



PROMOTING AND STRENGTHENING RUSSIAN NGO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

(Pro-NGO)

End of Program Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

The past three years have witnessed astounding successes for the third sector in Russia, specifically at the grassroots and regional level. In the four regions targeted by the Promoting and Strengthening Russian NGO Program (Pro-NGO), the non-commercial sector has gained in visibility and viability; it has learned the principles of professionalism and is using that knowledge to build sustainable structures; it has gained the trust of local government and the community by becoming transparent in its management and financial structures; most importantly, it has proven that people are capable of taking charge of their lives and their environment. This sense of empowerment, which was so conspicuously lacking during the Soviet years, may be the most important legacy of third sector development programs in Russia.

The road has been a long and rocky one. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a small army of consultants and several billion dollars have gone into civil society development and democracy programs in Russia. At times the ratio of resources to results has seemed skewed in favor of the former, and it has been difficult to keep enthusiasm high.

But the seeds that have been sown are now bearing fruit. During the three years of Pro-NGO, there has been a tidal change in the civil society movement. No longer a set of donor-sponsored NGOs carrying out programs dictated from above, the third sector contains registered NGOs and municipal organizations; community organs of self-government and individual activists; initiative groups and volunteers. Together, they are beginning to make a real difference in how Russia attacks its community problems.

The reasons for the shift are numerous. Municipal governments have begun to understand the importance of NGOs in helping to solve community problems, and have started to foster the movement rather than fight it. The economy recovered much more quickly from the devastating crash of 1998 than anyone could have predicted, allowing local and corporate philanthropy to play a larger role in civil society development.

But perhaps the most important change occurred in the consciousness of the population. Third sector worked to gain the trust of the people and the organs of local government, which allowed a surge in volunteerism and a rise in local philanthropy. Spring Charity Weeks grew to the point where very real results were achieved; no longer associated with the “Leninskiye Subbotniki” of the Soviet era. Where citizens were basically gang-pressed into community clean-ups, these April good-works weeks gathered hundreds of thousands of activists willing to donate time and labor to improve their lives and their communities.

With guidance from USAID, IREX designed and implemented a program to mobilize the population and to raise the professional capacity of local NGOs. Working through resource center networks in four targeted areas, (Siberia, the South, the Volga region and the Northwest), covering 25 cities and 19 regions, IREX was able to access the reserves of energy and talent that had lain dormant for so long.

Rather than using a cookie-cutter approach to civil society development, IREX concentrated on capacity- building, and allowing resource centers and NGOs a great deal of latitude in developing their own programs. This has fostered sustainability – resource centers are no

longer reliant on a foreign “Big Brother” to tell them what to do – they are fully capable of assessing the needs of their communities and can design and implement programs to meet those needs. Furthermore, by helping NGOs demonstrate their capacity and helping them develop the skills and professionalism needed to operate, IREX has made it possible for the third sector in targeted regions to attract the resources necessary to carry out their plans.

This report provides a succinct, illustrative overview of the achievements and progress made by the third sector in the 23 target regions of the Pro-NGO Program from October 2000 – January 2004. Detailed activity, grant, publication, and indicator tables can be found in the exhaustive appendices. For descriptive purposes, this Pro-NGO Final Report does not provide an account of the activities of each resource center, but rather provides examples of concrete advances in citizen participation, institutional development, and the improvements in the image of the third sector over the last three years. Each sub-section also contains an illustrative success story which is clearly marked and highlighted to provide a concrete example of how these advances have impacted the lives of individual citizens. A full list of over 45 success stories can be found in Appendix C.

Section II summarizes the goals and mechanisms of the Pro-NGO Program. Section III provides a one-page description of key end-of-program indicators for easy reference. Sections IV-VI provide illuminating descriptions of Pro-NGO achievements and outputs to the programs strategic objective and two intermediate results. The report’s final section will detail the intense technical assistance and leadership that IREX provided over the course the last three years to improve resource center function and advance issues critical to third sector development across Russia. Section VII details IREX’s programmatic inputs into the Pro-NGO Program while the final section, Section VIII, provides a short list of some issues that continue to plague civil society in Russia.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

As prescribed in the cooperative agreement, the **Promoting and Strengthening Russian NGO Development Program (Pro-NGO) worked actively for three years** to enhance the structures that increase citizen participation in addressing the economic, political, and social issues of their communities including:

- 1) Strengthening grassroots NGOs in USAID-targeted regions with the goal of increasing citizen participation - especially the participation of youth - in the economic, political, and social life of their communities; and
- 2) Assisting NGO resource centers in the USAID targeted regions to improve the environment in which NGOs operate, paying particular attention to enhancing the organizational capacity, financial viability, and public image of the NGO sector.

During its three years, the Pro-NGO Program provided the following services to targeted NGO resource centers and other NGO stakeholders:

- Core funding for the four targeted resource center networks (Siberia, Southern Russia, Samara, and Novgorod) to offer technical services, consulting, training, and institutional development services to NGOs in 19 regions of the Russian Federation

- Technical assistance and oversight to the four resource center networks for administering small grants programs targeted at increasing the capacity of grassroots NGOs, supporting local NGO projects addressing local social problems, and increasing volunteerism and citizen involvement in community affairs
- Assisting the four resource center networks in developing greater institutional capacity and improving customer service through training programs (Trainers 2000), individual network training grants (Voucher Program), third sector development seminars (Brain Trusts), and networking opportunities (Pro-NGO Exchange Meetings)

Goals and Objectives

The Pro-NGO Program was designed by USAID/Russia to address Strategic Objective 2.1 “Increased Citizen Participation in Political and Economic Decision Making.” To achieve this strategic objective, the Pro-NGO Program worked to contribute to the two intermediate results (IRs):

- IR 2.1.3 NGOs in USAID Target Regions Advocate More Effectively For Clients’ Needs and Interests
- IR 2.1.4 NGOs and Russian Institutions are institutionally Strengthened

To meet IR 2.1.3, resource centers provided local NGOs, government authorities, and commercial interests with technologies for cooperation in addressing community issues and promoted issues of concern to local citizens through inter-sector cooperation. Further, resource centers provided local NGOs and civic initiatives with training and resources to improve NGO effectiveness and customer service.

To meet IR 2.1.4, resource centers provided individual NGOs with technical and consultative services, as well as funding through the small grants programs, to increase the professionalism, reputation, and quality of services they deliver to their constituencies. Further, resource centers led the development of the third sector as a whole in the targeted regions by promoting local fundraising and funding diversification, advancing professional and institutional standards for local NGOs, publishing information on issues critical to third sector development, and lobbying for legislative improvement in third sector affairs.

Throughout the life of the program, IREX provided each of the resource center networks with an extensive set of tools and support structures for strengthening resource center capacity and improving the services.

III. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM OUTPUTS

Over the life of the Pro-NGO Program, IREX and its resource center partners have achieved

significant advancements in civil society and the strengthening of the Russian NGO community. Below is a quick reference table of Pro-NGO Program indicators broken down by a) technical services provided by Pro-NGO resource centers, b) results of the small grants program, and c) public perception/local impact indicators. Many of the figures shown below are process indicators, each of which is an input contributing to the overall program achievements detailed in sections IV – VI.

A detailed list of indicators by quarter can be found in Appendix A.

A) Resource Center Technical Services Indicators

- i. Number of Young People Involved in Resource Center Activities – 527,109
- ii. Number of New NGO Clients Served by Resource Centers – 4,689
- iii. Average Number of Client NGOs served Quarterly – 1,946
- iv. Number of NGOs Receiving Free Internet Access – 6,782
- v. Number of Consultations Provided by Resource Center – 41,642
- vi. Number of Participants at Resource Center Seminars – 31,076
- viii. Number of New Small Towns/Rural Villages Served by Resource Centers – 712

B) Small Grants Program Indicators

- i. Number of Small Grants Awarded – 390
- ii. Number of Small Grants Competitions – 17
- iii. Number of Beneficiaries of the Small Grants Program - 194,994
- iv. Percentage of Beneficiaries under the Age of 18 - ~ 116,996
- v. Total Small Grants Cost Share - \$1,047,275
- vi. Cost Share \$ per USAID \$ - \$1.37

C) Public Perception/Local Impact Indicators

- i. Number of Published Articles on NGO Activities – 7,948
- ii. Number of Commentaries on Public Policy/Local Legislation by NGOs - 664

**IV. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.1: INCREASED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DECISION MAKING**

Since the beginning of the Pro-NGO Program in October 2000, IREX and its resource center partners have made enormous strides in enhancing the ability of grassroots NGOs to attract new members and to focus their energy on promoting democracy and community development at the local level.

To these ends, the Pro-NGO team has developed and replicated innovative technologies to promote community-based volunteerism, to enable grassroots NGOs to expand their client base, and to develop institutional structures through which citizens can focus their civic energy to make their communities a better and more participatory place to live. The six Pro-NGO semi-annual and annual reports over the last three years have listed hundreds of examples of increased citizens' participation and leadership in community development. However, the three most systematic and sustainable improvements in the citizen participation as a result of Pro-NGO investment can be seen in volunteerism, local self-governance, and government/NGO

cooperation for community improvement. Each of these movements has gained enormous strength over the last three years with tremendous results.

Volunteerism

The first key element in civil society is the willingness of citizens to help build and improve their community. Volunteerism has long been a popular theme in NGO development, but, at the outset of the Pro-NGO Program, it was ill-defined and only erratically promoted by individual institutions. Over the last three years, the Pro-NGO program has helped to make volunteerism a solid foundation for the growth of citizen participation. Pro-NGO partners have perfected the community service campaign, provided motivation and management systems for NGOs to exploit volunteerism, and created sustainable institutions and policies in 23 regions across Russia which will assure the continued growth and integration of volunteerism as a daily way of life.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of the surge in volunteerism over the past three years is the development of Spring Charity Week. The first volunteer week was held in Krasnoyarsk, in 1997. But the idea really caught on and began to develop in 2001, which the United Nations had designated International Volunteer Year. In 2001 49 cities took part; by 2003, this number had grown to over 300.

The idea of Spring Charity Week is straightforward: spurred by resource centers and NGOs, volunteers direct their efforts at improving their communities. The concrete actions range from putting on concerts for invalids, arranging sports events for orphans, helping the elderly clean their homes, conducting clothing drives for the indigent, to cleaning up playgrounds and entryways.

But whatever the target, the goal is the same: to empower citizens, to convince them that they can effect positive change in their communities. Rather than wait for the State to step in, or just giving up and accepting the situation as it is, volunteers are living proof that the future of the community depends on the actions of each person living within it.

In each area targeted by the Pro-NGO partners, volunteerism has exploded: While in 2001 a respectable 103,000 volunteers took part in Spring Charity Week, by 2003 this figure had risen to an astounding 327,000. The value of their labor has also grown by leaps and bounds: in 2001, the estimated value of volunteer efforts during Spring Charity Week was \$96,000. By 2003, this had soared to \$542,000.

But more than the monetary value, these Spring Charity Weeks are a sign that the concept of civil society is growing in Russia. While during the Soviet years the Saturday forced labor junkets -- the "Leninskiye Subbotniki" -- were the butt of numerous jokes and not a little grumbling, we now have hundreds of thousands of people donating their time to improve their communities.

Spring Charity Week is also a measure of the degree to which NGOs are able to attract funding from their communities. At present, a large share of the funding for these events comes from indigenous sources: 60% of all projects receive funding from local sources, wither business, local government, or local organizations.

The media has also helped assure the success of Spring Charity Week by generous coverage of

the events. These actions have been so successful that local government has now stepped in: In 13 target regions local government financed events, and in 4 regions local government is working on legal reforms aimed at supporting volunteerism.

So the effect of these charity weeks goes far beyond the immediate and direct results: They have also brought together NGOs, business, and government, helping to assure the sustainability of the Third Sector and the progress of civil society.

Success Story: Volunteerism

Rostov-on-Don Youth for a Clean City

For those who remember the New York City garbage strikes during the 1970s, the current sanitation situation in many Russian cities is an unpleasant reminder of much smellier times. Unfortunately, in Russia, the pile-ups are not the result of striking garbage collectors, but are the status quo, brought about by insufficient municipal waste services and residents who haven't quite broken free from a Soviet mentality of social irresponsibility and laziness.

"It's much worse in the spring," says Fyodor Mikushin as he walks toward a row of modest snowdrifts framing the unpaved gravel road which leads to his office. "Because in spring the snow melts, and that's when you will see what has been hiding all winter—little mountains of trash all over the city."

Mr. Mikushin is the director of the Rostov-on-Don non-profit organization 'Eko-Logika,' a youth-run environmental protection center and consultancy. In addition to his battle to reduce Rostov's unending supply of trash, Mr. Mikushin's activist repertoire includes an ambitious agenda of programs aimed at making his city a cleaner, environmentally friendlier, more livable place.

'Eko-Logika's' anti-litter campaigns have directly contributed to improving the quality of life of Rostov's citizens. Over the last three years volunteers have regularly cleared playgrounds, city parks, streets and residential areas of refuse, and have reclaimed large areas which were formerly used as makeshift dumping sites. Apartment entrances and vestibules were cleared and repainted in over 20 buildings. "We have returned to many of our buildings and seen that the residents have kept their entryways clean. No one likes to smell garbage and look at graffiti every time they leave the house."

With more than 50 regular student-volunteers from Rostov-on-Don high schools and colleges, 'Eko-Logika' is one of the largest of the city's hundreds of non-profit organizations, and one of the most effective.

"We work seasonally—by that I mean that each season presents unique new environmental dilemmas that demand our attention," adds Mikushin. One such seasonally induced problem is the regular deforestation that strikes city parks and nature preserves during the Christmas season. Thousands of pines are cut down each year by Rostov's residents to be used as Christmas trees for a few weeks, and then discarded. "Until 'Eko-Logika' documented this phenomenon, the City Administration would not admit that it was actually happening. They refused to enforce penalties for cutting down trees on public land and were generally uninterested in our proposals to re-plant. So we decided to re-plant the trees ourselves." And they did. In cooperation with other city NGOs, 'Eko-Logika' planted close to 100 trees this

spring in an effort to compensation for the ravages of the last holiday season.

According to Mikushin, as a rule, the Rostov City Administration contributes no funding to environmental programs. In fact, the city can't even afford to buy more garbage trucks to haul away refuse. "We are funded solely by outside sources, and international grant programs." 'Eko-Logika' used some of the funding received in a \$6884.00 grant from the United States Agency for International Development for the tree-planting promotion. The USAID grant monies are coordinated in Russia by IREX, the International Research and Exchanges Board, and are earmarked for programs during the period 17 September 2002 to 15 March 2003.

Volunteerism is the key to getting citizens engaged in their communities; but citizens will only stay active if they feel that their efforts have a concrete impact. This requires that local NGOs, which are the most systematized and formal mechanism through which citizens can actualize their volunteer efforts, must be able to demonstrate that volunteers are making a difference. Pro-NGO resource centers have made enormous strides in improving the quality and quantity of services provided by NGOs in all of the targeted regions, and have been able to provide the feedback needed to keep volunteers engaged.

A large part of the credit for the rise in volunteers goes to the comprehensive training programs that resource centers are able to offer volunteers, so raise their level of effectiveness and ensure that their efforts reach their targets. Among the many trainings on offer are:

- Attracting and working with volunteers
- Management of volunteer programs
- Organization of work with citizens at their place of residence
- Creation of a volunteer center
- Development of local organs of self-governance
- Working with volunteers through clubs
- School for Young Leaders

Volunteer movements have a way of developing into structures and institutions which provide a more formal and targeted mechanism for citizens to voice their interests to their government. Realizing that volunteerism could be cultivated into stronger forms of representation, the Pro-NGO Program grasped at the opportunity to foster and strengthen new institutions to help build local self-governance structures, promote public policy debates, and improve the transparency and responsiveness of local government. To date, over 50 volunteer mobilization centers have been established in hospitals, schools, NGO, and libraries across the 23 Pro-NGO target regions due to resource center investment.

Local Self-Governance

Over the past three years, IREX has assisted its Pro-NGO partners in helping to develop local self-governance committees, similar in structure and function to the US community group model. This form of community activism has boomed since 2000, and these local initiatives may harbor the greatest potential for progress in civil society over the next half-decade. These organs have started to register as local NGOs, and are seeking help from resource centers. IREX, working through its partners, has mounted over 100 seminars on strategic planning, cooperation with local government, fund-raising, project-management, and other areas that help

these organizations to grow.

These community-based organizations normally concentrate on problems of vital concern to residents: the conditions of the buildings or playgrounds; cleanliness of entryways, streets, and markets; roof repair, maintaining order, fighting crime and drugs, promoting a healthy lifestyle, organizing city and community celebrations, sport competitions. In short, they concentrate on issues critical to the stability of the community, but which are not afforded or delivered by the municipal or regional authorities.

The results have been impressive. Some examples:

- **Tyumen:** Seven years ago local residents created a self-governance committee in a poor, crime-ridden neighborhood on the outskirts of Tyumen. With the help of this committee, which they named “Tura”, activists have since managed to build a school, Aquarelle, an open-air stage with benches and a tent, a neighborhood bathhouse, and an area where residents can play sports. “Tura” arranged for interrupted radio service to resume, and assisted residents in installing telephones. It also created a veterans association, a local choir, repaired elevators, organized neighborhood patrols, and helped make the routes for local transport more convenient for residents.
- **Barnaul:** A local self-governing committee organized the repair of dilapidated and precarious stoops for elderly residents, with materials being donated by local government and labor provided by the residents themselves. Local organizations helped organize installation of doors and locks in apartment entryways; they help clean up the area in and around apartment buildings, and conduct yearly competitions for the cleanest entryway and street and followed this movement up with a targeted campaign involved in consumer rights to government-provided public services.

Having witnessed the demonstrable impact of local self-governance committees on community development, municipal administrations have begun investing financially in strengthening the self-governance movement through local Pro-NGO resource centers. In 2001 the Tyumen resource center received a municipal grant to train leaders of local self-governance bodies in how to work with local government, fund-raising, program management, monitoring and evaluation. In 2002 the center conducted a grant program for activists and local self-governance structures aimed at attracting wider participation of citizens in the life of the community. The winners conducted programs on cleaning up yards, and streets, organized sports events, etc and providing critical community development services which local governments have been unable to provide. These successes spurred the Siberian Civic Initiative Support Center to replicate the Tyumen program, “Social Animator,” to over 5 regions of Siberia.

Similar movements can be seen in the city of Samara where there are currently over 87 self-governance committees in existence, as the following success story demonstrates.

Success Story: Local Self-Governance

Region Number 5 in the city of Samara covers an area including more than 12,000 inhabitants, one-quarter of whom are pensioners, as well as 3500 children and 521 single parents. All of these groups are in great need of social welfare assistance. To address these community problems, the Strukovskiy Community Group has developed a special service called *Neighbors*, a volunteer program based upon the community-watch model developed in the

United States.

When it was created, there were 11 volunteers in the *Neighbor* program. At present, there are 126 people in charge of safety in public areas and 480 volunteers in charge of monitoring the safety and cleanliness of the region's apartment buildings.

But the *Neighbors* program has expanded into many more services conducted by volunteers to serve disadvantaged community members. For example, one lawyer volunteers one day each month to provide free legal consultations to those in need. The *Neighbor* program also expanded to include a health service in which volunteer medical workers from the local clinic provide regular lectures on preventative health and information on local health services. Volunteer Liudmila Golubkina, a physical education instructor, provides free after-school activities for children with nowhere to go. One of the most active members of the community group, Natalia Merkulova, has motivated her neighbors to begin community clean-up programs, plant trees in public spaces, renovate old buildings, and build a children's playground. Natalia remarked that before, people in her building did not even say hello to one another, but now are coming together to make the community a better place.

Government/NGO Cooperation

A major goal of the Pro-NGO Program has been to raise the professionalism of grassroots NGOs and assisting them in garnering the respect from the local government that they need to implement successful social service and advocacy programs. In early 2001, local governments continued to view NGOs as small, unprofessional citizen groups whose request for government funding was more of an annoyance than a matter of smart investment. However, Pro-NGO program partners played a critical role not only in increasing the professionalism and impact of local NGOs, but in lobbying for and improving government cooperation with and investment in local NGO programs as a way of delivering public social services.

At the beginning of the Pro-NGO Program, local governments had little other mechanism for supporting local NGO activities aside from providing free meeting space, making public appearances with local NGO leaders, and strong-arming local business to donate to a local pet project. However, through intense lobbying and education by Pro-NGO resource centers, by November 2003 over 22 local government administrations had adopted laws on municipal grants and/or competitive procurement for public services. While the sums in certain regions may be small, other regions such as Irkutsk have established competitions such as the Governor's Grant Program which last year invested 250,000 rubles in the NGO community on a competitive and transparent basis.

Success Story: Government/NGO Cooperation

NGOs and Government Cooperate to Lower Unemployment in Stavropol

Investing a mere 20,000 rubles (\$650) into the non-profit Center for Entrepreneurial Support, the Stavropol municipal government helped 12 unemployed young people find rewarding jobs

in the private sector. The project *Business Culture for Unemployed Youth* aimed to tackle the inability of young university graduates to market themselves and their skills properly to potential employers. Funded under Stavropol's first municipal grant competition which was administered by the North-Caucasus Regional Resource Center, the pilot project provided training in such areas as marketing their skills to potential employers, critical thinking and public relations, market segmentation, corporate image making, and customer service, to a group of 23 youth who were unable to find employment. A simple 2-week training session showed spectacular results as over half of the participants, twelve, found gainful employment within two weeks and 5 more are currently negotiating offers from several local companies. In the words of Stanislav Tran, a training participant, "Now [after having attended these courses] I can plan my career, successfully market myself in the job market, and be confident in my ability to do a good job."

V. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2.1.3: NGOs IN USAID TARGET REGIONS ADVOCATE MORE EFFECTIVELY FOR CLIENT'S NEEDS AND INTERESTS

One of the most significant challenges facing grassroots NGOs and citizens interested in changing their communities for the better is the 70-year tradition of government control over all aspects of civic life, which all but assured a passive population with little expectation that their actions could have a positive, or, indeed, any, impact on their lives and their communities. Until citizens feel that their voices can be heard, there is little impetus for them to expend the time and energy necessary to mount a successful campaign.

NGOs have been able to play a key role in demonstrating to the ordinary citizen that coordinate action can yield results. Of equal importance is convincing local government that citizens have a right and a duty to contribute to the public debate. While key democratic principles of participation and transparency are slowly filtering into government structures, municipal and regional governments have yet to fully adopt these principles. As part of their core mission to increase NGO and citizen input into the local political process, Pro-NGO resource centers have created a large number of innovative mechanisms and structures which facilitate participation by NGOs and citizens in local self-governance. While examples are numerous, the most dramatic increases in citizen impact can be seen through NGOs efforts to raise public awareness of critical community issues and NGOs abilities to lobby for citizen-generated policy and legislative change.

Raising Public Awareness

As civil society development "hubs," resource centers have acted over the last three years as the key advocates for citizen interaction with government structures. As advocates, resource centers have promoted the idea of public hearings and policy development councils in almost all of the USAID priority regions. Further, working closely with local administrations, resource center leaders, in many regions, have actively engaged government functionaries in developing transparent and democratic methods for conducting competitive procurement, creating consultative structures for NGOs to affect local policy, and assisting NGOs to become professional and reliable structures worthy of full partnership with local and regional government policy-makers.

NGOs are still not that understandable to the average person, although local NGOs, from labor unions to grade-school clubs, touch on the lives of almost every citizen. In order for NGOs to

grow, to attract clients and mobilize resources, they need to become known and recognized in the community.

A coordinated and targeted media policy helped out with this task: The number of publications in local press on the activities of NGOs is rising by 20-25% yearly. Between December 2000 and July 2003, newspaper in targeted regions published more than 7500 materials on NGOs.

In order to maximize results, resource centers organized journalism competitions to raise coverage of the social sphere, competitions for NGO PR-campaigns, and competitions to produce and broadcast PSAs. In Novosibirsk alone, one competition yielded more than 370 major publications in the local and regional press, as well as several television and radio packages.

In order to raise the profile of local organizations, the resource centers conducted NGO fairs and festivals, and trained activists in how to work more effectively with the populace. These fairs, which highlighted the services of more than 3,000 organizations, demonstrated the ways in which NGOs were able to better their communities, and enabled organizations to attract volunteers and resources. These events became commonplace in small towns, as well as in regional centers.

However, not only did the Pro-NGO program help raise public awareness of NGOs themselves, but provided the leadership and resources necessary for local NGOs to raise public awareness of issues critical to community development and civil society as the success story below demonstrates.

Success Story: Increased Public Awareness

A New NGO in Taganrog Helps the Disabled Through Sports

Sergei Burlakov's disability has done anything but keep him from realizing his dreams: he holds eight Russian sports records, he has competed in the International Paralympics, he has been the Russian champion in swimming and track-and-field athletics for the disabled 31 times, and he is a champion of the World Chess Competition. Recently, he was able to add a new title to his collection: President of the Taganrog Sports Federation of the Disabled, a non-government organization.

Though the practice of rehabilitating the disabled through sports is not new, residents of Taganrog were long unsuccessful in persuading local authorities to start such programs in their city. Disabled activists petitioned the Taganrog Sports Committee and other organizations to set up sports clubs for them and give them a chance to take part in sports competitions, all without success.

That began to change in the summer of 2000 when Sergei Burlakov met the staff of the "Sudarnia" NGO Resource Center at the annual Taganrog NGO fair. As he heard them discuss the support they provide for local non-government organizations, he began to form a new goal: to unite disabled residents of Taganrog who have the same athletic interests, and help them be rehabilitated more quickly and begin to feel that they are equal members of society. Yevgenia Ivanova, the director of "Sudarnia," and the resource center staff gave him the advice and technical assistance he needed for drafting documents to set up a new non-government organization, the Taganrog Sports Federation of the Disabled. With the hard work of Sergei

and the RC staff, the Federation was officially registered in December 2000.

The partnership did not end here, however; the staff of “Sudarnia” continued to work closely with the young organization to help with event planning and other issues. Soon, the Sports Federation organized and held competitions and championships in swimming and track-and-field athletics for the disabled. The latter event was especially interesting: over 30 participants with disabilities took part in the first Taganrog City Championship in Track-and-Field Athletics. The competition was held for residents of different ages and degrees of disability, in a lively and friendly atmosphere. The oldest athlete, 68-year old Vladislav Shevelev, confessed to resource center assistant Natalia Bashmakova that he was taking part in a competition for the first time in his life and was very glad to participate and meet people. Irina Subycheva, a girl who is completely blind, raced 100 meters. She was awarded a valuable prize for having the will to win. One should have seen how happy her mother was to see her daughter happy, meeting friends and leading a full, interesting life.

Whenever Sergei asked “Sudarynia” for help, he always got it. With the resource center staff’s support, the Sports Federation took part in the competition for social projects administered by the Southern Regional Resource Center, and won a small grant.

Sergei Burlakov has shown once again that he has the ability to achieve extraordinary things in life. His hope is that the Taganrog Sports Federation of the Disabled will help others in Taganrog see that they can as well.

Advocating Citizen Interests in Policy and Legislation

Over the past two and a half years NGOs in the targeted regions have produced 560 written expert evaluations on social, economic and cultural policies for local government organizations. Over the past three years close to 200 laws regulating the third sector were adopted on the initiative of resource centers and other NGOs.

In general, these laws were aimed at advancing the mechanism of municipal grants, NGO participation in public procurement tenders, local self-governance, citizens’ initiatives, human rights campaigns, youth policies, support for sports, etc.

In order to develop, the third sector will have to consolidate. According to program data, up to 70% of client organizations take part in coalitions. The resource centers serve as catalysts in developing these coalitions, as in Rostov on Don, where in 2001, the Rostov resource center gathered 70 organizations into a coalition to promote a local law on philanthropy, which gave tax incentives to local business for the charity donations as well as providing recognition for local philanthropists. NGO coalitions have initiated over 150 public hearings on themes such as the environment, the rights of vulnerable sectors of the population, the problems of youth.

One of the crowning achievements of the past three years has been the active participation of the third sector in the development and implementation of targeted government programs. These programs, as a rule, were co-financed by the federal and local budgets and focused on topics such as culture, employment, youth policies, the fight against crime, reform of the prison system, care of the elderly and programs for children. NGOs participated in these programs through public procurement tenders.

In Barnaul 11 NGOs provided expert feedback on the program “Children of the Altai,” which resulted in 142 amendments being made to the project. The government of Buryatia contracted with 6 NGOs to implement projects in the medical sphere and to promote a healthy lifestyle, discourage smoking and drugs. In Samara NGOs and the government worked out a long-term strategy for the development of civil society, which the government will finance out of the budget.

In Kemerovo NGOs conducted a roundtable “Rights of Those Under Arrest,” dedicated to the situation in temporary holding cells at the police stations “monkey cages.” Participants agreed to organize citizens’ control over such places. These citizen patrols continue to play an active role in preventing human rights abuses for the temporarily detained.

In other cases, the results may be incremental, but no less appealing, for example, in Omsk, where a local boy mounted a campaign against cigarette sales to minors. The Siberian Center, under its program of “hot grants,” supported a project of the Omsk socially-active schools “A School Press-Center as a Mechanism for Supporting Civic Activism.” Through this press center a thirteen-year-old boy was able to conduct his very first piece of investigative journalism into the issues of his own community. He and a friend tried to buy cigarettes in all of the kiosks in his town, and was successful every time. The boy wrote us his findings for the press center, but the article soon gained wide attention and was printed and reprinted in local newspapers. This action by one small boy launched a community investigation and round-table into youth smoking and the sale of tobacco to minors. A small success, but a great return on the \$500 investment by the Siberian Civic Initiative Support Center.

Similarly, in Southern Russia, the Southern Regional Resource Center (SRRC) and its affiliates were critical in targeting marginalized groups and incubating nascent citizen groups into full-blown NGOs able to advocate for their clients’ interest. The SRRC resource center helped to form the first women’s self-help group, Sozidanie, in the city of Pyatigorsk. With the support of the local Duma, over 100 women came together to form an organization that would provide services to battered women, encourage female entrepreneurs, and provide assistance to disabled women.

Success Story: Advocating Citizen Interests in Policy and Legislation

Baikal is More Valuable Than Oil

After a seminar in the Siberian Center for the Defense of Rights and Interests (Novosibirsk, February 2003) the Irkutsk organization “Baikal Ecology Movement” realized that it alone could not stop the construction of an oil pipeline near Lake Baikal. In June, a group of environmental organizations from Siberia and the Far East got together and designed an advocacy campaign. Over the next three months, the coalition demanded that an observer be included in the State environmental impact study, and brought up the problem of the pipeline at a UNESCO session in Paris, and successfully brought suit against the redrawing of the borders of the Tunkinsky Nature Preserve. The residents of the Baikal region sent 5000 postcards to the president of Russia, and the Kremlin posted information about the campaign on its website. As a result of the coalition’s actions, the State Environmental Impact committee gave a negative evaluation of the project, and the oil project was suspended.

VI. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2.1.4 NGOs AND RUSSIAN INSTITUTIONS

ARE INSTITUTIONALLY STRENGTHENED

Twelve years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with millions of dollars invested, Western donors are beginning to cut back sharply on aid to Russia. The funds that kept many NGO communities afloat are drying up, posing serious problems for those who have not managed to attract indigenous funding. Along with foreign money goes the imported “know-how” that teams of consultants brought with them; NGOs will have to rely more and more on their own professionalism to keep them growing into the next decade.

Pro-NGO resource centers had the foresight to tackle the question of sustainability from the beginning of the program, in 2000. Pro-NGO partners designed a coordinated, targeted program of technical assistance aimed at institutional strengthening of NGOs, with a view toward long-term survival.

Trainings and consultations were organized in every aspect of institutional management, from bookkeeping to fund-raising, from cooperation with local government to monitoring and evaluation. During the three years of Pro-NGO, close to 30,000 employees of NGOs received the type of training that allowed their organizations not just to survive, but to thrive.

Thus organizations within the Pro-NGO network were able not only to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to citizens in their communities, but also to increase their financial, legal, structural, and informational capacity. The boom in the number of citizens involved in the NGO movement in USAID target areas (see Appendix A, “Indicators,”) is witness to the strides the Pro-NGO program has made. By far the most effective mechanisms for this investment were through trainings and consultations, small grant funding opportunities, and diversification of the NGO funding base.

Trainings and Consultations

Over the life of the program, Pro-NGO resource centers provided a wide range of professional development, training, consultative and technical services designed to improve both the effectiveness of NGO client services as well as their ability to attract new funding and develop long-term partnerships with government and business structures. Pro-NGO resource centers have distinguished themselves as leaders in creating and implementing comprehensive training programs that were exploited not only by grassroots NGOs in the target regions, but by business and government structures as well.

One major difference in the Pro-NGO training approach was that IREX did not attempt to impose a single, top-down training program, instead encouraging resource centers to develop their own programs based on their assessments of the needs of their clients. This has led to greater sustainability for both resource centers and NGOs, since they work together to maximize results based on their own needs, rather than implement a ready-made program.

Over the three years of Pro-NGO, the topics of trainings have developed and evolved, as NGOs become more professional. The most popular training topics now are:

- project design,
- proposal writing,
- bookkeeping and taxation issues,

- fundraising,
- legal aspects of NGO activity,
- development of volunteerism,
- cooperation with government and business,
- personnel management,
- fee for service,
- Public Relations
- publishing.

In addition to systematic trainings, each of the four resource center networks developed individual mechanisms of consultations to address the needs of a wider audience. For example, The Irkutsk office of the SCISC organized a distance learning seminar for NGO managers and employees of the State sector in those areas where it was impossible to bring everyone together for training.

Thanks to the training programs designed and conducted by the resource centers, NGOs in all of the target regions have become more professional and sustainable. Among the more outstanding results are:

- NGOs have begun to work with professional project-managers, and to adopt a project-management approach to their activities
- Professional bookkeeping standards have become the norm for grassroots organizations, and NGOs have brought their activities into conformity with the law
- Financial management has been raised to a professional level, and Russian organizations are beginning to use tenders for contractors
- NGOs have become more transparent, they now publish annual reports
- NGOs now have more transparent management structures, such as boards of directors, and they are accountable to the community
- Donations from local sources are on the rise; grassroots organizations now have a better shot at financing
- Organizations now are able to attract more members and volunteers, expanding their social base
- Services have become regular and systematic; more and more NGOs are able to command fees for service
- Human resources management is improved, and volunteers and employee relations are now in line with the labor code
- NGOs have begun to work with government and business in a more professional way: they have begun to formulate their proposals in a way that allows business and government to see their own interests
- NGOs have expanded their use of (Internet resources; they have begun to use websites to promote their services and for fundraising purposes
- Media relations have improved, NGOs now have professional PR managers

Small Grants Program

In addition to training, Pro-NGO through its partners, provided direct financial assistance to the NGO community, to help new organizations get on their feet, and more experienced ones to expand. Pro-NGO resource center partners delivered approximately \$763,000 in USAID

funding to 390 NGOs through small-grants competitions over the course of the three years. A full list of NGOs and project names can be found in Appendix B.

Conducting thorough needs assessments of the third sector in their regions, the four resource center networks designed and conducted a total of 17 small-grants competitions to provide NGOs with funding for social services and democracy-building projects. NGOs were also coached in the technical expertise to manage foreign and domestic grant funding successfully.

Grant competitions varied wildly from region to region, based upon the needs of local organizations and matching funds provided. The Siberian Civic Initiative Support Center, for example, placed a strong emphasis on funding institutional development projects for smaller NGOs, providing over 110 of the smallest NGOs with up to \$500 in seed funding to get them started. The Southern Regional Resource Center, on the other hand, completed the last two years of the Pro-NGO Program by providing advocacy grants from mid-level organizations ready to tackle human rights and sticky public issues.

However, the bulk of the small grants programs supported NGOs in what they do best, providing services to marginalized and under-served groups. Most grassroots NGOs across Russia grew from small activist and parents groups who identified a local service need and then band together to provide that services. Typical examples are grassroots NGO services include day care for disabled children, legal assistance for veterans and pensioners, after-school programs for troubled children, and consultation centers for abused and/or troubled women. By resource center count, 194,994 Russian citizens benefited from services provided by local NGOs under the Pro-NGO Program, with over 60% of these beneficiaries under the age of 18.

Finally, resource center grantees mobilized local resources by mandating significant cost share for each and every small grant awarded. In total, resource centers were able to generate \$1 million in cost share through the small grants program. That is, resource centers generated \$1.37 in cost share for every federal dollar spent. The table below shows a breakdown of cost-share by region for the life of the Pro-NGO Program.

Region	Cost-Share
Siberia	\$556,679
Southern Russia	\$246,154
Samara	\$208,314
Novgorod	\$36,131
Total	\$1,047,278.00

A full list of small grants by region can be found in Appendix C.

Diversification of the NGO Funding Base

But, as outlined above, funding from foreign donors can only take the civil society movement so far. With an eye to the sustainability of the Third Sector as whole, the Pro-NGO team has taken the lead in diversifying the NGO funding base to include a host of new donors and contractors. For the small grants competitions outlined above, resource centers were required to generate matching funds; they were quite successful in this, matching USAID's \$700,000 with

over \$1.1 million. The 25 resource centers also attracted close to \$2 million in additional funding for civic initiatives from various other donors, both foreign and international.

In addition to successfully adapting the US community foundation model to Russian conditions, resource centers were also able to promote government investment through competitive procurement, municipal and regional grants. Finally, as Russian business began to recover from the crash of 1998, resource center partners engaged small, medium, and large enterprises to create a growing movement in systematic corporate philanthropy.

Reinforcing the relationship of hard-earned trust had been built with state and commercial structures over the years, Pro-NGO resource centers organized a large number of grant programs, financed by local donors. With IREX assistance, the Siberian Civic Initiative Support Center and the Povolzhe Association were able to engage the oil giant, Yukos Oil, in providing grant funding totaling over \$300,000 to small NGOs and public institutions in 26 municipalities of Siberia and the Samara region.

Russia's municipal organs had never before given grants to NGOs for projects aimed at addressing social ills. There was also no tradition of public services procurement. But during Pro-NGO, partner resource centers in many regions were able to promote the idea of municipal grants, and to participate in the organization of over 30 municipal and regional grant programs, some of which were financed at the unprecedented sums of \$100-\$150,000 a year.

The resource centers trained local authorities in the methods of conducting grant competitions, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, resource centers worked with NGOs, raising their effectiveness, so that they were able to compete for government funds along side commercial structures.

The resource centers also were successful in setting up community foundations. Through professional training and technical assistance, Pro-NGO was able to get more than 20 philanthropic foundations up and running. For example, the Rostov resource center established the first community foundation in the south, the "Rostov Foundation." Working closely with local business, the Tyumen' Development Foundation was able to attract more than \$100,000 for 8 grant competitions.

Success Story: Diversification of Funding

Municipal Grants Come to Southern Russia

On September 7, 2001 the City Administration of Stavropol held a ceremony to announce the winners of the first-ever municipal grant competition in the city. This significant event – Stavropol is the first city in southern Russia to award local NGOs budget funds on a competitive basis – was made possible largely thanks to the work of the North Caucasus NGO Resource Center, an affiliate of the Southern Regional Resource Center network (SRRC). The participants in the ceremony, including journalists, the mayor of the city and his team, representatives of the Stavropol City Duma, members of the city Department of Social Policy, and seventeen different non-commercial organizations, were all pleased to be present on the historic occasion. It's worth noting, however, that establishing municipal grants in Stavropol was not a simple task, and that the work of the North Caucasus Center began more than two years before.

In 1999 the North Caucasus NGO Resource Center took the first steps towards creating a mechanism for awarding local NGOs municipal grants. The Center developed the necessary documentation on city grants for submission to the Stavropol City Duma, and held a series of round tables with local NGOs to discuss it. Together with thirty other non-commercial organizations working in the city, the Center established a coalition of NGOs devoted to bringing municipal grants to Stavropol. The draft documentation developed by the group was submitted to the Duma along with a letter signed by each of the members of the coalition. In January 2000 the Stavropol City Duma passed the submitted provision on municipal grants, without a single amendment.

However, the establishment of municipal grants in Stavropol was not to be so easily won. Though the North Caucasus NGO Resource Center began working closely with the Stavropol Department of Social Policy in 2000 to prepare for the first grant competition (which was to be dedicated to youth-related issues), no funds from the city budget were made available, and the planned competition did not happen.

In 2001 the situation changed. This time, the City Duma set aside a portion of budget funds especially for distribution among NGOs working on issues related to youth, maternity, the disabled, and the elderly. Again, the North Caucasus Center began work with the city administration to plan and prepare for the competition. As Ivan Timoshenko, Deputy Mayor of the city, noted, "They taught us everything – including how to choose experts, how to develop procedures for evaluating projects, and how to hold a Board of Experts."

Seven projects were submitted to the competition by local NGOs, and three were awarded funding of nearly 20,000 rubles each. The experience of holding a municipal grants competition was a positive one for all who participated, not least of all members of the city administration. Deputy Mayor Timoshenko confirms that plans are already being made for a 2002 grants competition, and that significantly more funds will be made available for the competition's second year.

VII. IREX VALUE ADDED

Over the past three years, IREX has designed and implemented several mechanisms that gave a significant push to the development of civil society in the four targeted regions. These methods have proven effective in activating NGOs and citizens to take control of their lives and their communities, by providing the training and resources necessary to build capacity while fostering creativity and independence.

The technical support program developed by IREX under the Pro-NGO program is a series of trainings and discussions targeted at improving the performance of PRO-NGO resource centers and raising the professionalism of their staff.

The Technical Support Implementation Plan was drafted with due regard for USAID priorities, regional specifics and the individual needs of the resource centers. It identified four main components in running the technical support program: the training program "Trainers 2000," meetings of experts ("brain trusts"), exchange meetings and training vouchers.

Over the past three years, PRO-NGO organized seven training seminars, two Russia-wide conferences, four brain trusts, two schools and three exchange meetings for representatives from 25 resource centers with professionals from NGOs working in the appropriate fields.

The Technical Support Implementation Plan was made up of the following components:

Training Program “Trainers 2000”

The goal of the Training 2000 program was to develop a cadre of professional managers for resource centers. While other programs devoted significant resources toward training for directors and volunteers, the middle-managers, who form the backbone of the NGO movement, had been largely ignored. This lack of a trained, competent pool of managers hampered the development of the third sector as a whole, and kept NGOs from attaining their goals.

To address this problem, the “Trainers 2000” program designed a comprehensive program of seminars, conferences and schools. Some of the highlights:

- “NGO Periodicals” (Samara, May 2001), for those who were interested in starting their own NGO bulletin; This seminar generated 20 independent NGO bulletins and three magazines.
- “NGOs and Legislation” (Sochi, October 2001); As a direct result of this seminar, NGOs were able to push through over 200 laws directly affecting NGOs during the past three years
- “NGO Cooperation with the Authorities” (Stavropol, April 2002); as a result of this seminar, two new resource centers were formed in the south
- “Methods-Related and Methodological Issues of Studying the Effectiveness of Philanthropy” (St. Petersburg, April 2002); this seminar resulted in the formation of a cadre of professional analysts, able to conduct studies for the NGO community.
- “Activating Volunteer Initiatives in Russian Regions” (Gorno-Altai, May 2002): This seminar gave the big push to Spring Charity Week, with all the results outlined above.
- “Developing Local Philanthropy” (Volgograd, September 2002); This seminar resulted in the first consolidated budget programs, and gave rise to Russia’s first community fund, in Rostov-on-Don.
- “Quality of NGO Services” (Pyatigorsk, October 2002).

Twenty employees of resource centers took part in two schools, one in the Public Relations School in St. Petersburg (“Latest PR Technologies: Russian and Foreign Experience”), financed by IREX. This event helped resource centers develop mechanisms for outreach to local media and the community, which resulted in a dramatic improvement in the image of the NGO sector.

The other major training event was the Russian Grant Manager School (Rostov-on-Don, June 2003), which brought together 100 participants from 40 cities in 5 countries. This seminar resulted in greater transparency for grant programs, which was one of the major factors allowing for consolidated budgets, and community funds.

Also of note was the first Russian conference of NGO lawyers on “Important Legal Issues of NGO Development in Russian Regions” (Moscow, January 2002) and

the conference on “Training Programs and Technologies in the Non-Profit Sector” (Moscow, February 2003).

As a result of the Trainers 2000 program, over 500 professionals received high-level training in various fields.

In all of its training events, IREX adhered to certain principles, among which the most important were:

- Principle of voluntary participation
- Principle of professional consistency: maintaining certain criteria of professionalism
- Principle of cost covering: each participant was to cover his/her return ticket to/from the location where the event was held, accommodation and meals. The staff of PRO-NGO resource centers used training vouchers for this.
- Principle of openness follows from the two preceding principles: the staff of various NGOs (other than resource centers) and experts who were eligible to participate and had funds to cover their costs could take part in program events.
- Principle of support means that an allowance fund was to be established and its amounts were to be distributed among NGO professionals, usually the staff of young Russian NGOs that could not afford the costs of training.
- Principle of translation of experience means that the gained knowledge and experience were to be grapevine through RC networks and other infrastructure organizations.
- Principle of development of regions. PRO-NGO always treated regional and Russia-wide events outside Moscow as investment in the development of regions.
- Principle of focus on experts’ opinion means that groups of volunteer experts were invited to take part in the brain trust sessions, and that this particular fact was the ultimate success factor of these meetings.
- Principle of separation of responsibility means that PRO-NGO always raised matching funding for all seminars and experts meetings targeted at the development of the whole sector.

Expert Meetings (“Brain Trusts”)

To expand the expertise available to the NGO community, IREX assisted its partners in creating “Brain Trusts.” These were thematic meetings that brought together experts and professionals from the non-profit, government and business sectors. The major goals of these meetings were to discuss issues important for the non-profit sector, find solutions to common problems and exchange experience.

These meetings helped to identify a key problem with resource centers – the low quality of services – and then helped to resolve it. As a direct result of these brain trusts, IREX was able to help NGOs become quality service providers, to the extent that now 19% of the NGOs in USAID’s four targeted regions are able to charge for services, thereby generating revenue and raising their level of sustainability.

Themes for these brain trusts were determined by the needs of the resource centers. Over the

three years of Pro-NGO, the most prominent topics were:

- “Training Programs and Technologies in the Non-Profit Sector” (Moscow, March 2002);
- “NGOs’ Input in the Solution of Social Problems in Russia. Development of Social Services” (Sochi, October 2002);
- “Role of Non-Profit Organizations in the Social Policymaking” (Ulan-Ude, February 2003),
- “Strategy of Community Development ” (Sochi, October 2003).

The results of these sessions were collected, analyzed, and distributed to all resource centers, thus multiplying the effect. Materials of one brain trust session were published in a separate volume as “Input of Non-Government Non-Profit Organizations in the Solution of Social Problems in Russia. Development of Social Services.”

Exchange Meetings

On order to facilitate the exchange of experience and enhance the effect of program successes, PRO-NGO held semi-annual exchange meetings for project directors and coordinators of all program resource centers. These exchange meetings were held to sum up the results of each program year and to discuss the most important issues related to PRO-NGO implementation, and to allow program managers to benefit from the experience of their colleagues.

For example, the southern network took the lead on advocacy campaigns; after the exchange meeting in 2002, the Siberian network was able to develop its own approach to this very important aspect of NGO work. In turn, Siberia assisted the south in developing volunteerism and local philanthropy.

Training Vouchers

Training vouchers were an innovative development instrument which PRO-NGO offered to resource centers. Each RC received a voucher of \$6,000 a year for institutional development and staff training. The voucher made it possible for the resource centers to tailor their training programs to their individual needs, by choosing and inviting trainers, consultants and experts, depending on the situation in their own regions.

Resource centers chose the forms of training/development events for their staff, and proposed candidates as trainer, consultants, and experts. PRO-NGO staff reviewed and approved:

- topics of consultations and seminars;
- reasons for having education or consultations;
- invited specialists;
- seminar trainees.

In the first year of Pro-NGO, the four inter-regional resource centers received training vouchers of \$6,000 (SCISC, SRRC, HECA “Povolzhe” and NWCDC). In the second and third years, training vouchers of \$2,000 each were also given to the 10 resource centers of the Siberian network and the 9 centers in the south.

The resource centers themselves designed models for using the training vouchers. The major elements were:

1. covering the costs of staff training;
2. training seminars for the whole organization or network;
3. a course of training sessions on strategic development;
4. staff internships in other organizations.

Some of the more outstanding examples of the use of the voucher system:

SCISC officers K. V. Grebennik and I. I. Baradachev took an internship in IFES-Armenia to study forms of public advocacy and implementation of human rights, and instruments, methods and technologies of conscious public participation in the election. Based on this internship, the officers adjusted and strengthened the advocacy program which SCISC had launched, and shared the new knowledge and experience with their Siberian colleagues at the seminars on advocacy and work in the community.

HECA "Povolzhe" invited consultants to install computer accounting software 1C-Wage and teach its accountants how taxation and accounting rules had changed. As a result, it began using the latest software for financial accounting and reporting.

SRRC used the training voucher amounts for strategic planning. It developed the strategy of development for the next five years and expanded its programs by including new areas (work with refugees and forced migrants and public advocacy). The new strategic vision of SRRC staff helped them draft a three-year project which was awarded direct funding from the USAID.

NWCDC lawyer V. M. Mirny was a trainee at a seminar on the labor and tax law, held by the Union of Lawyers of Russia. He used the new knowledge in a series of seminars which he held for the leaders and accountants of north-western NGOs.

VIII. WHERE TO NEXT? - REMAINING ISSUES

As mentioned earlier, civil society in the Russian regions has made significant strides since the Pro-NGO Program began in October 2000, many of them correlated to, but not a result of, Pro-NGO influence. Russian business, both local and multi-national, has started to take in interest in local philanthropy in their constituent regions of Russia. In December 2002, Vladimir Putin called in approximately 3,000 NGO leaders from the Russian regions to hold a "Civil Forum" on how to develop civil society. Local governments have begun to recognize and award local NGOs with the resources they need to function properly. And last, but not least, local governments have acknowledged that citizens can have an impact on community development and their voices can affect government intentions at the local level. Note, however, that all of these achievements have come as a result of enthusiasm and professionalism of NGO professionals and activists at the micro, grassroots level.

Despite these grassroots advances, there still remain three keys issues which will hinder the future development of civil society in Russia, all three of them can only be resolved at the macro, federal level. The first of these issues is that of the federal legislation. Unfortunately,

as Russia remains a system in which leadership starts at the center and then trickles to the peripheries, the lack of quality legislation supporting NGO activities at the federal level continues to hinder the growth of NGOs at the local level. Currently, the muddled federal legislation hinders everything from easy registration to fee-for-services and even to the extreme point of making volunteerism taxable! And these are just a few of the examples.

By the tone of recent government ramblings, many at the federal level continue to view NGOs as either pawns of Western governments or as nuisances to the implementation of federal policy. For this reason, there has yet to be a federal champion of NGO development at the federal level to convince that NGOs can make a difference. Despite this lack of federal support, NGOs at the grassroots level have continued to grow and prosper, mainly due to the enthusiasm of local activists and the increasingly diversified funding base. However, if the federal government does not improve the legislative framework to favor civil society organizations, grassroots NGOs will not be able to gather enough capital, human or financial, to create larger coalitions and have a more significant impact on policy at the regional and federal levels.

The second issue hindering NGO development and the full advancement of civil society is the overwhelming public expectation of government intervention. Although many citizens have begun to take an active part in their communities through voting, volunteer activities, public campaigns, and lobbying, the majority of citizens, including the large number of marginalized and impoverished, continue to view the government as their guardian and champion, obliged to provide financial assistance to keep the majority of citizens from starvation and homelessness.

This legacy of Soviet state-control will last for perhaps decades to come and its resolution will only come with a sharp increase in personal income for those in need. As income levels rise, the majority of citizens will no longer be as dependent upon government subsidies, hand-outs, and public services. Once freed from this dependency, the average citizen will be more empowered to make his/her own decisions, have a greater sense of investment in the community around them to protect his/her private property, and employ his/her disposable income and time to activities deemed vital to betterment of his/her person and/or family. At the present moment, these are all luxuries for those who are most in need and struggle to make it each day.

However, the picture is not entirely bleak. Recent rumblings from the Kremlin indicate that the government is looking to end the culture of dependency through reform of the communal service and welfare systems. USAID and other donor efforts have provided a solid infrastructure to accept and channel the energy of the majority of citizens when they become financially stable and ready to invest in the community around them. The Pro-NGO Program, as demonstrated through the lengthy testimony above, has given not only resource centers, but grassroots NGOs and citizen groups the technology, skills, and resource to manage even larger populations of volunteers, increased government and private funding, and improved government/NGO relationships in the years ahead. In short, USAID's investment in the infrastructure of Russia has been well placed and well time timed. Should the economy continue to grow at the current brisk pace and should the Russian government begin to tackle the culture of dependency, Pro-NGO partners and grassroots NGOs will be well prepared to exploit the wave of human, social, and financial capital that will flow their way.

