

**NGOs, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SOCIAL POLICY IN  
RUSSIA'S REGIONS**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Working Paper reports on social sector non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with various social problems and issues in the Russian Federation. It draws on more than seventy interviews with NGO and political leaders in Tula and Samara Regions and the Chuvash Republic during 2004. The interviews are used to map social sector NGOs according to their essential functions, staffing and financial resources, and connections with other social organizations as well as with political and governmental authorities. We find that the behavior of NGOs ranges from opportunistic and clientelistic to civilly-active and politically-relevant. Many smaller organizations lack political voice but have potential to promote civil-society formation. Stronger organizations, many of which have been recipients of some foreign support, are able to engage political authorities in dialogue. The restrictive legislation currently before the Duma (12/05) would damage the potential for NGOs to organize mutual aid and to represent legitimate interests of socially-vulnerable groups in Russian politics.

## **Introduction**

The political transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union has generated a great deal of interest in development of post-Communist ‘civil society,’ the autonomous sphere of activity between societal structures and the state that provides the means for society to build trust, to articulate collective interests, and to hold political authorities accountable. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs or the ‘third sector’) constitute one of the core forms of civil society. First granted legal status in Russia in the early 1990s, NGOs have proliferated there. While estimates vary widely, 60,000 can be taken as a conservative total by 2002. Most previous research has focused on Russian women’s or environmental NGOs but the single largest category, some 30% of the total, is involved in social welfare. (Sundstrom 2002) Many provide services to the most vulnerable groups in Russian society, including the disabled, chronically-ill, migrants, street children, and others. Our project contributes to the broadening of knowledge about the activities, character, and influence of NGOs in the social sector.

The research is concerned mainly with issues of civil society building and political representation. We analyze NGOs’ relationships with societal groups on the one hand, and with political power on the other. We set out to determine whether surveyed organizations are trying to articulate and defend interests of particular social groups, are simply successors of Soviet-era organizations, clientelistic and politically-subordinated to state authorities, or are marginalized and politically-irrelevant. What NGO behaviors and strategies seem most productive in creating social networks and influencing social policy formation? Is there evidence of a turn toward citizen activism, or general stagnation?

We focused our research at the regional level, where most of the responsibility for financing and implementing social policy resides. Field work for the project was carried out in

Tula Region (city of Tula and some additional communities) in March, 2004; the Chuvash Republic (city of Cheboksary) in November, 2004; and Samara Region (city of Samara and some additional communities) in December, 2004. These three regions were chosen to include one close to the Russian average in terms of socio-economic conditions (Tula), one in which conditions are below the average (Chuvashia), and one in which they are better (Samara). More than forty interviews were conducted with leaders of social sector NGOs, including organizations that provide charity, support for families with disabled children, youth, veterans, and alcoholics, advocacy for social justice, etc. Interviewers asked questions about the philosophy and goals of the organizations, their human and financial resources, their long- and short-term strategies, and their relations with other civil society organizations and with political authorities. An additional thirty interviews with leaders of social sector trade unions, political party, legislative, and governmental leaders were designed to provide additional perspectives on NGOs' behavior and role in social policy formation. (a list of the interviews with NGO leaders is included in the References.)

The study of Russian NGOs is especially important at present because the Russian government has initiated legislation that would place their activities under increased state scrutiny and control. Over the past three years, the Putin administration has made various efforts to manage the government's relations with NGOs and to orchestrate their political participation. President Putin has called into question the legitimacy of foreign aid to Russian organizations, and there has been increased scrutiny by police and tax authorities of some that receive foreign financing. (USAID, 2003) In late November, 2005, the Duma passed in the first reading a bill that would, if approved in its initial form, strengthen state monitoring of the NGO sector and severely restrict organizations' receipt and use of foreign funds. (Gazeta.ru 12/10/05) Our

research addresses questions that are highly relevant to this legislation, particularly questions of foreign funding and other assistance to regional social sector NGOs, and their influence on domestic policy.

### **Issues in the Study of Russian NGOs**

The available literature on NGOs in the post-Communist space generally and Russia in particular makes three central claims that help to frame the study. The first is that NGOs, and civil society more broadly, remain weak and underdeveloped because of societal attitudes and orientations held over from the Communist period. The well-known study of Marc Howard, for example, argues that levels of participation in voluntary groups remain comparatively low in postcommunist states because of residual negative attitudes toward enforced participation in the Communist period, the persistence of alternative private support networks, as well as people's general disappointment with post-transition realities. (Howard 2002) Other scholars stress low levels of trust within society as well as distrust for civil society organizations. (Evans 2002, Domrin, 2003) At the same time, there is evidence of a modest tendency toward growth of Russian NGOs. (Weigle 2002, USAID 2003, Auzan, 2005) Our study suggests that pre-existing informal friendship and neighborhood networks may be sources for, rather than alternatives to, some types of NGO development.

A major theme in studies of Russian NGOs has been their dependence on foreign funding and its largely detrimental consequences. During the 1990s Western governments and international NGOs provided substantial support to new Russian organizations in an effort to strengthen civil society and build democracy. Scholars, while acknowledging that this support provided resources for development of Russian NGOs, argue that it detached them from

domestic constituencies, dictated agendas that failed to reflect the needs of Russian society, and led to competitive rather than cooperative relations among NGOs. (Henderson 2002b, Sperling, 1999) Some see a sharp dichotomy between well-funded, internationally-oriented organizations and resource-poor ones that are rooted in Russian society. As noted above, foreign financing has also been used by the Putin administration in an attempt to de-legitimize NGOs politically. The present study asks about both financing and relations among NGOs. We find that while foreign financing has fostered competition, it has also been important in providing some NGOs with sufficient resources to gain the attention of political actors and engage them in dialogue.

Third and most importantly, scholars and others argue that Russian NGOs have little or no political influence or access to political processes, and that as a result, they can neither represent societal interests in the political sphere nor hold government accountable. Some point to traditions of ‘clientelism,’ or social organizations’ reliance on the state for support, as an inheritance that undermines independent civic activism. (Evans, 2002) Others stress the weak opportunities for genuinely representative politics, though local and regional governments have engaged NGOs in dialogue through consultative mechanisms such as ‘discussion squares’ and ‘round tables.’” Our study focuses on issues of political access and representation of social sector NGOs.

### **Mapping Social Sector NGOs**

Interviews with NGO leaders focused on the following sets of information:

- 1) A picture of the NGO’s organization: its, goals, activities, and personnel (whether volunteers or professionals); financial resources, whether foreign or domestic, including contributions from business or the wealthy; and whether the organization originated in the Soviet or post-Soviet periods.

- 2) The character of its ties with society, and with other NGOs, through coordination, conferences, protests, or other forms;
- 3) Relations with political parties and electoral politics, whether the NGO has supported particular parties' or candidates' election campaigns, or been involved in developing platforms or programs on the social sector;
- 4) Contacts with legislative or executive authorities in the social sphere at regional and municipal levels, including relations with legislators, participation in commissions, drafting committees, expert consultations, monitoring commissions, and access to information about policy implementation;
- 5) Evaluation of viability, sustainability, and influence: whether the NGO has gained support in society (membership), its prospects for financing; and its involvement in or marginalization from politics.

Our research found two main groups of NGOs, distributed according to their essential mission or function and principle of internal organization, (i.e., formal structure of leadership and membership or not, professional management or not.) The first main group, “Grass-Roots NGOs,” are organizations that reflect the needs of members or specific social groups. They include self-organized and self-help organizations (Grass Roots I); and organizations that provide professional assistance or services. (Grass Roots 2). The second main group “Policy/Advocacy NGOs,” include organizations that defend social rights, (Rights Defense NGOs); and resource centers that provide various types of assistance and consulting to other NGOs – legal, organizational, intellectual – and also initiate activities to develop civil society. (Infrastructural NGOs). Each of these groups has a primary functional goal. (See Table 1) At the same time, within the categories organizations differ in terms their history of formation, the skills of their leaders, the numbers and social positions of their rank-and-file, their financial resources, and their relationships with other NGOs and with political actors and power structures. We look successively at four sub-groups of NGOs – Grass Roots I, Grass Roots 2,



**Table 1**  
**Main Types of Russian NGOs: Grass-Roots and Policy/Advocacy**

<b>1.Grass Roots organizations –</b>  <b>Mass organizations reflecting the needs of members or a focused group</b>	<b>1.1 Grass Roots 1</b>  NGOs with activities that are directly related to the resolution of problems or satisfaction of needs of members of the organizations themselves	1.1.1. Basic organizations of mutual help, for example, associations of invalids, veterans, families with ill children, gender-based
		1.1.2. Organizations of a Club Type; Associations according to interest, etc.
	<b>1.2. Grass Roots 2</b>  NGOs with activities related not to their own members’ needs, but to the needs of a defined group of people and/or to the resolution of some specific social problem	1.2.1. Social Service NGOs and Charitable Organizations, the activities of which are directed to resolving the problems of certain population categories (i.e., elderly, families with many children); or to resolving some social problem (i.e., homelessness, narcotic addiction, etc.)
		1.2.2. NGOs with ecological and historical-cultural concerns- defense of the environment, cultural monuments, etc.
<b>2. Policy/Advocacy Organizations</b>  <b>Organizations directed To the formation and Realization of policy, or To the defense of interests Of some social group</b>	<b>2.1 Rights Defense Organizations</b> traditional human rights organizations also comparatively new types – groups of civil control, including control over the activities of executive structures; control over election procedures	
	<b>2.2. “Infrastructural” NGOs</b> the mission of which is to aid development of the third sector; including Groups of legal/ rights defense/ guarantees NGOs; Centers for research and educational activities; Resource Centers (for support of NGOs) Organizations of civic initiative, with the goal of aiding the Growth of civil society, partnerships of society and power	

Rights Defense, and Infrastructural- and characterize and compare their behavior in the sphere of social policy. Such a systematization will allow us to proceed toward a differentiated evaluation of the NGO sector's potential for building civil society and participating in policy-making.

The remainder of the present report to the National Council will deal with Grass-Roots I-type NGOs, the group that is closest to the base of Russian society. We will draw on the interviews to define, characterize, and illustrate the organizations in this group, and categorize their behavior as tending to political marginalization, civic and political activism, political clientism, or subordination. The following report to the National Council will provide a parallel study of the other three categories of NGOs, and a comparative analysis of their potential for civil-society building and political influence.

### **Grass-Roots 1.1:**

#### **Self-Help NGOs and Their Varied Behavior Toward Politics**

The first group we look at are self-help NGOs, formed by people to deal with problems or needs that they themselves experience. We found it useful to classify the behavior of the NGOs belonging to this group into five types based on their relation to politics. Table 2 (below) lays out their typology of behavior, including information about their typical personnel structures, finances, contacts with other NGOs, civil-society building potential, and political access and influence.

##### **1) Political Marginalism, Solidarity for Survival**

These organizations exhibit a "bottom-level" solidarity for solving survival problems, but they are virtually devoid of institutional channels for effective influence on social policy or power. Their poor financial resources, the deficient skills of their leaders, and limitations on

activities imposed by their members' health problems lead to this outcome. This type of behavior can be found mostly in relatively small groups of people with shared problems (i.e., invalids, parents of disabled or sick children, those with certain serious illnesses). Their situations are often desperate, and these self-help associations exist on the periphery of society, balanced on the borders of social exclusion. According to one activist belonging to a group of mothers of invalids in Altai, "The state authorities do not see us, do not hear us, do not know the situation of our families, the problems with which we live." (Gazeta.ru, 5/27/05)

Groups of this kind emerged on the basis of spontaneous self-organization in the first reform years, and provide mutual support to their members. They organize various types of practical help and social support for the needy, including regular or occasional help at home, material and practical assistance to families at difficult points, organization of leisure activities, and to a limited extent legal defense functions (i.e., helping in contacts with state and municipal organizations.) They fill strongly-felt needs for their members, and their services are in demand. (Interviews #10, 11, 38a)

### *Structure and Resources*

Most NGOs with behavior of this type have small, non-professional staffs, and their internal life is not bureaucratized. As a rule, members know one another and contacts are direct and informal. At the same time, they have a sharp deficit of skilled staff and limited possibilities to attract volunteers, because everyone associated with the organization needs income. Leaders generally do not have the capabilities to mobilize substantial financial resources or to succeed in competitions for funding, and these organizations generally have no foreign funding. At an earlier point, financial support for some was stimulated by laws providing tax advantages to

enterprises and businesses (mainly small businesses) that had invalids as half of their employees, with invalids or their families sometimes starting such businesses. Later these tax advantages were abolished, and many of the organizations closed. Those that operate rely on the chance character of charitable help, have difficulty attracting it, and difficulty accessing either domestic or foreign grants. They are too small to be of interest for large and medium businesses that might provide significant programs of charitable support. They rely mainly on traditional networks of social support, i.e., neighbors, relatives, friends. There is a tendency toward worsening of their financial position, constriction of their ability to carry out their work.

(Interview # 38a)

#### *Contacts with other Civil Society and Political Organizations*

Cooperative relations generally predominate among NGOs in this group that are involved in similar work. According to the leader of an organization of invalids in Samara Region, for example, “We associate with all organizations similar to ours. We provide help, exchange experiences. We organize parties or festivals for our young members.” (Interview 38a) These NGOs sometimes cooperate in holding street demonstrations, which aim to draw the attention of authorities and society to their plight, and occasionally succeed in gaining specific goals or resources. But they are too small to attract the attention of political parties, candidates, or influential groups within administrations that are competing for power are interested mainly in the organized support. Overall, these groups are political outsiders, marginalized in the broader political process.

One such group from our interviews is an organization for the aid of invalids, formed in Cheboksary in 1992. It organizes leisure activities and mutual help for invalid children and

young adults, most of whom are affected by cerebral palsy. It has about 70 members and five non-specialized staff, themselves invalids with the same diagnosis, and cooperates with other invalids' organizations. Members are active, constantly coming into the office; they know one another and contacts are informal. The organization has no grants or competence in fund-raising. It relies on informal networks for support, and its financial problems are worsening. It is too small and poor to attract attention from political parties, and has virtually no channels of political or policy influence. (Interview #38a)

## **2) Civic and Political Activism**

NGOs that display civil and political activism attempt to communicate the needs and interests of their members, to influence political agendas, and to participate in the formulation and realization of social programs at regional and municipal levels. Most NGOs showing this type of behavior were organized after the transition, and serve constituencies including invalids, pensioners, veterans, and other socially-vulnerable groups. Like the first group of self-help NGOs they are built on the principal of horizontal mutual aid. But they differ in having stronger staff resources, better and more varied sources of financing, usually including foreign grants, and more political access and influence. The significance of international assistance for both leadership development and financing independent of the state formed a theme of the interviews. (Interviews # 10, 32, 56, 57, 58, 60)

### *Structure and Resources*

Politically-relevant behavior is associated with professional leaderships, including groups of activists, semi-professional staffs, and trained personnel who provide services to members. Relations between staffs and members tend to be more formal than in the first group, with less inclusion of rank-and-file members. Volunteers tend to be student interns of social work facilities or people prominent in the community. Leaders are active in getting publicity for their work, informing public opinion about their achievements, and working with potential sponsors. Several remarked on positive shifts in public opinion and the growth of confidence in their work. Significantly, some leaders point to training programs within international projects as an important source of their preparation for leadership roles, especially for learning public relations and how to identify potential sources of financing. (Interviews # 2, 3, 11, 32, 33)

Sources of financing for these organizations vary. Foreign grants play a significant – but generally not exclusive – role in supporting their activities. Some organizations have been financed mainly by a succession of grants over several years. Many others have succeeded in generating support from the Russian business community and other domestic organizations. According to the leader of an association of disabled people in Samara, for example, “We try to find business-partners. In general businessmen have begun to show interest. If you show a successful person some sort of direction, some sort of problem, he will respond and become interested in this.” (Interview # 57) Resources from state organizations play a very limited role. Many were able to develop sources of private domestic support. (Interview # 56)

### *Contacts with Other Civil Society and Political Organizations*

Interviewed respondents agreed that there was insufficient internal solidarity among this group of NGOs. Organizations were often unable to reach agreements, even in efforts around common interests. According to one leader of an association of invalids in Samara, for example, “We, social organizations – are not mature enough for cooperation. . . For this we need a different consciousness.” (Interview # 58) This behavior stands in sharp contrast to the cooperation reported by the first group of self-help NGOs. At the same time it corresponds to the claims in the secondary literature that foreign funding and involvement breeds competitiveness among Russian NGOs.

NGOs demonstrating this type of behavior do gain attention from political parties, though this is confined mainly to the period of pre-election campaigns. Such interest is in most cases not based on a commitment to shared social policy or legislative programs, but simply on getting organizational support for the party. These NGOs’ overwhelming orientation toward parties is one of political neutrality. According to one leader, reflecting a common position, “As an organization we do not get involved in political struggle. . . For seven years we have preserved our independence and neutrality. We are prepared to work with parties, but without mutual obligations.” (Interview # 58)

Most of these organizations do have access to politics, through formal consultative mechanisms such as ‘discussion squares’ and ‘round tables’ that are organized by local and regional administrations. As a whole, organizations in this group have business-like mutual relations and dialogue with political power. They see their main function in translating needs of members and clients, and in getting support for direct provision of services that are now performed by state organizations. Though the effectiveness of dialogue is reportedly limited,

several NGO leaders give accounts of influencing particular areas of social policy legislation, or re-directing governmental financial resources to state-NGO partnerships that better serve the felt needs of their members. (for example, an ‘independent living center’ for invalids in Samara.) (Interview # 58) In sum, they have succeeded in expanding memberships from society, and developing connections with political actors that allow them some possibility to articulate interests and affect policy.

Our surveys included a number of NGOs with this behavior. One association of mothers with invalid children in Tula is in many ways typical. It grew from 250 active members in 1995 to 1,000 at the time of the survey. It has received foreign grants, but also found domestic sponsors once its work became established and known. Its chief goal is to defend members’ rights by influencing legislation and getting local resources. It has participated in passing and implementing laws on handicapped access, one of the strongest areas of NGO influence (Interview # 10) It is typical of invalids’ groups that press for legislation on creation of barrier-free spaces, quotas of work places, etc. Another group in Samara brings together pensioners who worked in cultural institutions such as theatres, museums, and libraries, and gets contributions from the opera theatre and other sponsors. (Interview # 60) Leaders of these NGOs again show awareness that they need independent sources of financing in order to engage state actors in genuine dialogue.

### **3) Political Dependency / Clientelism**

This type of NGOs’ behavior is derived from Soviet times, when clientelism was one of the main principles of all political-societal organization. Clientelistic NGOs cannot be civilly active because their goal is to receive what they need from the state in exchange for loyalty. As



a rule, they have a genuine leadership and clientele in society, but construct their behavior in close contact with regional and local powers, and are financially and organizationally dependent on such powers. These NGOs generally have formal structures, with professional staffs separate from rank-and-file members. Financing comes mainly from regional and local government budgets, sometimes through government-sponsored competitions in which they are favored. According to one critical observer, “So a certain circle of non-commercial organizations forms, with which it is convenient for (power) to work, which receive financial means from the budget, through competition or without.” (Interview # 27)

This type of behavior is the most characteristic for various veterans’ organizations (WWII, Afghanistan War, retired Soviet army officers’ organizations, etc.), as well as some invalids’ associations. (for example, Interview #30). They do cooperate among themselves, and with local political leaders who help manage and coordinate their activities. They engage members in various activities that are initiated by authorities, which aim to demonstrate good relationships between power and society (administration and community). These include, for example conferences, round tables, commissions and committees, where social policy issues are discussed and decisions made. Sometimes they are involved in demonstrations, often against measures of the federal government and with the support, open or tacit, of regional and local authorities. Many have links with political parties (i.e., KPRF, LDPR, Rodina), often on ‘patriotic’ grounds, and provide orchestrated political support for candidates designated by their sponsors (‘administrative resources). (Interviews #27. 32. 33)

**Table 2**  
**Behavioral Types of Grass-Roots Russian NGOs**

<b>Type of Behavior</b>	<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>Personnel/ Structure</b>	<b>Finances</b>	<b>Contacts with Other NGOs</b>	<b>Civil Society-Building Potential</b>	<b>Political Access, Influence</b>
Political Marginalism, Solidarity for Survival	Invalids, Families with ill or disbled children, Groups with chronic illnesses	Non-Professional/ Informal	Weak; Small contributions, Declining support from business	Cooperation with similar self-help groups	Significant – builds mutual trust, support networks, social solidarity	No party contacts, marginal access to exec. authorities via episodic demonstrations; independent
Civic and Political Activism	Invalids, Families with disabled children, Women’s Groups, Pensioners’ Groups	Semi-professional Leadership; Division among leaders, activists, clients	Strong, foreign grants, business contributions, domestic orgs. limited budget sources	Lack of solidarity, Competitiveness, poor coordination	Significant – building memberships, mutual support	Access through consultative mechanisms; articulation of members’ interests some influence on legislation; neutrality toward parties
Political Dependency Clientelism	Invalids Veterans Women’s groups	Professional staffs; divisions among leaders and members	Regional and local governments; Govt.-sponsored competitions	Cooperation and coordination with similar NGOs	Weak – limited societal initiative or independence	No independent influence or articulation of interests; ‘managed’ cooperation with executive authorities, orchestrated support for parties (KPRF, LDPR, Rodina)
Marionette/ Subordinated	Women Pensioners	Led and staffed by family members, colleagues of bureaucratic sponsors	Budget Resources	--	None; artificial constructs with legal status of NGOs	Controlled by state bureaucracy
Non-Political Behavior	Cultural Societies	Varies	Self-Financing	Cooperate with other organizations sharing interests	Significant – builds mutual trust, societal linkages	Outside of politics; seek neither cooperation nor dependence



#### **4) Marionette Behavior:**

This type of behavior can be found in organizations created by power-holders, without leaderships or clienteles in society, but legally they take the form of NGOs. They are often staffed by family members, former colleagues or others trusted by power-holders, and directed by influential bureaucrats. They serve the purpose of controlling budget resources that are directed to the social sphere. These organizations are artificial constructs, not initiated by society. They do not form part of civil society, but are formally recognized as NGOs and can participate in consultations with political leaders (i.e., Civic Forum) as putative representatives of civil society.

(Interview # 11)

#### **5) Non-Political Behavior**

This type of behavior is characteristic for club-type NGOs. Clubs are organized around a variety of common interests. They are far from the world of politics, and are included among our social sector NGOs because several have social programs, for example, cultural societies that include help for the poor and ill. Clubs cooperate with other organizations sharing their interests, and have no relations of either cooperation or conflict with local or regional powers. They have no political influence or aspirations, though they may play an important role in building norms of cooperation trust in civil society. (Interview # 5, 28, 29)

## **Conclusion:**

### **Assessment of the Potential of Grass-Roots NGOs for Civil Society-Building and Political Influence**

We return now to the set of issues raised in the introduction. Discussion focuses first on the group of NGOs that has achieved a degree of political relevance, managed to open up channels of influence and play some representative role in articulating the interests of their members or clients in the political process. A common feature of many of these organizations appears to be at least some foreign resources, either leaders' participation in training programs in international projects, or financing at some point in their development. Interviews indicated that resources and leadership skills gained from international cooperation were important in their getting access to politics. According to one respondent, for example, "Simply there came a moment – there were foreign funds, many organizations became financially independent, were able to express opinions. Power saw that society was disregarding it and could be strong. . . . Power decided, 'We will have conversations with you.' Even in the oblasts, 'discussion squares' and 'round tables' were created." (Interview # 56)

The presence of resources independent from the state allowed many of these NGOs to start contacts with state organs, which could gradually develop into healthy, but not conflict-free, partnership relations with them. Leaders of these organizations also gained skills that helped them to publicize their activities, and to develop sources of domestic sponsorship and support.

At the same time, leaders of politically-relevant NGOs reported their organizations to be more competitive than other types, very likely because of the competition for foreign grants and sponsors to which other studies have pointed. This suggests that foreign support is double-edged, facilitating influence while discouraging cooperation among the more developed Russian NGOs. Leaders also reported their political influence as quite limited, with governmental actors

consulting them but not accountable for following through, though some organizations clearly did influence specific areas of legislation or social provision for their clients.

The virtually universal commitment of these NGOs to political neutrality, to avoiding commitments or longer-term connections with political parties, is also significant – a factor that the literature on hold-over effects has not emphasized. This negative attitude toward parties is a hold-over from the Communist period, and is reinforced by the weakness and non-programmatic character of contemporary parties, the general absence of real political life. It seems likely to constrict linkages in the political system and block potential development of broader alliances around social policy goals.

Marginal NGOs are resource-poor and stand outside the political process, lacking channels for policy input. At the same time, they can contribute to the building of civil society. Their role in creating networks of social support and solidarity, promoting social interaction and trust, should not be underestimated. Members of these organizations are acquiring one of the most important social habits, the ability to give mutual help and to get even modest results. It should be noted that these small self-help groups often grew from pre-existing networks of friends and neighbors, suggesting that such informal support networks may become the basis for, rather than necessarily an alternative to, development of civil society. Clubs also contribute to the growth of civil society, providing contexts for social interaction and trust-building that the literature sees as key to civic cultures.

The significant presence of NGOs with clientelistic behavior is distinctive to the post-Soviet landscape. They are largely a hold-over from the controlled social organizations of the Soviet period, providing real resources and services to their members but without the potential for genuine social initiative or articulation of interests. The risk is that these ‘managed NGOs’,

with their assured sources of financing, will survive within Putin's model of 'managed democracy' while more independent NGOs see sources of financing wither under both legislative restrictions and assaults on the political activities of wealthy individuals (i.e., the Khodorkovsky case). Clientelism can provide a mechanism for the government to channel funds that buy political support, and to legitimize policies through consultations. Marionette behavior of NGOs, too transparently manipulated to play such roles, constitute an abuse of NGO legislation.

Most previous research has stressed the overall low levels of civic engagement in Russia as a result of the Communist period, and the disproportionately negative effects of foreign financial dependence. Our study suggests the importance of two different hold-overs that affect the sector: the significant presence of clientelistic NGOs, and the negative attitude toward parties of the most politically and civically active

It also finds that international financial and development assistance have played a role in allowing some grass-roots NGOs to exercise a degree of political influence, specifically to engage political party leaders in dialogue and advance their policy agendas. These agendas relate to the needs of their disabled and other socially- vulnerable constituencies, interests that have a legitimate place in Russian politics. Grass-roots NGOs that serve similar clienteles but have received no external aid tend to remain too small and poor to gain the attention of political actors, though they have built networks of mutual aid and trust among their members. Thus, our research implies that prohibitions on foreign assistance would serve to undercut the capacity of more developed grass-roots social sector NGOs to have a political voice in Russia. Restrictions on the activities of all NGOs would also damage abilities of weaker ones to sustain local networks that organize mutual support for vulnerable groups.

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## **List of Interviews with NGOs**

### **Tula NGOs**

**Interviews #1-25 were conducted in Tula Region, in the city of Tula unless otherwise indicated, March 15-19, 2004**

- #1 Charitable Fund, General Director, individual interview
- #2 Organization against Alcoholism and Narcotics, Assistant Director, individual interview
- #3 Women's Organization, Chairperson, individual interview
- #4 Human Rights Organization, Chairperson, individual interview
- #5 Organization for Mutual Psychological Support, Leader, individual interview
- #6 Charitable Fund, Uzlovsky District, Tula Region, Director, individual interview
- #7 Organization of Intellectuals, Tula Region, Chairman, individual interview
- #8 Organization for Support of Women, Tula Region, Director, individual interview
- #9 Movement for Support of Social Initiatives, Tula Oblast, Leader, individual interview
- #10 Association for Mothers with Invalid Children, Leader, individual interview
- #11 Women's Organization, Tula Region, Chair, individual interview
- #12 Charitable Organization, Tula Region, Co-Chair, individual interview
- #13 Organization for Social Justice, Chair, individual interview
- #14 Political Consultative Council, Tula Region, Co-Chair, individual interview
- #15 Discussion Group of NGOs, Tula Region

(Interviews # 16-25 were with Tula Region Trade Union, Political Party, and Governmental Leaders, and will be listed in Report # 3)

### **Cheboksary NGOs**

**Interviews # 26-38 were conducted in city of Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic, November 24-26, 2004**

- #26 Consumer Protection Organization, Chairperson, individual interview
- #27 Organization for Support of Social Initiatives, Director, individual interview
- #28 Jewish Social-Cultural Center, Director, individual interview
- #29 Chuvash Social-Cultural Center, President, individual interview
- #30 Afghanistan Veterans' Organization, Chairperson, individual interview
- #31 Student and Youth Organization, Chairperson, individual interview
- #32 Organization to Support Women in Business, Leader, group discussion
- #33 Women's Organization, Leader, group discussion
- #34 Fund for Support of Social and Cultural Programs, Director, individual interview
- #35 Charitable Fund, Chairperson, individual interview
- #36 Youth Ecological Movement, Leader, group discussion
- #37 Youth Social Organization, Director, individual interview
- #38 Association for Gender Equality in Education and Employment, chairperson, group discussion
- #38a Young Invalids with Cerebral Palsy, Director, individual interview

(Interviews #39-48 were with Chuvash Region Trade Union, Political Party, and Governmental Leaders, and will be listed in Report # 3)

### Samara NGOs

**Interviews # 49-61 were conducted in Samara Region, in the City of Samara unless otherwise indicated, December 14-16, 2004**

- #49 Association for Legal Rights, Deputy Chairperson, group discussion
- #50 Policy Group, Chairperson, individual interview
- #51 Organization for Defense of Voters' Rights, Chair of Board group discussion
- #52 Consumers' Rights Organization, Chair of Board, group discussion
- #53 Charitable Organization for AIDS-infected, Chair of Board, group discussion
- #54 Social-Ecological Organization, Coordinator, group discussion
- #55 Children's Fund, Deputy Chair, group discussion
- #56 Women's Association, President, group discussion
- #57 Invalids' Social Organization, Chair of Regional Organization, group discussion
- #58 Association of Invalids, Press-Secretary, group interview
- #59 Ecological Organization, Coordinator, group interview
- #60 Organization of Veterans of Cultural Work, Chair of Committee, group interview
- #61 Regional Social Organization, Deputy Director, individual interview

(Interviews # 62-74 were with Samara Region Trade Union, Political Party, and Governmental Leaders, and will be listed in Report # 3)