

Women's NGOs in Russia: Struggling from the Margins

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Considerable discussion has emerged in recent years concerning the evolution of civil society in Russia. Most authors and observers focus on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in civil society, and optimists note the enormous growth in their numbers over the past decade as evidence that Russian civil society is flourishing in a post-Communist, democratic Russia. Authors have offered widely varying estimates of the total number of NGOs active in Russia today, ranging between 60,000 and 350,000.¹ However, we cannot look at numbers alone to gauge the success of civil society development. More important questions are, What are NGOs actually doing in Russia? and What is their role (actual or potential) in Russian democracy? What political and societal impact do NGOs have in Russia today? Do the recent developmental trends in the Russian NGO sector bode well for a civil society that bolsters and strengthens democratic institutions?

In this article I consider those questions in relation to one segment of the Russian NGO sector: women's organizations. Women's NGOs are an important sector to observe in Russian civil society for several reasons. First, women's movements are widely considered to be an important part of independent civil societies. With the growth of women's movements around the world in the second half of the twentieth century, women's NGOs are a prominent example of the kinds of nongovernmental advocacy organizations that have blossomed in democratic regimes. Practical observers have frequently upheld them as examples of the success of civil society in new democracies, or at least as a key component of the NGO sector that should be supported by donors of foreign democracy assistance.² Patrice McMahan points out that "the theoretical link between democratization and women's advocacy groups was, in fact, never questioned" by representatives of foreign assistance foundations.³

Second, based on their considerable resource support from Western governmental and nongovernmental donors, women's organizations arguably should

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have a relatively good chance of flourishing in Russia. Women's NGOs have received a great deal of material support from foreign donors because of the postulated link between women's civic activism and democratization, whereas many other Russian organizations, such as hobby clubs or pensioners' advocacy groups, have not been targets of significant support. If any portion of the Russian NGO sector can succeed based on resource mobilization today, women's organizations should be one of the success stories.

Finally, given their many problems and the extent of inequalities between men and women in Russia, we might expect a successful women's movement to grow on the basis of serious grievances. Ample scholarly work exists, both Russian and Western, that documents the unequal status and opportunities of women compared with those of men in Russia.⁴ On a multitude of fronts, including hiring practices, media portrayals, and treatment by law enforcement institutions in cases of domestic violence, women face blatant gender stereotypes and discrimination. In measures such as unemployment levels, salaries, domestic workloads, and representation in positions of power, women are vastly unequal to men. Reproductive health has always been an enormous problem, with abortions being the major form of birth control.

Despite these grievances, although the number of women's NGOs in existence in Russia has grown enormously over the past decade—from only a few dozen in 1990 to several thousand today—several problems continue to plague the women's movement, severely hampering its influence in both political circles and among the public at large. Below, I consider developments among Russian women's NGOs over the past decade as they relate specifically to the democracy-promoting potential of civil society. I draw on observations from my field study of women's organizations in seven regions around Russia, which was conducted in summer 1998 and from April 1999 to August 2000, and included semistructured interviews with approximately seventy women's NGOs.⁵

I first present a brief argument about the potential roles of NGOs in democratic regimes, and how civil society should be organized to foster democratization. I then describe the ways in which Russian women's NGOs have developed in post-Soviet Russia, detailing both positive and negative trends in terms of building democratic civil society. Finally, I explain the major barriers that hinder the development of the women's movement in terms of larger political, economic, and social-normative features of Russian life today. Many of the political and economic obstacles to success are problems that plague the contemporary NGO sector as a whole in Russia. The normative barriers to development, in contrast, are specific to women's issues. Widespread antifeminist ideas present major obstacles that are likely to continue to confront Russian women's NGOs even if the more general political and economic difficulties disappear in the foreseeable future.

The Role of NGOs in Democratization and Democracy

NGOs have been the prominent organizational form on which scholars and foreign policy practitioners have focused their attention in the civil societies of transitional states. Often, civil society and NGOs have been equated with one another.

er to the point of excluding other important areas of civil society, such as less-formal clubs and societal networks that act as important forums for building trust and engaging citizens in public discussion. Part of this emphasis on NGOs has come from an attempt to simplify the complicated concept of civil society into a notion that is easy to convey and analyze. Civil society is notoriously difficult to define, and the ways in which it promotes and strengthens democratic rule remain more postulated than proven.

Although scholars and policymakers have generally assumed that civil society is crucial to democratization, the proper configuration of civil society and how it creates and strengthens democratic institutions, as well as the specific role of NGOs in civil society, have been topics of ongoing debate in academic literature.⁶ Almost all authors concur that civil society is a sphere of public activities by citizens (outside of their homes and kinship organizations) that lies outside of state institutions and market activities. It is argued that without the development of a strong and active civil society that demands citizen participation in governance, democratic rule cannot be thoroughly consolidated.

Active civil societies are certainly empirically correlated with the persistence and strength of democratic regimes. However, a number of important theoretical questions regarding civil society remain under dispute in the existing literature on democratization. Authors differ significantly on the question of whether civil society should be delimited specifically as formal nongovernmental advocacy organizations, or extended to less-formal networks, relations, and values shared among citizens as a public. Analysts and real-world citizens alike also disagree about how active the state should be in guiding and shaping civil society, and whether participants in civil society should act as adversaries or partners of the state.⁷

Despite these controversies concerning the organization and roles of civil society, it is possible to distinguish some general signs of NGO development that incorporate the major features of most conceptions of democratic civil society, and are likely to increase the strength of democratic procedures and institutions, versus features that clearly will not promote democracy. Civil society is generally postulated to be a realm that acts as a forum for discussion of affairs of public interest and serves to communicate citizen preferences and demands to government. It is also a space where citizens can form links with like-minded individuals to pursue common interests. Thus when we consider the organizational form of NGOs in particular, it would seem that NGOs should exhibit certain characteristics to embody these ideals.

Characteristics of NGOs that relate to their role in civil society include autonomy from state manipulation of activities (although a certain amount of state funding is not excluded); knowledge of, communication with, or collaboration with other NGOs working on similar issues; outreach to the public constituencies to which the NGOs' activities are relevant; and, where appropriate to organizations' concerns, turning to state and government institutions to advocate improved public policy. Elements of general NGO sectoral development include public awareness of NGOs, positive public attitudes toward NGOs, a significant NGO

voice and influence in public affairs and politics, and the existence of active NGO associations or networks.

These organizational and sectoral characteristics are specific qualities of NGOs that indicate a role as an intermediary realm of activity and dialogue between individual citizens and the state. Outreach to public constituencies, dialogue with the state, and public awareness clearly further NGOs' role as intermediaries. Networking among NGOs indicates that they are working to build a sphere that can realistically be called a community of public discourse, which potentially can be mobilized in case NGOs' concerns or very existence are threatened by actions of the state.

On the Bright Side: Positive Trends in NGO Development

Among women's NGOs in Russia, we can see some encouraging signs that bode well for the gradual development of a more democratic society in Russia. First, and most visibly, over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in the number of self-initiated nongovernmental women's organizations in Russia. At the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, only a handful of independent women's groups existed, operating in a semiunderground manner; today, there are several thousand women's NGOs in Russia. This is a sign that Russia's female citizens are becoming more active in voluntary public life and that they see themselves as having important roles to play as political actors, philanthropists, social problem-solvers, and simply as autonomous citizens with diverse interests. Women's NGOs in Russia work on a vast range of issues and problems, from charity, hobbies, and professional interests to domestic violence, trafficking of women across borders, and gender stereotypes in the mass media.⁸

Analysts contributing to a recent directory of women's organizations in Russia estimated that in January 1998, approximately two thousand active nongovernmental women's organizations existed in Russia. They argued that, given the total number of NGOs registered in Russia at that time, women's organizations made up only 0.5 percent of all active Russian NGOs.⁹ Far more NGOs in Russia work in areas of sport and culture, ethnicity, the arts, environment, and issues dealing with children, the elderly, veterans, and disabled persons.¹⁰ The reasons for the relatively small numbers of women's NGOs in the overall NGO community have to do largely with normative resistance to feminism in Russia, which I discuss below. A noticeable "boom" in the creation of new women's organizations took place in the mid-1990s; now the rate at which new ones are forming appears to be slowing down.¹¹

Growth in numbers of NGOs does provide some indication of positive development in civil society—it indicates that more citizens are becoming interested in active participation in public life. However, numbers alone are not a reliable indicator of NGO development. For several reasons, increases in numbers of NGOs do not always indicate that more people are becoming involved in civil society. First, estimates of numbers of active NGOs in Russia are subject to considerable dispute, since many officially registered NGOs are in fact completely inactive, while other organizations that do a great deal of work have chosen not

to register. Often the unregistered organizations are composed of former dissidents who oppose government policies and continue to resist formal registration because they are reluctant to limit their activities according to Russian government regulations on NGO activities. In other cases, organizations with little or no income choose not to register to avoid the onerous task of filing quarterly tax reports to the federal government. Among officially registered NGOs, many are defunct but have not canceled their registration.

Second, numbers of organizations are deceptive, since it is not uncommon in Russia for a single individual or a handful of citizens to form multiple organizations. Laura Henry notes the phenomenon of the "NGI" or "non-governmental individual" in her article in this issue. My own research has confirmed this phenomenon; often, women activists have formed numerous registered NGOs within a single organization, either for the purpose of legally being able to carry out a wide range of activities, or to obtain more foreign grants, since foreign donors are usually reluctant to grant funds to the same organization repeatedly. Because of these phenomena, increased numbers of NGOs are not a thoroughly reliable indicator of increased numbers of citizens or amounts of activity in civil society.

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Nonetheless, in addition to the growth in sheer numbers of women's organizations, we can say that there is a women's movement in Russia today, given the nature of the relations among them. Women's groups operated in virtual isolation from one another in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In contrast, today, particularly in Russia's largest cities, women's organizations are much more networked with one another and have managed to organize national campaigns uniting dozens of NGOs on issues such as violence against women and the goal of increasing women's presence in politics. Thirty-four NGOs from regions across Russia, stretching from Moscow to Norilsk in the far north and Irkutsk in Siberia, are members of the Russian Association of Crisis Centers for Women (RACCW), founded in 1994. The political movement "Women of Russia" initiated a "Charter of Women's Solidarity" in 1997, and more than 300 women's organizations across a broad philosophical spectrum have signed it. Although the charter has not led to concrete political action, it represents a step toward identifying some principles on which many women's NGOs can agree. As I discuss below, there are serious limitations to the extent of collaboration among women's NGOs, including competition for foreign funding and the continuing relative isolation of NGOs in smaller cities and more remote regions. There are also considerable ideological rifts that persist between traditionalist organizations descended from Soviet monopoly organizations and newer, feminist NGOs. Yet given the grow-

ing number of women's NGOs in the country and gradually increasing amounts of information sharing, awareness of one another, and even collaboration on projects, we can now say that a women's movement—albeit a small one—exists and is gaining in strength.

Some testimony to this growing strength is that, in a few recent cases, the mass media have provided positive portrayals of women activists' work. Documentaries on the problems of domestic violence and sex trafficking have recently aired on major Russian television networks, and the occasional positive article has appeared in newspapers and magazines. One example is a serious portrayal of domestic violence on the well-known television discussion program *Vzglyad* (Viewpoint), broadcast across Russia, which took place during a conference of the RACCW in Moscow in 1999.¹² There are sporadic serious treatments of women's issues in newspapers, such as a biweekly column by the sympathetic journalist Nadezhda Azhgikhina in the popular newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*.¹³

Aside from these exceptions, most media references to women's organizations continue to be made in an ironic and misunderstanding manner. In my study, women's NGOs that had received significant media interest—mainly crisis centers—reported that their interviews had largely been misused and twisted into sensationalist stories of sexual violence. Crisis center staff members state that journalists and editors who have little real knowledge about domestic violence often revise and twist the words of activists to fit their own representations of the issue.¹⁴ An issue such as sexual harassment is “presented more as an entertainment genre than a social problem.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, the situation is improving gradually and women activists are beginning to find allies in the news media to increase public awareness of women's issues.

Another gradually improving area for women's groups is their relationships with politicians and bureaucrats. Women's NGOs are beginning to find more allies in the corridors of political power, and especially in the regions outside Moscow and St. Petersburg, they have begun to have an impact on public policy. For example, in Novgorod Oblast, the leader of the local “Women's Parliament” organization submitted a plan for promoting women's entrepreneurship in the region, which was included in the regional Social Chamber's (*Obshchestvennaya Palata*) recommendations for oblast economic policies. The regional government then accepted the plan wholesale as a matter of principle. The leader of the Women's Parliament, Irina Urtaeva, stated that the battle for such government recognition of NGOs in the Social Chamber had been an arduous one, but was finally yielding some successes:

It has been extremely difficult, and the first three years were completely unproductive. But now we can say that we have worked out techniques and work according to a collaborative principle.¹⁶

In the Udmurt Republic, the administration of the regional capital city, Izhevsk, has opened a municipally funded crisis center for women and children, which operates with a clearly Western, feminist approach to the problem of domestic violence. Most of the successes of women's NGOs in gaining some

voice in government policy processes have occurred at regional levels; but at the federal level, too, there have been a few significant public policy victories. For example, several years ago, women's NGOs, in concert with a key government ally, managed to win changes in the draft version of a new federal Labor Code. According to Yelena Yershova of the NIS-US Women's Consortium in Moscow, the support of a friendly deputy minister of justice, Lyudmila Zavadskaya, in addition to organized lobbying by women's NGOs against discriminatory bans on women's participation in certain occupations, resulted in the Duma's decision to "freeze" operation of the relevant article in the current Labor Code until the new Labor Code was reviewed.¹⁷

The disappointing side of these sporadic victories is that they occur in every case because there happen to be key individuals who are allies of the women's movement within the government. They do not occur because of any more general, institutionalized government commitment to dialogue with NGOs or to improving the status of women. In the case of the Russian draft Labor Code, Zavadskaya is a longtime academic colleague of many of Russia's prominent women activists and was previously closely associated with the Moscow Center for Gender Studies. In Izhevsk, the crisis center is the brainchild of Galina Shamshurina, the woman who heads the city's Committee on Family, Women's, and Children's Affairs. Luckily for women activists in the city, Shamshurina has attended many foreign- and Russian-sponsored seminars on women's issues in Izhevsk and Moscow and has long been convinced of the worth of women's NGOs. In fact, Shamshurina stated that she is often frustrated because she would like to see more activism on the part of women's NGOs, but that there remains "generally an inertia of the population" that translates into a lack of initiatives from grassroots citizens.¹⁸ Because positive political developments still depend on personal ties between women activists and individual politicians and bureaucrats, the policy victories that NGOs win are vulnerable to immediate collapse without those specific personal allies.

On the whole, there have been some small positive developments in the growth of the women's movement and the connectedness of women's NGOs with one another. If we compare today's situation with the movement described by Valerie Sperling in her study of the Russian women's movement in 1994-96, we can see that there has been growth in the numbers of women's NGOs existing, especially in regional locations, and some gradual improvements have taken place in NGOs' political clout and relations with the mass media in certain contexts.¹⁹

Areas of Weakness

The developments discussed above provide room for optimism concerning the prospects for Russian women's NGOs as an element of a democracy-promoting civil society. However, a number of characteristics of the Russian women's movement impede its ability to influence society and in some cases even work against its potential role in democratization. Chief among these weaknesses are a lack of connections with grassroots citizens, negative public opinion of the movement, poor links among NGOs, and extreme political weakness.

Lack of Connection with the Grassroots

The most crucial continuing deficiency of women's NGOs in Russia is that they are, on the whole, severely detached from the vast majority of Russian citizens and isolated from any influence at all on public opinion. Most Russians have no idea what women's organizations do, and if they have heard of women's NGOs, they usually have a decidedly negative attitude toward them. Women's NGOs do not often work to improve their public reputation; many that are truly independent of government influence work on academic topics and activities that involve very few people—such as conducting gender analysis of draft government legislation or holding seminars among small repeat groups of NGO activists. Exceedingly few women's organizations conduct any significant outreach activities with the broader public or specific constituencies of women. An indication of this lack of outreach is that, in my detailed study of approximately seventy women's NGOs in seven regions around Russia, I found that only 23 percent of the organizations engaged in any charity work whatsoever.²⁰ Only 20 percent engaged in any collaboration with or education of groups or constituencies outside the women's movement. Meanwhile, 51 percent reported conducting internal training sessions for their staff members, and 41 percent had organized conferences (mainly attended by women NGO leaders and government officials). Forty-one percent also reported producing and circulating information about themselves and their issues—but in most cases this was through Web sites or printed materials aimed at other women's NGOs or select politicians. In short, far more organizations engage in internal organizational and movement development than in activities that involve work with average citizens.

This pattern becomes even more pronounced when one considers specifically the work of Western-style, autonomous women's groups that demand social and political change in Russia. Such groups, typically feminist in orientation, almost never conduct public outreach. Among the 23 percent of organizations in the study that do engage in charity, for example, all but two are traditionalist organizations led by women who were firmly entrenched in the Soviet nomenklatura, and they remain mostly deferential to the desires of the current government. They provide crucial help to particular groups in need, such as indigent families or disabled children. However, most of these charitable organizations are not oriented in any way to the problems of women as women, such as employment discrimination or gender stereotyping in society. Instead, they personify women's traditional roles as caretakers of other vulnerable groups, and only a scattered few address the social problems that women face as political problems with connections to state priorities and choices.

There are a few shining examples of NGOs that do conduct outreach—such as crisis centers for victims of violence and women's business associations that assist women in navigating the difficult Russian economic environment. Fortunately, crisis centers for victims of violence do engage in the search for ways of collaborating with other groups and authorities in Russian society, such as the police, the medical community, and government prosecutors. Crisis centers made up half of the NGOs in the study that reported engaging in educational and col-

laborative activities with outside constituencies (six out of the twelve organizations that did so).

Outside the major cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, outreach activities are more common among NGOs, especially in regions such as Izhevsk and Novgorod, where the local and regional governments are fairly welcoming to NGOs. This difference between the metropolises and smaller provincial cities may be a common characteristic of NGO communities around the world. Yet in contrast to most Western democratic countries, there is a striking dearth of awareness and information about women's NGOs among the general public in Russia, which makes the need for outreach even more crucial. In addition, unlike Russian NGOs, large Western NGOs generally have significant memberships, to whom they send information about their activities. The problem of insufficient NGO outreach in Russia is caused by a number of factors, including a lack of the economic resources to inform citizens about themselves through the media, frequent reliance on Western donors rather than domestic supporters to survive materially, and a general suspicion that the broader public wouldn't understand their messages anyway. These problems are common to many other NGO sectors in Russia, such as environmental groups and human rights organizations. However, the problem of detachment from society is particularly severe among women's NGOs, due to an enduring level of hostility to feminist ideals among Russians.

Public Opinion Failure

In addition to a lack of outreach to average citizens, the Russian women's movement is plagued by a considerable public opinion problem. Women's NGOs are largely unknown to the wider population, partly because of the self-induced problem of detachment discussed above, but also in part because of mainstream mass media resistance to covering issues of gender inequality in a significant or serious manner. To the extent that citizens are aware of women's organizations, they often express negative attitudes toward them, arguing that women's groups are either useless for helping women, or too radical in their aims.²¹

Women's NGOs can be divided into two camps, both of which are unpopular in society. One camp consists of organizations that are traditional in value orientation and do important basic charity work, but are often politically dependent and refuse to "rock the boat" concerning society's problems. The other camp is feminist in orientation and wants, in theory, to change society, but is thoroughly detached from the public at large.

The "old-school" organizations, which are usually descendants of Soviet-era *zhensovety* (women's councils), are largely dismissed by new feminist NGOs and ordinary Russian women as being too dependent on the state and more interested in pursuing state objectives than in developing their priorities based on the needs of women. This reputation is fairly justly deserved, based on the organizations' Soviet-era history.

During the Soviet period, official *zhensovety* numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Their descendent organizations still number over one hundred within the structure of the Union of Russian Women.²² The organizations were created to pro-

mote the Soviet state's dual objectives of bringing women into the workforce and increasing the birthrate in Russia. The demands of a growing industrial economy and declining birthrates created a crisis surrounding Soviet women's productive and reproductive roles in society, and the *zhensovet* were created largely to help women combine the two roles more satisfactorily, rather than to help women to raise their social and political concerns from the grassroots upward. A second role of the *zhensovet* was to present a rosy picture of the status of women in the Soviet Union to international audiences. At foreign conferences and in international organizations such as the United Nations, the role of the Soviet Women's Committee (the apex of the *zhensovet* hierarchy) was to describe how well Soviet laws protected

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women's rights, despite the de facto conditions that women experienced: widespread discrimination and a double burden of workforce and household obligations in a society where men shared very little in domestic tasks and the Soviet standard of living made those tasks exceedingly onerous.

The Soviet regime's treatment of women's issues and the concept of feminism contributed to the development of strong antifeminist norms in Russian society. The nature of these norms is discussed further below, in the section on barriers to women's movement development. They have had the effect of engendering a great deal of hostility against the arguments and activities of new, independent, feminist-oriented women's NGOs in Russia. In turn, the more traditional *zhensovet*-type organizations also face a major public opinion problem as a consequence of their historical background as Soviet organizations. Because of the perceived hypocrisy of the *zhensovet*'s behavior and mandate in the Soviet period, and the continuing habit of most of them to be fairly cozy with regional governments, Russian women today tend to dismiss them as having no potential for helpful mobilization on their behalf.

There is thus an unfortunate convergence of societal rejection of past Soviet policies on women and basic acceptance of the Soviet view of feminism. Russian women tend to perceive feminist organizations as espousing an alien Western ideology unsuited to their conditions. At the same time, they view nonfeminist women's organizations that stem from the old *zhensovet* organizations as state-dominated and having no interest in resolving women's real problems. As a result, as Irina Jurna has described it, Soviet women's experience with gender issues consisted of “legally consolidated but unrealized equality,” which “drove the women's movement into a blind alley.”²³ In this “blind alley,” women activists cannot build upon the reputations of traditional, preexisting women's organizations; and at the same time, they cannot appeal easily to the transformational ideals of feminism, with its frequent emphasis on gender equality.

On a positive note, some exceptions to this general dismissal of women's organizations are gradually developing. Crisis centers that work on the problem of violence against women are gaining considerable respect in both society and state structures. Certain other groups, such as women's business organizations, have also begun to gain respect in some regions—but very slowly, and only in those cases where they have demonstrated over time that their members generate significant economic activity. But other NGO efforts, based on feminist approaches, to promote such goals as expanding gender studies in higher education, improving portrayal of women in the mass media, and battling sexual harassment against women in the workplace, have been largely unsuccessful and poorly received by the wider public.

Missing Links among NGOs

Another problem characterizing women's NGOs is that links and networks among them remain sporadic and weak. Women's NGOs in recent years, especially under the auspices of foreign grants, have undertaken projects to widen e-mail access among women's organizations, and to link organizations through e-mail listservs and Web sites on the Internet.²⁴ While these are helpful activities that have certainly brought more and more NGOs into contact with one another, there are still wide swaths of women's NGOs that remain isolated from organizations in the rest of the country.

Because of the enormous geographic size of the country, poor postal infrastructure, and high cost of telephone calls (relative to average incomes), those who do not possess e-mail are effectively precluded from regular communication with NGOs in other parts of the country. Organizations in rural areas and more remote regions have much less access to e-mail than those in Russia's largest cities. For example, when the Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF) set up a network of regional women's centers, it had to abandon attempts to include an NGO in the remote region of Buryatiya, because the Buryat organization had poor telecommunications resources and no e-mail.²⁵ Nearly all of the NGOs interviewed in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Yekaterinburg had access to e-mail, but in Izhevsk, only three out of eleven did. Of the old-style *zhensovet* organizations in the study, only the one in Vladivostok had e-mail. These organizations never receive foreign funding, and e-mail access is often provided through foreign grants. Foreign donors typically avoid working with *zhensovet* organizations, which are viewed as being too traditional in orientation and too closely tied to the state. As a result, this branch of women's organizations is detached from many communication networks.

Hence, a limited network tends to develop of NGOs that are in the loop of nationwide communications. A fairly small proportion of NGOs have knowledge of and access to those networks, and overlapping circles of NGOs participate in them. As a result, many NGOs are completely unaware of organizations in other regions, or even nearby, that are engaging in similar efforts and might be good partners for collaboration.

Moreover, analysis shows that information networks such as those run by

ICIWF and the NIS-US Women's Consortium, both Moscow-based organizations, rarely bring about active mobilization on the part of subscribers. Instead, the networks are used mostly for passive information-sharing tasks. In this sense, although the networks are of course important, since they allow information to spread more widely than ever before, their mobilizing potential should not be overestimated. In a detailed report on the influences of foreign-funded information networking projects on Russian women's NGOs, Tina Nelson states that "despite the significant benefits of being connected, such as feeling part of a larger community, and gaining information about grants and conferences, it is clear that the women's networks which have been developed are not being exploited to their full potential for membership-building, outreach and advocacy."²⁶

Political Weakness

Finally, and perhaps most important, women's NGOs, like most NGOs in Russia, usually lack mechanisms for effective dialogue with levels of government that would allow their voices to be heard in public policy discussions. Bureaucrats and politicians have largely dismissed the concerns of women's NGOs as trivial or wrong-headed, with a few fortunate exceptions such as those noted earlier.

At the federal level, one can easily argue that the clout of the women's movement in policy circles has in fact decreased in recent years, as key government allies of the early to mid-1990s are no longer in their posts. Yekaterina Lakhova of the Women of Russia Movement is no longer head of the President's Commission on Women, Family, and Demography, and it is unclear what role the commission is now playing. Galina Klimantova, the previous, accommodating head of the Duma Committee on Women, Family, and Youth, was replaced initially by a Communist Party deputy, Alevtina Oparina, who was decidedly less friendly to women's NGOs.²⁷ After the 1999 elections, another Communist single-mandate deputy from Primorskii Krai, Svetlana Goryacheva, replaced Oparina. Goryacheva has tried to initiate dialogue with women's NGOs more than Oparina did, especially in the Russian Far East; nevertheless, she is not an ally of less-traditional, feminist NGOs in the way that Klimantova was.

In addition to the changes in government policy committees, and partly contributing to them, women's NGOs suffered another blow when the Women of Russia political bloc lost its seats in the federal Duma in the 1995 elections and decided not to run as a bloc on the ballot for the 1999 Duma elections. The status quo, then, despite some positive developments in the regions, is that women's NGOs remain ostracized from dialogue in the corridors of power, with only a few exceptions.

Thus, the major problems of the Russian women's movement, as concerns our main questions of civil society development and democratization, are that it lacks connection with the population at large; it faces hostile public opinion; it suffers from a shortage of broadly inclusive, active communication networks; and it has hardly any political influence. These are formidable problems indeed, when we consider that to play its putative role as a force promoting democratization of society and state, civil society must have strong connections both with citizens at

large and with the state. In the case of the women's movement, NGOs for the most part have only tenuous links to the very constituency that they claim to represent—Russian women. Without the support and confidence of average Russian women behind them, women's NGOs are also unable to make a strong case for their right to make claims on the state. And without effective links and a division of labor within the movement that benefit from different groups' comparative advantages in knowledge and strength, the movement is unlikely to attain visible changes in public policy or societal attitudes and behaviors.

Barriers to Women's Movement Development

Several factors underlie the weaknesses of the Russian women's movement. Most are the same aspects of Russian politics and society that contribute to numerous other problems in Russia. They fall under three broad categories: political, economic, and normative barriers.

Political Barriers

Women's NGOs have exceedingly little influence in the policymaking process, especially at the national level. Generally in Russia, there are very few channels through which cash-poor civil society actors can exert political influence. Political parties have not developed patterns of working closely with NGO allies or conducting significant outreach to voters.²⁸ Thus, the traditional Western pattern of civil society coalitions uniting behind political parties and politicians, who then owe allegiance to NGO supporters, does not exist. Relations between NGOs and political parties in the 1990s have been distant and tenuous where they exist at all.

In addition to the disconnect between political parties and NGOs, the power of NGOs to influence politics is hampered by a government system that allows NGOs hardly any input, while at the same time wielding a great degree of control over their very right to exist. Today, at the federal level, it is unclear where the Putin administration is headed on questions of relations with the NGO sector in general. On the one hand, the federal government has tried to tighten control on citizens' activities in the political sphere by increasing surveillance, placing stricter registration demands on organizations, and in some cases of clearly adversarial organizations such as the Glasnost Defense Fund, sending police raids in to intimidate outspoken critics.²⁹ Women's NGOs have not been subjected to this kind of harassment—human rights and environmental NGOs are more frequently victims of it—mainly because women's NGOs are viewed by most officials as irrelevant and weak. However, crackdowns on sectors of NGOs that articulate oppositional views indicate a tendency within the current leadership to approach NGOs as bodies that should be loyal to government policies and subject to punishment or eradication if they express serious dissent.

On the other hand, the president recently initiated a discussion with NGOs to learn about their needs and demands through a "Civic Forum" in Moscow, which gathered together approximately 3,500 NGOs from across Russia in November 2001 to discuss their problems and desires with the president and his representatives. Only time will tell whether this gesture was a sincere first step toward cre-

ating mechanisms of policy dialogue between NGOs and government or an attempt to control them. Despite the deep fears of many independent activists leading up to the forum, at least “nothing bad happened.” In the words of renowned environmental activist Alexander Nikitin, “we didn’t establish a ministry of civil society; there was no government representation of civil society [set up], so we didn’t do anything bad.”³⁰

There are formal instruments in place in the Russian government that could legitimize activists’ calls for input into government policymaking in the future. International conferences and legal conventions have placed a spotlight on women’s issues in recent decades: most notably, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms

“The ongoing, deep difficulties of economic transition in Russia have meant that few Russian citizens can, or are willing to, direct money to charitable causes.”

of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Russia’s or the Soviet Union’s official adoption of the principles of these policies and conventions has led to the creation of several legislative acts and government bodies focused on improving the status of Russian women, at both regional and

federal levels. Examples include the Presidential Commission on Women, Family, and Demography and the Duma Committee on Women, Family, and Youth, mentioned above, as well as a unique Department for Family, Women’s, and Children’s Affairs within the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and an interdepartmental Governmental Commission on Improving the Status of Women. Although these mechanisms exist formally, they have had very little power to influence political decisions or the social or economic status of Russian women, since by and large, the government has not endowed these committees and commissions with any financial resources to implement international standards. Yelena Yershova of the NIS-US Women’s Consortium notes that “there is not a single kopeck in the [state] budget dedicated to improving women’s status. That means that everything looks well resolved on paper, but in reality, there are practically no concrete solutions.”³¹ One staff member of the Duma Committee on Women, Family, and Youth stated in an interview that “the government’s executive organs [often] have to reject our laws, not because they don’t understand their importance, but because they know that they cannot realistically fulfill them.”³²

As mentioned earlier, women activists at more local levels in some of Russia’s regions, such as Novgorod and Udmurtiya, have been more successful than Moscow activists in achieving political solutions to women’s problems and attaining greater participation by women in leadership positions. Among the women activists I interviewed in 1999 and 2000, there was a widespread opinion that women’s NGOs in “the provinces” were able to achieve better results in working with their local governments than were NGOs in larger cities and at the federal

level, since officials were easier to reach in smaller towns and regions. Olga Lipovskaya of the Petersburg Center for Gender Issues described this difference particularly well: "It's easier to make contact with regional government—power is simply closer there."³³ This is likely to be an experience shared by many other kinds of Russian NGOs, in addition to women's organizations.

Nonetheless, in many regions where local leaders are even less receptive than average for Russia to the participation of NGOs in policy discussions, independent women's NGOs are even weaker than they are at the federal level. Often in such regions, descendent organizations from the former Soviet *zhensovet*y are well connected to regional political leaders; however, newer NGOs that are more critical of government policies and insist on their autonomy from the state tend to be marginalized and discouraged in their attempts to exert any influence on public policy. In my field study, the cities where such relations prevailed included especially Vladivostok and Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East. In those two cities, the local mayors and governors lead their territories almost as fiefdoms and see little role for ordinary citizens in government. Several independent-minded women activists in those two cities complained that local government officials were completely ignorant of the democratic idea that civil society should be autonomously formed and able to represent the diverse views of citizens in policy discussions. Said one leader of a women's organization in Vladivostok:

They treat us as in the old days, . . . The [Krai] Committee for Public Relations tells me that there are certain organizations they are "friendly" with, while others with which they are not, and that we must stick to their list of "friends" as partners to work with. . . . They are used to the past environment, when only one organization existed.³⁴

With this kind of government resistance to acknowledging an autonomous NGO sector, it is clear that the women's movement will have a tremendously difficult road ahead to improve its strength in the policymaking arena.

Economic Barriers

As others have pointed out very well, the economic environment in which the vast majority of NGOs are operating in Russia is not conducive to their development.³⁵ The ongoing, deep difficulties of economic transition in Russia have meant that few Russian citizens can, or are willing to, direct money to charitable causes. Most people are having trouble making basic ends meet, so that very few could be potential donors to NGOs in the current situation. Moreover, even among those who do have extra income that could be donated to charity organizations, a great deal of mistrust pervades people's perceptions of what NGOs would do with donated money. A recent poll by the Russian ROMIR Research Group revealed that only 23 percent of respondents were willing to support the charity activities of NGOs, while 64 percent were not willing to do so.³⁶ Figures such as this reflect mistrust that has grown especially out of scandals in the early 1990s, such as one in which sports and Afghan war veterans associations abused their tax privileges by allowing commercial businesses to be run in their guise. Many fear that "charitable organizations are a cover for dubious activities."³⁷

Another economic obstacle for NGOs is that, unlike most Western countries' tax laws, the Russian tax code allows taxpayers and businesses to deduct donations from their taxes only for a very narrow range of charitable causes.³⁸ As a result, there is little incentive for individuals or businesses to donate funds to activist nonprofit organizations. In addition, many fear that if they make such donations openly, they will be advertising their actual income level to the federal government, thereby betraying the fact that they are concealing part of their income from taxation, as most businesses do in Russia.³⁹

Unfortunately for women's organizations, those individuals and businesses that are willing to donate to charitable organizations direct their attention almost entirely to basic charity organizations, such as those for needy children or the disabled, rather than to advocacy NGOs that work to promote the aims of particular interest groups. Many businesses that donate to charities do so as a means of advertising their integrity.⁴⁰ The preferred way to do this in Russia is to donate to the neediest sections of society. Women's rights are not a popular cause in Russia, and supporting them financially does not bring public praise to Russian firms.

Because women's NGOs experience huge difficulties in attempting to raise funds from domestic sources, and Western donors are extremely interested in developing Russian civil society, Russian women's organizations have become significantly dependent on funding from the West to guarantee their economic survival. While it is tremendously helpful to NGOs to receive financial resources from Western donors, and many would be much weaker or would have disappeared without such support, dependence on Western money brings other dangers for NGO development. Foreign funding is the number one source of financial support for women's NGOs in Russia. In my study, 67 percent of women's NGOs had received foreign funding at some point, and 42 percent received the majority of their funding from foreign sources. According to the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), a British organization that studies the Russian NGO sector, feminist and human rights organizations overall receive 90 percent of their financing from Western grantmaking organizations.⁴¹

Such funds typically do not come without strings attached, in terms of the kinds of projects they support. Foreign donors most often offer grants for NGOs to fulfill particular projects and programs delineated by them, rather than proposed by Russian NGOs themselves. American donors, the largest donors to NGOs in Russia, are especially inclined to work using this top-down rather than demand-driven strategy. Throughout the 1990s, projects focused a great deal on organizing conferences for NGOs and developing NGO sector infrastructure, such as electronic information networks, resource centers, newsletters, and Web sites. American donors have strongly favored Russian women's groups that hold liberal feminist views rather than those that are more traditionally oriented. For example, academic gender studies centers and crisis centers for women have been far more popular with foreign donors than organizations that teach women new job skills.

The greatest question facing Western-funded women's organizations is that of their long-term sustainability. When Western donors eventually decide to leave

Russia—and the question really is when rather than if, with government super-donors such as USAID and the EU's Tacis program planning their exits—how will women's NGOs survive, if they have not successfully cultivated domestic sources of financing? Western donors claim to be working on long-term sustainability plans with their grantees by encouraging them to seek out new forms of support. However, so far, success in this area has been minimal; Western donors remain the only generous source of funds, and the most efficient one. One Russian leader of an NGO resource center stated that “writing grant applications is a more reliable and worthwhile method of obtaining income,” in terms of time invested versus results, than any other available fundraising technique.⁴² So far there is little success on the domestic fund-raising front to entice advocacy NGOs to attempt to raise more money locally.

The political and economic problems I have outlined here are much more acute for women's rights NGOs than for basic charity organizations or even some other advocacy NGOs such as environmental groups. The reasons for the especially difficult development path of women's organizations are largely normative ones, related to historically rooted, negative attitudes toward the ideal of gender equality and the concept of feminism.

Normative Barriers

Unfortunately for women's NGOs that are interested in improving the observance of women's rights or gender equality in Russia, there are strong norms in Russian society that make such goals extraordinarily difficult to attain. The way in which gender issues have been treated historically in Russia has contributed to a general resistance to feminist ideals, including the norms of women's emancipation and equality. In my conversations with Russian women from all walks of life over the past decade, I have found that although they often express the certainty that they are stronger and more capable than their male counterparts, they largely reject the idea of attributing women's lower status in Russian public life to explicit discrimination or structural gender inequalities. Other authors have also found this to be true.⁴³

A recent study by Vannoy et al. found through in-depth interviews and a large-scale survey that most Russians reject the concept of “gender”—that is, the socially constructed aspects of male and female roles—and instead “essentialism regarding men and women is widely accepted in Russian political discourse.”⁴⁴ While essentialist views of gender roles are common in many countries, there is evidence to indicate that they are stronger in Russia than in most Western countries. For example, the 1990–93 World Values Survey, which studied people's values in forty countries around the world, found the opinion that men should be the primary breadwinners to be much stronger in Russia than in nearly all Western countries (with the exceptions of Italy and Austria).⁴⁵ According to the survey, 40 percent of Russians agreed with the statement, “When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women.”⁴⁶ In contrast, 24 percent of Americans, 19 percent of Canadians, and 8 percent of Swedes agreed with the statement. Along similar lines, in the same survey, 91 percent of Russian respondents “strongly agreed”

or “agreed” with the statement, “A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children.”⁴⁷ This compared with 59 percent of Irish, 56 percent of American, and 43 percent of Canadian respondents.⁴⁸

Russian women’s antipathy to feminism stems mostly from dynamics of the Soviet era, which de facto continued pre-Soviet societal patterns of gender discrimination and inequality, even though Soviet laws, on paper, were some of the world’s most progressive in terms of gender equality. Soviet women’s right to vote, the principle of equal pay for equal work, and relatively generous paid leave and daycare benefits were legislated early on. Yet the early experiments with policies to advance the status of women were soon abandoned in the Soviet Union. In 1930, Stalin closed the *Zhenotdel* (Women’s Division), declaring that Soviet women had attained freedom and equality with men and that there was no need for special women’s organizations. From that point until the late Soviet period, official discussion of eroding traditional forms of gender inequality was virtually nonexistent, and feminism was denounced as a luxury of bourgeois Western women.

Two general tendencies in Russian public opinion have resulted from Soviet antifeminist propaganda and the failure to bring about actual equality, in spite of the prominence of “equality” as an ideal in official Communist declarations. First, to a considerable extent, Russian men and women believed Soviet official descriptions of Western feminism and the argument that it was entirely unsuited to Russian conditions. But also, women saw with abundant clarity that in fact they were not equal to men, despite Soviet declarations of equality and the “defeminization” of the Soviet ideal woman, depicted in images of male and female tractor drivers toiling side by side. As discussed above, the official *zhensovet* women’s organizations worked vigorously to ensure that women more effectively fulfilled their “double burden” of duties at home and at work to support state goals, instead of focusing on developing more equitable domestic and professional roles for men and women.

From the perspective of many Russian women, the Soviet state granted them legal equality with men and promoted uniform images of men and women, particularly in the labor market—yet this “equality” did not improve women’s lives. Observers of Russian gender issues widely acknowledge that the Soviet treatment of female roles created a backlash against the idea of equality between the sexes. Feminist Olga Voronina explains that “for the average Soviet woman, emancipation is what she already has, that is, a lot of work, under the guise of equality with men.”⁴⁹

Russian citizens also largely reject the idea that women face discrimination. One women’s NGO in the Siberian city of Tomsk notes: “Inequality of women in Russia is not perceived as overt discrimination, which, according to general opinion, does not exist in our country.”⁵⁰ Indeed, when a poll of Moscow residents by the ROMIR agency in March 2001 asked which groups in society suffer from discrimination, only 2.8 percent agreed that women suffer from discrimination. This was half the number of respondents who stated that children are victims of discrimination (5 percent), and less than one-third the number who replied that the disabled are victims of discrimination (9.8 percent).⁵¹ Yelena Yershova of the NIS-US

Women's Consortium in Moscow remarks that the biggest challenge to the women's movement is the general "patriarchal character" of Russian society: "Even my friends and colleagues are hostile. Everyone knows that violence, harassment, and discrimination exist, but no one is willing to discuss it."⁵²

The result is that, in the post-Soviet context, Russian women frequently view feminist organizations as espousing an alien Western ideology unsuited to their conditions. Because of disparaging accounts they have heard about feminism and feminists, Russians tend to perceive feminist organizations negatively, as being composed of radical, lonely, and probably lesbian women. They interpret feminism as advocating equality as "sameness" with men, in fact wiping out the appealing differences between the sexes, just as Soviet ideology did. At the same time, they view non-feminist women's organizations that stem from the old *zhensovet*y as being nomenklatura organizations that have no interest in resolving women's real problems.

Thus, Russian women's organizations face a number of political and economic obstacles to development that they share with other kinds of Russian NGOs. In addition, though, organizations pursuing goals that could in any way be branded "feminist" face unique normative barriers to success that render political and economic obstacles even more severe.

Conclusion

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, women's NGOs have made some visible gains in terms of the numbers of organizations existing and the extent of networks among organizations. There have also been some glimmers of success, particularly at regional levels, in developing dialogue with government agencies concerning the policy goals of women's NGOs. But the women's movement continues to be plagued by internal and external problems that are unquestionably formidable. It remains largely depoliticized, fragmented, and detached from its purported constituency—women.

These problems have implications not only for the development of a women's movement, but also for the strength of democratic institutions in Russia. Women's organizations exist in fairly large numbers, and the population of women's NGOs has grown enormously in the past ten years. Yet in contrast to theoretical accounts of what a civil society should look like if it is to strengthen democracy, this large segment of NGOs remains mostly disconnected from the concerns of average Russian women, largely irrelevant politically, and weakly networked for potential mobilization. This is the case despite the fact that Russia is a country where women face inequalities that are shocking in magnitude by Western standards; certainly, there is no shortage of grievances to protest. When the larger political, economic, and normative factors inhibiting the development of women's NGOs are taken into account, the inability of Russian NGOs to galvanize women and to mobilize effectively to protest and resolve their problems is hardly surprising.

Women's NGOs share the structural political and economic obstacles they face with most other kinds of nongovernmental organizations in Russia today, although the normative obstacles that plague them are rather unique to mobiliza-

tion on the basis of gender. Unfortunately, those barriers are likely to erode only very gradually. Nonetheless, there are ways in which women's NGOs could improve their public clout, such as through framing their appeals in terms of principles of basic human dignity and the rights of all citizens to equal opportunities, rather than in terms of women's equality or discrimination against women, which are terms that provoke immediate negative reaction from most of Russian society. The success of the movement for crisis centers for women in Russia is one bright example of how appeals to the norm of basic human dignity can work well to promote women's rights under existing circumstances. The key to sustainable development of a movement that improves the status of women and strengthens democratic processes in Russia is the formation of strong connections with constituencies of ordinary Russians. Only then can the movement be a credible intermediary between individuals and government and thereby play a role in the democratization of the regime.

NOTES

1. The minimum number of 60,000 was stated in 2000 by Moscow's Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights, and includes 25 percent of the organizations registered officially with the Russian Ministry of Justice (Anna Sevortian, "Territoria NKO: Granitsy otkryty [NGO Territory: Open Borders]" (retrieved 5 October 2001 from <<http://www.asi.org.ru/asinfo/70565>>). The figure of 350,000 is cited by Marina Slobodskaya, president of the Institute of Problems of Civil Society in Moscow (cited in Valery P Liubin, "Government and Civil Society in Contemporary Russia: Prospects for Mutual Cooperation," Summary of Roundtable at Moscow's 'President-Hotel,' 13 June 2001, translated by Joan Barth Urban, printed in Johnson's Russia List #5324, 27 June 2001). Available at <<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson>>.

2. See, for example, Embassy of Canada, "Kanadskii fond podderzhki rossiiskikh zhenshchin [Canadian Fund for Support of Women's Initiatives]," (Pamphlet) (Moscow: Embassy of Canada, 2000); United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Europe and Eurasia (E&E), Office of Democracy and Governance, "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story," (Washington, DC: USAID, 1999), 35; Westminster Foundation for Democracy, "What We Fund," retrieved 27 April 2001 from <http://www.wfd.org/wfd.asp?sn=who_we_are&pg=what_we_fund>.

3. Patrice C McMahon, "What a Difference They Have Made: International Actors and Women's NGOs in Poland and Hungary," Report prepared for the Columbia University Project on Evaluating Western NGO Strategies for Democratization and the Reduction of Ethnic Conflict in the Former Communist States (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998), retrieved 15 August 2000 from <<http://www.ceip.org/programs/democr/NGOs>>, 11.

4. For example, see Monica S. Fong, "The Role of Women in Rebuilding the Russian Economy," *Studies of Economies in Transformation* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1993); Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Hilary Pilkington, "Behind the Mask of Soviet Unity: Realities of Women's Lives," in *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Chris Corrin (London: Scarlet Press, 1992); Natalia Zakharova, Anastasia Posadskaya, and Natalia Rimashevskaya, "Kak my reshaem zhenskii vopros [How We Solve the Woman Question]," *Kommunist* 4 (1989).

5. The entire study also involved close examination of soldiers' rights organizations and select interviews with other kinds of Russian NGOs. In total, the study included 114

interviews with Russian NGOs. The cities included in the study were Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Izhevsk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Veliky Novgorod.

6. See Antony Black, *State, Community and Human Desire: A Group-Centred Account of Political Values* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988); J. L. Cohen and A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Larry Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Paul Kubicek, *Unbroken Ties: The State, Interest Associations, and Corporatism in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Philippe C. Schmitter, "Civil Society East and West," in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, ed. Larry Diamond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

7. Black; John A. Hall, ed., *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995); Alison Van Rooy, ed., *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The Politics and Promise* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1998), 24–7, 46–7.

8. Note that, unlike Abubikirova et al., I do not include organizations of soldiers' mothers under the rubric of women's organizations, even though they are a huge community of NGOs with mostly female membership (N.I. Abubikirova et al., *Spravochnik: Zhenskii nepravitel'stvennye organizatsii Rossii i SNG [Directory: Women's NGOs in Russia and the CIS]* (Moscow: Women's Information Network, 1998), 10. I consider women's organizations to be those that work on issues of concern or interest primarily to women. In contrast, soldiers' mothers' organizations are concerned with the rights of soldiers rather than questions that are traditionally classified as "women's" issues. In fact, soldiers' mothers' groups themselves overwhelmingly identify themselves as "human rights" organizations more than "women's" organizations (as stated, for example, by Valentina Melnikova, interview with author, Moscow, 9 February 2000; and by Ella Polyakova, Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg, interview with author, St. Petersburg, 12 August 1999).

9. Abubikirova, *Spravochnik*, 10.

10. For example, the list of registered NGOs in Khabarovsk krai includes 41 NGOs in the combined category of "women, family and youth," but 124 sports organizations, 137 religious organizations, 49 organizations for the disabled, 49 ecological, and 51 veteran and charity organizations, among others (Khabarovsk krai 2000). An independent study by the Charities Aid Foundation found that 30 percent of Russian NGOs were social welfare organizations, 24 percent "interest groups" (clubs and interests), and 10 percent each environmental, human rights, and cultural. Women's organizations comprised only 1 percent (see Charities Aid Foundation International, *Working with the Nonprofit Sector in Russia* (London: Basic Work, 1997), 2.8–2.9.).

11. Abubikirova, *Spravochnik*, 12.

12. That the issue was taken seriously on the program was stated by a staff member of a feminist-oriented Izhevsk crisis center, whose director appeared as one of the interviewees on the program. Maria Likhacheva, head specialist for social psychological work, Tyoplyi Dom [Warm Home] Women's Crisis Center, interview with author, Izhevsk, 14 April 2000.

13. Azhgikhina is co-president of the Russian Association of Women Journalists, in addition to being a regular columnist.

14. Yelena Potapova, hotline director, ANNA Crisis Center, interview with author, Moscow, 12 May 1999; Natalya Khodyreva, director, St. Petersburg Psychological Crisis Center, interview with author, St. Petersburg, 6 October 1999.

15. Zoya Khotkina, ed., *Seksual'nye domogatel'stva na rabote [Sexual Harassment in the Workplace]* (Moscow: ABA-CEELI, 1996), 16.

16. Irina Urtaeva, president, Novgorod Women's Parliament, interview with author, Veliky Novgorod, 22 February 2000.

17. Yelena Yershova, coordinator, NIS-US Women's Consortium, interview with author, Moscow, 21 July 1998.

18. Galina Shamshurina, chair, Committee on Family, Women's, and Children's Affairs, Izhevsk City Administration, interview with author, Izhevsk, 12 April 2000.

19. Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

20. Note that in choosing the sample of women's organizations to interview, I actively sought out as diverse a range of organizations as possible, including both feminist and non-feminist groups, foreign-funded and non-foreign-funded, newly organized and long-existing.

21. Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia*, Ch. 3. My personal experience in Russia confirms this. Whenever I have mentioned that I study women's organizations in conversations with "regular" Russian women (that is, women who are not NGO activists), invariably they have smirked and asked why I bother to study such useless organizations.

22. Soviet-era count stated by Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (Toronto: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 210.; current count stated by Irina Vladimirova, Union of Women of Russia, interview with author, Moscow, 31 March 1999.

23. Irina Jurna, "Women in Russia: Building a Movement," in *From Basic Needs to Basic Rights: Women's Claim to Human Rights*, ed. Margaret Schuler (Washington, D.C.: Women Law and Development International, 1995), 482.

24. Major funders of electronic information projects among Russian women's NGOs have included George Soros' Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation with USAID, IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board), and Project Harmony.

25. Lidia Yurovskaya, ICIWF, interview with author, Moscow, 29 July 1998.

26. See also Nelson regarding a foundation program evaluator's finding that a high percentage of e-mail addresses of NGOs subscribing to national networks were either defunct or rarely checked by their owners. Tina Nelson, "Democratization, NGOs and New Technologies: Building Connectivity for Russian Women's Groups," Report prepared for the Columbia University Project on Evaluating Western NGO Strategies for Democratization and the Reduction of Ethnic Conflict in the Former Communist States (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), retrieved 15 August 2000 from <<http://www.ceip.org/programs/democr/NGOs/Nelson.pdf>>), 14–15.

27. See Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia*, 125–28.

28. Ronald J. Hill, "Parties and Public Organisations," in *Developments in Russian Politics*, Vol. 4, ed. Stephen White, Alex Pravda, and Zvi Gitelman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Sarah E. Mendelson, "Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Russia: Between Success and Failure," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001): 79–80.

29. Paul Goble, "Russia: Analysis From Washington—A Threat to the Growth of Civil Society," *RFE/RL* (24 May), printed in Johnson's Russia List #3304, 25 May 1999, available at <<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson>>; Information Center of the Human Rights Movement and Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights, "Doklad o faktakh narushenii v khode pervichnoi registratsii i pereregistratsii obshchestvennykh organizatsii v Rossiiskoi federatsii v 1999 godu [Report on the facts of violations in the process of initial registration and re-registration of public organizations in the Russian Federation in 1999]," retrieved 16 May 2001 from <<http://www.hro.org/docs/reps/ngo/index.htm>>; Sarah Karush, "Police Storm Glasnost Foundation," *Moscow Times*, 30 August 2000; Boris Pustintsev, "The Kremlin and Civil Society," *Moscow Times*, 22 October 2001.

30. Alexander Nikitin, Lecture delivered at the Russia and Eurasia Program Seminar, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 13 December 2001, retrieved 24 December 2001 from <civilsoc-admin@vhost1.partners-intl.net>.

31. Yelena Yershova, coordinator, NIS-US Women's Consortium, interview with author, Moscow, 24 March 1999.

32. Zinaida Suslova, consultant to the Committee Apparatus, Russian State Duma Committee on Women, Family, and Youth, interview with author, Moscow, 1 April 1999.

33. Lipovskaya, interview.

34. Anonymous leader of a women's organization, interview with author, Vladivostok, 9 November 1999. Four women's NGOs in Vladivostok and two in Khabarovsk made similar comments concerning their regional governments.

35. Nina Y. Belyaeva, "Charity of Strangers? Philanthropy in the Russian Commercial Sector," edited by Franklin M. Parlamis (Moscow: Interlegal Foundation), retrieved 15 March 1997 from <<http://solar.rtd.utk.edu/~ccsi/resource/chrtysttr.htm>>; Yulia Bredun, "Pomoshch' idet peshkom [Help arrives on foot]," *Itogi*, 19 January 1999; Sevortian, "Territorii NKO"; Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia*, 169–74.

36. Rossiiskoe obshchestvennoe mnenie i issledovanie rynka (ROMIR), "Rossiiane o blagotvoritel'nosti [Russians on charity]," retrieved 18 May 2001 from <http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/08_2000/charity.htm>.

37. Charities Aid Foundation International, 2.25.

38. See Article 219 in Part II of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation, which specifies allowances for deducting charitable donations to scientific, cultural, educational, health-care, social-security, and sports organizations, Ministry of Taxes and Revenue of the Russian Federation, "Nalogovyi kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Tax Code of the Russian Federation]," retrieved 4 June 2002 from <http://www.garant.ru/nal_mon/10800200/10800200-043.htm#20023>.

39. Belyaeva, "Charity of Strangers?"

40. *Ibid.*

41. Charities Aid Foundation International.

42. Anonymous staff member of Khabarovsk NGO resource center, interview with author, 1 December 1999.

43. Jurna, "Women in Russia"; Dana Vannoy et al., *Marriages in Russia: Couples During the Economic Transition* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999); Olga Voronina, "Zhen-shchina i sotsializm: opyt feministского analiza [Woman and socialism: the experience of feminist analysis]," in *Feminizm: vostok, zapad, Rossiia [Feminism: East, West, Russia]*, ed. M. T. Stepaniants (Moscow: Nauka, 1993).

44. Vannoy et al., *Marriages in Russia*, 5.

45. In Italy, 43 percent of respondents supported the statement; in Austria, 50 percent. The World Values Survey included 1961 respondents in Russia.

46. Ronald Inglehart, Miguel Basáñez, and Alejandro Menéndez Moreno, *Human Values and Beliefs: a Cross-Cultural Sourcebook: Political, Religious, Sexual, and Economic Norms in 43 Societies; Findings from the 1990-1993 World Values Survey* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), V128.

47. Inglehart, Basáñez, and Menéndez Moreno, V220.

48. Russia was the country with the third-highest approval of this statement, behind Lithuania (97 percent) and Czechoslovakia (93 percent), and tied with India.

49. Voronina, "Zhenshchina i sotsializm," 223.

50. Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum, "Informatsionnyi listok," (16[112]), retrieved 5 May 1999 from <iciwf@glas.apc.org>.

51. Rossiiskoe obshchestvennoe mnenie i issledovanie rynka (ROMIR), "Moskvichi o diskriminatsii v Rossii [Muscovites on discrimination in Russia]," retrieved 18 May 2001 from <<http://www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/032001/discrimination.htm>>.

52. Yershova, interview, 21 July 1998.