

Green Cross Switzerland

An introduction to Green Cross Switzerland

Six full and part-time employees work for the young non-governmental organisation Green Cross Switzerland. With the objective to reduce or avert environmental risks such as unsafe chemical weapons destruction and reactor disasters such as Chernobyl at a global level, the organisation works closely with the Green Cross parliamentary group, among others. 20 members of the Council of States and 99 members of the National Council belong to this group.

Nathalie Gysi, executive director of Green Cross Switzerland: "Green Cross Switzerland mediates in environmental crises and disasters. In addition to direct help for those affected, we make an important contribution to reducing political tensions and to enhancing greater security, also for Switzerland. With Green Cross Switzerland I am committed to a secure world, ready to face the future."

Dr. Stephan Robinson, director of the Legacy of the Cold War Programme: "For me it is a fundamental and exciting challenge to be able to push forward the disarmament process through practical work in the field and discussions up to the highest level, together with the sister organisations in Russia and the USA. Now and in the future."

Christina Bigler, director of the Social and Medical Care Programme: "Together with the local partners, I am able to take part in finding solutions in wretched situations. Helping to give the people affected the chance of a better future is a task which demands much, but also gives much."

Green Cross Switzerland Programmes

Legacy of the Cold War in Eastern Europe

Chemtrust promotes chemical weapons disarmament through mediation and information work, confidence-building measures and scientific investigations, as well as through social projects in favour of the districts in which chemical weapons are stored.

Radleg is concerned with the effects of military use of nuclear materials on environment and health.

By means of pilot projects, **Conweap** indicates the possibilities for the redevelopment and conversion of military bases and promotes the destruction of weapons and ammunition without harming the environment.

The governments of Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA support the Legacy of the Cold War Programme with annual contributions.

* Since the end of the Cold War, a massive reduction in Warsaw Pact and NATO armed forces has been striven for. In the USA alone, 311 military bases have been closed in the last ten years, new functions have been assigned to 112 bases, and many overseas bases have been given up. The American armed forces have reduced their personnel strength from a maximum of 4.8 million during the Vietnam war to 1.3 million today. The Russian armed forces have been reduced on a similar scale.

* Almost every military base shows pollution with oil products, chemicals, explosives and unexploded weapons. Up to now the US armed forces alone have recorded 28,000 such cases of residual waste. In addition, every year huge quantities of ammunition whose maximum storage life has expired are destroyed. In the USA alone this amounts to 100,000 tons per year. In the process, using the "destruction technologies" which are usual today (such as detonation or burning in the open air), poisonous substances such as PCB, dioxins, furans or hydrochloric acid are generated. It is estimated that 80 to 90 per cent of all ammunition produced is destroyed again after a few years in store.

* Weapons of mass destruction such as atomic, biological and chemical weapons can only be destroyed at great expense; technologies for their destruction or ultimate storage mostly still have to be developed. Moreover, the high safety standards required when dealing with such materials lead to enormous costs. This also applies to the destruction of the associated carrier systems, such as intercontinental missiles or submarines. The production and storage of weapons of mass destruction has led to large amounts of residual waste (in the ground water, in lakes and oceans), which often can no longer even be cleaned up, but now only isolated from the environment in the best possible way.

Social and Medical Care Programme in Eastern Europe and Vietnam

The Social and Medical Care Programme (Socmed) promotes medical and social projects for children, young people and mothers, in order to improve the living conditions of the population in contaminated areas.

Mother-and-child projects

Mothers and their small children rest thoroughly under psychological and medical care. The main emphasis of their stay in a sanatorium is placed on nutritional advice courses in which the mothers learn to grow and prepare foods in such a way that they contain the least possible amount of radioactive caesium.

Therapy camps for children and young people

In order to strengthen their immune systems and psychological health children and young people live in a healthy environment for at least four weeks, receive uncontaminated food and are looked after comprehensively.

Vietnam: orthopaedic aid

Physically handicapped children and young people affected by "Agent Orange" are provided with prostheses to replace parts of the body, or other orthopaedic aids to support particular parts of the body.

The Social and Medical Care Programme is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA) with annual contributions, as well as by donations.

* Results of the measurement of the radio-nuclide content in foods consumed by the rural population: in 15 to 25 per cent of the milk samples the caesium-137 content exceeds the limit for adults of 111 Bq/l. In 1998 new limits were established in Russia: 50 Bq/l for milk and 160 Bq/kg for meat. In Belarus, however, the old limits dating from 1996 of 111 Bq/l for milk and 600 Bq/kg for meat were left unchanged. Therefore children still remain without protection against radiation today.

* The number of cases of thyroid cancer among people who were younger than 18 at the time of the disaster has increased by a factor of over 50. In the last 15 years children have fallen ill with cancer of other organs 2.4 times as often as before the accident. In comparison with 1998 there are 4.5 times as many children who suffer from diabetes, auto-immune thyroid inflammation or from disorders in the stomach, intestinal and lung functions.

Green Cross International - the Beginnings

In 1992, on the occasion of the Rio conference, Mikhail Gorbachev called for the formation of a so-called 'environmental Red Cross', in short Green Cross International. Its aim should be to provide rapid and straightforward help in the case of environmental disasters - throughout the world. The Rio conference adopted the proposal.

At the same time Roland Wiederkehr founded a World Green Cross with the same aim. This was the start of Green Cross; the two merged in 1993 to form a single organisation, Green Cross International. One year later the formation of the first five national organisations took place, among them Green Cross Switzerland, USA and Russia.

Green Cross International forms the parent organisation for 26 national Green Cross organisations. In addition to the global Legacy Programme, which is under Swiss management, there are four other global Green Cross programmes.

Water is Life operates at the highest level to avert conflicts based on water shortage. As part of local projects it is concerned with the maintenance of water as the vital resource.

The Earth Charter commits people to dealing with our planet in a responsible way.

Education (environmental education) is included in all Green Cross Switzerland programmes. Green Cross Youth is Green Cross Switzerland's youth and volunteer organisation and co-ordinates volunteer activities by young adults in therapy camps with partner organisations in Eastern Europe. In addition, competitions for young adults on Green Cross subjects are run, and pen-friend relationships with those affected are offered. Teaching material on the consequences of the Chernobyl reactor is published, especially for use in schools.

Energy and Resource Efficiency works for the reduction of energy consumption and, in collaboration with partners, promotes technology transfer.

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Green Cross Switzerland Today

Green Cross Switzerland is addressing the impact of industrial and military disasters and of the waste materials left behind from the time of the Cold War. The focus lies in improving the quality of life of people affected by chemical, radioactive and other forms of contamination, as well as promoting sustainable development in a spirit of co-operation rather than confrontation, while involving all stakeholder groups affected by a problem.

In order to support world-wide disarmament efforts Green Cross created the global Legacy Programme focused mainly on aspects of disarmament and social and medical care. The first of a total of five global Green Cross programmes today.

Some three million people in Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine have to live in a contaminated homeland for decades to come. In this respect, the continuing low-level radiation contamination, which enters people's bodies via nutrition, is of particular importance.

In the framework of investigations conducted over many years, the effects of the military use of nuclear materials on the environment and people's health have been studied, and concrete help is offered to those affected.

In addition, Green Cross Switzerland promotes pilot projects in the redevelopment of former military bases, and supports the interests of the population who lives in areas that have been previously used for military purposes.

Since its start in 1994 the work of the Green Cross Switzerland foundation is characterised by fast, direct, and effective help to self-help on site. Support is provided in a pragmatic manner, based on scientifically sound approaches and mediation with tangible results. Green Cross Switzerland's projects are monitored by its board of trustees with regard to factual and cost objectives. Great importance is attached to education, mediation and scientific arguments in the search for solutions.

[quotation below picture]

With the solidarity declaration on the 15th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, Green Cross Switzerland called to mind that the children of Chernobyl need help, and that we must not forget them. At the solidarity rally for the children of Chernobyl on the Helvetiaplatz in Zurich, schoolchildren release 'Babushka balloons', and carrying cards expressing their wishes for a more hopeful future.

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The non-governmental organisation Green Cross Switzerland provides key services in world-wide disarmament, and serves as an independent and objective information source in the chemical weapons disarmament process in Russia. Green Cross mediates between the Russian chemical weapons authorities and the population living nearby the chemical weapons stockpiles and fearing the impact of an improper destruction of these weapons.

In recognition of the constructive work performed in the past, on 17 March 1997 the Russian chemical weapons forces signed a "memorandum of understanding". A further indication of the quality and importance of the global Legacy Programme is the award of Category 1 UNO status: official Green Cross representatives can take part in the discussions at the UN headquarters in New York, as well as at the UN agencies in Vienna and Geneva, and since 1999 they have advisory status in the European Council. Green Cross Switzerland is recognised internationally for professional action for remedying and preventing environmental damage resulting from industrial and military disasters.

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Social and Medical Care Programme

The Social and Medical Care Programme (Socmed) provides help for the weakest part of the population in Eastern Europe and Vietnam.

The disaster at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and the use of the defoliant 'Agent Orange' in Vietnam have led to the contamination of large areas. Millions of people are still affected today.

The Social and Medical Care Programme supports the people most severely affected with comprehensive medical and psychological help. Both health and the life quality of children, young people and mothers with small children are improved in order to be able to open up for them a liveable future.

SocMed projects: Help for local self-help

Therapy camps

Therapy camps for children and young people have been run in Belarus and Russia since 1995, and in the Ukraine since summer 2000. In order to strengthen their immune systems and psychological health, children and young people live in healthy surroundings for at least four weeks, receive uncontaminated food and are cared for comprehensively. Before and after the camps the children receive further medical care from mobile teams of doctors and advisers where they live.

Mother-and-child projects

Since 1997, mothers and their small children have been receiving medical and psychological care and treatment, as well as nutritional courses on how to deal with contaminated foodstuffs. The training of mothers in the creation of mother-networks in Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine is promoted. Several clubs are already active.

Training for the trainers

Setting up and running training camps and courses for prospective youth-group leaders in Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine. The aim is that young people should take on responsibility for their future and pass on their knowledge in the community.

Information and publications on health matters

Setting up an information network for the population, as well as specialists, and publication of recommendations on health matters.

Pilot medical project for diabetic children

Since early 2001 a mobile team of doctors in the Ukraine has been examining children suffering from diabetes. On the basis of the results, a record is made of what medical remedies are needed for first aid equipment, and what additional specialist knowledge can be of help in the primary health area. A specially set-up advisory centre for diabetic children and their parents is the starting point of this medical pilot project, which at the same time serves as the base for a "flying doctor team".

[quotation below picture]

"Healthy and uncontaminated food for my child" is the central theme in the four-week periods in sanatoriums for mothers with small children under stress from radiation.

[text for map]

Green Cross is active locally with social and medical care projects in Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine.

[glossary for map]

Weissrussland	Belarus
Russland	Russia
KIEW	KIEV
Reaktor	Reactor
Tschernobyl	Chernobyl

[box]

- Closed area (Cs-137 > 40 Cu/km²)
- Permanent inspection area (Cs-137 between 15 and 40 Cu/km²)
- Periodic inspection area (Cs-137 between 5 and 15 Cu/km²)
- Unspecified area (Cs-137 between 1 and 5 Cu/km²)

Orthopaedic care in Vietnam

Physically handicapped children and young people are provided with orthopaedic aids, so that they are able to walk again and are given the chance to work. In training courses mothers are supported with information on the care of their handicapped children. Young Vietnamese people receive grants for training as orthopaedic technicians.

Facts and figures on the projects

Eastern Europe: Through the medical rehabilitation projects carried out since 1995, it has been possible to improve the health of over 5'000 children and young people in Eastern Europe.

South-East Asia: 750 children and young people can now walk again and get an education.

Costs in 2000: CHF 1.5 million
Costs in 2004: CHF 4.0 million

The Social and Medical Care Programme is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA).

Organisation and partners

The Social and Medical Care Programme is headed by Christina Bigler, Green Cross Switzerland, and developed and implemented in collaboration with the local partners.

Green Cross Russia, with its headquarters in Moscow, has been active in Russia since 1994, and is headed by Prof. Sergey Baranovsky. Up to 2000, 23 regional branches have been set up, some of them also serve as regional information centres.

Green Cross Belarus was founded in 1999, but had already been carrying out social and medical care projects in Belarus since 1995 as the New Technology Foundation (NTF), under the leadership of Vladimir Shevtsov.

Green Cross Ukraine was founded in Kiev in 2000, and ran the first therapy camps for children and young people in the same year. Green Cross Ukraine is headed by Elisabeth Züblin Tymoshenko.

The Vietcot training centre in Hanoi/Vietnam was founded in 1997 in order to introduce the profession of orthopaedic technician. It is under the technical management of the German Society for Technical Collaboration (GTZ) and is officially recognised as part of the country's educational system. In 2000, 27 Vietnamese people completed the three-year training to become an orthopaedic technician.

[quotation below picture on the left]

The indirect victims of the Vietnam war, children and young people suffering from physical handicaps due to the use of "Agent Orange", are restored to mobility by means of orthopaedic aids.

[quotation below picture on the right]

In an unspoiled and uncontaminated area in their homeland the children gain new strength. During the therapy camps specialist teams of doctors, therapists and sports teachers provide medical and psychological care for the children.

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Legacy of the Cold War Programme

The disarmament projects Chemtrust, Conweap and Radleg in the area of tension between armed forces, environment and safety policy.

Disarmament projects always take place in an extremely complex environment, and can only be successful if all the associated problems are resolved. Key challenges are the lack of finance, fears on the part of the citizens concerning health and environment, as well as economical and societal structural upheavals. A further factor in disarmament efforts, and one whose effects have so far been underestimated, is the mistrust of the citizens towards the state.

In these complex settings, the Legacy of the Cold War Programme facilitates a successful implementation of disarmament projects and increased environmental awareness within the armed forces. Our strength lies in a non-partisan and co-operative approach, a sound understanding of the problems in all their aspects, and a widely developed network within all stakeholder groups.

The Legacy of the Cold War Programme is implemented through practical, pragmatic projects, which meet local needs and promote the development of civil society.

[text for map]

- Green Cross regional information centres about on the chemical weapons disarmament process in Russia
- ▼ Chemical weapons stockpiles
- Destruction facility for strategic missiles

[glossary for map]

Russland	Russia
Kasachstan	Kazhakstan
Moskau	Moscow

A summary of the Legacy of the Cold War Programme

Conweap - Recovery of an oil-polluted missile base

Today thousands of military bases are being closed throughout the world, some of them being converted for civil use. Many of them contain old oil waste. As part of a tri-national pilot project a missile base in West Russia, which is massively polluted with oil, is cleaned up. On the basis of a specific case, the necessary knowledge concerning the management of a waste-clean-up project, as well as knowledge about reclamation technologies adapted to Russian conditions, is being passed on.

Conweap & Chemtrust - Information centres as points of contact

Eight information offices have been set up for the Russian population to pass on information concerning the destruction of chemical weapons and of motors of intercontinental missiles. Citizens are given information on neighbouring weapons stockpiles and their planned destruction. At the same time the information centres are also points of contact for representatives of the district or regional administrations, and of the armed forces. In order to answer the large number of questions, a series of brochures and information sheets have been published over the years. Regular lecture tours enable direct contact between top decision-makers in disarmament projects and the citizens.

Chemtrust - Hearings

Public hearings are organised regularly in Russia and the USA. The purpose of these hearings is to make the local population familiar with the respective destruction project in their district, and to promote a free exchange of information between all parties affected by the construction of the future destruction plant. Citizens are given the opportunity to ask questions directly to the decision makers present, and also to express their fears.

Chemtrust & Conweap - Scientific investigations

Scientific investigations are decisive, in order to transform the mainly emotional arguments into fact-based discussions. Scientific publications are available on an investigation of the old chemical weapons waste in Penza (central Volga basin), as well as on risk-analyses of chemical weapons stockpiles and destruction plants.

Chemtrust - Medical training at chemical weapons storage sites

Districts in which chemical weapons are stored must prepare their medical staff and their disaster organisations for the consequences of a possible chemical weapons accident. Both require specific technical knowledge, which is not readily available in the rural areas of Russia. Green Cross passes on this knowledge in 10-day courses, in collaboration with proven specialists.

Radleg - Effects of the use of nuclear weapons materials

A project lasting for several years studied the effect of the military use of nuclear materials on environment and health in Russia. It considered the construction of atomic bombs, their testing and also the operation of the nuclear-propelled fleets. The results are available in the form of scientific reports, as a geographical information system and as a popular-science book.

Facts and figures on the projects

Since 1995 eight public hearings have been held in Russia and the USA, as well as various 'round tables'.

Costs in 2000: CHF 1.5 million
Costs in 2004: CHF 4.0 million

The Legacy of the Cold War Programme is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA), by the American defence ministry, by the British and Swedish governments, as well as by a number of foundations.

Organisation and partners

The Legacy of the Cold War Programme is headed by Dr. Stephan Robinson, Green Cross Switzerland, and developed and implemented in collaboration with Green Cross Russia and Global Green USA.

Green Cross Russia, with its headquarters in Moscow, has been active in Russia since 1994, and is headed by Prof. Sergey Baranovsky. Up to 2000, 23 regional branches have been set up, some of them support the regional information centres.

Global Green USA was formed in 1994 and has been taking part in Chemtrust and Conweap since 1995. The co-ordinator is Dr. Paul Walker who had previously worked on disarmament projects in the American administration for many years.

[quotation below picture on the left]

In 1993 the Russian armed forces handed back a piece of woodland to the administration of the Penza region. It had previously served as a destruction site for chemical weapons. The picture shows a soil sample being taken in Penza by an operator wearing protective clothing. The analysis showed, among other things, that the maximum permissible values for arsenic and dioxin were exceeded by a factor of 65,000 to 500,000.

[quotation below picture on the right]

In Green Cross information centres thousands of citizens are given access to open and objective information on local disarmament projects. The picture shows a warfare-agent detection device used by the Russian army.

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