

Government and Nonprofit Cooperation in Russia: Serving Older Adults.

The topic of older people in Russia has been a difficult issue. After the economic and ideological changes of the 90's older people have shifted to be the most vulnerable, poor and disrespected group in the Russian population. As historically Russia has been a paternalistic state, everyone is still expecting it to play the leading role in taking care of the elderly and protecting older people's rights and interests. Cooperation with the nongovernmental organizations was difficult mainly because of the recent history, when most nongovernmental nonprofits could be divided into these groups: 1) Nonprofits associated with the government and sponsored by it, 2) Independent protesting nonprofit nongovernmental organizations fighting against the government and corruption; 3) Independent organizations founded specifically for money laundering by criminal and commercial enterprises; 4) Independent nonprofit organizations started by "grass roots", supported or not by foundations, foreign or Russian. The aims of the research included estimation of the level of involvement of the Governmental and nongovernmental organizations in providing adequate conditions for older persons for their self realization and active life style, revealing existing partnerships and possibilities for cooperation between them and possibilities to improve the services on the local level.

The research was conducted in 8 cities of Russian Federation (Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Ufa, Kazan, Tuymazy, Prokopyevsk, Novokuznetsk, Naberezhnie Chelni). In each of the cities we surveyed local older persons aged over 55 for women and over 60 for men as according to the Russian legislation a person becomes eligible for the Government pension at this age, and also officially becomes considered as the "elderly". From 70 to 250 people were surveyed in each city. Also in each city we interviewed representatives of municipal authorities, governmental social welfare organizations, and nonprofits, whose target population included older persons.

Common problems included

- Lack of trust and communications between governmental and nonprofit organizations;

In most cases representatives of governmental institutions when asked about nonprofit sector they were only able to name nonprofits officially supported by the government and associated with them. When asked about ease of cooperation generally government officials were much more positive and optimistic than nonprofits. They were confident that cooperation was fruitful and easy for both sides, whereas nonprofits stated that sometimes contacts were impossible, they were not treated respectfully, and governments did not want to hear them.

- Lack of information about available services (both governmental and nonprofit);

In most cities (except for Orel) from 44 to 66% older respondents could not name any organization, providing conditions for active and productive life of older persons.

- Little attention to scientifically and economically sound planning of the programs for older persons.

According to the results of the survey on average about 70% of the senior respondents stated that the municipality is not concerned or is likely not to be concerned about their opinions, and 60% think that the municipal authorities do not or are likely not to take into consideration their needs or interests.