The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Individual Charity Donations Increasing

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February 06, 2011



At least half the population financially assisted a nonrelative in 2009, with many giving for medical procedures. **Vladimir Filonov**

Philanthropy experts see a growing trend of Russian individuals providing charitable assistance to their countrymen.

"Volunteering is growing," said Natalya Kamenskaya, an executive secretary at Donors Forum, a partnership of nongovernmental organizations. "People are responding. The process of civil society is growing, developing," she said Friday on the sidelines of an international investment forum organized by Troika Dialog.

In the last 10 years, more than 300 private charity organizations have been founded throughout the country, Kamenskaya said.

In 2009, more than half the population offered some kind of financial help to a person who was not a relative, according to the most recent study of the topic by the Higher School of Economics. Only 3 percent of respondents said they helped others through government

organizations or NGOs.

The most widespread form of charity is donating money for surgery, according to Olga Alexeyeva, founder of The Philanthropy Bridge Foundation. But it is more of a short-term solution that contributes to "philanthropic corruption," because the government should be the one funding proper medical care.

More needs to be invested in learning the skills and processes of how to organize giving, American philanthropist Michael Milken said.

"It's hard to find people to professionally conduct philanthropy," Milken said at the Troika forum.

While there are no official statistics on domestic philanthropy, there are more than 400,000 active NGOs, according to media reports. Ten percent of large companies are involved in some kind of charity, but their activities are not being tracked, Kamenskaya said.

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