

1991–2001: Ten Years of NGO Partnerships

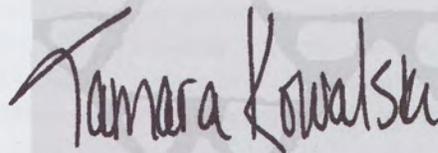
This year marks a momentous anniversary—it has been ten years since the fall of the Soviet Union. Although ten years is by no means long enough to judge the transition a success or failure, the end of the cold war opened the doors to cooperative activities between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on both sides. Thus, 2001 is also a ten-year anniversary for joint NGO efforts. *Give & Take* felt it would be interesting to look back over the decade of NGO partnerships and try to assess what they have achieved. Ten years is long enough to come to some general conclusions on what has worked and where we should go from here.

Since 1991, and in some cases earlier, partnerships between NGOs in the former Soviet Union (FSU) and in the West have been decisive in the establishment and maintenance of FSU-based NGOs. They have proven beneficial to each side, both as a learning experience, and in achieving goals through building international coalitions. Each group is able to publicize the work of the other, thereby providing a broader base of moral and financial support; they can provide training to each other in areas where one partner is stronger than the other; and they can help each other when challenged by government agencies engaged in activities that endanger people or the environment. Whether it's in the FSU or the US, a partner can intervene to publicize the other's situation and show international support.

The articles in this issue of *Give & Take* show what working together has meant for long-term US-FSU partners. Some of these partnerships have endured while others have evolved into different activities and relationships. In Section One, ISAR's executive director, Eliza Klose, describes how partnerships with environmental NGOs in Eurasia positively affect the NGO movement as a whole, and how the personal relationships that develop from them, in turn, keep the movement strong. Nino Saakashvili, of Horizonti, the Foundation for the Third Sector—one of ISAR's long-term partners—follows with her thoughts on how the ten-year partnership with ISAR has benefited her group.

Section Two looks at four partnerships from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Russia. Each article describes one side of a partnership and what each has gained from joint efforts. The third section contains articles from well-known US NGO representatives describing their experiences with long-term partnerships in the FSU. Gary Cook, director of Earth Island Institute's Baikal Watch project, shares his early experiences of partnership, from being called "environmental spies" by the local press to being asked by Russian NGOs to help them deal with international corporations. David Gordon of Pacific Environment explains how his NGO works with groups on the ground in the Russian Far East and Siberia, noting the value of strong local leadership, Russian fluency among US staff, and tighter bonds formed through much travel and regular communication.

All of these partnerships represent a movement that, despite its short history, is maturing and enjoying success due to the determination of partners on both sides. These groups have been empowered and energized by their partnerships, and would not have achieved nearly so much without the support of their counterparts on the other side of the world.



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