



Zone 8

Lake Baikal, Russia

ZONE 8 HIGHLIGHTS

COUNTRIES	CENTRES/ GROUPS	SSIO MEMBERS	SSE STUDENTS	ISSE	SATHYA SAI SCHOOLS
Azerbaijan	3	20	4		
Belarus	5	34	4		
Kazakhstan	10	81	18		
Kyrgyzstan	1	7	2		
Moldova	1	6			
Russia	67	533	198		
Ukraine	11	77	7		
TOTAL	98	758	233		



ZONE 8 COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Zonal Activities

SSIO members of Zone 8 continued to serve and work together beyond international borders with love and unity.

In October 2017, nearly 300 volunteers across 55 cities served food to more than 1,300 people in need and likewise to some animals. Every autumn and spring, the SSIO members from Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan pledge this undertaking, despite many challenges. Likewise, hundreds attended a series of public meetings organised by 250 volunteers from 50 Sathya Sai Centres. These meetings addressed a broad range of topics, including the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, SSIO programmes and conservation of the environment, tailored to the needs of each country. For example, in Belarus, SSIO volunteers organised a “Sai Café,” where participants joined in a rousing discussion on the role of language in emotions. In Kazakhstan, the environment was a key focus, reflecting the nation’s emphasis on preserving the natural beauty of the country. In Ukraine, a film was screened, highlighting the relevance of spirituality and family values in daily life.





Azerbaijan

The holidays can be a poignant season for young orphans. In recognition of this, volunteers from three Sathya Sai Centres in Azerbaijan brought festive cheer to orphaned children just before Christmas 2017. They presented gift bags with fruits, sweets, snacks and a toy to 36 children. The volunteers also helped the younger children prepare gifts for their friends, while the older children were treated to a seminar on appreciating the beauty of nature and seeing the inner beauty in each person.

On Earth Day, 20th April 2018, SSIO volunteers planted a variety of seedlings to help restore some of nature's beauty.



Belarus

In an unbroken tradition spanning the last 20 years, SSIO members across Belarus gathered for their flagship conference both to celebrate their work and define the SSIO's outlook for the coming year. Surrounded by picturesque lakes and forests, more than 30 delegates attended a two-day conference near Vitebsk. The event was highlighted by cultural programmes, interactive sessions, poems, songs and a special dramatization of the famous fairy tale, "Repka," all of which added a distinctive touch to the conference.

Belarus



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Vitebsk further hosted the Belarussian National Family Camp in June/July 2017, bringing together SSIO members and children from across the country. The “Five Ds” (devotion, duty, discipline, discrimination, and determination) were a focus, underpinning many of the fun activities, including constructing a shelter, cooking on a bonfire and participating in Sai Olympics as well as classes and seminars for the families.

The essence of these five virtues was again harnessed only weeks later when volunteers gathered in the Gomel Region for a national initiative to repair an orphanage for abandoned orphan children.



Kazakhstan

The SSIO of Kazakhstan joined international celebrations of Earth Day and used the occasion to clean homes, workplaces, beaches and amusement parks around the country. Together with local residents and children, Sathya Sai volunteers also planted trees and flower seedlings to beautify the surroundings.

Later, during the national family camp, nature was again brought to the forefront, as more than 50 SSIO members and children celebrated the theme, “Happiness Is Our True Nature.” Amidst a serene glade surrounded by snow-white birch trees, the children received daily lessons on human values and took part in creative workshops, games, sports and other activities. The group also participated in a



Kazakhstan



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20-km walk through the spectacular Tsar's Path, near Yalta, where they cleaned a heavily littered section of coastline along the Black Sea. A local official, pleased and impressed with the service, urged the SSIO to return next year.

These and other service and devotional initiatives were discussed in the national conference during October 2017, where representatives from 12 cities shared their work and discussed future opportunities. The conference also included a seminar on pedagogy, featuring a guest speaker from the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In another programme, 14 children from an orphanage were given an educational seminar based on human values and enjoyed a drama based on the fairy tale, "Tilimilitrymadia."



Kyrgyzstan

In partnership with a Kyrgyzstani public foundation, a small group of SSIO volunteers organised a celebration of friendship and kindness for the children of Bishkek. A total of 77 visitors, of whom more than 85 percent were children, visited the Centre for Social Adaptation, where the epic of Er-Toshtuk was brought to life. Having studied the story earlier, the children watched videos and recited passages featuring the heroism and love of the titular protagonist. Love for nature was another message – not lost on the children in attendance.

Kyrgyzstan



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Moldova

Tree planting has been a long-standing staple of the SSIO's Serve the Planet initiative. SSIO volunteers of Moldova introduced a novel application of this programme by planting 200 seedlings in a region prone to landslides. They and their partners from the Zelenstroy Company not only beautified the region but performed a public service to help keep the area safe for years to come.



Russia

The vast expanse of Russia has long been a challenge for national service initiatives. Nonetheless, Sathya Sai volunteers, inspired by love and devotion, organised a sizeable medical and education camp. An international volunteer task-force of 162, including 65 doctors and nurses in 17 specialties, served more than 3,800 villagers in the region. The volunteers also distributed medical supplies, including 900 pairs of eyeglasses. Simultaneously, a human values-based education programme engaged more than 130 children over five days. SSIO volunteers further renovated two schools and presented sets of supplies, clothing, linens and household appliances to more than 60 needy families. The spectacular camp concluded with a rousing concert enjoyed by an audience of about 500.



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In October 2017, SSIO members from 13 Russian cities hosted a national gathering in the rugged Urals region of Russia. The conference, focusing on health and well-being, featured a programme of dance, music and poetry, as well as a unique Kazakh choir. This came on the heels of a zonal conference, held in St. Petersburg, which brought together the SSIO leadership of Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

For years, the SSIO of Russia has pioneered family camps, offering children and their families an opportunity to unwind amidst an atmosphere of love and devotion. Several camps were organised again, this year. Attendees met in places such as the banks of the Katun River or in sunny Dagestan. The international network of Sathya Sai volunteers re-enacted fairy tales, organised sporting events, participated in creative workshops, presented concerts and enjoyed games and activities.



Ukraine

On the shores of the Black Sea, the SSIO of Ukraine organised a family camp attended by 34 people, some hailing from as far as Russia and Moldova. The campers participated in creative workshops daily, even presenting human values-themed tales written by themselves. The camp further included a round-table discussion on spirituality, as well as melodious devotional singing.



Russia



Ukraine