

USAID INSIGHT

Ukrainian Philanthropy Emerging to Provide New Opportunities for Civil Society Organizations

Ukraine's nonprofit sector has made tremendous strides over the past decade. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have significantly improved their organizational and advocacy capacity while actively promoting public policy and legislative change that has positively affected the lives of people throughout the country. Watchdog groups are more effectively monitoring government activities, and think tanks have improved their policy analysis and presentation skills. CSOs continue to play an ever more critical role in expanding access to resources and services for disadvantaged populations, such as the elderly, people with mental and physical disabilities, intravenous drug users, people living with HIV/AIDS, children with special needs, the homeless, and many others.

Many analysts have suggested, however, that the sector is entering a crucial period of consolidation during which coalitions of organizations will need to be better positioned to more readily translate their indi-



Tenants of Horobynka orphanage at a playground, built with funds collected by the Lions Club charitable organization (Photo: H. Hopko)

dual successes in addressing issues at the local and regional level into cooperative efforts to effect systemic change at the national level.

In addition, CSOs are becoming increasingly aware of the tremendous need to work together to localize and diversify their sources of financial support. With unsustainable funding from international donors still representing the bulk of revenues for most CSOs (38% of all revenues according to a 2005 Counterpart Creative Center study), efforts to encourage charitable giving by corporations, individuals and community foundations will be critical to the survival of the sector.

There exists a huge and little-tapped potential for philanthropic activity to support the important work of CSOs here in Ukraine. USAID and other international donors are currently working to ensure that a recent surge in interest in charitable activities, manifested in both corporate and community philanthropy, and individual giving,

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SICHOVA RADA: IMPROVING COMMUNITIES WHILE PROTECTING KHORTYTSYA'S HERITAGE

Valentyna Opilat, a pensioner from Sadivniche district on Khortytsya Island, a nature reserve located in the center of Zaporizhia, recently installed gas heating in her home. "Gas is much better than firewood or coal for heating," she says. "It's cleaner, and it saves me time and money."

Valentyna is not the only person in Sadivniche to have come to this conclusion. Last year, gas heating was installed in every house in the village after Valentyna and other residents suggested it to their local government. And this year, the boiler house that serves Khortytsya Island will also switch to cleaner fuel, which will not only save the citizens and city government money, but will help protect the island's environment.

The seed for such change was planted back in November 2005 when the Community Connections Alumni Association Journalism Union formed the *Sichova Rada* as a part of a USAID/Eurasia Foundation project, entitled *Community Involvement in Administrative Reform in Zaporizhzhia*. The project encouraged NGOs and the public to participate in local government decision-

making. *Sichova Rada*, or the Sich Council,

includes scientists, NGO representatives and business leaders among its members, and makes policy and development recommendations to local authorities based on public



A view from a top of Khortytsya Island (Photo: serg-klymenko.narod.ru)

discussions. Switching to gas heating was one of those recommendations.

Khortytsya Island is a historic landmark, which makes Zaporizhia unique. No other city in Ukraine has a National

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Engaging Citizens, Empowering Communities: A snapshot of EF Civic Society Programs

The Eurasia Foundation (EF) has been central to the USAID effort in supporting civil society development in Ukraine since 1993. In this time, Ukrainian civil society has grown from a nascent and disjointed sector to a thriving force, and has given ordinary citizens a voice in their economic and political future. The EF mission reads: "We believe societies function best when people take responsibility for their own civic and economic prosperity." Ukrainian civil society has adapted to that role well thanks to at least some degree on EF's work here.

From the mid-1990s through 2004, EF worked closely with NGO Resource Centers, which serve local NGOs through access to equipment, consulting, information and training in Chernihiv, Donetsk, Lviv, Kharkiv, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Rivne and Vinnytsia. EF helped the centers become sustainable and the driving force in local community development that they are today. The Gurt Resource Center in Kyiv is now a national support organization for NGOs, and its weekly newsletter is a widely read source of information for civil society organizations throughout Ukraine. *Civic Initiatives* in Kharkiv and *Ahalar* in Chernihiv have their own grant-making programs for local NGOs, supported by local sources. *The Western Ukrainian Resource Center* in Lviv and *Volyn Resource Center* in Rivne have grown into respected training providers and consultants serving NGOs throughout Ukraine.

Over the years, EF has also supported a range of non-partisan initiatives for *free and fair elections*, including voter education programs, get-out-the-vote initiatives targeting traditionally disenfranchised voters, media monitoring, televised candidate debates and other activities to help create an environment in which voters can make an informed choice on Election Day.

EF's *participatory public policy* programs have brought citizens and experts alike into the processes of reform through analysis of reform concepts and stimulation of a national discussion on the potential benefits of reforms. EF has also supported local initiatives to improve administrative services, including improving energy efficiency and energy policy at the municipal level through public-private partnerships. In addition, EF recently trained members of 545 rural councils across Ukraine to better serve their constituencies with good results. In the village of Troitsa, the village council created new bus stops, providing additional transportation for employment outside the village. In Hostiv, the council created the village's first pre-school, giving working parents new options for childcare and providing kids with early education.

EF also promotes *philanthropy and corporate citizenship* by helping local and international businesses support local charities effectively and transparently nation-

VOLYN NGO INSTILLS CIVIC OVERSIGHT OVER UKRAINE'S CRIMINAL LAW PROCESS



A lawyer from the Volyn Protection Association consults an incarcerated minor (Photo: Courtesy of Volyn Protection Association)

Roman Danylchuk, 17, a high-school student, was accused last year of aggravated robbery. Allegedly, he and his friend assaulted another minor and took his cell phone in the process. Roman faced two years of incarceration and would most likely have ended up in a prison if it were not for help from a *pro bono* lawyer.

The lawyer conducted his own investigation, which found that Roman had acted alone and had obtained the cell phone by tricking the unwitting victim. Roman pleaded guilty, and then apologized to the victim and reimbursed him for the cost of the phone. After reviewing his case, the judge decided to give him another chance. He reduced the charge to fraud and released him to his parents after three days in a holding cell.

Danylchuk's legal defender belongs to the Volyn Protection Association, a team of lawyers headed by a young social activist, Petro Verzun. They are dedicated to ensuring due legal process for minors, and their current project - *Protecting the Rights of Volyn Youth* - aims to instill civic oversight over Ukraine's criminal law process, which currently still operates under the guise of "guilty until proven innocent."

The idea of a criminal rights protection campaign originated when the Association was developing a rehabilitation program for ex-prisoners. They were shocked to see Ministry of Justice statistics that showed a 100% conviction rate for minors for the period from January 1, 2003, to July 1, 2004, in Volyn Oblast. Over 70% were put behind the bars instead of being given community work, probation or fines. This fact, compounded by a 7.9% increase in the juvenile crime rate plus a high recidivist rate in Volyn for the year 2004, led Verzun to conclude

that not only did young teenagers lack knowledge of their basic rights but that public defenders weren't doing their jobs in defending minors accused of crimes.

After examining these findings, Verzun decided to launch a campaign aimed at systematically changing the way criminal proceedings were carried out. With financial assistance from USAID/UCAN, he held a series of roundtable discussions with lawyers, prosecutors, judges and police investigators, as well as other stakeholders that eventually led to the formation of advisory councils in two city councils in the region, which reviewed and oversaw every step in criminal proceedings.

On the regional level, they created a watchdog organization to oversee the entire process. On the national level, they lobbied for changes in the criminal law, including amendments that would secure significant increases in salaries for public defenders (currently they receive a paltry 15 UAH per day of work) and give civic groups access to prisons and correctional institutions. On the local level, they called for unified efforts among school principals, parents and teachers in learning proper criminal procedures to taking the necessary steps to identify and address at-risk children.

On the ground, the association visited 61 schools throughout the region and gave informational seminars to over 15,000 high-school students (grades 9-11) on their rights and the consequences related to breaking the law.

As Verzun stated, "most convicted minors are undereducated, lack parental supervision, and come from poor rural backgrounds or small mining towns in the East, including the Roma population."

The association enlisted a group of lawyers to offer cost-free representation in court through contracts involving three parties: a minor, the lawyer and the association. The minor received a *protection card*, which he/she carried and presented to police when detained. The latter was required to call a lawyer defending the cardholder. A total of 215 cards and contracts have been signed. In addition, lawyers and psychologists started visiting a correctional institution in Kovel (Volyn region), where they reviewed individual cases for possible sentence reduction, reversal or appeal.

"We've almost succeeded in assuring that guilty minors are charged for the crime they have actually committed, not what the investigators claim they did," asserts Osipov.

wide. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in Kharkiv, where, through its partnership with Philip Morris Ukraine, EF has helped civil society organizations deliver thou-

sands of food packages to indigent elderly people, provided job skills to the disabled, and will soon create social assistance centers for disabled and elderly citizens.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTANTS FINALLY MARKED FOR REMOVAL

For Stepan Vasylechko, head of the Syanky Village Council, December 2006 was the moment he tasted victory. After six years of struggle, it was finally decided at that time that 13 tons of unusable hazardous pesticides that had lain uncovered within the village limit for years should be removed in 2007. This long-awaited news was announced by Stefan Tatukh, deputy head of the State Department for Environment Protection in Lviv region during a press conference organized by «WETI», a journalist-based NGO and the village's partner in resolving this protracted and serious ecological problem.

In 2001, Syanky – known for its pristine and striking natural surroundings, and part of the East Carpathians International Biosphere Preserve – became notorious throughout Ukraine and Poland for a dilapidated pesticide storehouse containing 11 tons of the hazardous material.

Every time it rained, streams of toxic water flowed to a small brook, the well-spring of the Syan River. The Syan carries its water to the Visla River, which runs through Poland, and eventually to the Baltic Sea. The hazardous chemicals discharged a dreadful stench and threatened to cause an ecological disaster.

To avert catastrophe, Council Head Vasylechko decided to act. He sent letters to everyone from the local district council to the Parliament and the Presidential Secretariat, but received only standard letters of acknowledgement in return.

The situation began changing when WETI decided to get involved to draw attention to the problem. WETI came up with an idea for holding an eco-drawing contest for Syanky schoolchildren, asking them to depict Syan River landscapes. No one could have expected that harmless renditions done by young artists would bring heat upon their teachers. As it turned out, government officials were more concerned with who gave the assignment to grimly depict the small village rather than with the dire environmental problem facing the small community. Unexpected negative bureaucratic reaction for the ecodrawing contest spurred Vasylechko to write one more letter, this time to the Minister of the Environment of Poland.

The rather radical step brought international experts to the village to inspect the problem. International media attention and the ensuing uproar forced local government officials to seal 11 tons of the toxic pesticide into reinforced concrete containers, which were guaranteed for 50 years. The problem had been partially solved. But within a year, six of the 20 containers had cracks and the chemicals began to seep out.

In 2006, when four more containers ruptured, Stepan Vasylechko approached WETI

for help again. To make Syanky pesticide-free once and for all, WETI volunteers decided to conduct an advocacy campaign. With UCAN/USAID support, they launched an information campaign and conducted public hearings, and invited Ukrainian and Polish journalists to visit the storehouse. National newspapers, TV and radio stations, NGOs activists and scientists joined WETI's

termine the most optimal ways for its resolution.

Currently, WETI is preparing to present a documentary entitled *The War on Pesticides: the WETI Files*. The film traces the origin of pesticides, explains their influence on health and ecology as well as gives cases of successful problem solutions, including the one implemented by Stepan Vasylechko.



1. WETI volunteers, biology students from a nearby university, take soil samples near a cracked container to test for pesticides. 2. Oksana Zachko, a WETI volunteer, hangs a poster on the pesticide storage warning about the danger of using this chemical for agricultural purposes. 3. Students of secondary school and WETI volunteers near the pesticide storage in Dozhok village. (All photos: Courtesy of WETI)

informational campaign. Heavy mass media bombardment had the desired effect; officials finally ordered approximately 4 tons of the toxic chemical to be shipped from Syanky in August. They also allocated additional funds in the budget to entirely remove the pesticide from the village in 2007.

To spread the success of the Syanky advocacy campaign, WETI held educational workshops in rural schools in communities in four Carpathian oblasts that faced similar problems with neglected chemical deposits. They explained the danger of grazing herds near pesticide storehouses, handed out informational leaflets and posted poison warning on local storehouses. Early in December, WETI held a public hearing on environmental issues for residents of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions. The overall goal was to assess the extent of the pesticide problem and to de-



The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) principal mission in Ukraine is to help the country to complete the transition to a broad-based democracy with a market-oriented economy. USAID assistance focuses on the following areas: **Economic Growth, Democracy and Governance, Health and Social Sector.** Since 1992, the USAID has provided \$1.6 billion worth of technical and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine to further the processes of democratic development, economic restructuring and social sector reform in the region. To obtain additional information about USAID programs in Ukraine please visit the USAID website at: <http://ukraine.usaid.gov> or e-mail omyrtsalo@usaid.gov

ADVOCACY IN ACTION: SAVING ANDRIYIVSKY UZVIZ

Carolers wearing Ukrainian national costumes visited each and every house on Andriyivsky Uzviz on January 20 to wish its residents good fortune and prosperity in the New Year. Kyivans and guests of the city joined them in performing a modernized version of the traditional New Year's skit, called a Malanka.

The carolers, representatives of the civil society network OPORA, were trying not only to maintain ancient customs and traditions and revive the warm and jovial neighborhood spirit our grandparents knew, but also to underscore the true meaning and importance of the historic Andriyivsky Uzviz. The caroling and the Malanka was organized to bring attention to the problems the Uzviz, including the dangerous condition of the stone paving and the infrastructure of the street; illegal construction and non-transparent and unclear rental agreements with owners of workshops, gift stands and galleries.

The caroling was part of OPORA's *Saving Andriyivsky Uzviz* advocacy campaign, which seeks to protect the historical and cultural center of Kyiv - the Ukrainian "Monmartre" - from usurpation and destruction. The campaign has been led by Olha Aivazovska, OPORA project coordinator and a past participant of USAID/UCAN advocacy training.

On August 14, 2006, the Podil District State Administration held public hearings concerning plans for the Andriyivsky Uzviz reconstruction during which the community unanimously spoke out "against reconstruction" and "for restoration" of the street. But in the official minutes distributed to participants of the hearing the term "reconstruction" was substituted for restoration. Whether

mistake was consciously made re-mains an open question and for a court to decide after 60 participants turned to Ukraine's legal system for help.

The Andriyivsky Uzviz community held its own hearing on September 28, inviting representatives of the Rayon State Administration and Kyiv City State Administration. The group reached agreement on a common public position concerning the planned projects and their compliance with certain



Carolers performing Malanka, the traditional New Year's skit, on Andriyivsky Uzviz (Photo: A. Hevko)

laws and statutory acts that are meant to protect the historic nature of the street, which belongs to State Historical and Natural Preservation "Old Kyiv". The community emerged victorious when the municipal government adopted the public resolution.

In addition, the campaign successfully maneuvered to cancel a construction tender on the Uzviz that was supposed to start on October 18 after OPORA activists discovered that the Kyiv City Administration had never issued a tender for construction for that street.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPS PLANS TO IMPROVE HISTORICAL PRESERVE

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Park in its center. The city of Zaporizhia does not have the authority to make decisions about land use in this protected area. Yet, a portion of the island is inhabited by city residents, and it is unclear to whom these residents should address questions concerning property, social or environmental issues. *Sichova Rada* provided residents the means to discuss these issues and offer solutions to local authorities and the national parks administration.

Based on the results of a local survey of residents, and suggestions and comments at public discussions, *Sichova Rada* recommended that the National Park administration and the city government jointly develop a plan to improve the inhabited historical preserve while protecting the island's historical and

cultural heritage. They also recommended plans for development in the Khortytsya National Park in 2007, which would improve upon a similar program from 2006. Residents challenged their government to discontinue or minimize construction that could damage or destroy historical and cultural objects; to continue restoring historical objects and give them protected legal status; to restore the island's coast, home to many archaeologically important sites; and to increase security in the nature reserve, especially during the spring flower blossom season, a popular time for tourists.

Installing clean gas heating in residents' homes was merely the first of many successes for the *Sichova Rada*. It generally helped the citizens of Zaporizhia under-

USAID SUPPORTS CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

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translates into a new, sustainable source of CSO funding.

Recently, USAID has taken the lead in addressing these issues through its Corporate Philanthropy Initiative, designed to stimulate new investment and encourage the growth of transparent and effective corporate philanthropy in Ukraine. Part of the USAID Global Development Alliance, the project is implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) in conjunction with alliance and resource partners representing all of the major organizations working in the area of corporate social responsibility in Ukraine.

The Corporate Philanthropy Initiative grew out of a two-year partnership program between the United States Chamber of Commerce and ISC's USAID-funded UCAN project which resulted in the establishment of the Ukrainian Fund for Corporate Citizenship (UFCC). It has already helped 26 Ukrainian NGOs creatively address urgent needs in their communities, and further developed social entrepreneurship as a means of support for CSOs.

In November 2006, the Corporate Philanthropy Initiative held its first major event—the Second International Philanthropy Conference - *Promoting a Culture of Giving: Mobilizing Resources within Communities, from Corporations and Individuals*. The conference provided discussion and master classes on topics ranging from workplace giving and community foundations to venture philanthropy. More recently, a group of 14 organizations, including GDA partners, met to discuss the coordination of efforts aimed at the further development of corporate philanthropy. Additionally, the Corporate Philanthropy Initiative will develop comprehensive materials targeting the business community that detail the benefits of engaging in philanthropy and the steps businesses can take to become responsible donors within the current legal and regulatory framework. The project will also train CSOs to improve their ability to work with businesses and manage philanthropic relationships, and introduce innovative mechanisms such as workplace giving programs, to Ukrainian practitioners.

stand that communities can have a real influence on their government. The work begun continues today, even with the conclusion of the Eurasia Foundation project. On January 18, citizens of another Zaporizhia district, Borodyna, began their own discussion on ways to improve their district. *Sichova Rada* has shown that transparent decision-making and active community involvement can help build constructive dialog and collaboration between government, business, community groups and individual citizens and lead to improvements that can only benefit all those involved.