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MAINSTREAMING OF HUMAN, SOCIAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN RUSSIA FINAL REPORT



MARCH 27, 2013

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MAINSTREAMING OF HUMAN, SOCIAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN RUSSIA

FINAL REPORT

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I. PROGRAM APPROACH AND RESULTS

This report documents the activities and accomplishments of the Mainstreaming of Human, Social and Civil Rights Program (*I've Got Rights* program) implemented for USAID/Russia by Management Systems International (MSI) between August 31, 2009 and December 31, 2012. According to the Cooperative Agreement, the Program was planned to end on August 30, 2013. Due to USAID/Russia Mission early closure, the Program, as all other USAID activities, was terminated eight months before its original completion date. Despite early termination, the Program achieved significant results and made an impact on promoting and mainstreaming human rights in Russia.



Program logo that says "I've Got Rights"

This report provides an overall description of the Program's activities and approaches, summarizes key accomplishments, discusses the issues that emerged during program implementation, and provides lessons learned and recommendations.

Program concept and design

The Program was designed and implemented to contribute to USAID/Russia's objective to *improve the observance of fundamental human rights*, focusing on the intermediate result, *Citizens assert their fundamental rights* (IR 1), and contributing to the intermediate result, *Responsible Government authorities act to fulfill human rights obligations* (IR 2). This second IR also served as a "critical assumption" that was beyond the manageable control of the Program. To reach the major result - *Citizens asserting their fundamental rights* – the Program established three sub-IRs, including: *IR 1.1 Citizens are willing to assert their rights*; *IR 1.2 Citizens are aware of their rights*; and *IR 1.3 Citizens have the tools and capacity to defend their rights*. Program activities were designed and implemented toward achieving these intermediate results and the overall objective of increasing the observance of fundamental human rights in Russia.

The Program embraced the concept of *mainstreaming* human rights, originally introduced in the RFA which argued that "human rights are everyone's business, and their defense requires the participation of the citizenry across the board."¹ To engage the concept of mainstreaming human rights, the Program worked in areas of broad public interest, engaged a wide spectrum of the population in this work, bridged human rights organizations (HROs) with the general population and particular constituencies, and mobilized HROs that promoted public-supported human rights reforms. Program activities were implemented around the following tasks:

"Our rights should be with us every day and not only during roundtables, meetings, festivals, and demonstrations. The protection of human rights should be a ubiquitous concern for every citizen and for the government."

Natalia Zvyagina,
Voronezh Civic Development Initiative Center

¹ Request for Applications No. USAID-Russia-DI-09-0001-RFA – Mainstreaming of Human, Social, and Civil Rights Project in Russia. – p. 6.

- Promote citizen awareness about human, social and civil rights, as well as mechanisms to effectively defend them;
- Strengthen the skills and capacity of civil society organizations to reach out to and educate citizens;
- Incentivize citizens to defend their rights by collecting and disseminating information about successes of Russian citizens defending their rights;
- Facilitate networking among human rights and other civil society organizations; and
- Facilitate constructive dialogue between human rights organizations and the government to develop and strengthen institutions that allow citizens to assert their rights.

Geographical focus

The Program was implemented in four regions spread throughout Russia from the central part to the Urals and to Siberia, including Voronezh, Nizhniy Novgorod and Novosibirsk oblasts, and Perm krai. The regions were selected in consultation with local counterparts and experts and through research using the following criteria: (a) a diversity of geographic locations and population/demographic features, (b) existence of capable local HROs, (c) an attentive local mass media, (d) a responsive local government, and (e) diversity in the human rights issues of principal concern. The regions selected for the Program differed somewhat in terms of their priority human rights issues. Social and economic rights as well as freedom from torture were among priority issues in all four regions. Among other concerns were rights of specific demographic groups, such as the disabled, orphans, elderly, military draftees, women, ethnic minorities and migrants. While the Program was focused on these four regions, it expanded its activities to about 20 neighboring regions by inviting HRO representatives to Program trainings, workshops and other events, involving them in grantee project activities, and extending the journalist contests beyond Program regions. In addition, by disseminating information generated by the Program, we reached out to many other regions of Russia as was confirmed by a large number of messages and feedback we received from all over the country.

Program team

The Program was designed to emphasize upfront involvement of Russian HROs and experts as key Program activity implementers, facilitators, trainers and communicators with Russian authorities, media and the public. To maximize involvement of regional expertise and talent, MSI partnered with four local civil society organizations (one in each region) that served as Program **Regional Coordinators (RCs)**, including the Perm Regional Human Rights Defense Center, the Voronezh Center for Development of Civic Initiatives, the Press Development Institute – Siberia in Novosibirsk, and the Committee Against Torture in Nizhniy Novgorod. The role of the RCs was to coordinate activities of HROs and other CSOs in the their region and reach out to CSOs in the neighboring regions; maintain communications with the media and the authorities; organize and host major project events, including networking meetings and training sessions; and conduct human rights mainstreaming activities of their own. To implement the media component of the Program, particularly journalist contests and trainings, MSI partnered with one of the most prominent human rights and media organizations - the **Glasnost Defense Foundation (GDF)** - and its regional partners, the Press Development Institute – Siberia

(Novosibirsk), Media Rights' Defense Center (Voronezh), Journalist Technologies Center (Nizhny Novgorod), and the Nizhny Novgorod and Perm regional organizations of the Union of Journalists. MSI also partnered with the highly respected Russian research organizations – **ROMIR and the Levada Center** – to conduct baseline and interim regional and national public opinion polls to assess citizen perceptions of and experience with human rights. Finally, MSI engaged directly with about **50** human rights and other CSOs (**Program grantee organizations – PGOs**) and over a hundred CSOs indirectly to implement human rights mainstreaming activities that included building public awareness, providing legal assistance to the victims of human right abuses, and conducting human rights advocacy activities in the Program regions. These organizations were a major force helping us achieve the objectives of the Program. Finally, MSI involved many **experts** throughout Russia to conduct training, workshops, provide technical assistance, and share their experience with our partners and grantees in the Program regions. MSI's **program staff** in Moscow, consisting entirely of Russian professionals for the last year and a half of the Program, coordinated the implementation of the Program with all partners, managed and provided support to PGOs, designed and implemented skill and capacity building programs, and facilitated networking and information sharing and dissemination. The Program team was supported by international experts who shared their experience and international best practices and assisted PGOs in designing effective programs to mainstream human rights.

Operating environment

Over the course of three years, some PGOs experienced gradually increasing hostility from the Russian government. Although the objectives of the Program were constructive, the fact that the Program was focused on the issue of human rights and was funded by the USG contributed to a negative attitude by some governmental agencies and officials. Several PGOs experienced unscheduled inspections that lead to sanctions or court hearings, searches and other types of harassment and threats towards their organizations or members. To prevent and mitigate these situations, MSI encouraged program partners and grantees to refrain from using protest actions if a matter could be resolved constructively through dialogue; repeatedly trained PGOs in legitimate ways of using their rights to assembly to avoid, to the extent it was possible, detentions and arrests; and trained PGOs in other skills and legal matters including the regulation of CSO operations. All grantees and partners were also granted a waiver relieving them from the requirement of using USAID branding/marketing if it compromised the intrinsic independence or neutrality of activities conducted. Despite all of these measures, the operating environment deteriorated in 2012, aggravated by legislation passed by the government later in the year. Additional information is provided in the *Promoting Human Rights Reforms* section of this report.

Implementation approach

To achieve the overall Program goals and objectives, MSI developed an approach based on the following principles: addressing the priority needs of the local constituencies, applying innovations and best practices relevant to the local context, building strong partnerships with local counterparts, promoting local capacity, and maximizing coordination with other programs and donors. The Program implemented the following activities:

- **Identify human rights priorities and assess HROs' needs and capacity.** These activities guided us in developing regional strategies for mainstreaming human rights based on the priorities identified by the general public and demographic groups, as well as human rights and other CSOs;
- **Build mainstreaming skills and capacity of HROs.** This activity improved HRO skills and capacities to implement effective human rights mainstreaming activities;
- **Provide financial and technical support to HROs in implementing human rights mainstreaming projects.** With the financial support provided through small grants programs and technical assistance, the Program enabled HROs to implement mainstreaming human rights projects which consisted of the following:
 - improving public and constituency groups' legal awareness,
 - providing legal assistance to the victims of human rights violations, and
 - promoting institutional reforms to strengthen the observance of human rights;
- **Engage the mass media.** To reach out to the general population, we involved the mass media through various approaches, including financial support, contests and training which facilitated the expansion of outreach to the general public; and
- **Support networking.** Networking and information exchange among HROs and the mass media contributed to strengthening the capacity of and cooperation among stakeholders.

Program results

Despite early termination, the Program had notable impacts in strengthening the capacity and skills of human rights organizations enabling them to provide legal assistance to thousands of citizens, raising citizen awareness about their rights, and advocating for institutional reforms to guarantee citizen rights. The project exceeded all targets that were measured by the time the Program was closed. Due to early termination, MSI was not able to conduct planned follow-up public opinion surveys to measure several indicators, including community satisfaction with human rights protection, citizen perceptions of their awareness of their rights and how to defend their rights, and citizen willingness to defend their rights. The interim surveys conducted at the end of the second year of the Program were instrumental in adjusting and strategizing the Program, but could not be counted against targets set for the third year of the Program. Charts below demonstrate results achieved by the end of the third year on all indicators other than those measured through public opinion polls.

Figure I. Program Targets and Results (as of end of the 3rd year)

Legal assistance provided to citizens
 (# of citizens receiving legal consultations)



Cases filed with court
 (# of court cases filed by HROs)



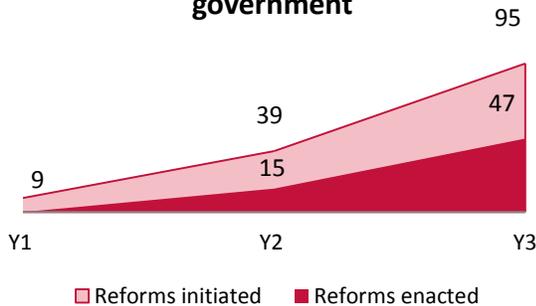
Human rights activists improved their knowledge and skills
 (# of HRO activists reported improved knowledge and skills)



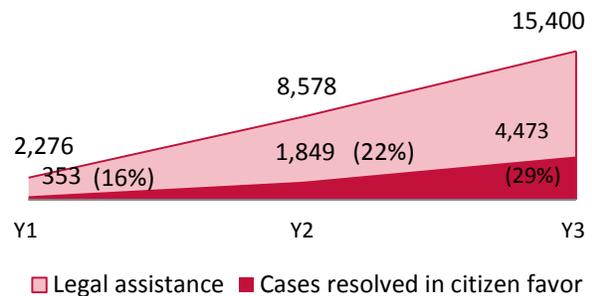
Human rights CSOs receiving USG support
 (# of HROs receiving USG support)



Advocacy reforms initiated by HROs and enacted by the government



Legal assistance and reported cases resolved in citizen favor



The Report discusses the Program's approaches, activities, and results achieved in relation to the established objectives. Here is a snapshot of some of its achievements:

- **80 human rights mainstreaming projects** were implemented, with the support of the Program by about **50 local HROs** and their partners, to increase public awareness about human, civil, and social rights, provide legal assistance to citizens whose rights were violated, and advocate for reforms to better observe and defend citizen rights, including the rights of youth and children, the disabled, workers, women, etc.
- With the support of the *I've Got Rights*, program grantee organizations:
 - provided legal assistance to more than **19,300** citizens (including 2,270 through social media tools) in all four Program regions. About **1,700 cases** were brought to court. **About 5,290 cases** appealed to governmental agencies were reported as resolved in favor of citizens that constitutes **31% of the total cases** filed with HROs;
 - directly engaged about **29,830 people** in about **770** public education and awareness raising events, such as workshops, trainings, roundtables and public meetings;
 - advocated for **100 legal and institutional reforms** to promote better observance of human, civil and social rights. Out of the 100 reforms initiated, 85 are on the municipal and regional levels and 15 are on the federal level. **53 of the reforms have been enacted** and the rest remained with the government at different stages of review;
 - published and disseminated more than **160 informational brochures and flyers** and 18 analytical reports on different aspects of human, social and civil rights, and disseminated them among citizens and target audiences;
 - participated in more than **300 TV and radio shows**, generated hundreds of publications in print media, and produced **14 TV shows, 20 radio shows, and 17 animated and video films**;
- Regional Coordinators conducted about **100 Human Rights Discussions** attended by about **1,750 people** who discussed a wide spectrum of issues of regional and national importance and initiated human rights advocacy campaigns;
- More than **300 journalists** participated in three annual Journalist Contests;
- The Program website contains more than **2,000 reference materials** on a wide spectrum of human rights issues, and had over **9,000** of unique visitors.

II. MOBILIZING STAKEHOLDERS AND DEVELOPING REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Public opinion polls

Understanding the importance of building activities that would directly address citizens' concerns, MSI commissioned a public opinion survey in each of the Program regions. The survey objective was to identify citizen priority issues; the level of citizens' understanding of their rights and their readiness to protect them; their perceptions and expectations regarding HROs; the mass media and the government; and how human rights issues should be framed so they are appealing to citizens. Regional surveys were supplemented with the nationwide survey. Four key questions of the regional survey were used in the nationwide survey. Results of the surveys were used to guide the Program and participating local organizations in the planning and implementing of mainstream human rights activities.

MSI contracted on a competitive basis the Russian survey group ROMIR to conduct a survey in each of the four regions and the Levada Center to include four key questions into their nationwide Omnibus survey. The **regional surveys** of the adult population (ages 18-70) were conducted in each region in November 2009. Sample size in each region was approximately 2,400 respondents and a margin of error was +/- 2% with a 95% accuracy rate. This sample size allowed for sufficient analysis of each region, as well as cross-tabulations with demographic variables. Each interview was conducted face-to-face and lasted between 25-35 minutes. The **nationwide survey** was conducted in December 2009 using four of the same questions to provide a comparison to the regional results. The survey used the same age groups as the regional surveys. The total sample size of 1,600 respondents was stratified to be representative by gender, age, education, region, and settlement type. The nationwide survey served as a control group to compare with the regions that the Program was working in. The results of the regional surveys, in part, were also used to establish a baseline for some of the indicators of the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).

Focus groups with human rights stakeholders

The surveys were supplemented with a series of **focus group discussions** conducted in each region with key HROs and other types of CSOs representing particular constituencies (youth, women, the disabled, veterans, orphans, migrants, home owners, etc.), as well as government and mass media representatives. The discussions at these sessions were directed at the groups' understanding of current human, social and civil rights issues in their region; how these groups interact with government to defend and protect these rights; and how they communicate and serve citizens. In addition, a short questionnaire was completed by many of these groups. The



One of the focus groups in Novosibirsk

qualitative results of these meetings and questionnaires provided further explanation for the
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quantitative survey findings. MSI staff conducted focus group discussions with a total of about 170 participants.

Mainstreaming human rights regional strategies

Upon completion of the survey and focus groups, MSI drafted a report that served as a key document at the two-day **Strategy Development Workshops** conducted in each region in February 2010. The objective of the workshops was to develop regional human rights mainstreaming strategies that would guide the Program in providing financial support to CSOs through its small grants program, and to assist stakeholders in the regions to better reach out to citizens with their human rights raising awareness activities. About 250 people -- representatives of human rights groups, other CSOs, the mass media and the government -- participated in the workshops in each region. Participants discussed the results of the survey and developed their regional priority strategies for mainstreaming human rights. The workshops were conducted with the support of experienced human rights experts and facilitators.



Human Rights Strategy Development workshop in N.Novgorod

Support to CSOs to implement mainstreaming human rights activities

The draft strategies developed by the workshops' participants were finalized by the experts, Regional Coordinators, and Program staff and served as guiding directions for the **Small Grants Program**. Over the course of three years, the Program awarded 80 grants, including follow-up awards to 48 CSOs in all four Program regions. The grantees implemented a wide spectrum of activities to mainstream human rights. They worked with various demographic groups including youth and children, disabled persons, workers, women, elderly, ethnic minorities, and other groups, as well as general public, to increase their awareness about human rights, provide legal assistance to citizens whose rights were violated, and advocate for reforms to better observe and defend citizen rights. Detailed description of the grantees' activities and achievements is provided in the following sections of this report.

In May-June 2011, MSI conducted an **interim survey** using the same methodology as for the baseline survey of 2009. The survey generated lively discussions among Program participants who were looking for more effective approaches in raising citizen awareness about their rights and how to defend the rights. The survey was instrumental in adjusting the Small Grant Program. It focused on more aggressive and innovative approaches in educating citizens and mainstreaming human rights. Based on this survey and discussions surrounding it, the Program put more emphasis on using traditional mass media and social media, further strengthening HROs public and media outreach skills, and expanding activities throughout the Program regions.



Discussing results of the 2011 survey report in the regions

III. STRENGTHENING THE MAINSTREAMING SKILLS

For years HROs in Russia were primarily focused on civil and political rights with more specific emphasis on the administration of justice, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of movement – issues that were not high on the agenda of the majority of citizens. In addition, HROs underestimated the importance of public outreach, building trust and support, educating people, and targeting issues that were important to the mainstream population. Many HROs have isolated themselves not only from people, but also from other CSOs. Recently, Russian HROs turned their attention to economic, social, and cultural rights and opened themselves to interaction with the broader public and CSOs. However, they have not been effective in reaching out to the public and generating action. There appeared to be a serious communication problem between the general population and HROs. The large majority of citizens would not report rights violation cases to HROs. A survey conducted by the Levada Center not long before the Program started showed that although 36% of respondents were aware of the work of human/civil rights groups, only 5% said that they would contact these groups in the case that their rights were abused by the authorities.²

Our baseline survey conducted in 2009 confirmed these findings, indicating that a relatively small percent of citizens made appeals to HROs when their rights are violated (between 4% and 12%). At the same time, the survey showed that the public's perception of government and human rights and other CSOs' effectiveness in protecting and defending citizen rights was relatively low. Citizens tended to believe in the value of human rights and other CSOs just a little bit more than they do in government institutions. Across all four of the Program regions, citizens believed that in order for human rights or other CSOs to be effective in helping citizens to better assert and defend their rights, they would need to communicate and educate citizens better and address citizen concerns more directly. They would also need to educate citizens on the knowledge and skills required to defend their rights, as well as advocate for the rights of central concern.

In pursuing the goal of mainstreaming human rights, the Program viewed local HROs as a major partner and a force, although noting the lack of skills in relating, reaching out to, and transferring their knowledge effectively to citizens and their constituencies. To address this, MSI has developed and implemented a comprehensive skill and capacity strengthening program for human rights and other CSOs in the Program regions that included several approaches:

- Skills and capacity building training workshops were conducted based on the needs and capacity assessments;
- Support Human Rights Discussion Clubs were conducted by the Regional Coordinators on a regular basis to strengthen knowledge of various human rights issues and to share knowledge and experience;
- Resources and information were provided in order to disseminate through various channels among human rights and other CSOs and the public;

² Russians about Law Enforcement Agencies. – Levada-Center, Moscow 2008
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- Approaches and tools for effective use in mainstreaming human rights were identified and summarized;
- Facilitated the exchange of tools, approaches, and products developed by grantees in each region; and
- Provided direct technical assistance to grantees in developing and implementing effective mainstreaming human rights projects.

Detailed information about the skills and capacity building training program is provided below. Information about other tools for strengthening mainstreaming human rights skills is provided in the section *III. Strengthening the Mainstreaming Skills* of this report.

I. Skill and capacity building training and workshops

MSI has developed and implemented targeted a mainstreaming human rights skill and capacity building program based on the needs and capacity assessment conducted through a set of focus groups and questionnaires. We designed our training program to take into account several factors: (1) objectives of the Program in mainstreaming human rights that required particular skills for human rights CSOs; (2) citizens understanding, attitude, and experience with human rights, and their perception about and expectations of human rights CSOs; (3) CSOs’ needs and capacity in mainstreaming and promoting human rights. Needs and capacities were regularly reassessed through feedback from participating in the Program CSOs. During the implementation, the *I’ve Got Rights* program conducted 43 trainings and workshops on 15 topics.

Formal Training Program
No. of trainings - 43
No. of participants – 1,066
No. of organizations trained – 559
No. of topics – 15

The training program included, among others the following topics:

- **Mainstreaming human rights strategy development** – these facilitated sessions guided participants in developing targeted strategies to build public human rights awareness;
- **Public outreach and communication** – this training session helped CSOs to develop effective communications and social marketing strategies;
- **Working with the mass media** – this training built skills of human rights CSOs to effectively communicate with and engage the mass media;
- **Managing the image of human rights organizations** – this unique training focused on improving and managing public image of human rights CSOs to gain public trust and support;
- **Using emerging technologies in human rights advocacy** –in this activity, participants learned to use information and communication technologies and social networking tools in their human rights advocacy activities;
- **Negotiating with authorities** – this training helped CSOs in developing skills to effectively negotiate with the government in advocating for human rights reforms;
- **Advocacy and lobbying** – this activity taught participants how to build advocacy strategies that are closely aligned with an organization’s mission and constituency interests in promoting human rights;

- **Fundraising** – this activity taught participants how to build sustainable organizations through diversification of their funding sources, including modern innovating techniques in fundraising.

Other topics addressed at the training workshops included: **using civil rights (freedom of assembly) in the CSO work, building cooperation with the justice system, providing legal assistance to the victims of human rights violation, conducting public investigations**, and other topics.

The training program was open for HROs and other CSOs, as well as to the mass media representatives. In addition, the Program implemented a dedicated training program for the mass media representatives. That training included an initial 2-day workshop conducted in each of the four regions to improve journalist knowledge of human rights issues and build their skills in reporting on human rights and educating the public. The training also had an objective to introduce and attract journalists to the Journalist Contest sponsored by the Program. Additional workshops and training sessions were conducted in each region as part of the Journalist Contest attached to the award ceremonies. Furthermore, the winners of the regional stage of the Contest participated at the *Open Jury* discussion sessions, at which the prominent experts in journalism and human rights openly discussed contestants' reports helping them to better understand strengths and weaknesses and improve their professionalism.

"These workshops expand not only knowledge, but also provide an opportunity to determine trends in the development of CSO work in human rights area. I am glad that the opportunity to communicate with colleagues will be continued".

"Enjoyed the meeting. A lot of useful, relevant information. Want to run, fast, to implement ideas! Good organization of the meeting. Good handout materials. Thank you! "

Anonymous participants' feedback

The training program for HROs was implemented on the **regional and interregional levels**. On the regional level we conducted training sessions in each of the regions, albeit expanding participation beyond Program grantee organizations and including CSOs from neighboring regions. Often trainings were supplemented with discussions or attached to the Human Rights Discussion Clubs implemented by our Regional Coordinators. Training workshops on the interregional level were conducted for our Program grantees from all four regions together and were attached to the interregional networking meetings. This allowed our grantees not only to learn together but also share experience and build cooperation.

To implement training programs, MSI engaged with the best available Russian trainers and experts. According to participant feedback collected through evaluation questionnaires, all trainings were successful and useful for most grantees and other CSOs participating. On average **around 91%** of participants of all training sponsored by the Program reported improved knowledge and skills. Many provided their comments about the content and quality of training they received in the course of the Program.

Brief descriptions of some of these training workshops are presented below.

✓ **Reaching out to Citizens and the Mass Media**

In June, 2010 the first twenty-nine Program grantees participated in the Program's first four-day long Interregional Networking Meeting, *Mainstreaming of Human Rights School*, in Kazan, which was hosted by the Interregional Human Rights Defense Association, *Agora*. On the first day, participants presented their projects and discussed the linkages of social and economic rights with civil and political rights. On the second and third days, participants were taught public and mass media outreach tools and developed their own strategies in applying these tools in their project activities supported by the *I've Got Rights* Program. Igor Tsikunov, who has more than 15 years of first-hand experience working in mass media and public relations, guided participants on how to attract the attention of the mass media and work systematically with different media sources. These interactive workshops were also based on examples of projects being carried out by the grantees. Most of the participants noted that they had only a vague idea about public relations and did not have any type of structured approach. Others expressed their readiness to change their existing public relations strategy to increase the efficacy of their outreach. The workshops received high remarks from participants.

"I regret that we did not have such a well-structured approach before. If we knew these things before we could have avoided many mistakes."

Natalya Zhukova,
N. Novgorod Regional Committee of Soldiers'
Mothers

"In our every-day activities we had just a general idea about what a public relations strategy is. Now we are going to put more effort into it and we expect greater effectiveness."

Stanislav Rudik,
Voronezh Social Technology Center

✓ Improving the Image of Human Rights Organizations

According to the public opinion survey conducted in the Program regions, the overwhelming majority of citizens did not think that the work of HROs was effective in defending their rights. In the Novosibirsk region the percentage of people who considered the work of HROs effective was the lowest (11.1%), while in Perm region the percentage was the highest (27%).

During September 2010, Maria Sereda, PR Manager of the Rayzan Memorial NGO, conducted a unique interactive workshop -- *Managing the Image of a Human Rights Organization* -- in each of the Program regions to address this disconnect between citizens and HROs. Over 50 participants from many CSOs discussed their problems with reaching out to public, citizen skepticism and misperceptions about HROs, and what they need to do to overcome it. Many of the participants admitted their failure to effectively communicate their missions to citizens and demonstrate to the public their credibility in representing their interests. Participants also admitted the difficulties they experienced in communicating with the government that often perceived HROs as unable to discuss issues constructively. By the end of the training, participants outlined strategies and approaches that their organizations could take to better communicate with the public and improve their public image. As one of the participants noted, the training was useful not only for professional development but also for personal growth.



Trainer Maria Sereda discusses with participants approaches to improve their organization public image

✓ Emerging Technologies in Human Rights Advocacy

In January and February 2011, more than 80 people attended the workshops *Emerging Technologies in Human Rights Advocacy*, which were conducted in each of the Program regions. The trainings were led by Marina Litvinovich, *a well-known politician, human rights activist, journalist and a popular blogger*. Among participants were representatives of HROs from each Program region as well as from neighboring regions, including Lipetsk, Ryazan, Orenburg regions, and Tatarstan and Chuvashia Republics.



Participants of the workshop on Emerging Technologies, 29-30 January, Voronezh

The first day of the training focused on building participant knowledge about social media, such as twitter, blogs, Skype and others. Quickly learning about these tools, many participants started blogging right away by the end of the first day of the training. On the second day of the workshop, participants learned to organize and manage internet campaigns. They analyzed in detail several examples of using social media in promoting and defending human rights, among them the *Blue Buckets*, *Tangerine Flash-mob* in Kaliningrad, and the *Shavenkova Accident* in Irkutsk. These examples helped participants to develop ideas for using social media for their

organizations and projects. By the end of the training, a majority of the participants registered their accounts in Facebook, Twitter, In Contact, and Life Journal.

Participants commented: “Now I am registered at the most popular social networks and I will use them frequently;” “The workshop will help me organize an internet campaign on the protection of public interests;” and “I will use my knowledge to find online discussion groups, forums, and increase the awareness about problems of children with disabilities.”



Trainer Marina Litvinovich assists participants to create social networks for their CSOs

Some participants created new blogs to advocate for human rights on particular topics. “By the end of the training, participants not only proposed great ideas but were already developing new programs and discussing implementation plans,” said Ms. Litvinovich.

✓ Mass Media Reporting on Human Rights

Over 70 print, radio and TV journalists took part in a two-day workshop -- *Civic Journalism and Human Rights: Pros and Cons* -- conducted in each of the Program regions in May 2010. The workshops were organized by the Press Development Institute - Siberia (Novosibirsk) in partnership with the Mass Media Rights Defense Center (Voronezh), the Center of Journalistic Technologies (Nizhny Novgorod) and the Perm Regional Branch of the Russian Journalists Union (Perm). The goals of these workshops were to promote better quality publications and broadcasts on human rights.



Media representatives at the journalist training in Novosibirsk discussing investigative approaches.

Participants learned about Russian and international human rights norms and standards, methods of journalistic investigation, and information verification. Participants also discussed the changes in the legislation regulating access to information, and looked into several case studies of effective approaches in acquiring credible and substantive information. Other topics that generated lively discussions included civic journalism (direct participation of the media in civic actions), professional ethics, contemporary journalist technologies, and interacting with human rights defenders.

Participants reflected on the workshop as very useful in improving their professionalism in reporting on human rights issues. As one of the participants exclaimed: *"So much that I didn't know!"* Many others agreed with Diana Kasumova, Chief Editor of the newspaper "Nasha Zvezda", who found this workshop useful in making journalist reports on the issue of human rights more effective.

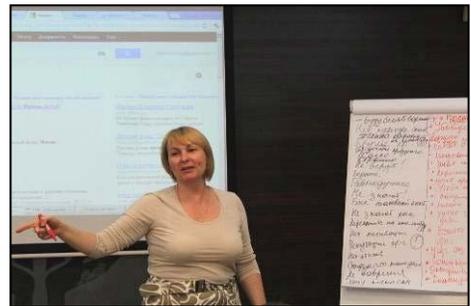
"I learned how to prepare quality information for publications so they would not become a target for lawsuits."
*Anastasia Moiseeva ,
 correspondent for the newspaper "Vestnik"*

"The workshop helped to expand my vision and inspired and drew my attention to new topics and new forms of communicating with readers."
*Ekaterina Revenko,
 journalist with "Svidetel" newspaper in Berdsk*

✓ **Building Fundraising Skills of Human Rights Organizations**

A series of training workshops to strengthen fundraising and funding diversification skills of HROs was held in all four project regions in June-July 2012. The workshops were conducted by the experienced trainer Tatyana Burmistrova, General Director of BTA Consulting. About 100 representatives of HROs participated in these trainings.

Dr. Burmistrova stressed that collecting money for human rights causes is much more difficult than for other types of activities, but is still possible with a well-designed strategy for attracting donations. Fundraising requires constant involvement and great deal of responsibility and accountability. Before spreading the word about raising funds, it is important to make sure that people understand the organization's mission and that the organization's reputation is solid. It is important to formulate concrete goals that the funds are being raised for, establish transparent financial management systems, and collect feedback. One also needs to clearly understand who potential supporters are, what their motivations are, and how exactly



Tatyana Burmistrova conducts seminar on fundraising in Novosibirsk.

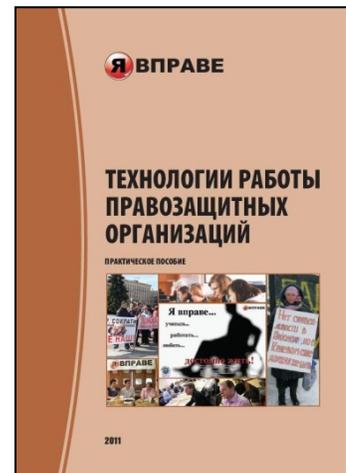


Participants develop their fundraising strategies at the workshop

they can help the organization to achieve its mission. Another necessary condition is to provide potential donors with convenient channels to make donations. The workshop concluded with a lively discussion during which participants were provided with answers to their numerous questions about attracting private donations for their projects. Participants were highly appreciative of the training. One of the participants wrote in the feedback questionnaire: “There were some unique things like the seminar on fundraising by Tatiana Burmistrova. One won’t be able to learn this elsewhere.”

2. Mainstreaming human rights manual: Best Practices and Tools in Promoting Human Rights

To capture and disseminate the best practices and approaches in mainstreaming human rights, the *I’ve Got Rights* program brought together a team of local experts to work collaboratively on drafting a 300-page manual “Technologies for Human Rights Organizations.” The Manual’s chapters are based on materials from workshops conducted by the Program in 2010-2011 as well as on the practical experience of the human rights experts. The Manual’s objective was to demonstrate the effectiveness of techniques used by HROs and to acquaint the reader with new tools that are essential for human rights defenders. The manual includes chapters on public outreach and communication with the media, managing the public image of HROs, providing legal support to the victims of human right violations, using social media in promoting human rights, negotiating with the government, developing and implementing human rights advocacy campaigns, conducting public investigations, appealing to the European Court of Human Rights, and some others.



Manual Technologies for Human Rights Organizations

The manual could be useful for human rights practitioners in a variety of ways. For instance, the chapter on fundraising could help HROs develop new and effective strategies, and the chapter on social networking technologies could help them promote and join social networks. The chapter on the European Court of Human Rights could lead readers to try solving issues in Russia with the help of the European court’s legal positions on human rights. Ideas on image management could help organizations build public trust and support.

“Of course, the authors’ goal is not to magically teach the reader how to use complicated technologies in Russia’s far from perfect conditions,” writes one of the authors, Pavel Chikov, Chairman of Agora Association, in the introduction. *“The goal is to show what a long way the country’s civil rights leaders have gone in the past few years and what results may be achieved and by what means while working in complicated environment.”*

Five hundred copies of the Manual published in November 2011 were distributed in three months and showed great demand throughout Russia. To satisfy this demand, an additional 500 copies were printed and distributed in cooperation with ABA-ROLI in February 2012.

An electronic version of the manual was posted on the Program and other websites.

3. Technical assistance to human rights CSOs

In addition to conducting training workshops, MSI program staff, regional coordinators, and other local experts provided customized one-on-one technical assistance to the Program grantee organizations to address the particular needs of each organization. MSI program staff regularly reviewed program grantee reports and projects and made frequent visits to the regions, attending their events and advising grantees on effective design and implementation of the activities. They also provided consultations and discussed a variety of issues when raised by the local groups. The Grants Manager and other project staff regularly monitored grantee results and evaluated results against their project objectives, milestones and implementation plans. Also, MSI staff regularly reviewed and provided recommendations to grantee draft publications (brochures, flyers, etc.) to improve publication content and format.

"It felt like they took you by the hand and led. Their questions led me to get a deeper understanding of the problem."

Feedback of one of the Program grantees about MSI technical assistance



Project development training workshop in Novosibirsk

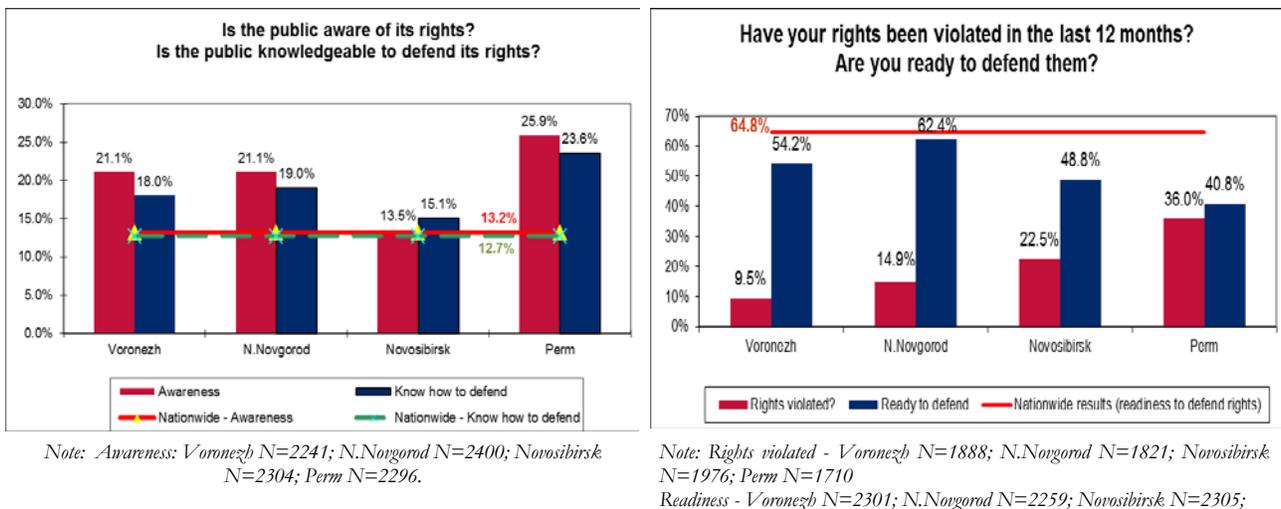
Throughout the entire implementation period, the Program's Outreach Manager consulted each grantee on developing their communication strategies and writing quality news and success stories. Our Grants Manager and Financial Assistant consulted managers and accountants of the grantee organizations on financial management and reporting.

IV. BUILDING CITIZENS AWARENESS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Building citizen legal awareness is one of the major elements in mainstreaming human rights. It also contributed directly to achieving Intermediary Results making “citizens aware of their rights (IR 1.2), providing “citizens with the tools and capacity to defend their rights” (IR 1.3), and giving “citizens the motivation to defend their rights” (IR 1.1).

The baseline survey conducted at the beginning of the Program served as a useful starting point for shaping the Program grantees’ public awareness activities. The baseline poll showed citizen skepticism about their legal knowledge. Only between 13.5% and 25.9% of citizens in the Program regions perceived that they are aware of their rights and between 15.1% and 23.6% that they knew how to defend their rights if they are abused. Despite poor legal awareness, a rather high percent of respondents indicated that they were ready to defend their rights (between 40.8% and 62.8%) while on average, 20.1% of all respondents indicated that their rights had been violated during the past 12 months (see charts below). The sample size of 2,400 of the surveys in each region was large enough to analyze major demographic groups such as gender, age, education and urban/rural residence. At the same time, it could not provide information about particular target groups that the Program grantees were focused on, including disabled, children, military conscripts, detainees, orphans, migrants, etc. To assess perception and experience of those smaller demographic groups, targeted surveys would be required that were not envisioned by the Program due to cost ineffectiveness. The Program grantees were encouraged and trained to communicate with their constituencies to discuss their perceptions and experiences and translate it into targeted awareness campaigns.

Figure 2. Citizen perception and experience with human rights.



Designing our approach for public awareness activities we took into account many challenges, including the following:

- **Public ignorance towards human rights.** One of the challenges in building citizen awareness of human rights is overcoming their overall ignorance about the issue. As our public polls showed, human rights were far behind many other issues that citizens were concerned about. Among the spectrum of the rights, citizens were concerned the most with the social/economic rights such as an adequate standard of living (between 19.5% and 26.4%), worker rights (between 18.8% and 21.5%), and the right to own property (between 6.7% and 8.6%). Individual rights such as freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention and rights to physical security and freedom from torture were the next set of rights that concerned the citizens. Civil and political rights such as the right to political participation; the right of peaceful assembly and association; the freedom from discrimination because of race, religion, ethnicity or gender, etc. were at the bottom of the priority rights. Citizens' concerns with social and economic rights were reflected the hardships they dealt with on a daily basis. At the same time, their indifference towards political and civil human rights was evidence of the lack of understanding of the underlining causes of their hardships. Keeping this in mind, we developed our public awareness building approach that would both appeal to public priority interests and also educate citizens on a wide spectrum of rights and the linkage and the value of various types of rights.
- **Public skepticism in asserting and defending their rights.** Our approach in building citizen awareness about their rights was based on understanding that while it was important to educate citizens about the value of the human rights and build the knowledge of their legal rights, it was not enough for citizens to effectively use and defend their rights. It was critical to educate citizens about how in practice, in real life, and in specific situations, to assert their rights and how to defend the rights when violated. Citizens need to know approaches (“*algorithms*”) in using and defending their rights, i.e. what the right is, who provides the right, how to demand the implementation of a right, etc. But even if a citizen is aware about a particular *algorithm* s/he might be hesitant to stand up for her/his rights due to skepticism that s/he would succeed or due in fear of governmental authorities. To overcome this, in addition to providing legal assistance as it is described in the *Legal Support to Citizens* section of this report, citizens should be provided with convincing examples of other citizens successfully defending their rights.
- **Effectively reaching out to general public and target groups.** Another challenge in mainstreaming human rights through building citizen legal awareness was to identify and apply media and tools that were the most effective in reaching out to general public or particular demographic groups. Our baseline public opinion polls showed that the traditional media – TV, radio and newspapers - by far was the most frequent source of public information about human rights issues. Between 33% and 52% of the respondents got their information about human rights from these sources. Between one-quarter and one-third of the respondents got information from family and friends. Between 11% - 20% of the

“The real challenge for the human rights activists is to relate to an ordinary citizen, arousing an interest and a concern for these issues, cultivating a sense of urgency and action.”

Pavel Chikov,
Chairman of the AGORA Human Rights
Association, Kazan

respondents used internet as their main source of information about human rights. This data informed us that to reach out to general population we were to use traditional media, although we would be competing with other types of information that was more appealing to the public, including entertainments and news. When using traditional media we had to identify approaches and formats to ensure that we would sufficiently attract readers/listeners/viewers' attention, including interactive call-in talk shows, among others. Although through the traditional media and internet we could reach out to larger population, other, more personalized, approaches should be used for in-depth education, including workshops, group consultations, educational materials (brochures, flyers, etc.), public events, etc. All these approaches much be customized for a particular target audience. For example, while public meetings and printed information materials are sufficient approaches for working with an older population on their housing rights, the interactive games, performances, cartoons, contests are the tools to educate children.

To address these challenges, we developed a multi-faceted approach that engaged both human rights CSOs and the mass media in conducting public education activities using various media and tools to affectively reach out to the general public and particular demographic groups. To implement this approach, the Program: (1) provided technical and financial support to CSOs and the media to conduct public awareness activities; (2) assisted CSOs in organizing public events such as the Human Rights Week and Festival; (3) organized and conducted annual journalist contests incentivizing journalists to educate the public about human rights and how to defend those rights; (4) publicized information and success stories of citizens who defended their rights; and (5) facilitated an information exchange among regions and elsewhere. These activities and the results are described in the sub-sections below.

I. Public education and awareness activities implemented by human rights CSOs

The majority of the public awareness activities of the Program were implemented by our Program grantees. Each project implemented by CSOs with the support of the Program included a public awareness component. Our Program staff and consultants worked with each Program grantee to define their particular audience and apply the most effective approaches to reach out to them. As a result, the public legal awareness activities conducted with the support of the Program consisted of a wide spectrum of initiatives tailored to particular audiences, some of which are described later in this section. The range of public awareness activities included public events such as: (1) educational workshops and training sessions, public meetings, roundtables, public hearings, group consultations; (2) interactive activities with youth and children – contests, role games, performances; (3) the publication of educational brochures, flyers, posters, analytical reports; (4) publications in the print media and participation in the TV and radio shows; and (5) websites and social media.

About **30,000** people attended roughly **770** awareness raising workshops, training sessions, roundtables, and public meetings conducted by Program grantees in all four Program regions. The events were conducted for various audiences, including disabled adults and families of the disabled children,

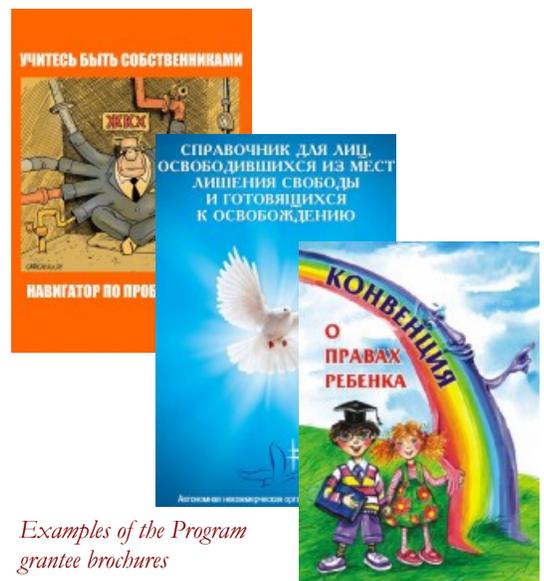
migrants, prospective military draftees and their families, orphan young pregnant women and mothers, prisoners, homeowners, entrepreneurs, etc. Public awareness events provided opportunities to directly communicate with participants and to discuss the issues in-depth. Participants often represented certain constituencies (associations, unions, etc.) and were able to pass knowledge received at the training to them, therefore expanding the number of the beneficiaries of the events. Many events were attended by the governmental officials who also often served as experts and to whom participants could directly address their questions and concerns. Some of the educational events were conducted specifically for governmental officials to raise their legal awareness about human rights and their obligations to safeguard the rights of citizens.

Program grantees developed and published **161** informational brochures and flyers and **18** analytical reports, developed **CDs** with legal information on **18 topics**, and developed **7** animated and video films. They published multiple articles in print media and participated in many radio and TV shows. Several grantees had their own newspapers and journals. Our media grantees developed and aired multiple times, including **14** TV talk shows and **20** radio shows. We developed and broadcasted **10** video films on various human rights issues. Almost all grantees had their regularly updated websites and several had dedicated to their projects sections of their websites. Several grantees developed their social media sites (In Contact, My World, Facebook, Life Journal, and Twitter).

Publications by grantees	
No. of events conducted	- 767
No. of event participants	- 29,830
No. of brochures and flyers published	- 161
No. of analytical reports published	- 18
No. of topical CDs	- 18
No. of animated and video films	- 17
No. of TV shows	- 14
No. of radio shows	- 20

Here are short snapshots of the awareness activities conducted by some of the Program grantees:

- The **Youth Memorial** (Perm) that worked on the military conscript rights conducted about 70 workshops, roundtables, public discussions for more than 2,500 military draftees and their families including 11 video lessons. They developed an 80-page Military Conscript Pocket Book printed twice with total number of copies of 2,500; 3 brochures and published 100 copies of each and posted on their website; 5 guides for teachers, employers, military drafting commissions; and published numerous articles in newspapers and participated in TV and radio shows.
- The **Voronezh Democracy Center** that worked for 13 months with the support of the Program on the issues of homeowner rights conducted 30 workshops, training, and roundtables including 17 outside of the regional capital with about 800 participants. They also published 7 newspapers with circulation between 10,000 and 20,000 each that had a dedicated section on the housing rights.



Examples of the Program grantee brochures

- The **Center for Assisting Migrants** (N. Novgorod), during the nine months of their activities, conducted 12 educational workshops for about 200 people and published and disseminated 7 flyers with legal information (from 500 to 1,800 copies each). They also participated in 2 TV programs, and organized several roundtables.
- The **Perm Center for Civil Education and Human Rights** that worked on the rights of imprisoned persons, conducted 11 legal awareness workshops for about 200 prisoners and about 35 correctional facility staff members, developed two 40-page brochures about the rights of imprisoned persons and printed and disseminated 1,000 copies of each brochure. They also prepared and disseminated two analytical reports on the rights of imprisoned.
- The Nizhniy Novgorod NGO, **Veras**, that worked on the rights of disabled children conducted 62 public events (workshops, trainings, interactive role games, roundtables, etc.) for more than 1,200 participants, including disabled children and their parents throughout the region. They also published 4 informational brochures and developed an educational video film.
- The Novosibirsk NGO, **Family and Children**, that worked on the issues of the rights of orphan young mothers and pregnant women conducted 15 public events (workshops, trainings, conferences, and charitable events) for about 900 participants over nine months. They also developed three 40-page informational brochures and printed and disseminated 500 copies of each; published 4 informational flyers and 3 posters and disseminated 1000 copies of each, which were widely, included in women’s hospitals; participated in 5 video and 6 radio shows.

Feedback collected by our Program grantees from the participants of their educational and awareness raising events indicated high appreciation and improved knowledge of their legal rights.

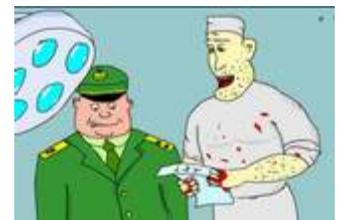
As we mentioned earlier, each Program grantee crafted their public awareness activities to more effectively reach out to their particular constituencies. Below are examples of a spectrum of approaches used by some of our grantees:

- ✓ The **Perm Youth Memorial** has been working on the issues of the rights of military draftees for many years. The most common violations are drafting the young men despite their health conditions and assigning the type and the location of the military service without taking into account particular circumstances. In addition, the



Legal Express in the village Dobryanka of Perm krai

prospective draftees and their families are not sufficiently familiar with the enacted in 2004 legislation on Alternative Civic Service (ACS). The drafting commissions are also either not fully familiar about how to implement the law or/and withhold information from the draftees. The Youth Memorial set an objective to educate young men and their families about their rights when drafted to the army and the

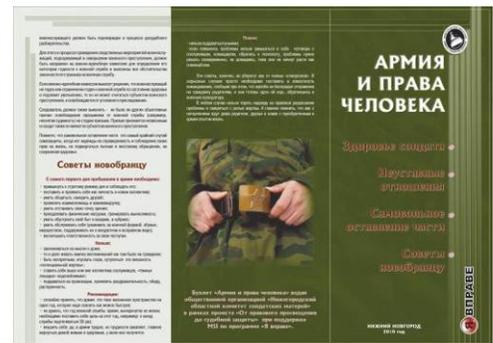


One of the cartoons about ACS used at the lessons.

right to ACS. The Memorial also recognized the need for educating the military drafting personnel. Having three types of target audience (prospective draftees - young men of age 16-18, young men drafted to the army, families, and military draft personnel) the Memorial developed an approach customized to each of them.

Within about twelve months, the Memorial implemented—with the support of the Program—the *Alternative to Lawlessness* project. To reach out to young men who could be drafted to the army, the Memorial taught **interactive lessons** at schools, colleges, and summer camps. These lessons often used video films and cartoons that facilitated discussions about how to defend their rights during the draft, how to apply for the ACS, and what their rights are during the service. Overall, they conducted **56 lessons** and workshops for more than **1,300 participants**. The successes of the lessons prompted teachers to ask the Memorial for more similar lessons. Several workshops were conducted as part of the Memorial’s **Legal Express** initiative. Under this initiative, the Memorial experts and young volunteers from the *Self-defense Club*, described below, traveled throughout the region conducting workshops for **200 students**. Also the workshops were conducted during the Memorial Volunteer Camp for **228** young people from 11 cities including 7 from outside of Perm krai. To institutionalize these lessons in schools and colleges, the Memorial developed a **methodology** for conducting such lessons and collected or developed video materials. The methodology was disseminated among schools and colleges throughout the region.

Another approach the Memorial used in working with the youth was a **virtual Self-defense Club** that was initiated through the social network *In Contact*. The club had on average **200 participants** throughout the country discussing the issues of military draft and the ACS. The discussion was expanded to other social networks such as *Facebook* and *Life Journal*. While virtual communication was enthusiastically maintained by young people, the Memorial also invited activists from the network residing in Perm to meet at the ‘live’ discussions. Several discussions were conducted for a group of 30-35 activists.



Brochure Army and Human Rights about the rights of military conscripts.



Illustrations to the newspaper articles by Irina Kizilova

While many young people learned about the military draft, their rights, and the ACS, many of them were set to serve in the army. As a ‘final touch’ in strengthening their knowledge about their rights when in the army, the Memorial lawyers visited the draftee holding stations and conducted discussions and disseminated an informational brochure and a flyer. The Memorial’s brochure—or as they called it a pocket-book—*I Have the Rights* has been updated and reprinted 9 times since it was initially developed in 2001. It has remained of great demand among draftees and their families as well as among draft commission personnel. 2,500 copies printed

under the *Alternative to Lawlessness* project were snapped up almost instantly. The pocket-book as well as other information materials were also posted on the Memorial website and disseminated via various social networks.

To reach out to general public, the Memorial actively used **print and electronic media** including TV, radio and Internet. The Memorial had a dedicated column in the Perm News newspaper (circulation of 20,000) where Irina Kizilova, the Memorial's lawyer, published articles on a regular basis. In addition, the Memorial's experts published articles in other regional and federal newspapers and various Internet sites, and participated in several TV programs (channels UTV and T7) and radio shows, including Moscow Echo in Perm and Perm Radio reaching out to millions viewers and listeners.

Active and effective awareness activities by the Memorial and strong expertise of their staff have yielded respect with the **government and the military commissions leadership**. Military Commissioner of Perm Krai General V. Lunev invited Memorial's representatives to participate in the training for heads of drafting committees and commissions. The Memorial developed **two guides**, one for committees and one for commissions, with clear instructions on how to accept applications to the ACS (for drafting committees) and how to review the applications (for drafting commissions). They handed out these guides at the training that were conducted upon General Lunev's invitation. Although the Memorial conducted an extensive awareness campaign, they also understood the need for the drafting authorities to do their part in educating the draftees. In that regard, the Memorial staff conducted inspections of several drafting stations and discovered that while the stations had information about draftee responsibilities, there was no information about their rights. Moreover, the stations had misleading information. The findings of these inspections were forwarded to the krai Drafting Commission and published in the krai newspaper. As a result, all stations updated and expanded their information materials. Also, after attending the *Legal Express* workshop, the local administrations started organizing meetings with parents of the prospective draftees educating them about the military service legislation, including about the ACS, and disseminating the Memorial's informational brochures and flyers.

The Perm Youth Memorial has developed extensive expertise and experience that was enhanced with the support of the *I've Got Rights* program. The Memorial **shared their experience with 56 regions** in Russia via human rights networks and CSO activists participating in their activities.

- ✓ Another example of the well-designed creative approach in conducting awareness activities was under the *Right with Knowledge* project implemented in two stages during sixteen months by the **Nizhniy Novgorod Social Foundation Right to Live**. The objectives of the project were to build the knowledge of the school children about human rights, and to institutionalize human rights education in the school system. The implementer pointed out that human rights



Marina Golub, Head of the Right to Live Foundation, reviews artworks submitted to the contest.

education in schools was not an obligatory course, and even when it was taught, the teachers used formal materials and teaching techniques that were not attractive for students. As a result, students remained indifferent to the issues and illiterate about human rights and their rights as children. The approach developed by the grantee included a wide spectrum of interactive activities implemented together by students and teachers, ranging from contests to performances, to role games, and to the production of cartoons. The scope of the activities was based on the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, as a fundamental document defining the rights of children, but it was often not comprehended by children or even adults.

The approach developed by the grantee was constructed to gradually involve more and more participants and beneficiaries through participation in various activities. One of the first activities of the project was to develop a version of the *Convention, that would be* attractive and well understood by children and could be developed by children. To do this, the grantee organized a region-wide contest for children for best illustration and comments to the Convention. To attract students to participate in the contest and to educate them about the Convention, the grantee involved law students from a local college who developed a performance called **The Tale of Irresponsibility**. It was presented for about 1,000 school children and their parents throughout the region along with discussions about the Convention and the rights of children. Also, in preparation to the contest, the grantee conducted several educational **interactive workshops** for about 500 children throughout the region. 112 school and college students participated in the contest and 9 winners were selected in several categories. Upon completion of the contest, an illustrated Convention in verse form for elementary school children was developed, published and presented in numerous discussions in schools.



Illustrated Convention of the Rights of the Child in verse form

During the second stage of the project, the grantee set the objective to **institutionalize the formal and informal education of human rights in the region**. For formal education, the grantee



Student performing team

developed a teaching course for elementary school students that included 6 interactive lessons filled with games, quizzes and contests, these children on a journey from the *world of lawlessness* to the *world of rights*. The teaching course developed by the grantee was formalized in the Teaching Guide that was indorsed by the regional educational authorizes. The Guide was supplemented with the Human Rights ABC, the Human Rights Journal, multiple games and quizzes, the animated electronic Convention of the Rights of a Child, and a series of cartoons 3-5

minutes long each. The cartoons placed their characters in different situations to demonstrate various rights and freedoms, including the right to political participation, freedom from

discrimination, and the right of peaceful assembly and association. The course was tested in several schools on 660 elementary school students.



Human rights lessons in the elementary schools

For middle, high school, and college students, the grantee established a **Center of Legal Creativity** in March 2012. The Center is a semi-formal institution led by the grantee organization that unites human rights and civil society activists, and some governmental institutions such as the Ombudsperson on Children Rights, the Department of Education and the Commission on Minors among others. During the process of establishing the Center, the grantee conducted extensive preparatory and awareness activities. They worked with students-activists on developing several performances including a performance-tale called *Alice in the All-Rights-World*. This performance took third place at the festival “The Constellation of the Russian Academy of Justice” contest. The *Alice in the All-Rights-World* and several other developed by students performances were enacted for more than a thousand students throughout the region. The grantee also initiated many live and virtual discussions among students. In addition, the grantee held many meetings with educators, school and college administrators, and governmental officials promoting legal awareness and institutionalizing formal and informal human rights education of children of different ages. The Center of Legal Creativity and the educational course in the elementary school became examples of successful activities by the grantee with the support of the *I’ve Got Rights* program.

Feedback to some of the activities conducted by the Program grantee the Social Foundation Right to Live:

- Member of the jury of the contest “Constellations of the Russian Academy of Justice” about the *Alice in the All-Rights-World* performance: “The fairytale the Alice in the All-Rights-World was a real eye-opener and a new word in the promotion of human rights knowledge among young people.”
- Answering a question how participants will use received at the workshop knowledge one of the students said: “I will defend my rights ably! This knowledge will help me in school and in life. It will help me in my future when I became a parent and in my professional life. It helped me with understanding my rights and responsibilities. I will put the Convention with all my other textbooks and share with my friends.”
- Feedback from a training participant: “Every person must know her or his rights and responsibilities to be able to use them in any situation in her or his life. Rights and responsibilities are not mutually exclusive values but the common foundation for a peaceful and constructive life.”
- The Ombudsman of the Rights of a Child in Nizhny Novgorod S. Baranova at the opening ceremony of the Center of Legal Creativity: “We need to collect, accumulate, preserve and implement the whole experience of schools, colleges, CSOs in studying, publicizing and defending rights of individuals. It is important to make people to understand that the rights should not be asserted by force but that the rights are given to any person with her or his birth. The rights is a value by using of which it is possible to make our life better.”
- A school teacher commenting on the human rights lessons conducted for elementary school students: “The lessons came out very rich, lively, interesting and useful both for children and teachers. The Right with Knowledge project is very timely, and is in great demand by elementary schools because of its great educational influence on children. The project stands out for its well thought out content and creative form of presenting fairly complicated material. The project’s implementation is a very important step in forming the moral core for the young generation, legal literacy and active civil position which is necessary for Russia’s growth and prosperity.”

As we mentioned earlier in this report, the Program grantees developed and published about **200 informational materials** to educate citizens about their rights and how to defend the rights. In addition to the publications described above, we would like to provide several more examples:

- ✓ **Guides to organize and conduct public events.** The Foundation for Ecological and Social Justice (EKOSOCIS Foundation) developed in partnership with other Voronezh human rights CSOs two guides: *Peaceful Assembly* and *All About Street Actions! Rights-Practice-Law*. The *Peaceful Assembly* guide discusses the citizen fundamental rights to organize and conduct public events in Russia. The guide includes the major legislative acts, describes in detail the rights and responsibilities of those organizing and conducting the events, and provides sample documents for activists to use in preparation for the event. The second guide, *All About Street Actions! Rights-Practice-Law*, was developed to assist journalists in reporting on public events. The guide provides information about types of public actions, administrative and criminal liability of those who hold them, government responsibilities, and typical actions by law enforcement during the events. Both guides were disseminated during multiple workshops and trainings conducted by the grantee and were posted on-line. The guides served as very useful practical tools by CSOs in many regions of the country.

- ✓ **Defending rights through the justice system.** People often don't know or feel intimidated in filing their grievances with the government, in particular with prosecutors or courts. The Perm Human Right Defense Center, our Regional Program Coordinator in Perm, has developed a series of brochures that described in a simple language how to file complaints with the prosecutor office, the court, and other governmental organizations. The series was supplemented with the Guide that explained various rights and freedoms and their limitations. It also provided examples of violated rights, and contained advices and samples of petitions and claims to file with the government when rights are violated.



Brochures by the Perm Human Rights Defense Center about how to appeal to a prosecutor, to court, and other governmental agencies

- ✓ **Rights of pregnant women and mothers with infants.** The Novosibirsk NGO *Family and Children* dedicated their work to the rights of women and children, particularly those who are socially unprotected and orphans. Young women who were brought up in orphanages are lacking knowledge of their rights and the rights of their children, including access to healthcare, housing, labor, and many others. The *Family and Rights* NGO conducted many educational activities in the orphanages in the Novosibirsk region educating girls and young women about their rights and how to defend the rights. Lawyers of the NGO provided group and individual consultations to hundreds of young women and developed a series of flyers, posters and brochures about their rights. These materials were widely distributed in the region, including in the majority of the Novosibirsk hospitals.



Brochures about the rights of pregnant women and mothers with infants

There were many other very useful awareness building and educational materials developed and broadly disseminated by our Program grantees.

2. Facilitating conducting Human Rights Week and Festival

The Program grantees reached out to hundreds of thousands of people by involving them directly into their awareness building activities and millions through various mass media. Some of the grantees conducted public events such as fairs and festivals and public meetings. The Program provided grantees with a unique opportunity to come together and organize a Human Rights Festival in one location – in the city of Voronezh. The Festival was a culmination of the Human Rights



The Voronezh Human Rights Week logo

Week championed by several Voronezh human rights CSOs lead by the Program Coordinator and the Center for Civil Initiatives Development. **The Human Rights Week** was conducted during 6 days on June 25-30, 2012. The objective of the week and the Festival was to have various activities compressed in several days to attract people's attention to human rights issues and increase their legal literacy and knowledge of ways to exercise and protect their rights.

The Human Rights Week, as the first-ever event of such kind in Voronezh, became the launching pad for experiments and innovations for the Voronezh residents.

The Week opened with human rights activists' recognition of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On that day, human rights advocates throughout the country called upon the regional police departments to issue an apology to victims of torture. In the Voronezh region, attorney



Boris Suprenok is consulting people on their rights to public services

Olga Gnezdilova delivered a letter to the head of the police with such request. During the week, human rights lawyers provided citizens with free legal consultations, educational literature and seminars on a wide spectrum of rights. These included the rights of disabled people, rights of orphans, protection of motherhood, rights to land for families with many children, housing rights, ownership rights, freedom of assembly, and electoral freedom. Legal experts also taught entrepreneurs about legal protections for small business owners and held special seminars for journalists on investigative reporting.

"I am glad that such festival is held here for the first time. People have remained dormant about their rights for too long and now is the time to get awake."

"The outdoor format of the festival is very unique. People have exposure to human rights and social justice in a very casual setting. Everyone is educated on where and how to seek help."

Feedback from citizens about the Festival

On June 29, the day before the Festival, about 60 representatives of the Program grantee organizations from all four regions came together for an **Interregional Networking Meeting**. In addition to reviewing the overall Program results, sharing experience and strengthening cooperation, the meeting focused on using *information and communications technologies* by human rights CSOs in building citizen awareness and advocating for reforms. The meeting had several guest speakers including Fedor Gorozhanko, creator of the website “St.Pete is being flooded,” who shared his experience with using Internet technologies to solve city and housing problems; Anastasia Cherepanova, a research associate of the Federal Institute of Education, who spoke about the “Virtual Watch Bell” through which they coordinate mutual aid during social crises; Grigory Melkonyants, deputy director of the GOLOS Association, who presented a Map of electoral violations in Russia in 2011-2012 and informational technologies used by the Association; and Pavel Chikov, the Chairman of the AGORA Association, who shared the latest developments in the work of human rights activists on social networks and managing threats associated with on-line activities. The participants discussed various ways of how the modern informational communication technologies could assist them in strengthening and promoting human rights.



Entrepreneurs discussing establishment of an Ombudsman of the Rights of Entrepreneurs



Human Right Festival map of activities

Some of the meeting participants came the day before to join the Voronezh Human Rights Week by conducting legal awareness activities for Voronezh citizens. All the participants of the meeting became co-organizers of the Human Rights Festival conducted the following day.

The **Human Rights Festival** was concluded on June 30, 2012 in the city park, and was attended by nearly 800 residents who came to the park despite a rainy morning. Voronezh residents enjoyed a variety of human rights-themed activities including contests, trivia games, open discussions, legal consultations, a caricature exhibit, children drawings and posters, a photo exhibition, film screenings,

animated cartoons for children, and social advertisement clips on human rights. Among organizers of the event were human rights experts from more than 30 human rights organizations from six regions of Russia who came to the event to spread awareness about human rights issues and educate citizens about their rights. The regional Ombudswoman Tatyana Zrazhevskaya stressed the importance of the Week that provided an opportunity for face-to-face communication between the Voronezh residents and human rights advocates: *“I am very glad that this week really happened....We must unite our efforts to protect the rights. Before entering this park today, many people didn’t know how to defend their rights and where to go to seek for help. During this Human Rights Week and Festival, human rights activists, local and from other regions, were building Voronezh residents’ awareness of their rights and how to stand up for the rights.”*



Feedback from the Festival participants:

Natalia Firsova: *“I’m glad that such a Festival is held here for the first time. I’m also glad that people’s consciousness is waking up—it had to wake up a long time ago. We can’t just be cogs in a machine.”*

Ivan: *“It is interesting that all the events dedicated to human rights are held outdoors in the open air. A person may not even know what rights and social justice are, and hear about them for the first time in the Orlyonok Park. People go to lawyers with their concrete problems and learn where to get help in the future.”*



The Week and the Festival were captured at the 20-minute film that was available on-line on the Program website and on YouTube.

3. Mainstreaming human rights by engaging the mass media

As we mentioned earlier, the mass media is one of the major sources of information about human rights for Russian citizens. According to the survey conducted by the *I’ve Got Rights* program in 2009, between 33% and 52% of the respondents obtained their information about human rights from traditional media – TV, radio and newspapers. The internet is a major source of information for 11% - 20% of the respondents.

To maximize the impact of the program we used three primary approaches in facilitating and promoting involvement of the mass media in reporting on the human rights issues and building citizen legal awareness:

- Strengthening human rights CSOs' skills to reach out to the mass media,
- Incentivizing mass media organizations to report on human rights in cooperation with human rights CSO, and
- Conducting an annual journalist contest for best broadcasts and publications on human rights.

These approaches and results are described below.

a) Strengthening human rights CSOs in reaching out to the mass media

The Program made significant effort to build bridges between human rights CSOs and the mass media. To achieve this, we trained CSOs in communicating with the mass media as it is described in the section *III. Strengthening the Mainstreaming Skills* of this report. We also provided technical assistance to each of them in developing their communication strategies that included their work with the media outlets. We also trained the mass media representatives--both journalists and managers--on reporting on human rights and working with human rights CSOs. In addition, we facilitated networking between CSOs and the media as it is described in section *VII. Facilitating Networking*. These activities yielded effective results. All Program grantees were able to bring the mass media attention to the issues they were working on. Many grantees published their articles or generated publications in the print media, participated in numerous radio and TV programs. The mass media representatives participated at and reported on many events conducted by the Program grantees. Here are several examples of the successful efforts of the Program grantees in engaging the media in reporting on and promoting human rights.

- ✓ Nizhniy Novgorod Regional **Committee of Soldiers' Mothers** had regular meetings with the press on the military draft issues and violations of the rights of conscripts and soldiers. For example, in 2010, Natalia Zhukova, Chair of the Committee, conducted a press conference describing multiple violations during the spring military draft. This press conference prompted oblast prosecutor's office to open several investigations. In the fall of 2011, Natalia Zhukova, participated in several high profile press events and broadcasts. For instance, on October 17, 2011 she participated along with the governmental officials at the press conference with the informational agency *Interfax-Povolzh'ye* in Nizhniy Novgorod discussing the upcoming military draft. A few days later, on October 20, she hosted a radio call-in show on invitation of the regional press center called *Arguments and Facts*. The next month, on November 23, Natalia Zhukova participated in the regional TV talk show *Directly* and on November 25, she was a



Natalia Zhukova, Chair of the Nizhniy Novgorod Regional Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, at the press conference

guest of the TV show *Crew* by the regional TV channel *Volga* where she talked about the death of one of the soldiers due to poor medical care in the army. Participation in the last show generated many publications in the print and electronic media. She also started her blog on the invitation of the highly respected *Echo of Moscow* radio and on-line media outlet. On February 2, 2012, Natalia Zhukova participated in an hour-and-half radio show *Image* about the work of the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers and the rights of military conscripts and soldiers. On February 21, her article appeared in the regional newspaper *Nizhniy Novgorod Worker* that was reprinted in several print and on-line newspapers. She also participated in several press conferences during the summer of 2012 providing in-depth analysis of the violations during the spring 2012 draft. Working very closely with the mass media allowed the Nizhniy Novgorod Regional Committee of Soldiers' Mothers to reach out to millions of the people building their awareness about the issues in the army and educating citizens about the rights of draftees and those in service.

- ✓ The Novosibirsk Families with Many Children NGO **Nadezhda** [Hope] successfully enlisted federal mass media to fight for the rights of families with many children. Nadezhda was working on the issues of the rights to land of the families with many children. While the law stipulated the rights for the families to receive land plots for residential construction, the government either sabotaged these rights or provided families with unsuitable lands. The grantee conducted a comprehensive set of activities to restore these rights by building families' awareness of their rights providing legal assistance, and pressing the government to act. The grantee was very effective in reaching out to the mass media on the regional and federal levels. For example, on July 23, 2012, one of the major federal TV channels - Channel 1 - aired a show *A Scandal in the Novosibirsk Region in Land Allocations to Families with Many Children*. The episode showed that families with many children in Novosibirsk region received land plots unfit for construction while according to the documents provided by the government everything was fine. By involving the federal TV channel the grantee was able to press the prosecutor's office to get involved in this case.



Lyubov Malenko, Chair of the Family and Children NGO, at the TV program by Channel 1

- ✓ **The Committee Against Torture (CAT)** is one of the most prominent human rights CSOs defending the rights of the victims of police brutality and promoting freedom from torture. Their work frequently attracted both the Russian and international media. At the same time, the media reporting was rather sporadic, lacked depth, and was sometimes biased. CAT put significant effort into educating the media on the issues by conducting regular meetings, writing and posting on their website, and conducting extensive press conferences. Their efforts yielded significant results in both increasing the number of publications and the quality of the mass media reporting. Also, thanks to the regular publications in the mass media about CAT's public investigations, their reputation with the public and some of the governmental agencies improved. The CAT's website is a popular source of information for the mass media. On average 80% of the information and in-depth reports about public investigations into police violence posted on the CAT's website found their way to the mass media which reprints it in multiple outlets. On average, CAT conducts 1-3 press conferences a month, gives 1-3 TV interviews, occasionally participates in TV programs, and prints several of their own articles in regional and federal press. In addition, CAT develops their own videos and posts them on their website. The videos provide information about the most acute issues of police violence, featuring victims, and describing successes in defending their rights. As the CAT's Director, Igor Kalyapin, says in one of the videos, the CAT "*does what must be done but is not done by the prosecutor's office: drag criminal cases to the court by the collar.*"



Committee Against Torture lawyers at the press conference

b) Incentivizing mass media to report on human rights in cooperation with human rights CSOs

The *I've Got Rights* program worked extensively with the mass media to engage them in reporting on human rights and to work closely with human rights CSOs. To incentivize the mass media, the Program provided financial support to several media organizations, including Channel 16 Ltd. in the city of Sarov in the N. Novgorod region, the Foundation of the Home Owners Association in the N. Novgorod region, and regional TV studio Precedent TV Ltd. In the Novosibirsk. Channel 16 was producing a monthly call-in TV talk show called *The Right to Know* on various social, civic and political rights with participation of experts from civil society and the government. The Foundation of the Home Owners Association printed and posted on-line *Home Economy* newspaper and broadcasted local radio programs focused, on increasing citizens' legal awareness of their rights related to housing and communal services. Precedent TV Ltd. produced and broadcasted a series of investigative reporting videos on the pressing human rights issues in the region and beyond.



Svetlana Voronkova, Precedent's show hostess and author

Here are some of the results of their work:

- ✓ Novosibirsk **Precedent TV Ltd.** (the Precedent) is one of

the most popular and respected programs broadcasting in the Novosibirsk region. It is also among just a few in the region that is completely independent. The way the studio joined the Program is rather remarkable. Svetlana Voronkova, hostess and author of the TV program, became one of the winners of our first Journalist Contest. When she attended our Program's interregional meeting and met our grantee organizations, she was amazed with the work they do and deeply regretted that she knew very little about them. "We need to know about you and we need your stories," – said Svetlana, charting her new path to close cooperation with human rights organizations in Novosibirsk and other Program regions. Upon winning the Program grant in late May 2011, the Precedent has developed, broadcast, and posted on-line, with 10 stories about 30 minutes each on the rights of the disabled, freedom of assembly, women's rights, children's rights, labor rights, and some others. Each program was broadcasted on the Region-TV and Ren-TV channels. On average, Precedent's program has more than 120,000 viewers a week. Filming each episode, Precedent worked very closely with human rights CSOs. For example, working on the episode on women rights, the Precedent involved two CSOs from Novosibirsk, and one from each of the other three Program regions. Such cooperation made



the episode more comprehensive as it looked at the issue that is not specific for a single region but rather has cross-regional and national significance. The Precedent was not only broadcasting about the problems but also provided real help to citizens who frequently turn to the mass media for protection of their rights instead of the government. Thanks to the TV journalists' intervention, many conflicts were resolved. For example, the government reinstated benefits to pensioners, improved access to infrastructure

for the disabled, and improved citizen living conditions. To publicize successes, the Precedent added a special section on its website *The Precedent Helped*, where they post stories of how the TV program helped the Novosibirsk residents to defend their rights. In addition to the scheduled episodes, the Precedent helped CSOs and citizens by promptly responding to immediate issues when they arose. For example, when our Program grantee NGO Nadezhda was falsely accused on the regional TV of financial fraud, the Precedent team filmed an alternate report discrediting the accusations and telling the real story about Nadezhda's work. On September 14, 2011 Svetlana Voronkova won an award: "The Top 50 of the Most Influential People in Novosibirsk." Also, the open online voting at www.utrmedia.ru earned the Precedent an award as one of the longest lasting TV programs in the region.

- ✓ **Channel 16** is the only local TV company in the city of Sarov of Nizhniy Novgorod region. It broadcasts 4 times a day in prime time and has the viewer audience of around 120,000. It has both news broadcasts and analytical call-in shows. The city of Sarov hosts one of the Russian nuclear



*The Right to Know talk-show,
February, 2011*

research facilities and therefore it has a status of a *closed city* with travel and residence restrictions. The city has very few human rights and other CSOs, and general public perception of human rights CSOs was rather gloom. With the support of the Program, Channel 16 has broadcasted 14 talk shows under the umbrella of *The Right to Know* series to educate citizens about their rights. One of the challenges of the talk show was to overcome the apathy of the Sarov residents. While citizens were ready to call and complain, they were reluctant to try solving their problems themselves hoping that the media, NGOs, or the government would solve everything for them. The other objective of the show was to improve the public image of human rights CSOs by inviting their representatives to serve as experts alongside the governmental officials. Each show was between 30 and 45 minutes long and each was broadcasted twice – live on Wednesdays at 7 pm and recorded on Saturdays at 5:30 pm. Each show was also posted on the Channel 16 website. Channel 16 had extensive preparatory work done for each episode, including street interviews, advertising on TV and in local newspapers, and encouraging people to call to the studio to share their experience and thoughts that were to be addressed in the show. The topics of the show ranged from the rights to healthcare, to ownership rights, to labor rights and to the rights of citizens in interacting with law enforcement agencies.



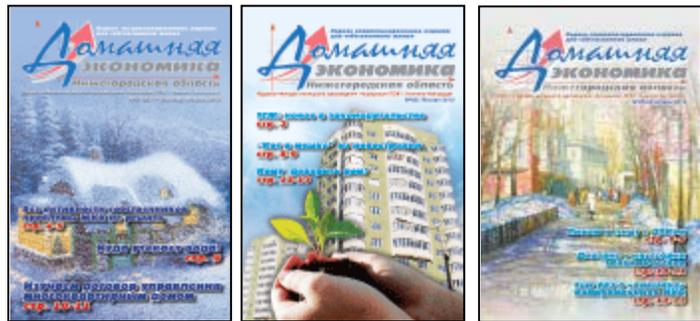
Interview with the Voronezh attorney Olga Gnezdilova during the Right to Know talk-show

In addition to local experts, Channel 16 actively involved guest experts from all Program regions who were interviewed via telephone, skype, or recorded live. On June 26, 2012, Channel-16 aired an episode on the rights of citizens in their interactions with law enforcement agencies. Olga Gnezdilova, an attorney from Voronezh and a legal advisor for the Interregional Human Rights Group, joined the show via skype, discussing the issues of police brutality and providing legal advice on the rights of those detained by police. Another guest of the same show was a local attorney from the Center for Promotion of Legal Literacy, Vasily Posypaitalked, who talked about the rights of minors. Aleksandr Zotin, director of the Perm Union for Protecting the Rights of Perm Residents, served as an expert for the July 20, 2011 episode that discussed the issues of violations of the rights for public services. The *Right to Know* talk-show was very popular among city residents and contributed to resolving many issues. For example, after the show on violation of the rights of the disabled, the prosecutor's office conducted an inspection of many government facilities on their compliance with the legislation on providing accesibility to the buildings for citizens with disabilities. The inspection revealed many violations. It filed 12 cases with the court for failing to install ramps and adopted three resolutions on initiating legal proceedings on administrative violations.

- ✓ People in the Program regions and throughout Russia are very frustrated with public housing and communal services. Established in 2010, the **Nizhny Novgorod Foundation of the Housing Education Home Owner Assosiation** united experts with many years of

experience in the housing and communal service issues. With the support of the Program they set the objective to use various channels, including radio, newspaper, and Internet, in educating citizens about their rights. During implementation of their project, they broadcasted a *Housing Self-Defense* bi-weekly 20 minute call-in radio show, as part of their *Neighbors* radio program on one of the most popular radio stations with more than 3 million listeners - Radio Russia. The target audience for the radio show was primarily pensioners, therefore the time for the program was during the day between 12:15 pm and 12:35 pm. The show was also recorded and posted on the grantee website for any listeners. To collect feedback, the grantee provided listeners with their telephone number. The show discussed the issues of the Housing Code, management agreements, new rules of providing communal services, professional management of homeowner associations, responsibilities and supervisory functions of the administrative and technical inspection, and other topics. Among the successes of the *Neighbors* radio show was the corrections of the utility charges made by the government under the pressure of citizens equipped with the knowledge received from the show. In 2012, the host of the *Neighbors* talk show Natalia Mikhailova won the category Social Journalist of the Year of the organized by the oblast government the Nizhniy Novgorod Charity Season. During the first 5 months of the project the Foundation received about 150 calls from residents in response the talk show. While many of the callers were seeking answers and help, they also were expressing their appreciation to the show. As the grantee reported, the calls often started with the words: “*I have just listened to your show and would like to express my gratitude...*”

In addition to the radio talk shows, the Foundation instated a specialized section on citizen rights in their monthly newspaper, *Home Economics*, which has a circulation of 1,000 copies. The section supported by the Program included several sub-sections: *Success Stories* included testimonials of citizens successfully defending their rights, *Illiteracy Eradication* educated readers about their legal rights, and the *Children’ Page* was to educate children.



Examples of the newspaper The Home Economics

With the support of the Program, the Foundation published 13 issues of the newspaper. The newspaper was disseminated throughout the region through residential Self-management Councils, local administrations, with the support of the Foundation’s partner NGOs, and during legal consultations and workshops conducted by the Foundation. The newspaper became very popular among homeowners not only in Nizhniy Novgorod but throughout the oblast and in many other regions, as evidenced by the readers’ feedback. Here are a few readers’ comments worth mentioning:

A.S. Dombrovsky, leader of the movement Volunteer of Multi-Apartment Buildings said: “My colleagues and I are eagerly waiting for the next issue of the newspaper. We, the older generation, are very glad that it is delivered to our homes. I study every section. I would suggest that the news section would also describe the situation in city districts based on the reader reports. I am ready to contribute myself.”

T.A. Lodygina, Chairman of a Territorial Self-Governing Organization (TOS): “The housing committee members read the magazine from cover to cover. Strange as it may be, they love the Children’s Page. They also like the column about partners. It helps me to invigorate residents, look forward, see our actual problems and prevent potential problems.”

T.V. Chernova, a teacher: “In class, I use the Children’s Page materials to teach children to be competent residents. The Q&A column helped me a lot; it made me more knowledgeable about paying for public utilities. I began feeling more confident as a home owner.”

The popularity of the newspaper facilitated the Foundation to attract private sponsors and the governmental funding that allowed to increase newspaper’s circulation from 1,000 to 3,500 copies. Moreover, the city weekly newspaper Day of the City re-printed many articles from the *Home Economics* newspaper. The Chairman of the Governor’s Commission on Human Rights A. Kozeradskiy praised the Foundation’s newspaper and the website as the example of a quality publication in educating citizens of the housing issues. The Foundation also found support from the regional Ministry of Housing and Communal Services. In 2013, the newspaper will also become available through subscription.

To reach out to younger audience, the Foundation used its website that has a lot of informational materials and provides opportunities for visitors to receive answers to their questions. The Q&A sections of the website gained popularity very quickly and the number of questions posted in those sections grew rapidly from a few questions per month to dozens. The number of success stories also grew. All of them were posted on the website and published in the newspaper.

Overall, the feedback the Foundation was receiving from the readers of their newspaper and listeners of the radio and the changes in the questions they were asking indicated that citizens were becoming better educated about the issue and about their rights. Instead of just complaining, they started asking very specific questions, communicating meaningfully with the government, putting their complaints in writing, and more often and without fear appealing to court and oversight agencies.

c) Journalist contest “I, You, We Have Rights!”

Another approach that the Program used to incentivize the mass media to report on human rights and build citizen awareness about their rights was conducting an annual journalist contest. The contest was combined with and supplemented by journalist skill and professionalism building capacity activities, as well as activities to improve cooperation of journalists with human rights CSOs. The contest benefited significantly from involving one of the most prominent Russian media and human rights think tanks, the **Glasnost Defense Foundation** (GDF), and their regional partners: the Press Development Institute – Siberia (Novosibirsk), Media Rights’ Defense Center



Olga Loskutova, Chair of the Perm Regional Union of Journalists, congratulates the winner of the contest journalist Mikbail Danilovich

(Voronezh), Journalist Technologies Center (Nizhny Novgorod), Nizhny Novgorod and Perm regional organizations of the Union of Journalists. The annual contest under the title *I, You, We Have Rights!* was conducted three times throughout the duration for the Program. The first contest was conducted in 2010 for journalists in four Program regions. The following second and third contests were expanded to 16 regions: four Program regions and 12 neighboring regions. The contest had five categories: print media (articles, series of articles), specialized periodic publications, television, radio, and internet and social media. The contest promoted not only reporting on the violations of the rights but, and more importantly, building citizen awareness of their rights, how to defend their rights, and incentivizing citizens through sharing success stories. The contest was held on two levels: regional and interregional. Winners of the regional level competed on the interregional level.

At the beginning of the Program one of our regional partners, Press Development Institute – Siberia, conducted 2-day training for journalists in each region to improve their understanding of the issue of human rights and strengthen their skills in mainstreaming human rights, as well as to introduce the Program and the contest to them.

The number of journalists participating in the contest was growing every year - from 54 in 2010 to 119 in 2011 and to 138 in 2012. GDF partners conducted a competition on the regional level with the support and the guidance of the Program staff and GDF. The award ceremonies were combined with workshops, trainings or roundtables, where journalists had the opportunity to discuss among themselves and with human rights CSOs and the government the contest, the issues of the human rights, and public legal education.



“I, You, We Have Rights!” journalist contest trophy

Winners of the contest at the regional level were invited to the Program interregional meeting where they participated at the open jury session. The jury consisted of 3-4 prominent journalists and human rights activities such as: Alexey Simonov, President of the GDF and a member of the Presidential Council on the Promotion of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, Leonid Nikitinsky, President of the Guild of Court Reporters and columnist for the Novaya Gazeta, Natella Boltyanskaya, host of Echo of Moscow, and Arseny Roginsky, Chairman of the International Memorial Society. During the open jury session, the jury reviewed each submitted to the contest work and discussed it in the presence of contestants, allowing for the contestants to learn from their own and their colleagues’ successes and failures. Because the interregional contest evaluation was held during the Program interregional meeting, the award ceremony was conducted with participation of representatives of all Program grantee organizations. The second day of the meeting was

structured to build cooperation between human rights CSOs and journalists and to discuss the most critical human rights issues and to learn and share experiences and tools.

“Journalists from regional media rarely have an opportunity to get their materials reviewed by nationally-known professionals and get their comments and advice.”

“An opportunity to talk with Simonov, getting his professional opinion about your work is the main value of participating.”

Feedback of the contest participants

Comments by the jury of the contest about the challenges in educating people on human rights and about the contest:

Arseniy Roginsky, Chairman of the International Memorial Society: *“People are starting to get a clearer idea about what the human rights are. It’s not a simple search of justice; this is a search of rights.”*

Alexey Simonov, President of the GDF: *“As a matter of fact, this is a very complicated affair to popularize legal knowledge. I think that thanks to this contest we are able to help people.”*

Alexey Simonov, President of the GDF, about the contest: *“If the contest “I, You, We Have Rights!” is continued in 2013, it would serve as an indicator of the changes in our country, a thermometer of the state of society. People ignorance about their own rights is not different in provinces or in Moscow. I will not forget the guy from the Kursk region Sergey Prokopenko who became a winner of the 2011 contest in the category “Social networking on the Internet.” On his own initiative, he created his own newspaper “Echo of the week” and, as a blogger and journalist, was defending the rights of citizens of his city of Zheleznogorsk.”*

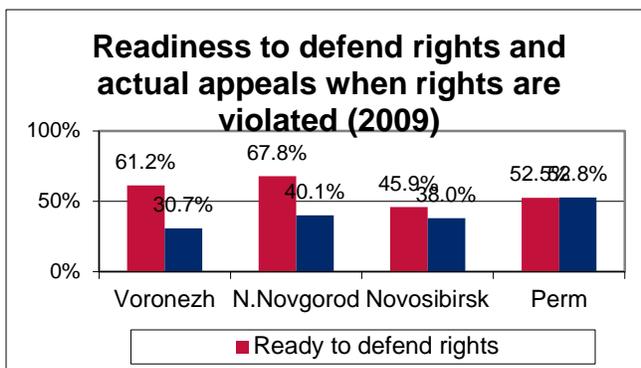


Journalist contest and award ceremony 2011

4. Incentivizing citizens to defend their rights – success stories clearing house

Our baseline survey showed that while respondents across all regions indicated that they had a strong readiness to defend their rights. The number of those who took real actions to defend their violated

Figure 3. Citizen readiness to defend their rights.



rights was much lower than the indications of readiness. In Voronezh, for example, while 61.2% said they were ready, only 30.7% actually filed a complaint. In Nizhniy Novgorod, 67% indicated readiness, but 40.1% did something, and in Novosibirsk, 45.9% indicated readiness, but 38% actually appealed. Only in Perm was the degree of expressed readiness matched by appropriate behavior when rights were violated. The chart below compares expressed readiness and actual actions in defending the rights when violated.

Russian citizens are generally pessimistic about their ability to protect their rights and have low expectations that the government will take any actions to address their complaints. While educating the public about how to defend their rights is essential, it is also important to provide them with real examples of citizens successfully standing up for their rights. Such examples of successes can serve as powerful evidence that citizens can prevail and, therefore, can raise public confidence and trust in the rule of law.

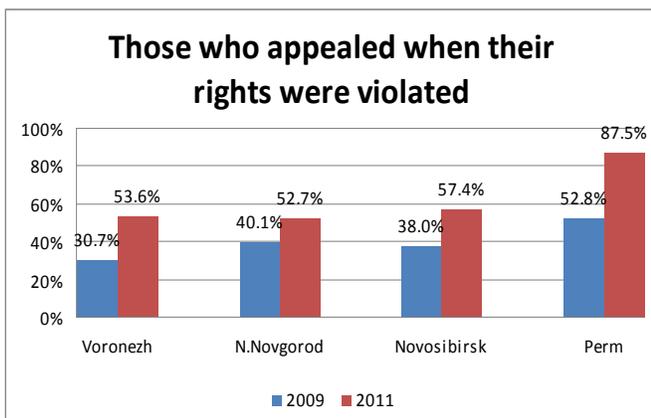
The *I've Got Rights* Program mobilized regional coordinators and all Program grantees to collect and disseminate such stories coming from their own experience and elsewhere. In addition, the MSI staff Program collected stories from various sources throughout Russia. We analyzed success stories collected from various sources looking for best approaches in defending citizen rights and made sure they are available to citizens so they can use them in practice. Our Public Outreach Manager worked with our grantees on verifying and editing the stories to make sure the stories are factually correct and, when possible, describe clear 'algorithms' of how to defend the rights.

We have developed a Success Story clearing house on the Program website that by the end of the Program had **354 success stories**. The stories were grouped by the issue areas, such as: personal safety, rights of military draftees and soldiers, rights of the disabled, rights to state and municipal services, rights to housing, customers' rights, rights of prisoners, children rights, women rights, migrants' rights, health, labor rights, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom from discrimination, freedom to assembly, and other issues. The Program put significant effort in getting these stories to the broader public. In addition to posting them on the Program website clearing house, we (1) disseminated them via our electronic Weekly News and the Newsletter that was sent out to more than 800 CSOs throughout the country (including those that represent constituencies – associations, unions, etc.); (2) our regional coordinators and majority of the Program grantees posted the stories on their websites and e-mailed them using their listserves and networks; (3) the Program grantees also disseminated stories during their various public events and trainings, and included the stories in their information brochures

"Often there is a complete disregard for the rights of citizens. I was able to win my case only with the support from the human rights lawyers who built my confidence that the law was on my side. We need to study, know and apply the laws."

Voronezh resident attended the Human Rights Festival held by the Program in Voronezh in June 2012

Figure 4. Citizen appealing rights violations.



and publications in the media; (4) we encouraged the mass media to publicize the stories at the media training workshops and other events as part of the Journalist Contest activities. Such a combination of dissemination approaches provided a sufficient spectrum of channels to reach out to ordinary citizens.

Although the Program was terminated early and we were not able to conduct our final survey, the interim survey conducted in mid-2011 indicated an increase in a percentage of citizens defending

their rights. In 2009, only in Perm region was there a majority of rights-violated citizens who appealed, but in 2011 there was a majority in all four oblasts who appealed their violations. In 2011, violated respondents who appealed their violations ranged from 52.7% (Novosibirsk oblast) to 87.5% (Perm krai).

Below are several examples of success stories of citizens defending their rights. In many cases, our Program grantees assisted citizens in drafting formal letters and appeals to the relevant agencies while in others cases they had to intervene on their behalf.

✓ **Rights to Healthcare Services**

The Program grantee *All-Russia Society of Disabled People* (Novosibirsk) was approached by a disabled person in a wheelchair, S. Ilyina, who asked for help in defending her right to receive treatment in a sanatorium. Ms. Ilyina had been trying to obtain a referral for such treatment by herself for months. However, doctors refused to issue it to her. With the assistance of the Society lawyer, Ms. Ilyina wrote a letter to the Chief Physician of the municipal clinic. He wrote back refusing to issue a voucher for treatment. The Society forwarded the letter to the chief physician of the Municipal Healthcare Administration stating the details of the unlawful denial of treatment. The copy of this letter was also forwarded to the prosecutor's office. Shortly after that, the Society received a formal response from the prosecutor's office and they opened an investigation which prompted the municipal clinic to set a medical committee to evaluate Ms. Ilyina's needs. The committee concluded in favor of Ms. Ilyina and issued her a voucher for treatment.

✓ **Standing up for the Environmental Rights**

In Nizhny Novgorod, when an owner of an apartment asked the District Administration for permission to make a small garden on land surrounding her building, she was told that her management company was building a parking lot on that land. The woman approached one of the Program grantees – *the Dront Environmental Center* - for legal assistance to stop the construction. The plan to build parking lot violated construction norms. Dront staff helped the woman to write a complaint to the Head of the District Administration. In response, the management company that wanted to build the parking lot argued that the residents of the building had held a general meeting and more than half of the residents voted in support of the construction plan. Dront lawyers reviewed the protocol from the meeting and found it fraudulent, as it listed deceased residents as taking part in the meeting and had other discrepancies between protocols on the dates and number of participants. The management company not only falsified the documents but also planned on collecting a commission from residents for the construction service. The woman filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office, and the management company backed off their plans of building the parking lot. Moreover, they promised to deliver soil for the garden.

✓ **Freedom of Assembly in Perm.**

In December 2011, Perm police detained Galina Volkova who conducted a single picket holding a poster expressing her disagreement with the results of the recent elections. The police also detained two other people, by-standers, accusing them of helping Galina to hold the poster and, as a result, turned the single picket into public action. The Russian law does not require a person conducting a single picket to notify the government while the mass action requires such notification. On December 21, the court judge ruled in favor of the police. The ruling was based entirely on the police report and ignored testimonies of eye witnesses who repeatedly stated that nobody was helping Galina to hold her poster. Moreover, the police withheld a video that recorded the incident. Lawyers of the Program grantee the *Perm Center for Human Rights Protection* assisted the defender is appealing the court decision. The regional court heard the case, reviewed all evidence, and acquitted the defendants. The police officers were reprimanded for misconduct.

V. LEGAL SUPPORT TO CITIZENS

Providing legal assistance to citizens was one of the essential and instrumental tools that the Program employed in mainstreaming human rights and empowering citizens in asserting and defending their rights. The assistance combined conducting legal education of citizens about their rights, providing legal advice and assistance in filing complaints with the government, representing citizens with the governmental agencies, filing cases with the court, and representing citizens in courts. The Program engaged **33 CSOs** in all Program regions in legal assistance activities. Many of these CSOs already had extensive experience in providing legal assistance while for others this was a rather new type of activity. Among those with many years of experience were the Perm Regional Human Rights Defense Center, the Nizhniy Novgorod Committee Against Torture, the Perm Youth Memorial, the Voronezh Regional Chapter of National Public Movement “For Human Rights,” the Nizhniy Novgorod Regional Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, and some others. While such groups typically focused on providing legal assistance to individuals seeking their help, the Program expanded their activities to proactively reach out to target groups and the general population through various public events, workshops, traditional and social media, and educational materials. Their public outreach and awareness building activities were described in the previous sections of the report.

The Program helped to improve the professionalism of the less experienced CSOs and enriched the work of the experienced CSOs through training and facilitation of the cooperation between the two. Specifically, experienced CSOs benefited from extending their work beyond their traditional one-on-one assistance to citizens and becoming more vocal in advocating for constituency interests. As a result, the majority of CSOs succeeded in promoting reforms on the local, regional and federal levels as it is described in the section *VI. Promoting Human Rights Reforms* of the report.

Since the beginning of the Program, human rights and other CSOs provided legal assistance to more than **19,300 citizens** in all four Program regions. This total number includes about **2,270 consultations** provided through the social media tool – *Tak-tak-tak* network – described later in this section. Legal assistance was provided in person, by telephone, e-mails and via websites and social media. About **56%** of those who applied for legal services were **women**. While some of the CSOs providing legal assistance worked with the general population, a number of CSOs focused on particular demographic groups, which included: disabled persons, women, children, entrepreneurs, homeowners, military conscripts, imprisoned, and some others. This was reflected in the spectrum of complaints they were receiving from citizens, which included violations of rights in housing and municipal services delivery, labor, health, social protection, military service, freedom of assembly, and others.

In the majority of cases, assistance was provided in the form of legal consultations, although about one-fourth of the cases required assistance in reviewing and preparing formal documents. Over the course of the Program implementation, more than **1,700 cases** were brought to court. **About 5,290 cases** appealed to governmental agencies were reported as resolved in favor of citizens, which constitutes **31% of the total cases** filed with the Program grantee organizations. The percent of the resolved cases counts only those that the Program recipients were able to monitor. There are many cases when our recipients were not able to monitor the outcome because of the difficulties in collecting feedback from

all citizens who received legal consultations. One would assume that if a citizen did not appeal to providing the CSO for legal assistance repeatedly, his/her case was resolved successfully.

Among CSOs providing legal assistance to the general population, and to prisoners specifically, was one of the Program regional coordinators - the **Perm Regional Human Rights Defense Center (PRHRDC)**. The Center has many years of experience in implementing such activities and has developed a methodology in the past of how to effectively provide legal assistance to the victims of human rights abuses. With the

support of the Program, the Center provided assistance to about **3,500 citizens** between July 2010 and September 2012 (about 125 citizens per month). The majority of cases (about 75%) were filed in person during the Center lawyer's visits to the correctional facilities throughout the region or by the prisoners' families; and about 22% were filed by telephone. Although the Center had an option for citizens to apply via the Internet, only 1% used it. 47% of the citizens who requested assistance from the Center were women. The Center filed about 700 cases (19.7% of total cases) with the court and represented citizen

✓ **SUCCESS STORY - Unlawfully Detained was Released**

On February 1, 2012, Perm police officers detained an activist, Maxim Zhilin, for distributing leaflets calling to attend a rally on February 4. The leaflets mentioned the name of Vladimir Putin and his statement about corruption in the housing and public utility sector. The officers instructed Maxim Zhilin to stop distributing leaflets, to show his passport and instructed him to go to a police station in the Dzerzhinsky district accusing him in illegal propaganda during the pre-election period. The lawyer of the Perm Regional Human Rights Center Elena Pershakova who represented the interests of the detainee didn't see any ground for bringing administrative charges against Maxim. Maxim was at first denied his rights for legal representation until he refused to write any statement or sign documents without his lawyer's presence. The police report was not clear about the provision of the Administrative Code allied to the Maxim's case. The assistant duty officer verbally explained that the police had information that the organizers of the political rally have not informed the government about their plans as it is required by the Federal Law #54. But it was not true as the notification about the rally was filed by the organizers with the Department of Public Relations of the Perm City Hall on January 19. According to the same law a citizen has the right to distribute information about upcoming event after the notification was filed. And everyone has the right to a freedom of speech and information distribution even during the pre-election period if s/he doesn't represent interests of any party. As a result, Maxim Zhilin was released within an hour after the arrest, and the administrative offense hadn't been filed.

interests with other governmental agencies in about 280 cases. 122 cases were reported as resolved successfully in the citizens' favor, with many cases still pending at the time the Program ended. Because the Center focused primarily on assistance to prisoners, the majority of cases were against prison administrations and courts. The Center combined its legal services with extensive legal education activities, including publishing brochures and flyers explaining in plain language how to file cases with the court, appeal to the prosecutor, and other governmental agencies. In addition, the Center conducted many public education workshops and other public events on various human rights issues.

The Center was also very instrumental in supporting other CSOs in the region in building their skills to render legal help and assisting them in representing their constituencies. For example, the Center provided support to the Society for Support of Autistic Children, a CSO representing the interests of autistic children and their families. While the Society was providing legal services on their own, assisting about 150 citizens over the course of 12 months, they were seeking advice from the Center on complicated cases that required court resolution.

Another human rights CSO that had an outstanding record in providing legal assistance to the victims of police abuse was the **Committee Against Torture (CAT)**, the Program coordinator in the Nizhniy Novgorod region. CAT had many years of experience working specifically with citizens whose rights were violated by law enforcement agencies through torture and other unlawful and violent actions. On a monthly basis CAT worked with about 15 new and 83 ongoing cases. The cases they worked on were very complex and required significant time allocated for investigation and resolution. All complaints filed by citizens with CAT related to the abuses by law enforcement agencies, including 70% of the cases - by police. During the course of the Program support, CAT filed 284 cases with the court and about 300 cases with other governmental agencies. In many cases CAT was the last resort for people who were helplessly seeking justice for years. When all available legal remedies were exhausted within the country, CAT assisted the victims in filing their cases with the European Court of Human Rights. In light of that, CAT's international recognition grew significantly over the last several years.

In 2011, CAT received two international awards: in May, CAT received the Front Line Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk for its work in Chechnya, and on June 23, 2011, on the eve of the

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, CAT received the award from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Just two days before the PACE award, CAT celebrated one of their victories - on June 21, 2011, the Avtozavodskoy District Court of Nizhny Novgorod convicted two former militia officers for beating up a young automobile plant worker, Stanislav Lebedev. He was taken to the clinical hospital only on the second day of his interrogation. Before the surgery, the medical check-up established that Stanislav suffered a blunt stomach trauma, abdominal hematoma and a rupture of a left kidney. The doctors had to remove the smashed left kidney completely. CAT lawyers took on Stanislav's case. Thanks to their efforts, militia officer Zhuravlev was convicted, and sentenced to three years of imprisonment and officer Ladin got four years. Both defendants forfeited the right to work in law enforcement agencies for three years. Another example of the success stories of CAT work is provided in the box above. Similar to other supported by the Program recipients, CAT held extensive educational activities, primarily through a dedicated section of their website, advising citizens on their rights, and how to defend the rights, and incentivizing citizens to take actions by broadly publicizing their successes.

✓ **SUCCESS STORY -Waited Five Years to Get Justice**

On March 1, 2012, Nizhniy Novgorod district court ruled in favor of a retiree Lilia Gremina and awarded a compensation in the amount of 30,000 rubles for the unlawful actions that police officers committed against her about five years ago. On March 24, 2007, Gremina was going to participate in the Dissenters March (*Marsb Nesoglasnyh*). She never made it to the event, but instead was unlawfully detained by the police who used force against her even before the event began. Gremina applied to the NGO Committee Against Torture requesting help. The Committee's staff conducted a public investigation and concluded that the actions of the police officers who unlawfully and without any grounds detained Gremina and used force against her, were clearly rude, did not conform to the principles and goals of the law enforcement agency, and humiliated the elderly woman's dignity. In spite of the usual sabotage of the investigative authorities, footdragging and numerous denials of initiating proceedings about unlawful actions of the police, the Committee Against Torture still managed to bring the case to court. In March 2012, the court ruled that the 74-year-old retiree should receive compensation for moral damages in the amount of 30,000 rubles. However, no police officers were punished, because the investigation did not reveal concrete people who took part in the unlawful actions. With the help of the Committee Against Torture, the claim "on Gremina's case" was filed in the European Court of Human Rights. In December 2012, the European Court of Human Rights forwarded questions to the Russian Federation requesting clarification of the case.

Two human rights CSOs provided legal assistance to military draftees – **the Perm Youth Memorial** and **the Nizhny Novgorod Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers**. The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers



Human rights advocate and journalist Irina Kizilova from the Perm Youth Memorial talks about their achievements at the interregional meeting.

also provided assistance to active duty soldiers. Similar to the Perm Regional Human Rights Defense Center and the Committee against Torture, both the Youth Memorial and the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers are well-known human rights NGOs with years of experience in providing legal assistance to their constituencies. The Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers assisted 1,035 citizens, brought 31 cases to court and many cases to other governmental agencies. Overall, the Committee reported 246 cases resolved in favor of citizens. The Youth Memorial provided direct legal assistance to about 600 military conscripts during about two years with the Program support, and reported about 50% of the cases they worked on as being resolved in favor of citizens. Most of

the cases were resolved administratively, and several cases in court. The Youth Memorial is also a very strong advocate for an Alternative Civil Service (ACS). ACS was introduced in Russia several years ago but remained uncharted territory for citizens because they didn’t know their rights and how to apply for ACS. At the same time, the government, not favoring ACS, provided very limited information for young men and their families. In addition, the drafting agencies were not fully familiar with the ACS legislation and terms. To address this, the Youth Memorial conducted extensive legal education activities among young people using various means, including both traditional and new media as well as public meetings

and interactive lessons at schools. Some of the success stories of the Perm Youth Memorial and the Nizhny Novgorod Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers are provided in the box above.

✓ **SUCCESS STORY - The Right to Alternative Civil Service Restored.**

Alexander submitted his application for alternative civil service (ACS) to his district military commissariat on the basis of his peaceful beliefs and many years of social work taking care of an elderly woman. But the commissariat disregarded his application and, without required the hearing, summoned him to a medical examination followed by the draft commission meeting where he was told that he would be drafted because his application came in late. The official military draft letter that was given to Alexander failed to mention his application at all. Alexander applied to the lawyers of Youth Memorial for legal consultation who advised him to file a case with the court because only the court had jurisdiction in cases with an alleged missed deadline in submitting applications. Unfortunately, Alexander didn’t have courage to file his case with the court but appealed to the District Draft Commission which denied his appeal. On the Youth Memorial lawyer advice, Alexander reapplied for substituting the military service with ACS. In the meantime, the Youth Memorial lawyers spoke at the training of the draft committee heads explaining the process of accepting and reviewing ACS applications. On April 10, 2012, Alexander’s request was satisfied and in several months he was assigned a place of his ACS service.

Eight Program grantee organizations protecting the **rights of the disabled** (adults and children) provided legal assistance in all four regions. Among these PGOs there were those with extensive experience in providing legal help, including the Novosibirsk Branch of the All Russian Disabled People Association, and Nizhniy Novgorod CSO Invatur. Other CSOs had no or very limited experience in providing legal help, among them the Society for Support of Autistic Children in Perm. The Program provided opportunity for participating CSOs to build their skills, share experience, and provide mutual support. Together, these CSOs provided consultations to more than 5,500 disabled people and their family members (among them 66% were women), resolved about 2,500 cases in favor of citizens, and brought to court 245 cases. Although many complaints filed with these NGOs were against law enforcement agencies and judiciary, the majority of cases were related to violations of rights by the social service agencies, healthcare system, and municipal services. Similarly to other CSOs providing legal service, most complaints were filed by citizens in person and via telephone and lesser via internet or in writing. The CSOs providing legal assistance to the disabled and their families had many successes during the time they were provided the support of the Program. One of such stories is described in the box above.

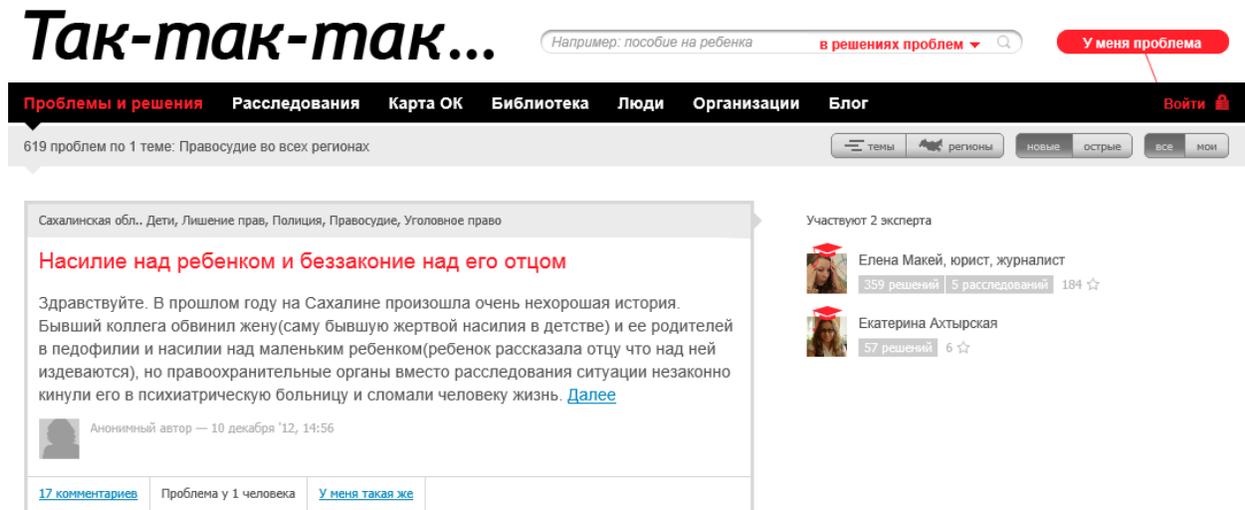
✓ **SUCCESS STORY - The Right to Education for a Child with Disability.**

In the summer of 2011, Nizhny Novgorod Regional NGO Invatur conducted a series of interconnected seminars on the protection of the rights of the disabled - the *Self-Advocacy School*. Among the participants were the parents of Vova Lyubaev, a nine year old boy with Down Syndrome. Vova had never attended pre-school or school because the medical and pedagogical commission found him to be learning disabled and denied his rights to education in the public schools. The parents taught him at home as best as they could.

After learning about their rights at the *Self-Advocacy School*, Vova's parents consulted with Invatur lawyers who helped them to develop a strategy on how to approach the government. On the lawyers' advice they approached the Center for Social Help for Families and Children "Dom," which assisted them in initiating an independent interdisciplinary psychological, medical and pedagogical evaluation of Vova. The Invatur lawyer attended all evaluation procedures, observing and providing support to the family. Based on the evaluation, the recommendations were made for Vova to be admitted to the school for children with learning disabilities. In mid-September, Vova went to school for the first time of his life. While it was a big victory, the parents felt that Vova was ready to be admitted to a school for children with special needs instead of the school for children with learning disabilities. Following the Invatur lawyer's recommendations, they applied, as their first step, to the Bureau of the Medical and Social Expert Evaluation Commission in order to create an individual rehabilitation program for a disabled child based on the results of the independent evaluation. The Bureau confirmed the results and provided the parents with the individual rehabilitation program that should facilitate Vova's admission to a school for children with special needs, that Vova has been previously denied admission to by the school Principal.

Program grantee organizations providing legal assistance to individuals ensured that they offer various channels for citizens seeking help. All PGOs offered assistance for citizens who applied in person, by telephone or in writing. In addition to these traditional channels, 21 PGOs were providing assistance via e-mail or Internet. One of the PGOs – **Press Development Institute-Siberia** - provided services exclusively via designated social media networking tool - *Tak-tak-tak* (<http://taktaktak.ru/>). This network retains a group of lawyers throughout the country who are always on a standby to provide legal advice to any person who posts question on the *Tak-tak-tak* website. Any complex question generates a virtual discussion among lawyers who exchange their opinions and seek resolution. Such discussion, called by the network authors as *public investigation*, is held internally until the resolution is found. Initially operating within just one region, the network became a nation-wide tool serving people throughout the

country. The number of people seeking legal advice through the *Tak-tak-tak* network grew just within one year from 50 to about 300 a month. In addition to providing legal consultations, the network provides about 30 *algorithms* (approaches) for citizens to deal with various situations to prevent their rights from being abused or to defend their rights. For example, how to conduct public meetings within the law, how to handle a situation when a law enforcement officer requests the citizen to show his/her ID, what pregnant women need to do when her employer wants to fire her, etc. The network also provides a description of hundreds of success stories when citizen rights were defended or restored. A snapshot of the website is provided below.



Snap shot of the interactive legal support website Tak-tak-tak

As we mentioned earlier, our PGOs provided legal assistance to various groups of population. In addition to those groups described above, assistance was also provided to women, entrepreneurs, migrants, homeowners, and some others. During the 14 months of the Program support, the Voronezh NGO **Democracy Center** provided assistance to 375 women and 182 men, consulting them on their housing rights and representing their interests with the government in court. They filed 75 cases with the court on behalf of citizens and represented citizens' interests in 20 courts. With extensive public outreach activities, they reached out to thousands of citizens throughout the region and gained vast public recognition. Their service was praised by many citizens. Another PGO that worked in the area of housing rights – **Nadezhda** (Hope) – helped dozens of families with many children to obtain land they were entitled to by the law but denied by the local government. In many cases as it turns out, local government was imposing various bureaucratic barriers or offering unsuitable land plots for residential construction to families with many children. During 14 months of the Program support, Nadezhda

“Often there is a complete disregard for the rights of citizens. I was able to win my case only with the support from the human rights lawyers who built my confidence that the law was on my side. We need to learn, know and use the laws.”

Feedback of a citizen on the legal assistance provided by human rights CSO in Voronezh

consulted 563 people (including 396 women) and reported about 50% cases resolved in the interests of citizens.



Lawyers of the Voronezh Democracy Center provide legal consultations to citizens on their housing rights

VI. PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS REFORMS

Strengthening legal and regulatory reforms and institutions is critical for improving and sustaining the observance of human rights. Institutional reform is an underlining basis for mainstreaming human rights as it, in combination with legal awareness, contributes to reducing citizen skepticism and consolidating their optimism and, ultimately, leads to the citizens being more active in exercising and defending their rights. CSOs play a vital role in promoting the reforms through constructive dialogs with responsive and cooperative government or through applying pressure on those dismissive or in opposition of the reforms.

I. Cooperation with the government and government harassments

Taking into consideration the sensitivity of human rights issues and with the objective of ensuring local ownership, dialog and coordination with the government was implemented primarily through domestic partner organizations – regional coordinators and grantees. At the beginning of the Program, the project staff had a set of initial meetings with some governmental officials including the Head of the Governor’s Commission on Human Rights, the Head of the Department Controlling NGO Activities for the Regional Ministry of Justice in Nizhniy Novgorod and with Deputy Regional Ombudsman and the Ombudsman on Children’s Rights in Perm. A number of governmental representatives also participated in fact-finding focus groups and Strategy Development Workshops. The Strategy Development Workshops described earlier in the report attracted between 4 and 7 representatives from the government in each region, some of whom served as keynote speakers while others actively participated in the discussions. These meetings, though, showed some cautiousness on a side of the governmental officials in direct communication and interaction with our first COP, Stuart Kahn, and the Program in general as affiliated and sponsored by the U.S. government. The tension soon escalated in Nizhniy Novgorod where the regional administration called upon the representatives of the CSOs that had assisted the Program in organizing initial meetings and workshops and threatened them if they continued working with the Program.

Over the course of about 3 years of the Program, our grantees had experienced different levels of cooperation with the government. There were many factors that defined the relationships including the overall political situation, in particular around the 2011 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections in Russia that resulted in a crackdown on the opposition and human rights CSOs in late 2012. Outside of this overarching factor the relationships between PGOs and the government depended primarily on the issues PGOs were working on. Grantees working on the issues of the disabled or children had the most welcoming and constructive cooperation while those working on civil rights (freedom of assembly), or economic rights (rights to own land, housing rights, entrepreneur rights), experienced the most opposition from the government. But even in the cases of the most productive and friendly cooperation, the Program grantees, by large, preferred to refrain from emphasizing their affiliation with the Program and the support they were getting. There were cases when governmental agencies refused to work with CSOs on the grounds that the project was funded by the U.S. government. One official voiced concern about losing his job if he cooperated with a CSO getting support through the Program,

referring to his colleague who was fired because of similar cooperation. The same official that refused to cooperate on a formal basis nevertheless provided unofficial consultations to the Program grantee when necessary. Some officials fully rejected any cooperation with the supported by the Program grantees for political reasons. One governmental official bluntly said that by accepting donations from the U.S. government grantees, they participate in an “information war against Russia, [and thereby] discredit Russia.”

There were several cases when, while having good relationships with and support from some of the governmental agencies, our Program grantees were harassed by other agencies. For example:

- In December 2011, Dmitry Kazakov, Assistant to the Chairman of the Nizhny Novgorod Committee Against Torture (CAT), received an award from the Ombudsman of the Russian Federation for public monitoring of cases of torture and cruelty in Russia, including monitoring human rights in the Chechen Republic. At the same time, several months earlier, in June 2011, two representatives of the CAT in the Chechen Republic, who initiated a picket on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, were summoned to the local police and threatened them. Also, in January 2012, Anton Ryzhov, a lawyer of CAT, was arrested while getting off the train in Nizhny Novgorod returning from the Chechen Republic where he had been travelling regularly to monitor and report on human rights. In the very same month, the Chechen Special Police Force had filed a case with the investigative authorities accusing the head of the CAT, Mr. Kalyapin, of disclosing state secrets. At the same time, less than a year later, on November 12, 2012, Vladimir Putin invited Mr. Kalyapin and received his consent to join the Presidential Council on the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights.



Igor Kalyapin, Chairman of the Committee Against Torture, at the 2011 Most Respectful People the Russia award Ceremony

- The TV studio Channel-16 in the city of Sarov (Nizhny Novgorod region) has been airing a monthly TV live talk-show *Right to Know*. The program discussed various issues related to social and civil rights (healthcare, housing, disabled, etc.) with the studio guests – independent experts and governmental officials. The talk-show gained credibility among viewers and the government. For example, the February 2012 show on the rights of disabled people prompted the prosecutor to conduct an inspection into the compliance with the law on infrastructure accessibility for citizens with low mobility. The inspection led to 12 cases filed in the courts for failing to install ramps for the disabled. Meanwhile on June 27, 2012, “Sarov,” the city newspaper published an article entitled



One of the Channel-16's talk-shows Right to Know

“Aliens walk here!..” which defamed the work of Roman Aleinik, the head of the Channel-16. The author of the article shamed Roman Alenik for taking money from USAID with, as the newspaper stated, the purpose to “destabilize the social-political situation in the city.” Although there was no proof that this publication was instigated from the government, the rhetoric suggested so. Similar tactics were used in Novosibirsk against CSO Nadezhda, who was working on the rights to land ownership for families with many children. The CSO uncovered multiple violations by the government that resulted in many families eligible for land plots to be denied their rights or provided with land unsuitable for residential construction. One of the government regional TV stations controlled by the government aired a news clip accusing the CSO of financial fraud as they allegedly collected money from citizens without providing any services. Instead of protesting the clip, another Program grantee, a highly respected TV station Precedent, filmed and aired a video rebutting the accusations and providing an in-depth report on the CSO activities.

- Voronezh CSO of The Democracy Center was working on the citizen housing rights issues, conducting legal awareness, providing legal assistance, and promoting reforms. Among the successes of their work was a simplified procedure of land and housing privatization and reduced privatization costs. The Center also published its quarterly newspaper *We Are Citizens*, that talked about both political and social issues. In November 2011, authorities confiscated, without a warrant, a circulation of the latest issue of the newspaper accusing it of violating election rules. The newspaper issue had a poster on the front page about an upcoming public meeting that likely was the reason for its confiscation. With the support of the Program lawyers, the CSO drafted a petition to the Governor and had it signed by several people. The Commission on Information of the Election Committee reviewed the case and didn't find any violations by the newspaper, and the police returned the newspaper circulation to the Center. A few months later, in June 2012, the Ministry of Justice conducted an unscheduled inspection and requested that the Center register some changes with the Uniform State Register of Legal Entities and change the name of the CSO as it, in their opinion, was not aligned with the Center's activities. The Ministry threatened fines and the closing the Center if it refused to comply. The Center complied with the first item of the request but refused to change the name of their CSO. As a result, the Ministry of Justice filed a case with the court suing the Center and requesting it to pay a fine, or dismiss and disqualify the head of the CSO for 3 years. The case was eventually dropped. The Center was victimized again less than half year later as it is described below. In September 2012, the Chief Editor of the newspaper, Alexander Boldyrev, was charged by police for distributing his newspaper at the public meeting against the development of nickel deposits. On police opinion the newspaper was irrelevant to the subject of the meeting. The newspaper, though, had an



Copy of the poster with the announcement of the public meeting on the front page of the We Are Citizens newspaper

article on similar issues in other regions and was of great demand at the meeting. The court dismissed charges against the Editor. Boldyrev's lawyer, Olga Gnezdilova, sued police for unlawful actions against Boldyrev that violated his constitutional rights.

- At The Perm Human Rights Defense Center (PHRDC), our Program Coordinator in Perm region, has been publishing for many years its newspaper *For a Human*. The newspaper is one of the best print editions providing in-depth analysis and overview of a wide spectrum of human rights in the Perm region and Russia. In May 2011, the Perm Prosecutor's office conducted an inspection of the newspaper for alleged promoting of extremism. In particular, they pointed out one of the articles in the newspaper that discussed relationships of local Russian and Komi-Permyak nationals with Azerbaijan diaspora, and the role of the government and law enforcement agencies. The Prosecutor's office forwarded the article to the Federal Service for Supervision of Communication, Information Technology and Mass Communication (Roscomnadzor), for their review. Convened by Roscomnadzor special expert council reviewed the article and didn't find any signs of extremism. The case was dropped by the Prosecutor's office.

- The most recent example of government harassment of the human rights and other CSOs

including those involved in our Program, happened in Voronezh in December 2012. On December 19th, all the offices of the CSOs that were sharing space in the Voronezh Human Rights House were searched by the Investigative Committee, as part of a controversial criminal investigation of the political opposition actions during the 2012 Presidential election, the case known as the "case of Udaltsov, Rozvozzhaev and Lebedev." Among the CSOs that were searched, two were working with the *I've Got*



Human Rights House - a building hosting several human rights CSOs in Voronezh

Rights program: the Center for Development of Civic Initiatives that served as a Program Regional Coordinator; and the Democracy Center that was implementing a project on promoting housing rights. The searches were also conducted in the CSO leaders' residencies, and the leaders were questioned at the police station as witnesses in the case. Investigators conducting the searches presented neither their IDs, nor search warrants. They confiscated computers and hard drives and some of the documents without leaving behind any documentation on confiscated items, or search conclusions. The case got a lot of publicity and searches of some other civil society activities continued. Lawyers that have presented this case on behalf of victimized CSOs have written a formal appeal to the local court, accusing police in violating law and rights during the search. The Presidential Council on the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights made a formal statement condemning the Investigative Committee actions, and committed to monitor any further developments in Voronezh. The criminal case that triggered these searches was still opened at the time this report was written.

The harassment of the Voronezh CSOs contrasted with the fruitful cooperation these CSOs have developed over the last couple years with the regional Human Rights Ombudsperson, and the Ombudsperson for the Rights of a Child. They both participated in many meetings organized by CSOs, supported many initiatives, and advised citizens to apply for legal assistance provided by the CSOs. Actively supporting the Human Rights Week organized by CSOs within the Program, the Ombudsperson publicly praised their efforts: *“I am very glad that this week really happened. Those interested [in human rights issues] will continue their work in the future. Human rights are widely violated not just here, but in other jurisdictions. We must unite our efforts to protect the rights. Just before they visited the Park [Orlenok park, the place of the Festival], many people had no idea how to do it and where to go. Human rights activists, local and from other regions, are explaining it to people.”*



On the request of the CSO lawyer the local police is trying to convince the officers conducting the search to open the door to let them to observe the search.

Government hostility towards human rights CSOs intensified throughout Russia, particularly after the protests related to the latest parliamentary and presidential elections. Our program grantees were not singled out as a target of these harassments but their affiliation with and financial support from the USG aggravated the situation by providing more reasons for the authorities' enmity and hostility. Legislation enacted in 2012 including the 'foreign agent' law, the amendment to the Criminal Code expanding definition of a state treason, and tightened control over bank transactions raised serious concerns among a majority of the Program recipients in the last several months of the Program.

Several human rights activists were threatened with their life during the implementation of the Program, although the threats did not directly relate to the Program. In May 2011, the Deputy Head of the Nizhniy Novgorod Committee Against Torture found threats written on the door of her apartment, accusing her of supporting terrorism. In November and December 2012, Alexey Kozlov, the Head of the Voronezh Foundation for Environmental and Social Justice, received two telephone calls with threats to his and his family's lives. In both cases, individuals who posted threats were not established. There is no evidence as to whether these threats were affiliated with the government. At the same time, the government failed to conduct thorough investigation of the cases.

2. Promoting human rights reforms

As we mentioned earlier, while there were instances of the government animosity and hostility towards our Program recipients, there were also examples of fruitful cooperation that facilitated implementation of many reforms. The *I've Got Rights* program encouraged our partner CSOs to promote reforms through constructive dialog with the government, basing their arguments on evidence and providing specific recommendations for reforms. At the same time, our Program recipients used other approaches such as public pressure, and court and other more forceful approaches in cases when the government refused to listen and act.

Constructive engagement with the government was undertaken by a number of grantees, especially

under the projects addressing the rights of the disabled, children’s rights and the rights of orphans. Grantees were also successful in establishing cooperation with the government on such issues as the rights of women, and juvenile inmates and police reforms. Our grantees experienced less cooperation from the government when they worked on civil and political rights, including election rights, freedom of assembly, the right to information, property rights, and right to public services. The majority of the reforms initiated by our Program recipients were on the municipal and regional levels with only 15% of the reforms – on the federal level. This is because many issues could be resolved on the local level through municipal and regional legislation, by aligning it with the federal laws or through changing governmental agencies, procedures, and policies.

“The Festival [Voronezh Human Rights Festival] marks years of cooperation between the penitentiary system and Voronezh human rights organizations. This also helps us to become more transparent.”

Alexander Kuznetsov, Assistant on Human Rights for the Federal Penitentiary Service Director of the Voronezh region

Since the beginning of the Program, the Program grantees advocated for **100 advocacy reforms** to

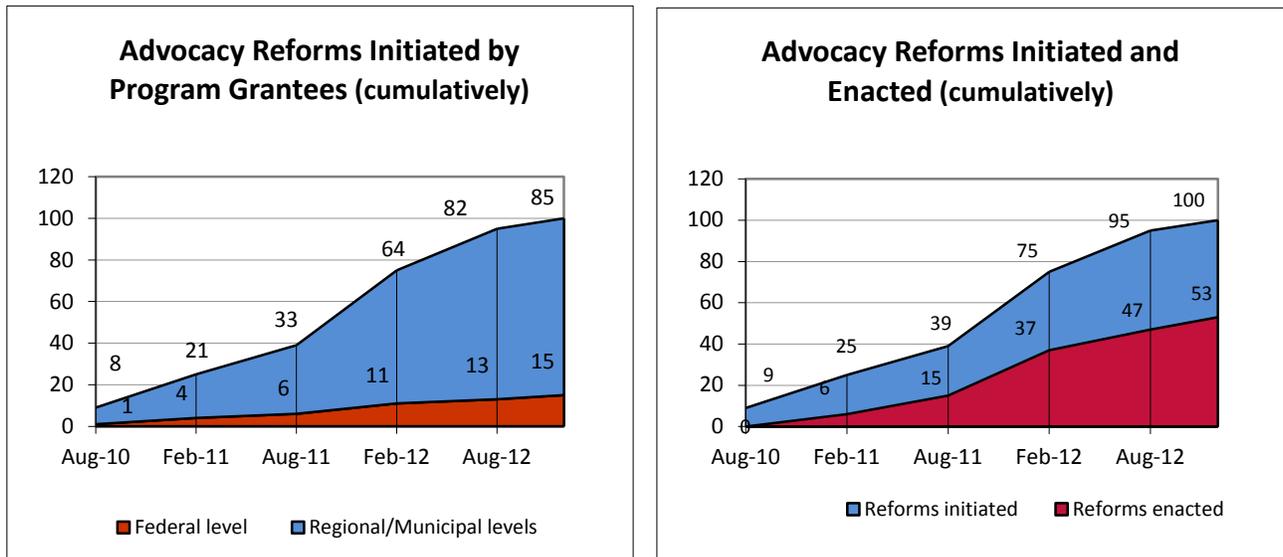


Novosibirsk citizens demand compensation for social services that were not provided by the government

promote better observance of human, civil, and social rights. Out of the 100 total reforms initiated, **85** are on the municipal and regional levels, and **15** are on the federal level. The initiated reforms addressed issues on the rights of assembly, citizen’s appeals, elections, participation in public governance, disabled people, children, entrepreneurs, housing, and others. **53 of the reforms were enacted** by the time the Program ended, and the rest were with the government at different stages of review.

Charts above show the number of advocacy campaigns initiated by the Program grantees on the federal and regional/municipal levels, and the number of the reforms enacted by the end of the Program.

Figure 5. Human rights advocacy reforms initiated by human rights CSOs.



Among the **most significant reforms** were the establishment Ombudsman offices in the Novosibirsk and Voronezh regions; enacting the Law on Civic Control in Perm krai, that enabled CSOs to monitor the observance of citizen rights in healthcare and social service providing institutions; improving legal environment for small businesses in the Voronezh region, by passing several legal acts; establishing a Council of Socially-Oriented CSOs in the Voronezh region; enhancing legislation to protect the rights of disabled, including enabling the people in the Novosibirsk region with blindness to exercise their right to vote; supporting children with autism in the Perm region to assert their rights to education; and strengthening the rights of pregnant women and orphans in the Novosibirsk region.

The Program grantees and their partners actively participated and provided input on many federal level legislative initiatives and reforms, including police, military service, education, and taxation.



Rally in Perm for direct mayoral election

Grantees organized many campaigns to promote civil and political rights. For example, in Voronezh CSOs mobilized around the issue of **the right to assembly**. In June 2010, the City Government passed a Decree restricting locations where public meetings can be organized. The CSOs found this restriction unconstitutional and in contradiction with the Federal Law *On Meetings, Rallies, Demonstrations, Marches and Pickets* and continued organizing public meetings throughout

the city while police were arresting and detaining the organizers. The CSOs' lawyers filed the case with the city central court which ruled in April 2011 against the city administration restrictions. While this was a very significant victory for CSOs, the regional government opened discussion about passing a new law empowering the city government to set restrictions for conducting public meetings in the city downtown. This effort faced a new and stronger opposition among CSOs.

In Perm, seven CSOs (all but one are Program grantees) organized themselves in April 2010 as a civic coalition, ***For Direct Election***, opposing the City Duma decision to replace election with appointment of the Mayor. Stripping citizens of the right to elect their Mayor left them without meaningful leverage to keep the city government accountable. The Coalition took many actions in opposing the City Duma decision, including sending official letters to the city, regional and federal governments, conducting public opinion polls, conducting public hearings, collecting signatures, and organizing public rallies. The Coalition filed a case with the city court. Unfortunately, the city court did not support CSO leaders, neither did the regional court of appeals. The Federal Constitutional Court refused to hear the case arguing that mayor appointment by the elected institution (City Duma) does not violate the citizen right to election. The Coalition disagreed with the court and was planning to resubmit the case. The issue remained unresolved at the time this report was written.



Sign on the Perm city streets: 79% of the city citizens want to elect their mayor

The following are several other successful examples of CSOs' dialog with the government in promoting reforms with the support of the *I've Got Rights* program:

✓ **Human Rights Activists Succeeded in Advocating for Establishing the Ombudsman Office in Novosibirsk Oblast**

The issue of establishing a regional Ombudsman office in the Novosibirsk oblast was one of the most acute and has been pursued by local CSOs for years. With the support of the Program, the Press Development Institute – Siberia (PDIS), which served as a Program Coordinator in the Novosibirsk oblast, initiated the establishment of the Coordinating Council for Promoting the Institution of the Ombudsman in the Novosibirsk oblast (Coordinating Council) in April 2011. The initial core team of the Council consisted of representatives of about 30 CSOs and was chaired by Victor Yukechev, Director of PDIS. Over time, the number of members grew. The Coordinating Council had regular meetings on the issue and promoted the establishment of Ombudsman at different events. The Council also prepared a draft law on Ombudsman in Novosibirsk oblast that was, though, rejected by the Legislative Assembly of Novosibirsk oblast.



Discussion of the draft law on the regional Ombudsman at the roundtable on 27 May, 2011

The shift happened during the visiting session of the Federal Council for Civil Development and Human Rights under the President of Russia, which took place on September 26-27, 2011, in Belokurikha, Altai krai. Victor Yukechev, who attended the meeting, pointed out at the contradictions in the regional legislation defining the status of the Ombudsman and described the Coordinating Council's attempts to prove to the regional authorities the necessity of an Ombudsman office in the oblast. In response to this, Victor Tolokonsky, Plenipotentiary of the President of Russia in the Siberian Federal District, announced that nothing must stay in the way of

introducing this position in the Novosibirsk oblast: “Based on this meeting, I will develop recommendation and necessary instruction. There are still no Ombudsman offices in three out of twelve regions in the Siberian Federal District. But the Novosibirsk oblast is in the most urgent position: there is no law (just a regional Statute’s regulation), and, consequently, there is no Ombudsman.”

In October and November 2011, the Coordinating Council members held additional meetings with Victor Tolokonsky, discussing approaches in establishing the regional Ombudsman. Following these discussions, the Governor of the Novosibirsk oblast Vassily Yurchenko and the Chairman of the Regional Legislative Assembly Ivan Moroz committed to introduce the office of Ombudsman in the oblast. In June 2012, the issue of establishing the Ombudsman office was included in a working plan of the Legislative Assembly of the Novosibirsk oblast. A working group of deputies was established and tasked with drafting a law. A representative of the Coordinating Council was invited to join the working group. A few months later, on November 29, 2012, the Law on the Ombudsman in Novosibirsk oblast was finally adopted by the Legislative Assembly of the Novosibirsk oblast.

✓ Visually Impaired and Blind Assert their Right to Vote

Several Program recipient CSOs worked on the rights of disabled children and adults. The Novosibirsk branch of the Association of the Blind have been proving services to and promoting interests of the blind and visually impaired people for many years. The blind and visually impaired experience many problems in their daily life and in asserting their political and civil rights including the right to vote. Casting their vote is always a challenge for them due to limited access to information about the election and the voting precincts that are not equipped with ballots customized for their use. As a result, many of the blind and visually impaired simply don’t participate in the elections. In Novosibirsk oblast alone there are about 2,500 blind people.



Webinar for precinct staff on facilitating the disabled in voting



A blind voter at the pilot precinct equipped with the blind.

In 2010, the Association of the Blind set a goal to change the situation by pursuing reforms to facilitate implementation of the voting rights for the blind and building their awareness about the election process. The Association fully recognized that while they would be able to raise the awareness of the blind on their own, they would need the government, and in particular the Election Commission’s cooperation in implementing the reforms. While the Association has established constructive relationships with some of the governmental institutions, among them the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health, the Election Commission was beyond their reach. Nevertheless, they approached the Commission in August 2010 with very specific ideas demonstrating their commitment for cooperation. In particular, the Association suggested assisting the

Commission in developing election ballots and information materials customized for the blind, developing policies and procedures for precincts, and training precinct staff in communicating and assisting the blind. The Commission cautiously agreed to the cooperation and to developing and testing the new systems in a pilot precinct during the upcoming regional legislature election in October 2010.

In preparation for the election, the Association, in partnership with the Library for the Blind and in cooperation with the Election Commission, has developed a special stencil to aid the blind in filling out the ballot, as well as the instruction for using the stencil. It also developed audio information with the candidate biography and platforms that were disseminated on CDs and posted on the dedicated for the blind portal *Invisible Novosibirsk*. The stencils were made available for the blind at the pilot precinct during the election in October 2010. The election resulted in a significantly larger number of the blind participating than in previous elections, who casted their votes and who did it on their own without assistance. After the success of this effort, the cooperation between the Association and the Election Commission grew in preparation to the national Parliamentary election in December 2011 and the Presidential election in May 2012. In preparation to the elections and with the input from the Association, the Commission adopted in May 2011 the Regulation #66/746 that defined the policies and procedures of the election precincts ensuring the implementation of the voting rights of the disabled including the blind. In addition to information materials and stencils, several election precincts were equipped with dedicated voting stations, with magnifying glasses, and audio equipment with information on the voting procedure, as well as instruction for filling out ballots.



Training of volunteers in assisting the blind at the voting precincts

The Association also developed a video film for the voting precincts about assisting the disabled at the precincts. The video was shown as part of the training conducted in person and via webinar for 44 precincts throughout the region. In addition, the Association conducted the training of young volunteers who expressed their willingness to assist the disabled. The training was very highly appreciated by the volunteers: *“We could not imagine that there are so many helpful techniques to effectively and safely help the disabled. We will feel much more assured now in assisting the disabled.”* The new procedures and approaches in facilitating the disabled in voting once more demonstrated their effectiveness during the Parliamentary and Presidential elections in 2011 and 2012 by higher turnover and feedback from the voters. The Novosibirsk Election Commission has shared the experience with other regions and found support at the federal level.

✓ Promoting the Rights of Entrepreneurs



Voronezh entrepreneurs discuss their rights.

The Voronezh Association of Entrepreneurs became an effective voice for small businesses' and individual entrepreneurs' rights in the region. They were successful in advocating for the equal rights of entrepreneurs in acquiring municipal and state property and providing a favorable business environment for small retail entrepreneurs. On the federal level, they prompted the government to amend the Tax Code to support fair rights of businesses in leasing property and submitted recommendations to a draft law introducing simplified taxation in 2012. The Association and its members used various approaches in persuading the government to implement reforms. Although their preference was always a constructive dialog, they had to apply other approaches, such as public protests and court actions when the government ignored them. The most recent initiative of the Association was the establishment of the *Ombudsman on the Rights of Entrepreneurs* in the region. To start the initiative, the Association organized a roundtable to discuss the needs of the Ombudsman in the region on June 26, 2012. 52 people participated in the discussion, including representatives of business and CSOs of Voronezh and Lipetsk, as well as the government including the Ombudsperson on Human Rights and the Ombudsperson on the Rights of Children. Participants agreed that small businesses are in particular need of an *Ombudsman on the Rights of Entrepreneurs* because their rights are the least protected in comparison with medium-size and big businesses that have better access to the legal support and often favored by the law. The experts participating at this meeting described the experience of the Ulyansky and Rostovsky regions where such Ombudsman offices have already been established. They pointed out that with the introduction of the Ombudsman, many regulatory documents will have to be changed in order to endow ombudsman with all the necessary powers, including the rights of representing businesses' interests in court. Roundtable participants outlined the major principles the Ombudsman institution should be based on and developed a plan to pursue the initiative. Within just a few months, the Association on behalf of the meeting participants and with their input developed a draft law of Voronezh oblast *On Ombudsman on the Rights of Entrepreneurs* and submitted it to the regional Duma on October 5, 2012.



Voronezh entrepreneurs protesting against government decision to restrict their rights

VII. FACILITATING NETWORKING

Traditionally, human rights organizations in Russia focused on individual, civil and political rights isolate themselves from other CSOs that work on social and economic rights or provide social services to their constituencies. Similarly, many service delivery and advocacy CSOs are cautious about HROs, perceiving them as destructive idealistic forces that are far from the life of ordinary people. Having the objective to mainstream various rights (human, social, and civil), MSI considered building cooperation among a wide spectrum of CSOs, a critical activity. Through cooperation, various CSOs could enhance their knowledge and skills and learn to value linkages of a broad spectrum of rights, reach out to larger population groups, strengthening their credibility with public, and provide mutual support in pursuing better observance of human rights and institutional reforms. MSI used several approaches to build and sustain networking among CSOs in the regions and beyond, such as:

- Semi-annual interregional networking meetings that brought together all Program grantees to discuss activity progress, share information, learn new tools and approaches, and plan cooperation;
- Human Rights Discussion Clubs conducted by Regional Coordinators on a regular basis to discuss among CSOs human rights issues, share information and knowledge, and develop plans for joint activities;
- Cooperation between Program grantees on the regional and interregional levels through implementing joint project activities;
- Skill and capacity building training workshops that brought together not only Program grantees but also other CSOs in the Program and neighboring regions;
- Information sharing via Program electronic Weekly News, Newsletter, website, and social networks;
- Conducting mass events such as Human Rights Week and Festival by mobilizing CSOs from all four Program regions and other regions.

I've Got Rights Program exceeded any expectations and brought positive results in Voronezh oblast. The Program united people from different backgrounds enabling them to discuss subjects of mutual interests on a single platform.

*Natalia Zvyagina,
Voronezh Civic Development Initiative Center*

"I would like to emphasize how important the cooperation with other human rights organizations is - interaction and support, exchange of experience, discussions about urgent issues and sharing plans for the future and fresh ideas. Our colleagues often become a solid support along this uneasy road."

*Tatiana Goncharova,
Voronezh Association of Entrepreneurs*

While the *I've Got Rights* program focused on the four targeted regions, information was shared amongst CSOs, media outlets and the government throughout Russia. In addition, representatives of human rights organizations from neighbouring regions attended regional events and training sessions conducted by the Program. For example, the training session "Fundraising for Human Rights Organizations" conducted in all four Program regions attracted 68 participants, including 5 representatives of HROs from neighbouring regions. The Human Rights Week and Festival conducted in Voronezh in June 2012 attracted more than a thousand people in the Voronezh region and the city of Voronezh. Apart from the participants of the Program, the Interregional Networking Meeting conducted in June 2012 was attended by 30 human rights activists and journalists from Voronezh and

the region. The journalist contest was also structured to encourage communication and cooperation between journalists and civil society activists. All Program grantees worked in partnership with other CSOs in the regions and across the regions while implementing the supported by the Program projects. Participating in the Program, human rights and civil society activists frequently praised the Program for facilitating partnership and cooperation among them. An independent mid-term evaluation of the *I've Got Rights* program conducted during the summer of 2012 confirmed significant growth in communication and cooperation among participating in the Program CSOs.

I. Interregional networking meetings

The Program used interregional networking meetings as one of the major tools in building cooperation amongst program grantee organizations that worked in various fields of human, social and civil rights in the Program regions. During the course of the Program, MSI conducted five meetings for 35-60 participants each. Networking meetings provided the program grantees with a chance to discuss implementation and the results of the *I've Got Rights* program and their own projects, exchange tools, share approaches and products developed within the Program, discuss human rights issues and technologies, and take part in trainings on topics that participants identified as important for them. Meetings were held on a semi-annual basis. They typically combined discussions and interactive training. For example, the first interregional meeting included two one-day trainings on Public Outreach and Communication and Working with the Media; the second meeting included a one-day training on Negotiations with the Government; the fourth meeting was built around HRO tools and best practices described in the manual, *Technologies for Human Rights Organizations*, published by the Program; and the very last meeting included a series of the short workshops on using information and communication technologies (ICT) in HROs' activities. Meetings held in the fall were also merged with the final rounds of the journalist contest *I, You, We Have Rights!* so that the Program participants had a chance to meet with journalists from their own and other regions, as well as neighboring regions. Overall, 231 civil society activists and media representatives participated in the interregional meetings.



During interregional meetings

2. Regional human rights discussion clubs

To facilitate and strengthen regional cooperation amongst various CSOs, our Regional Coordinators conducted on regular basis (monthly or bi-monthly) what they called *Human Rights Discussion Clubs*. The title was selected to emphasize the spirit of the meetings as informal, flexible, and interactive. Club meetings could have different forms depending on the participant needs and interests. Participants could choose to discuss some urgent issues, for example unveiled draft legislation that could hamper human rights observance or government harassment of a colleague, conduct a training workshop to learn about new issues or tools, or plan joint activities, among others. These clubs became a platform for discussions and joint actions. Our Regional Coordinators organized **99 such Clubs for about 1,750 participants**. Discussion clubs became very instrumental in promoting reforms. For example, in Novosibirsk and Voronezh they served as a platform to promote establishing the Ombudsman institution in the region. In Voronezh, the club served as a collective voice of the civil society community expressing their disagreement with the government measures restricting freedoms of assembly, the lack of transparency in government, and the violation of citizen rights by police. Below are some of the examples of the club meetings.

"I am pleasantly surprised and happy that these regions have such a platform for discussions."

Sergey Beliaev,
President of the NGO "Sutyajnik"
after attending discussion clubs in Perm and Nizhny
Novgorod.

✓ Freedom of assembly in Voronezh



Voronezh activists discuss gaps in the freedom of assembly legislation

Freedom of assembly was the subject of the first discussion club in 2011 held on January 15. The meeting was facilitated by the Program regional coordinator and the Center for the Development of Civic Initiatives, together with the Foundation for Environmental and Social Justice--a prominent in this field human of rights organizations. Participants of the meeting got together to develop ideas and suggestions for improving regional legislation on freedom of assembly. Participants analyzed nation-wide experience in organizing public rallies including the well-known *Strategy-31 rallies*

held on the 31st day of every month to highlight Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which protects the rights to peaceful assembly. While in Moscow the experience in holding such meetings improved in the last several months. In Voronezh the organizers of a public assembly were detained after their last meeting on December 31, 2010. Discussion Club participants came to a decision to closely monitor preparation to the upcoming *Strategy-31* rally in January 2011, to ensure that the meeting was held within the law, so that they would have solid reasons for appeal if any participant of the rally is detained. In addition, Olga Gnezdilova, a representative of the Foundation for the Environmental and Social Justice, outlined the legislative gaps that affect the implementation of the freedom of assembly.

In particular, she emphasized that there is no regulation describing a procedure for the government of accepting applications and issuing consent for conducting public meetings. Olga suggested establishing a conciliation commission to deal with those issues. To conclude the discussion, Vitus Media of the Youth Human Rights Movement presented a draft legislation developed by the Movement to address issues discussed by participants. Participants decided to establish a working group tasked with finalizing the draft and outlined steps for promoting the draft.

✓ **Observing legal obligations and international human rights standards in places of detention**

Four discussions on the observation of legal obligations and international human rights standards in places of detention were held in April in Voronezh, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk and Perm. Overall, about 50 people took part in the discussions including representatives from human rights organizations, regional ombudsman's offices, and public oversight commissions for human rights observation in places of detention. In his presentation, Stuart Kahn, the Director of the *I've Got Rights* program, reviewed international obligations and principles of the United Nations and the Council of



Discussion club in Novosibirsk

Europe regarding prisoners and their conditions, as well as the U.S. penitentiary system's standards and practices, drawing from many years of his own experience as a criminal defense attorney. Participants discussed how Russia and the U.S. deal with overcrowding, medical care, juveniles, jury trials and many other topics, which revealed that the American and Russian penitentiary systems have more similarities than differences. The discussion concluded with a presentation from the Deputy Director of the *I've Got Rights* program, Anton Burkov, about the European human rights standards regarding prisoners'

rights and their application in the Russian practice. Participants also discussed examples and legal cases of the European Court of Human Rights.

✓ **Improving interaction between the civil society and the judicial system**

Since April 2010, civil society organizations in the regions have been making an effort to establish a dialogue between CSOs and the judicial community as a part of the joint initiative of Russia's Council of Judges, the Council for Civil Society Development and Human Rights, and the Union of Journalists. The initiative called for creating a discussion platform entitled "Club for discussing the urgent issues of judicial reform."



Participants of the Discussion Club talk about building trust and cooperation between CSOs and the judiciary in N. Norgorod

As part of this initiative, several discussions were held in Moscow, Yaroslavl, Ekaterinburg, Voronezh, Novosibirsk and Perm. In Nizhny Novgorod, the discussion was organized by the Committee Against Torture within its Human Rights Discussion Club activity sponsored by the *I've Got Rights*. ABA ROLI co-sponsored the event. Mr. Leonid Nikitinsky of the Center for Legal Initiatives served as a moderator at the meeting. Participants discussed not only the approaches for interaction between civil and the judiciary branch but also the transparency of justice, accessibility of courts, influence of the courts on the economic development, etc. Sergei Aleksashenko, Director for Macroeconomic Research of the Higher School of Economics (Moscow), Vladimir Radchenko, former First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court, and Elena Novikova, head of the Center for Legal and Economic Studies, talked about small and medium enterprises being victimized due to harshness of the Criminal Court. They noted that out of 650,000 prisoners in Russia 100,000 are imprisoned for economic crimes many of whom are small business entrepreneurs. Later, heated discussion arose about the issue of “made-to-order criminal cases” against entrepreneurs and representatives of local self-government, based on the topic presented by Leonid Nikitinsky and Elga Sukiainen.

Another intense discussion took place about the level of corruption within judiciary. Representatives of the judicial community argued that it is an unsubstantiated myth that most judges are corrupt. The Chairman of Judicial Qualifications Commission of the Nizhny Novgorod region, Valentina Samartseva, pointed out: “Out of 1,000 citizen complaints, no one complained at the corruption, they were just dissatisfied with the outcome of a case.” Human rights activists argued with the judges, brining examples of corrupt judgments including during the election campaign.

Another discussion was about the lack of transparency and accountability in the judiciary. Research shows that it is rather rare in Russia for representatives of civil society to be included in the Judicial Qualifications Commissions. Participants learned with great interest about US experience, presented by the law professor Kathryn Hendley of The University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA) about the public election of judges and commissions evaluating candidates.

The significance of the meetings were that they brought together judges and CSOs to openly and constructively discuss a wide spectrum of the issues of public concerns. Participants agreed to continue communication regarding the procedure of appointing new judges and to help develop more openness in the society.

3. Joint project activities

The *I've Got Rights* program encouraged and incentivized the Program grantee organizations to implement their projects in close collaboration with other CSOs within their regions and in other regions. Opportunities provided by the Program for networking, sharing of information and strengthening of knowledge and skills allowed Program grantees to better understand benefits of working collaboratively. It resulted in each



Group of Vyksa environmentalists meet with Dronit.

program grantee involving two or more partner organizations in their projects. For example, the Right MAINSTREAMING OF HUMAN, SOCIAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN RUSSIA FINAL REPORT

to Life Social Foundation in Nizhniy Novgorod involved experts from several local NGOs, including the Committee Against Torture, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, and the Foundation of the Home Owners Association, in designing human rights lessons for school children and conducting workshops for college and school students. Channel 16 in the city of Sarov of Nizhniy Novgorod oblast involved in their TV show, Right to Know civil society experts from Nizhniy Novgorod (Invatur, Committee Against Torture, Dront Ecological Center) and from Voronezh Interregional Human Rights Group. Similarly, the Novosibirsk Precedent TV developed their TV shows based on the activities conducted by program grantees in Novosibirsk and other program regions including the Novosibirsk Society for the Blind, the Family and Children Center, and NGO Nadezhda, among others. The Dront Ecological Center worked with activists from the ecological group Ecocenter in the town of Vyksa, assisting them in creating a negotiation platform - a public ecological council - for activists and authorities to discuss the solution to the environmental concerns. The Perm Human Rights Defense Center worked very closely with the Society for Support of Autistic Children, assisting them in defending the rights of autistic children. The Press Development Institute – Siberia involved many human rights defenders and lawyers, who provided legal consultation on its social network *Tak-Tak-Tak*, and involved youth NGOs in developing a virtual *Map of Social Control*, to track promises made by the authorities and the implementation.

The Voronezh Human Rights Week and the Festival became a unique testimony of established strong cooperation among about sixty CSOs from the program regions as well as from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan who worked together in organizing and conducting the event.



Young civic activists on the city of Narymsk advocate for better public services and citizen rights



Human rights activists from program regions volunteering at the Voronezh Human Rights Week

The Week and the Festival are described in more detail in the *Building Citizens Awareness about Human Rights* section of this report.

4. Information sharing

The Program used a variety of approaches to facilitate networking among CSOs and to broadly disseminate information on human rights and about the program. It included a dedicated website

www.vprave.org, Weekly News, a semi-annual Newsletter, and social networking – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

During the Program implementation period we issued more than **150 editions of the Weekly News** in both Russian and English totaling over **720 pages**. The Weekly News was emailed via list serve to **about 800 subscribers** throughout Russia, including human rights and civil society activists, media outlets, government officials and international organizations both within and outside of Russia.

Twice a year, the Program issued a **Newsletter** that included information about activities of program partners, success stories, and other information related to the Program.

The Program **website** posted these publications and extensive information related to human rights, success stories of people defending their rights, information about Program events, Program announcements, etc. The information posted on the Program website and disseminated via Weekly News was often re-broadcasted on other websites including, but not limited to the following: www.asi.org.ru, www.infogrant.ru, www.pressagenda.com, www.oprf.ru, www.sutyajnik.ru/news, and others. The Program website was transferred to one of the Russian CSOs at the end of the program. It can be found at www.vprave.org.

The *I've Got Rights* program was followed on **Twitter** by 168 followers and on **Facebook** by 1,314 friends. Apart from the Program's web-site, all of the videos (49 in total) were uploaded to our **YouTube** page.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mainstreaming human rights concept

The concept of mainstreaming a wide spectrum of human rights issues (social, economic, individual, political, civil, etc.) was embraced by all types of CSOs, including HROs, as well as by the public, the mass media, and, to a certain extent, by the Russian government. Although the concept was not specifically spelled out in the RFA, the notion that it means that “human rights are everyone’s business, and their defense requires the participation of the citizenry across the board”³ was sufficient to understand its meaning. As one of the Russian CSO activists explained, mainstreaming means that “...our rights should be with us every day and not only during roundtables, meetings, festivals, and demonstrations. The protection of human rights should be a ubiquitous concern for every citizen and for the government.”

Taking into account that there is no Russian language equivalent of the word *mainstreaming*, it was very helpful to create an appropriate name for the Program – *I’ve Got Rights* (in Russian - *Я вправе*). This Program name emphasizes that any individual has rights. The name of the Program and the simple Program logo was clearly understood by everyone. The concept of mainstreaming appealed to citizens because it referred to many rights that they hold dear, instead of focusing specifically on political and civil rights, as most of the human rights programs do. It helped citizens to better understand and appreciate HROs’ missions and HROs to relate better to citizens and value their support. Traditionally isolated from the general public and the majority of CSOs (service delivery, public interest advocacy, etc.), HROs participating in this Program learned to engage with citizens and work collaboratively with CSOs thanks to the mainstreaming concept. It also facilitated cross-fertilization among different types of CSOs. For example, service-providing CSOs learned from HROs about how to apply various rights, including political and civil, to enhance their pressure on government, while HROs learned from CSOs how to build upon the support of the constituencies. The mainstreaming concept also encouraged better cooperation between HROs/CSOs and the government that resulted in constructive dialogues and institutional reforms.

Local ownership and the sensitivity of the human rights issue

Engaging in and relying on local counterparts in implementing human rights programs not only increases local ownership but also boosts credibility of the program with the public and local stakeholders. Although human rights is a universal issue, its implementation is defined not only by international legal instruments and standards as by mostly domestic policies and practices. Local HROs, particularly in Russia, have strong expertise in the human rights area internationally and domestically, as well as many years of practical experience in defending and promoting the implementation of rights. What they were lacking and what the Program helped them develop was to better connect to the general public and to other CSOs, strengthen their skills and capacity, broaden their knowledge and experience, and learn how to constructively communicate with the government in promoting and

³ Request for Applications No. USAID-Russia-DI-09-0001-RFA – Mainstreaming of Human, Social, and Civil Rights Project in Russia. – p. 6.

advocating for reforms. Taking into account the sensitivity of human rights, perceived by the Russian government as a domestic issue, as well as growing animosity towards USG operations in the country, entrusting the implementation of the major Program activities to domestic counterparts was the only approach available to achieve results. This approach, used by MSI, demonstrated its effectiveness with many successes and impacts.

Regional focus

MSI has been working in Russia since 2001 on a range of projects, including anti-corruption, civil society advocacy, and human rights programs. The *I've Got Rights* project implemented in four regions confirmed one more time that working in several regions simultaneously is one of the most effective approaches in Russia. Although the regions have become less independent of the central government, there are still opportunities for achieving meaningful and practical results. Typically, local CSOs in the regions are less spoiled by foreign donor money and attention while they have talented, dedicated and highly professional experts genuinely pursuing their missions. CSOs in the regions are also much closer to their constituencies and the public in general so they are able to represent their interests and priorities well. The regional and municipal governments are also more in touch with the citizenry, which opens opportunities for achieving practical results. What is critical for regional programs in Russia is building cross-regional networks and cooperation. This not only makes them stronger to address issues on the regional level but empowers them to reach out to the federal level to initiate federal level reforms or to respond to federal level issues jointly.

Human rights CSO mainstreaming skills

Human rights organizations in Russia, particularly those that emerged during the Soviet Union and soon after its dissolution, typically lack skills in relating to and reaching out to constituency groups and to the public in general. For years, they isolated themselves not only from people but from other types of CSOs and often alienated the mass media and government. As a result, their image with the public remained very poor. To implement mainstreaming activities, it is important to build HRO skills to connect to the public, communicate with the mass media, build alliances with other CSOs, and, ultimately, improve their image as a trustful and credible representative of the public. The *I've Got Rights* program was successful in designing and delivering a training program that built such skills and bridged HROs with the public, the mass media and other CSOs. The training included such topics as public outreach and constituency building, public communication and working with the mass media, managing HRO public image, public speaking, developing and implementing public education campaigns, providing legal assistance to the victims of human right violations, among others. Such training is essential in bridging HROs to the public and enabling them to transfer their human rights knowledge and passion to everyday citizens.

Mainstreaming human rights activities

The scope of activities to mainstream human rights can be very diverse depending on particular demographic groups and the issue. The whole spectrum of activities can be grouped into three types: (1) educating citizens about their rights and how to defend them when violated; (2) providing legal

support to those whose rights were violated to empower them to restore their rights; and (3) promoting institutional and policy reforms to safeguard human rights and enabling citizens to assert and defend their rights. Although, one would think that the last two types of activities are not necessarily related to mainstreaming, our experience clearly showed that it is critical to combine all three. With regards to education, it is not enough, for example, to just educate people about what rights are provided by international instruments or local law. What is important is to explain to citizens how they can use their rights and what exactly they can and should do if their rights were violated. To communicate this information to citizens, you have to use many channels and approaches ranging from the mass media to popular publications (brochures, flyers, internet, etc.) to more intimate settings that allow direct in-depth discussions tailored for a particular group. Educational programs for youth, both formal and informal, are extremely important in engraving the concept of human rights in their life at an early age. While people can become aware of their rights, they are often stonewalled by government bureaucrats and remain skeptical that the government will take any actions to restore abused rights. Mainstreaming human rights means that citizens not only know their rights but are also able to assert and defend them. Legal advice and other kinds of legal support are very instrumental to help citizens overcome the barriers they face with government. Lastly, for citizens to assert and defend their rights, legislation, institutions and procedures need be in place to enable citizens to follow-through. Therefore, advocacy for legal and institutional reforms must be an integral part of mainstreaming activities.

Program flexibility

Working in such a dynamic and diverse politically, socially and economically country as Russia makes flexibility in program planning and approaches essential for success. In pursuing overall long term goals and objectives, one has to constantly monitor the environment and adjust program approaches accordingly to be effective in implementation. For example, the Program was initially designed with the assumption of constructive cooperation with the governments in the regions. While initial interactions of the Program's then-expat COP were relatively positive, it soon changed to hostility with threats toward local CSOs working with the Program and negative information in the government-controlled mass media. This turn of events required modification of the Program's approach by reducing the Program's direct interaction with government while strengthening and empowering domestic CSO communication with government. The Program was also on the verge of dropping one of the regions to prevent growing hostility against local CSOs and had to switch one of the regional coordinators. Relations with the government is important, but not the only factor that requires program flexibility. The program needs to be flexible enough to enable local counterparts to respond efficiently to any significant human rights issues or public policy initiatives that may arise. For example, the Program offered a very timely training to CSOs on organizing and conducting public rallies within legal terms during the time when public protests related to elections were on the rise and CSO leaders became the subject of frequent arrests. Program flexibility needs to be channeled down to meaningful flexibility for program grantee activities too, allowing them to adjust their approaches to achieve better results and address critical issues.