

## Structuring and Functioning Issues of the Voluntary Sector in Modern Russian Society

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**Abstract:** The study dwells to the structuring and functioning issues of voluntary (nonprofit) sector in modern Russia and intends to identify the main trends that are characterized the voluntary sector in social welfare system. In order to identify the place and the role of voluntary (nonprofit) settings in social welfare system and its impact on providing social services for people in needs, the research was conducted in 2015 in Belgorod region. The main methods were expert survey (N = 12) and interviews of NGOs staff (N = 345) as well as analysis the statistical data and the results of national researches. The empirical data indicates the increasing a number of non-governmental organizations for the last several years which perform a variety of functions, operates in many areas, have various sources of income. The majority of NGOs face with such barriers as a lack of money for the development, a small staff, the deficiency of collaboration with government and business structures. In conclusion, the article reflected the factors influencing on the success of the voluntary sector functioning in the social welfare system.

**Key words:** Voluntary sector, non-governmental organizations, social welfare system, the third sector, Russia

### INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing role of voluntary and charitable organizations today there is an actual issue of the nonprofit sector development as a new phenomenon in social welfare system of modern Russian citizens (Leonova, 2009). Now a days, most social workers in Russia are employed in different forms of social service agencies: government, nonprofit human services agencies or voluntary and business sector.

Government organizations are founded by the general public to provide services that protect the well-being of all people and based on the government social policy (Morales and Sheafor, 1997). On one hand, most of them are created by lawmakers, who are geographically distant from the clients and their needs, as well as inflexibility, budgeting and auditing of government organizations makes them the subject of political manipulation. These organizations also have limited opportunities to influence their structure and funding. On the other hand, financing public organizations by taxes makes them more stable, especially in times of economic crises when voluntary contributions may be reduced. Also public services have the larger amount of money that allows them to make research and implement new methods in social work practice; to provide services that supposed to meet the most basic human needs.

Voluntary sector settings and so-called “the third sector” includes non-governmental and non-profit organizations which do not have the full power and

authority of the government although, some of them may influence on its members and even perform the functions of the government. Also, the term “non-governmental” can mean the involvement of ordinary people in public life, reflecting the trend of social organization levels and connecting with the process of civil society formation; the creation of its constituent organizations occurs spontaneously as a reaction to the people’s needs (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

Nowadays there are >220000 non-profit organizations across the country. Total >50% of Russian citizens were committed to involvement with civic initiatives and charities in 2014. Nevertheless, many existing non-profit organizations in Russia are not registered for various reasons: the insecurity resources, the instability of the environment, especially the formal and informal leadership in NGOs and their relationship with the state, entrepreneurial start in NGO activities, relationships with institutions of the external environment, the state of the public sphere, in which the NGO carries out its activities, etc., (Salmenniemi and Borodina, 2009).

According to a nationwide survey of NGOs (N = 1.015) conducted in 2010 in 33 regions of Russia by the Center for Civil Society Studies and the non-profit sector of National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (Moscow), Russian NGOs on the whole are extremely weak economically and often are at the brink of survival. More than a third of NGOs (38%) do not have employees, working full time and 33% have minimum staff permanent employees (from 1-5 people). Only 39% of

Russian NGOs have >10 volunteers and 30% of organizations do not involve volunteers in their work at all. Every fourth organization or 39% did voluntary public reports, regarding their activities which have been available to all interested individuals and organizations while 60% did not do that.

Nevertheless, the previous research conducted in 2009 by Higher School of Economics and Public Opinion Foundation (N = 41.500 people), showed that 3% of Russians declared their participation in NGOs as volunteers. On average, the volunteers worked in the Russian NGO 26 h per month, that equal to 0.42% of the economically active population or 0.44% of employed in the economy. Only 1-2% of Russians pointed to mediate their charitable activities through some organization, the majority of them preferred to make donations to people in needs personally, using the form of alms. The majority of respondents (76%) demonstrated the awareness about local NGOs and its activities, 21% of them did not trust NGOs and 18% could not answer the question.

One of the resources for developing social welfare system is the attraction of business structures to the realization of social programs in local communities. Socially responsible business is a business which is fully aware of the importance of its contribution to social development and ecological security and seeks to maximize the effectiveness of its activities on employees and employers as well as the society as a whole (Matsui and Ikemoto, 2015). Today in Russia business's social responsibility is at the beginning of its formation. According to a survey conducted by Information Agency "Ros Business Consulting", the greatest social responsibilities have only 14 Russian companies. About 66% of respondents said that Russia has no socially responsible business settings.

It is clear that in modern Russian society only the large companies (telephone, oil production companies or leading banks) can be socially responsible, on the contrary small businesses are still faced with enormous financial difficulties and the tax burden in order to develop social programs actively and properly.

**Literature review:** A great contribution to the development of the theoretical foundations of the social welfare system as a whole, its organizational-legal forms and different types of support for socially vulnerable groups of the population make such Russian scientists as Yakushev, Roik and coauthors.

The institutional models of social welfare system as one of the branches of the voluntary sector of the economy are reflected in the writings of Zhiltsova, Babich, Leonova (2009), Jacobson and Stiglitz (2008).

Issues of voluntary and private sector combination are analyzed by Fotaki, Sheiman (2007), Pine. Various

aspects of the reform of social welfare are contained in the researches of Gilona, Turner, Cichon, Groix, Barr, Bailey and coauthors.

According to the "World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice", only 27 % of the global population enjoys access to the comprehensive social security (World Social Protection Report 2014-15, 2015). However, it is worth noting the fact that the complete picture of the evolution of a combination of public and private beginnings in the social welfare system and its individual events, taking into account the reforms of recent decades, in terms of the development of the institution of social welfare are not presented. Little attention was paid to the issue of the effectiveness of the private sector in the organization forms of social welfare in the context of recent reforms in Russia.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The empirical study carried out in 2015 in Belgorod region, using intramural expert survey and interviews with the NGOs staff. During the study 12 experts had given their opinions regarding the development process of the voluntary sector in the social welfare system in Belgorod region. The eligibility requirements for experts were; MSW in social work (or equivalent educational background); work experience in NGO No. ≤5 year; position held in NGO (director, vice-director, chair, leading specialist, etc.).

At the second stage, the interviews with the NGOs staff were made, using a topic guide to focus the discussions (N = 345). Thematic analysis identified key themes about the developing of the voluntary sector and what factors might impact on it. The third phase of the study included the processing of the results, data analysis and making conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the expert survey, we can say that the vast majority of respondents consider the necessity to develop the third sector (nonprofit) in the system of social protection of the population (96%). However, the level of the third sector development is estimated by experts as "satisfactory" (68%), "good" (24%) and only 8% as "excellent".

Respondents who rated the level of functioning the voluntary sector as "good" and "satisfactory" were asked: "What are the causes of the weak participation of NGOs in social services?". The results might be seen in Table 1.

Based on the results, it is clear that the lack of effective functioning of voluntary settings and

**Table 1: What are the causes of the weak participation of NGOs in social services?**

Variables	Values (%)
There is no clear government policy on non profit sector representatives	20.85
The nonprofit organizations have not enough experience of participation in providing social services	20.28
The third sector is in the initial stage of its development which is characterized by spontaneity, formality, high factor of personal relationships of some representatives of NGOs, government agencies and business structures	33.04
All of the above	20.57

**Table 2: Why do you think it is necessary to increase the participation of the voluntary (nonprofit) sector in the social welfare system?**

Variables	Values (%)
There is no another alternative	15.94
To increase effectiveness of solving social problems	35.94
Dialogue and negotiations always contribute to the of problems' solution	7.82
The first collaborations between public and voluntary sectors showed good results	40.03

**Table 3: How to bring the voluntary sector into social projects and programs?**

Variables	Values (%)
Expansionary fiscal state policy	53.62
Effects of media	36.23
Coercion by the administrative authorities	2.03
All of the above	8.41

commercial entities in social welfare system due to the fact that the development of NGOs is in the initial stage which is characterized by spontaneity, formality, high risks of personal relationships of some representatives of NGOs with government structures and business.

About >90% of respondents considered the necessity to further strengthen the involvement of the voluntary sector in providing a decent level of social protection of the population while noting that in the current conditions of the market economy is no better alternative (52.75%) and the first steps to demonstrate that the solution of social problems with the participation of the voluntary sector is possible and effective (68.12%) (Table 2).

The main mechanisms of motivation to participate in social programs and projects of the voluntary sector representatives, experts attributed tax benefits (53.62%) as well as the importance, given to the formation of the prestigious image of the organization in the society through the media (36.23%) (Table 3).

### CONCLUSION

It should be noted that the findings of the research show the lack of effective functioning of the voluntary (nonprofit) sector in social welfare system due to the fact that the mechanism is in the initial stage of its development which is characterized by spontaneity, formality, high factor of personal relationships of some representatives of NGOs, government agencies and business structures.

In spite of the weakness of the voluntary sector and the lack of collaboration with public sector in providing social services for needy 86% respondents indicate the improvement of NGOs activities for the last three years. At the same time representatives of the public sector notice the lack of activity and awareness of business structures as well as the instability of voluntary associations.

All this indicates the deficiency of understanding between the authorities and the voluntary sector in ensuring a high level of social protection of the population. However, today we can see a tendency of improving the situation, regarding the development of partnerships among the State, NGOs and business in the social welfare system.

### AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study is prepared with the support of Russian Foundation for Humanities (grant 16-03-00057).

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