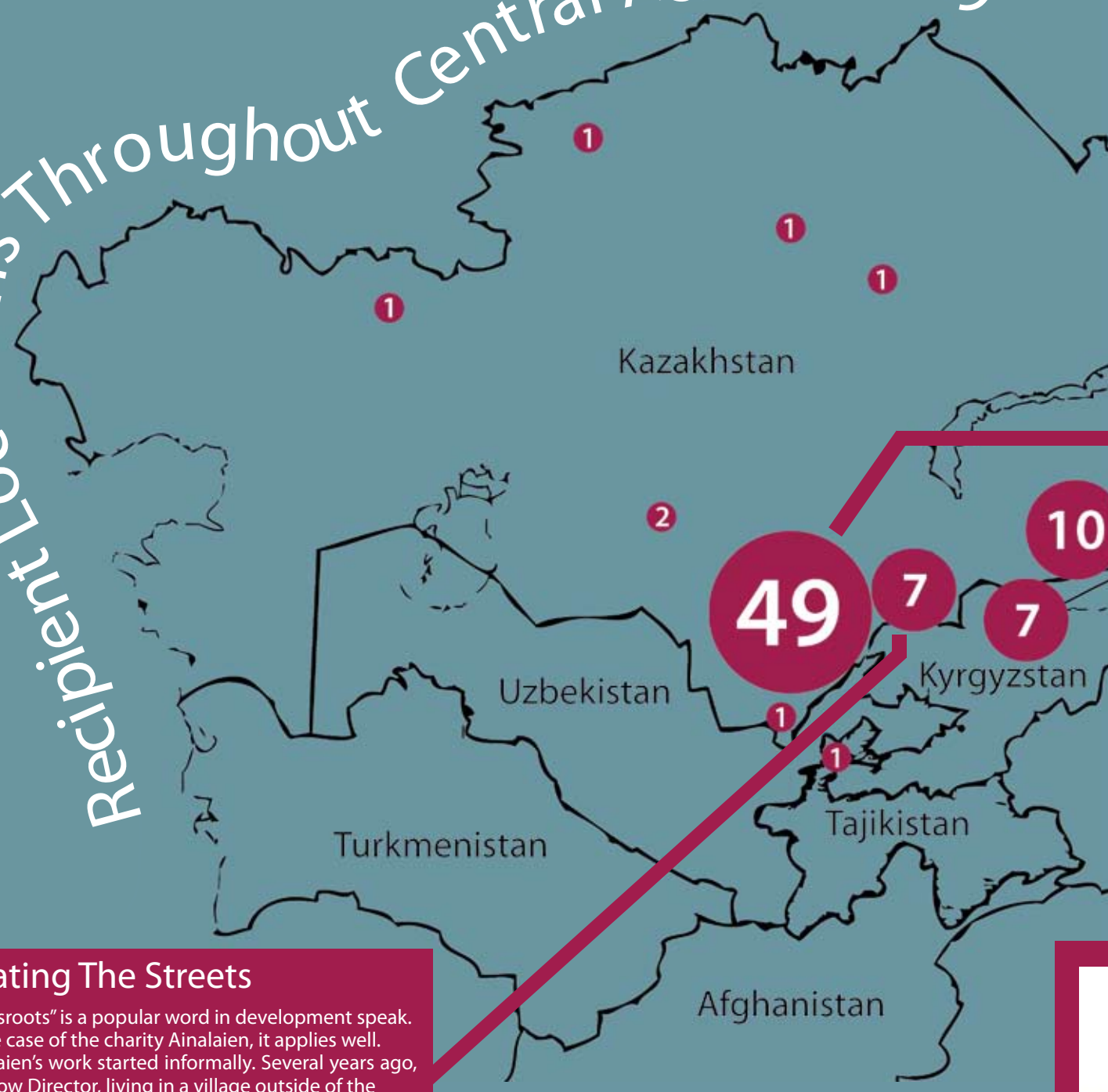
Looking to 2010, we are continuing our support of charities around the region and deepening our capacity to care for the community in which we are located. Internationally, shipments are planned for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the coming months. In Kazakhstan we will continue to support partner organisations working throughout the country. Locally, we are focusing particularly on the needs of women and young people within our community. To this end we will be beginning support groups for young mothers as well as a community café.

Thank you for your continued concern and generosity towards Central Asia's disadvantaged.

We look forward with hope to 2010, with you.

Andrew Starr

Recipient Locations Throughout Central Asia in 2009



Beating The Streets

“Grassroots” is a popular word in development speak. In the case of the charity Ainalaien, it applies well. Ainalaien’s work started informally. Several years ago, the now Director, living in a village outside of the Kazakhstani city Taraz, noticed that her children and their friends had nothing to occupy their time. In that void, the “call of the street”, as she named it, is strong. Children are easily led into drugs, alcohol and violence.

Rather than simply decry society’s decay, this mother decided to do something about it. She started activities for kids, beginning in her home. It has since grown into a 200 strong kids club that meets in a village hall. The club offers dance classes, craft, English, computers – all free, all in a positive, accessible space. A genuine alternative to the streets.

“We give them the opportunity to spend their free time usefully. Because today, the streets can have a huge negative influence on young people,” said Razakova Aigul Ashymovna, Director of the center. “We are very thankful to everybody who helps us in this work.”

In 2009, CCA continued our support of this excellent charity, providing craft supplies, computers and furniture for this future-changing project.



Mission Statement

Crossroads Central Asia is a non-profit organisation dedicated to helping the needy of Central Asia. We do this by assisting other charities and welfare institutions working hard to meet need across the region. We help not by giving money, but by providing quality donated goods.

Life After Detox

Aliya arrived at the rehabilitation centre in a village outside of Shymkent an addict. Several months later, she left free from addiction but also unaware of the price of bread, how to structure her day, manage finances or indeed find a job. She needed help to learn life's basic skills again.



Aliya's need is a common one. Drug and alcohol addiction is a chronic problem for the Central Asian republics. Detox and rehabilitation programmes exist. But reintegration into society is, for many, a long and difficult path and one that they struggle to walk unsupported.

Thankfully, Aliya found the help she needed in a "second stage house" in Shymkent. The women's programme provided her with accommodation and support to step back into society. During her time at the house she also found work and a husband! Her life has changed direction entirely.

The house was started by former addicts who have walked this difficult path. It's a locally born, locally funded project. It was our joy to be able to assist this excellent initiative by providing them with capital intensive but essential items

Cathay Pacific Blankets Find A Home

A significant donation of blankets from Cathay Pacific came to us last year through our head office in Hong Kong. One of the many organisations that received a portion of this donation is a homeless shelter housing around 150 people outside of Shymkent – children, women, grandmothers, men, old and young.

In winter the numbers arriving at the shelter climb steeply. It is not uncommon for those who come to need medical treatment for burns they received while sleeping on basement heating pipes.

When people arrive at the shelter they have nothing. What clothes they have are immediately destroyed for sanitation reasons. They are then clothed, fed and housed. Resources though, are not plentiful. When our team visited the centre, the blankets and the clothes that CCA were able to give were displayed with a great deal of pride and gratitude by those who receive the shelter's care.

Sasha (left) found his way to the centre from the streets where gangrene had taken his leg. His optimism, in speaking with our team was remarkable. "I have a bed, I have food, what more could I need? I have a full life before me."

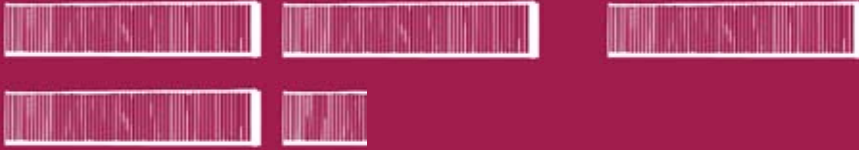


The Story So Far...

Number of forty foot containers of goods donated since CCA's inception

Internationally - 33

Locally - 10



Container Sponsors in 2009

Anonymous (1 1/2 x 40' containers)

Dirty Weekenders (2 x 40' containers)

Medisend International (3 x 40' containers)

Medline Industries Inc. (1/2 x 40' container)

Noble Shipping Group (1 x 40' container)

Steve Watson (1 x 40' container)

Rotary Club of Kowloon North
(1 x 40' containers)





Donations of Goods

It is humbling and wonderful to be an organisation whose core operations revolve around donations. Humbling because it is something we cannot orchestrate, wonderful because we are constantly actively witnessing and participating in the celebration and expression of generosity.

Donations of Goods
Distribution
Volunteers
Global X-perience

This year we saw an unprecedented volume of goods donated. We received six forty foot containers of goods from our head office in Hong Kong, as well as three forty foot containers of medical equipment from the United States, and assorted local donations of clothing and toys.

The breadth of donated items – computers, wheelchairs, medical equipment, furniture, white goods, clothing, carpet tiles, children’s playgrounds, craft supplies, sports equipment, tents, stationary supplies, toys, and much more - and the quality of these items enabled us to resource more organisations with what they needed most.

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of companies and individuals who have equipped and cared for the people of Central Asia with their donations of goods.

A Virtuous Supply Chain Shortened

By the time a computer, or any item for that matter, is placed in the hands of one of our partner organisations, it has been handled many times. One donates the computer, another donates their time to pack and prepare the computer, another loads the container, still another sponsors the shipping. At the end of the shipping line another unloads the computer, another loads a truck and on the computer goes. Finally, a grateful recipient greets the truck. It is a virtuous supply chain made up of many hands.

This year though we saw a wonderful exception. They call themselves “The Dirty Weekenders”. They are a group of Hong Kong professionals who put their spare time to good use, by getting their hands dirty working to fight poverty around the world. Tracy, a Hong Kong lawyer who started the club, tells us that she made the name up to catch people’s attention and inspire action. Indeed!



For two containers that we received in 2009, “The Dirty Weekenders” became almost the entire supply chain. It began at our head office in Hong Kong. On a humid Saturday, their volunteers loaded two forty foot containers worth of goods selected specifically for kids and youth projects in Kazakhstan. They also sponsored the shipping costs. And if that wasn’t enough, two of their team boarded a flight a month later for Shymkent, Kazakhstan. The containers were waiting for them when they arrived. Together with our team they unloaded, labelled goods, loaded trucks and in a whirlwind week visited 10 different recipient organisations working with young people around southern Kazakhstan. They were on hand as these organisations received computers, a trampoline, toys, bunk beds, TVs, clothes, books, exercise equipment; goods they had first loaded with such care thousands of miles away.

Their highlight was a visit to a local charity helping kids in a village outside of Taraz. The director started the work out of her own home. Since then it has grown to care for 200 children. The NGO depends on the generosity of others. In particular, they need toys. Tracy and Grace’s response? Blog. The next day, toys were already being donated by their friends in Hong Kong! Thank you Tracy and Grace for taking the time to get your hands dirty caring for Kazakhstan’s kids.

A Short How-To:

Is your company moving offices? Refurbishing your hotel? Do you have surplus product?

Hundreds of companies every year decide to donate their excess goods - computers, furniture, clothes, building materials, medical equipment, and more to Crossroads Foundation worldwide. If you’re in Kazakhstan, contact us to find out how.

Distribution

Have you ever tried to do even the simplest task without the right tools? It can be incredibly frustrating, especially if the task is an important one. Our distribution work is about putting "tools", sometimes literally, in the hands of those working with the needy throughout Central Asia. These "tools" are goods donated by individuals and companies in Kazakhstan and around the world. They can be incredibly varied – beds, clothes and blankets for rehabilitation centres, computers for a training centre for the unemployed, toys and equipment for a programme for children with special needs, or sports equipment for a youth centre, to name just a few. For charities hard hit by the financial crisis this in-kind assistance was of particular importance this past year.

By volume, in 2009, we distributed more goods than any other year. Also, by volume a clear focus for the year was medical.

This was largely due to generous donations of medical items by two organisations. Medline Industries Inc. donated a 20' container of wheelchairs. Medical equipment including wheelchairs and hospital beds were also donated by Medisend International and sponsored by ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc. In 2009, we were therefore able to distribute 181 wheelchairs. For many impoverished recipients these chairs are proving a life changing gift.

Drug and alcohol addiction are huge social challenges in Central Asia. We continued our commitment to supporting the life saving work of rehabilitation centres across the region. These centres are almost invariably started by former addicts. They are literally saving lives. Yet also invariably they are under resourced. Among those most vulnerable to the impact of economic downturn are children. In 2009, we shipped to a host of excellent organisations - orphanages, refuges, homes - in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan who are working with children at risk, particularly street kids and orphans.

This is a sample of some of the 49 different organisations that we shipped to in 2009. It is our joy to continue resourcing these vital works as they rescue, rehabilitate, heal, train and rebuild lives across Central Asia.



Donations of Goods
Distribution
Volunteers
Global X-perience



Correct Comfort

"Those being treated for tuberculosis of the bones, must spend a minimum of 1 year within our walls. Patients experience discomfort and severe pain, which they try to alleviate by moving into unhelpful or even harmful positions on ordinary beds. The beds which we received as a gift allow patients to lie in various comfortable positions. For a person who is unwell this is the most important thing!"

Alkhatai Myrzataevich,
Head Doctor of "Balyshi" Tuberculosis-Bone Hospital

"Balykshi" is the only tuberculosis hospital operating in rural South Kazakhstan Oblast. It serves around 900 patients per year. CCA donated the hospital 7 multi-functional hospital beds and 2 hospital gurneys. In 2009, we distributed 60 hospital beds to hospitals and clinics in South Kazakhstan Oblast.



Dauren is 6. Since he was 6 months old he has broken various bones 14 times. In 2007, he broke his legs which healed poorly. As a consequence he has been unable to walk since. Doctors have a name for children with the kind of bone condition which translates as the "Crystal Boy". Dauren is unable to go to school. His parents say he is a really bright kid. Before receiving the wheelchair he had only been able to get around by dragging himself across the floor.

As he was being fitted with the chair he was quiet – smiling – but quiet. For a moment as he left our office in his chair, he was alone outside. Then, alone and mobile for the first time, he let out a big, bold shout of joy.

Wheelchairs distributed - 181



Other mobility aids distributed - 71



In 2009 we had the privilege of distributing 181 wheelchairs. Dauren and 180 like him wanted us to thank those of you who made that possible.



Recipient Types	% by volume
Individuals	5
Kazakhstan - govt social institutions	24
Kazakhstan - NGOs	45
Other Central Asian countries - NGOs	21
CCA organisational needs	5

Sphere of Activity	% by volume
Education / Training	9
Orphan care	5
Children/Youth	23
Disabilities	10
Hospitals/Medical	19
Drug & alcohol rehabilitation	21
Women	3
Homeless people / needy families	5
CCA organizational needs	5



Of Kids, Clothes, and School in Kyrgyzstan

In 2009, we shipped to several organisations working in and around the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. The majority of these recipient organisations work with children. Their activities range from music classes for disadvantaged kids, summer camps, back-to-school education programmes for street kids and sports clubs. Together their work touches the lives of thousands of vulnerable Kyrgyz children.

In the months following this shipment, feedback stories began trickling back to our office, stories of how the goods had impacted lives.

One unexpected theme began to appear. Zhiparkul Monokova, 38, widow, mother of six school aged children, expressed it this way: "The new school year started and my eldest child had

nothing to wear to school. The younger kids wore the clothes of the older ones. Our family faced a big problem. How could we go on? Huge thanks, every piece of clothing we received fit perfectly and we now have seasonal outfits for each of my children. There is a wise saying, "Care for your neighbour", your organisation is actually doing that and demonstrating how it is lived. Thank you."

It is a too often repeated story for families in countries like Kyrgyzstan, barely managing to keep their heads above water. The gift of clothing can be the difference between a child continuing their education or not.

Volunteers

14626: The number of hours worked by volunteers at CCA last year. Giving is the lifeblood of our work. People giving of their time and their skills are what make our work possible. Volunteers joined us last year from around the corner for a couple of hours and from across the globe for several months. Locally, rehabilitation centres from Shymkent and its surrounds regularly gave generously of their time, helping with shipments and gardening. Students volunteered their translation services. The summer was particularly busy with teams joining us from America and the UK. They teamed up with local volunteers to run a series of camps in orphanages and children's refuges. International volunteers from across the globe came for a couple of weeks or several months to contribute their skills and sweat to the work. It was wonderful to see so many hands join together to carry the work forward.

Donations of Goods
Distribution
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A Little Piece of Oxford in Shymkent

What do a nuclear physician, a medical student, a student of history, and an engineer have in common? Last summer, it was not their common place of study - Oxford University - but rather a desire to spend time in Shymkent helping at CCA. They were a fabulous team, if not a little intimidating at the outset given the brainpower they packed!

Importantly, they were more than willing to help any way they could. For two weeks they packed boxes, painted, loaded trucks and participated in our summer children's programme. The fab four accompanied our team and another team from America as we ran different programmes over a couple of weeks for kids from disadvantaged backgrounds. Activities were held in a refuge for children, in a juvenile detention centre and in a home for children with special needs. According to the Oxford team, the experience was at times stretching but also incredibly enriching. For us, they were a brilliant example of people choosing to use their time and talents for the sake of others.





Peter and the Shed

The day before his departure from Shymkent, we decided to splash out. We headed for the choice Italian restaurant in town, found some couches, ordered some pasta and began to reflect. The first time I met Peter felt like yesterday. He had stumbled off the morning flight from Almaty. During his ten hour layover in Delhi from Australia, something had not quite agreed with him. Unshaven, a little worn, but eyes bright, he had, nonetheless arrived.

He had come with a purpose, he knew, he just didn't know exactly what it was. Two weeks later it became abundantly clear. Peter is an electrician but he is also a Mr Do-Most-Anything. Two weeks following his arrival, we received funding for the construction of a Goods Processing Facility, from nine forty-foot containers, affectionately known as "The Shed". The timing was perfect. Peter brought essential oversight and construction skills we simply did not have. Without his gift of a year, we would have had funds but insufficient skills to implement the project. With him, we now have an amazing warehouse. As our meal wound down, Peter sat back, smiled and said simply, "This has been the best year of my life."

Global X-perience

Donations of Goods
Distribution
Volunteers
Global X-perience

1 billion or so people live in slums. It's a startling figure but it's a billion lives that we can too easily ignore. Global X-periences are activities that allow participants to walk in the shoes of those whose lives are ravaged by poverty, sickness, disaster and disability. At Crossroads' head office in Hong Kong, thousands of people have gone through these Life X-periences and have been powerfully impacted.

In 2009 we began to host the Basti Life X-perience in Shymkent for students. Simulating slum life, this activity focuses the students' attention on global issues and how they can get involved in solving them. In 2010 we plan to expand this aspect of the work given the interest already generated.



Thank you!

We are enormously grateful to the many companies and individuals whose generosity makes CCA's work possible. To the right are organizations that have helped this year. Not listed are many other individuals including volunteers who were so vital to the year's success. Thank you for your compassion and action.



Almaty International Women's Club

Arden School, Sydney

Baker & McKenzie, Kazakhstan

Christopher Wren Photography

The Dirty Weekenders

TOO Europharma

ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc.

Interlink Resources Inc.

Jamross Trust

Medisend International

Medline Industries inc.

Noble Shipping Group

Pablo & Rusty's Speciality Coffee

Steve Watson

Rotary Club of
Kowloon North, Hong Kong

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