



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ALLIANCES IN ACTION

PRO BONO CLEARINGHOUSE IN MOSCOW

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

Until a few years ago, the concept of pro bono law services, the practice of legal firms donating free advisory counsel and services to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals, was unfamiliar to many in Russia. During the transition of the 1990's, pro bono legal services were not a priority for Russian and international law firms struggling to establish themselves. Since then, law firms have grown in strength while the legal environment for NGOs in Russia has become more challenging. New registration requirements and complex tax regulations have added a heavy burden to NGO operations, and securing access to affordable legal support is now critical to strengthening Russian civil society.

PARTNER CHALLENGE

International firms have a long history of providing pro bono legal services to those who need it most. Firms wishing to provide these services in Moscow had a hard time identifying NGOs requiring assistance.

APPROACH

In 2007, USAID, the American Bar Association (ABA), and the Public Interest Law Institute (PILI) joined together with several private law firms, first among them White & Case, to create a Pro Bono Clearinghouse in Moscow. The Clearinghouse coordinates the efforts of Russian and international firms to serve the needs of local organizations. NGOs submit a request for legal assistance and the clearinghouse identifies a law firm that is willing and able to work on the case. The clearinghouse has also launched an initiative to further expand its reach by providing Russian NGOs with training on a variety of issues related to the daily operations of non-profit organizations. Legal experts share their expertise, provide much needed training on key issues, and raise the profile of the clearinghouse among the NGO community.

PARTNERS



RESULTS

- In 2008, more than 90 cases were resolved, with a total value of over \$900,000 in legal advisory services.
- In two years, the alliance clearinghouse partnership has secured commitments from more than 22 firms (16 international and 6 local) to provide legal assistance to NGOs through the Pro Bono Clearinghouse.
- Based on the success in Moscow, plans are under way to extend pro bono services throughout Russia and other countries in the region.
- Strong international commitment in the partnership has contributed to a pro bono culture in Russia.

FAST FACTS

START: 2007 END: 2009

PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS:

\$1,110,000

November 2009