

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009, NGOs across Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia were at the forefront of the issues facing their societies, from elections to discrimination to environmental degradation. They persevered in their efforts to raise public awareness, advocate for policy change, and deliver needed services, often in the face of formidable obstacles. Differences between the countries surveyed in this report are great, but the challenges facing NGOs are often surprisingly similar. NGOs from Latvia to Tajikistan strove to improve internal governance, to raise their visibility in the media, and to secure stable sources of funding. NGOs experienced government pressure and criticism in countries as diverse as Moldova, Montenegro, Slovakia, and Belarus. The NGO Sustainability Index examines these and other key events and developments that affected the region's NGOs during the year.

OVERALL SUSTAINABILITY SCORES IN 2009

On average, NGO sustainability in the Northern Tier countries (the Baltic and Visegrad countries and Slovenia) was unchanged compared to 2008. The situation of NGOs worsened slightly in Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia, while it improved somewhat in Slovenia as the country's NGOs became more actively engaged in dialogue with the new government. In Hungary, the severe effects of the financial crisis combined with a serious political crisis to weaken NGOs. NGOs in Lithuania were also hit hard by the economic crisis, which consumed the government's attention and undermined the progress of reforms that might have benefitted the sector's development. The overall situation for NGOs worsened in Slovakia too. There, growing threats to free speech were among the factors creating a negative climate for NGOs.

In the Southern Tier (the countries of Southeastern Europe), the overall scores of the majority of countries remained unchanged. Croatia and Serbia saw their overall scores improve. Croatia's overall score increase reflected continuing progress in honing the legal environment and creating a solid infrastructure for NGO development. In Serbia the situation improved during the year as a result of greater cooperation with the government and passage of new NGO legislation. Albania was the only Southern Tier country to have a decrease in its overall score, primarily as a result of financial difficulties stemming from the continuing decline in international donor funds and the impact of the economic crisis on domestic resources.

The Eurasia region (Russia, West NIS, the Caucasus and Central Asia) also retained its average score from 2008. The country with the lowest overall score, Belarus, registered slight improvement, as did Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. In Belarus and Tajikistan, score increases were partly due to improvements in the legal environment. Ukrainian and Azerbaijani NGOs both improved in the areas of organizational capacity, advocacy, and public image. Only Moldova had deterioration in its score, largely as a result of the tense environment in the country during two hotly contested rounds of parliamentary elections.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND NGOS

Political changes in some countries opened up new opportunities for NGOs. New governments in Bulgaria, Moldova, Serbia, and Slovenia showed signs of being more open to NGOs' input on policy issues. In Kosovo, NGOs participated actively in the newly independent country's decision-making processes and strove to keep elected officials accountable. The new Armenian prime minister set a promising tone by showing more recognition of NGOs, marking a departure from the tense environment that put a damper on NGO activities following the 2008 presidential elections. The caretaker government that assumed power in the Czech Republic moved to adopt two legislative amendments that should improve conditions for the NGO sector; a meeting between NGOs and the prime minister also resulted in a promise to increase the amount of funding for social services. In both Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, presidents declared new reform agendas, opening up possible avenues for greater civil society participation.

NGOs in several countries took advantage of opportunities to promote civic involvement in political processes. Operating in a tense political environment, Moldovan NGOs engaged in a variety of nonpartisan elections activities during two rounds of parliamentary elections and responded to fast-changing developments, such as providing assistance to victims of police abuse following demonstrations against election irregularities. In Latvia, NGOs were active in facilitating dialogue between candidates and civil society representatives in the run-up to local elections.

In some cases political dynamics undercut NGOs' efforts. The uncertainty in Hungary after the prime minister's resignation in April highlighted NGOs' lack of capacity to help address the country's severe economic and political challenges. In Romania, NGOs found it difficult to maintain productive dialogue with authorities as the coalition government collapsed and politicians' focus shifted to the presidential elections. Ukraine's ongoing political crisis and preparations for 2010 presidential elections hampered movement on legislation that might have improved the legal environment for NGOs, while parliamentary elections in Albania sidetracked the establishment of a new agency to support civil society.

TRENDS ACROSS BORDERS

This year's reports reflect some common experiences of NGOs across the Europe and Eurasia region in 2009, even in countries with quite different contexts for NGO development.

The economic crisis hits home. In the 2008 Index, country reports highlighted growing fears that the global economic crisis would have a negative effect on NGOs. The impact of the crisis was clearly felt in 2009, particularly in the form of reduced public funding and private donations. This topic is explored in more detail in a special paper featured on page 20. In some countries, tough economic times caused NGOs to make better use of scarce resources and created new opportunities to attract qualified staff and

Development Levels Follow Geographic Patterns

As in previous years, levels of NGO sustainability in the region generally correspond with subregional divides. With the exception of mid-transition Slovenia, all countries of the Northern Tier are in the consolidation phase of NGO sector development. The Southern Tier countries are, on average, in mid-transition, although Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are approaching the consolidation phase in their overall scores.

In Eurasia, the countries of the Caucasus, western NIS and Russia fall in the mid-transition phase, with the exception of Belarus, which remains in early transition. The average scores of the Central Asian countries place the region as a whole near the bottom of the mid-transition phase. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are in early transition. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan continue to have the highest levels of NGO sector development among the Central Asian countries.

to serve vulnerable populations. Some NGOs even contributed to the public dialogue about how to overcome the crisis. Financial difficulties also increased the appeal of low-cost techniques to reach constituencies and communicate across the NGO sector. The use of online tools, mobile networks, and social media continued to grow across the region, a trend examined in the paper on page 36.

Further definition of the legal environment. NGOs in several countries benefitted from the passage of new legislation that is expected to support the development of the NGO sector. In most cases, NGOs actively lobbied and advocated for these laws. In Serbia, the Law on Associations was finally updated for the first time since 1982. Kosovo NGOs welcomed the adoption of a new NGO Law, considered one of the most comprehensive in the region. New tax legislation in Bosnia allows taxpayers to take deductions for donations to NGOs. In Slovenia, a new resolution passed at the end of the year promised to help institutionalize NGO participation in the legislative process. In Azerbaijan, NGOs working together with the international community succeeded in influencing passage of an NGO Law that represented a significant improvement over earlier drafts, even though problematic provisions remain in the final version. The legal environment for volunteerism continued to take shape—in Azerbaijan with the adoption of a new law and in Montenegro with the government’s adoption of a strategy for developing volunteerism. A revised draft Law on Associations and Foundations promised to bring Macedonia’s NGO legislation in line with European standards, but the law was not adopted by year’s end.¹

NGOs reaching out and opening up. In several countries, NGOs employed more proactive and creative techniques to involve the public and the media in their activities, from recruiting volunteers for environmental clean-ups to organizing an NGO festival to holding events on traditionally slow news days. In addition to making greater efforts to engage stakeholders, NGOs also took steps to be more accountable to them. NGO sector experts in some countries noted improvements in financial transparency. In Tajikistan, NGOs’ shift to using banking has resulted in increased transparency and more NGOs are conducting audits. A growing number of Montenegrin NGOs released annual reports. Turkmen NGOs showed more willingness to operate transparently and even some informal groups produced annual reports.

Complex situation of service provision. Even as authorities in several countries voiced greater support for NGO service provision, this was rarely accompanied by needed levels of political support or funding. The economic crisis made it more difficult for NGOs to recover costs and competition among service providers increased. Budget cuts in 2009 reduced government funding available for procuring NGO services in Hungary, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. In Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, NGOs faced greater competition in relation to government-supported service providers, while in Russia competition among NGOs for service provision contracts increased, raising incentives to improve the marketing and quality of services. NGOs in Serbia, Belarus, and Kosovo improved and expanded their provision of services. But in Uzbekistan, while NGOs increased their provision of services, a lack of government support limited their impact.

Resource centers active, but vulnerable. Many countries in the region have NGO resource centers that are funded by international donors or national or local governments. Resource centers continued to expand in 2009 in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Tajikistan. Making such centers sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs of NGOs, however, has emerged as a particular challenge. In Poland, resource centers have been established with EU funding, but NGOs find that the quality of training provided is not consistently high. Similarly, in Kazakhstan, government-supported centers that operate in four cities do not always supply the services that NGOs need. In Moldova, resource centers have shifted

¹ The revised Law on Associations and Foundations was enacted by the Macedonian parliament in April 2010. Among other improvements, the law allows NGOs to engage directly in economic activities and introduces the concept of public benefit status as a prerequisite for receiving tax benefits.

to providing more advanced services, which threatens to further increase the gap between well-developed and nascent NGOs. A network of resource centers in Turkmenistan grappled with its future after its main foreign partner withdrew from the country. In Ukraine, resource centers established a decade ago have disappeared. Donors and NGOs in the region will no doubt continue to struggle to find the optimal model for addressing NGOs' infrastructure needs.

REGIONAL AND COUNTRY TRENDS

The following is an examination of each subregion featured in the Index, with a closer look at developments that contributed to countries' overall scores, as well as, scores within specific dimensions.

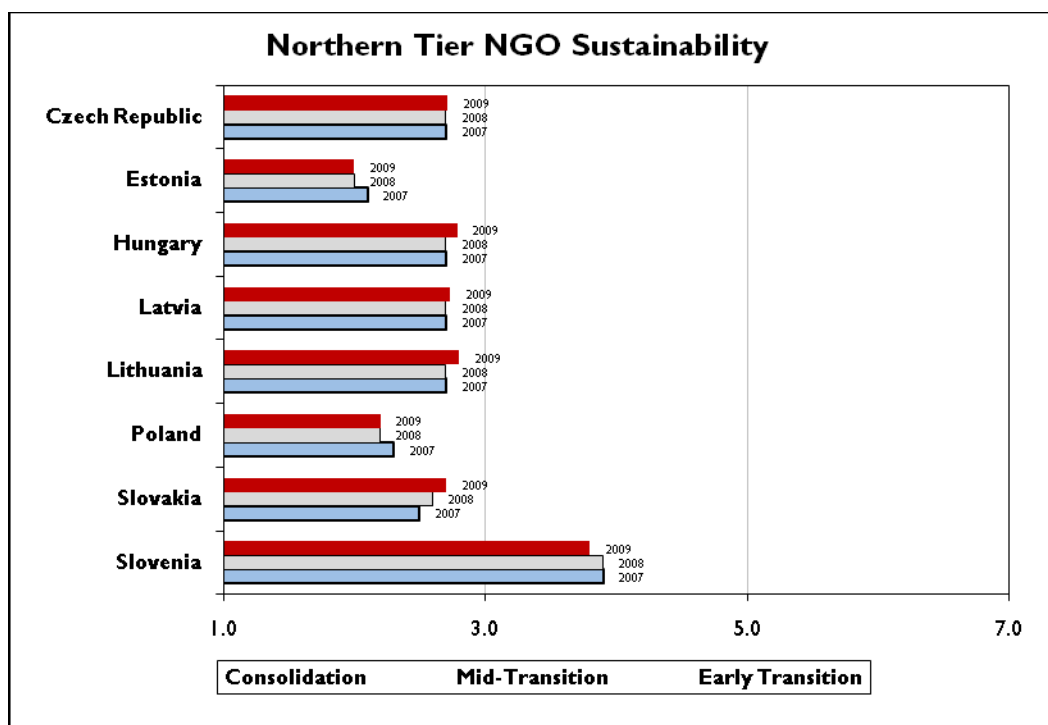
Northern Tier

Estonia and Poland remain the Northern Tier countries with the strongest levels of NGO sustainability, while Slovenia has the lowest.

Legal environment is the strongest dimension across the Northern Tier and all countries have a generally supportive legal framework for NGO development. NGOs continue to push for further improvements, however, and in some cases positive aspects of the legal environment came under threat. In Slovakia, the Ministry of Finance proposed a gradual decrease from 2 percent to 0.5 percent of businesses' tax liabilities that may be donated to NGOs. After several years of stalled progress in hoped-for legal reforms, Lithuanian NGOs are beginning to lose faith in their dialogue with the government. Hungarian NGOs experienced a setback now that individuals are no longer able to take tax credits for donations to NGOs. The amount companies can deduct for long-term donations was also reduced, and VAT (which NGOs must pay on in-kind donations) increased by 5 percent. Poland was the only Northern Tier country to show improvement in its score in this dimension, thanks to the expansion of NGOs' access to legal advice. For the first time Polish donors were also able to make VAT-free donations of goods to public benefit NGOs.

Organizational capacity, though generally strong among Northern Tier NGOs, was an area of slight deterioration in 2009. Economic difficulties forced Lithuanian NGOs to reduce programs, activities and staff, and some NGOs faced eviction as municipalities sought to privatize city properties. In Slovakia, as well, the financial pinch affected NGOs' ability to provide staff with adequate salaries and training opportunities. In contrast, organizational capacity among Slovenian NGOs improved as regional NGO support centers actively trained NGOs in project development, and the newly established Association of NGO Managers launched capacity building activities.

Half of Northern Tier countries experienced declines in their financial viability scores in 2009. In the Czech Republic, the financial crisis reduced the resources available to NGOs from foundations and corporations, and NGOs found it increasingly hard to compete with government-sponsored NGOs, academia, and businesses for public and private funds. Competition with businesses for public grants and tenders was an issue for Estonian NGOs as well, and those that depend on public-sector or corporate funding were especially hard hit in 2009. Lithuanian NGOs felt the effects of the crisis on all fronts, as government, business, and individual sources of funding diminished. In Slovakia, some NGOs managed to generate impressive support from individual donors, but experienced greater difficulties obtaining EU funds due to administrative requirements and delays.



Capacity for advocacy is generally high in the Northern Tier and the situation was dynamic in several countries in 2009, though this did not influence the average score. Despite political turmoil in Hungary, NGOs launched visible advocacy initiatives, tackling corruption, campaign financing, and other issues. Latvian NGOs took an active role in keeping civil society on the agenda during a governmental reorganization. NGOs in the Czech Republic successfully advocated for legislative changes that benefit the NGO sector and made progress influencing community- and regional-level development plans. Polish NGOs stepped up their cooperation with the government and improved channels of communication with the public. The advocacy score also improved in Slovenia, where NGOs enjoyed better access to decision makers and increased input in the legislative process. The prime minister’s participation in the climate change talks in Copenhagen was the result of environmental NGOs’ advocacy. NGOs in Lithuania, on the other hand, saw several advocacy efforts falter and found that their concerns were low priorities for the government.

The economic crisis was one of the causes of the decline in service provision scores in half of Northern Tier countries, which led to deterioration in the average score. In the Czech Republic, budget cuts eliminated some services and NGOs were at a disadvantage compared to GONGOs in the competition for funds. While the need for NGOs’ services continued to grow in Lithuania, local governments responded to the economic crisis by reducing the use of NGOs as providers of social services. The Act on Social Services dealt a blow to NGOs in Slovakia in its first year of implementation by assigning service providers by area of residence rather than allowing citizens to choose providers, a move that favored public providers. And government cutbacks in human services in Hungary disproportionately affected NGOs, who are more likely to be dependent on such funding in comparison to other types of service providers.

The infrastructure for NGOs in the Northern Tier is generally strong and provides NGOs with reliable sources of training and information. In the Czech Republic, NGOs had greater access to training and consulting, though the quality of such services was uneven. The situation also improved in Slovenia, where EU Structural Funds and the establishment of new regional support centers enhanced training and

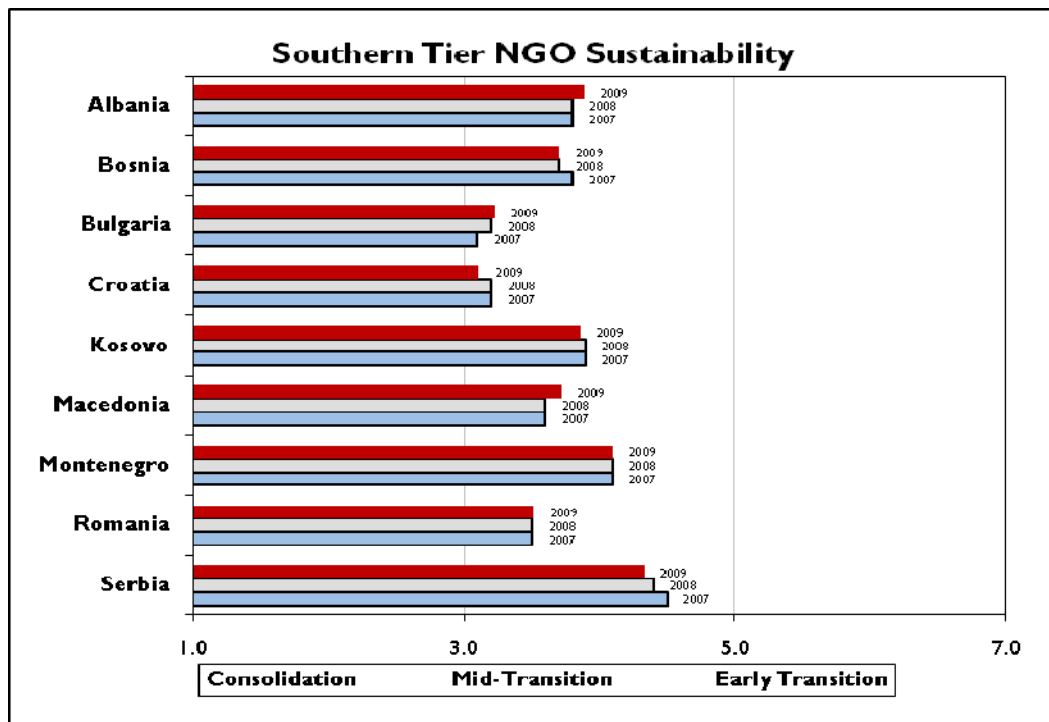
networking opportunities for NGOs. In Slovakia, however, NGOs continue to lack a strong countrywide network and their presence on the Internet declined.

NGOs in the Northern Tier countries are usually proactive about promoting their public image and enjoy relatively positive media coverage, though this does not always translate into broad public recognition. In two countries, Estonia and Slovenia, the situation improved during the year. The economic crisis enhanced public and media interest in social issues and NGOs' work in Estonia. A new electronic newspaper focused on NGOs launched in Slovenia and NGOs increased their presence on the Internet. In Slovakia, NGOs received threatening letters and phone calls from citizens and racist, nationalistic views expressed by a political party contributed to the increasingly hostile operating environment.

Southern Tier

Bulgaria and Croatia continue to have the highest overall scores among the Southern Tier countries. Serbia once again had the lowest overall score, though it showed improvement in 2009.

The legal environment in the Southern Tier countries continues to be the strongest dimension for NGOs in the subregion, but the year was characterized by progress in some countries and backsliding in others. Serbia in particular experienced dramatic improvement with the new Law on Associations and better cooperation between government and NGOs at the national level. Continued progress in bringing legislation into compliance with EU standards boosted the score in this dimension for Croatia. In both Macedonia and Montenegro, meanwhile, NGOs faced government hostility and harassment and, in the case of Montenegro, legal action as a result of voicing independent views. Government pressure on NGOs was also an issue in Kosovo, dampening optimism about the progressive new NGO Law. Lack of progress on reversing the previous year's negative changes to the Tax Code led to a score decline in Albania.



In the area of organizational capacity, which has tended to be weak in the Southern Tier, the situation was largely unchanged in 2009, though Bosnia and Romania improved their scores. Bosnian NGOs were increasingly coordinated in their activities and came together to develop a proposal of measures to address the financial crisis. NGOs also used technology in new ways to disseminate information and stimulate support for their initiatives. The improved score in Romania reflected NGOs' active efforts to stimulate volunteerism and reach out to new constituencies. The increased access to EU Structural Funds allowed some Romanian NGOs to woo back former staff.

Southern Tier countries, like their Northern Tier counterparts, suffered in the area of financial viability. Bulgaria experienced the most dramatic drop in score; factors included a decline in donations to community foundations, the continuing withdrawal of international donors, delays in the disbursement of EU funds, and corruption in the distribution of public funds for NGOs. In Romania, while private donors continued to be generous toward NGOs, the financial crisis nonetheless affected corporate, individual, and foundation support. In both Albania and Kosovo, decreasing donor funding combined with weak domestic funding options constrained NGOs' financial viability. In contrast to the negative tendencies elsewhere, the outlook brightened in Croatia as mechanisms for government funding became more streamlined and decentralized and as new EU and other regional funding opportunities opened up to Croatian NGOs.

Southern Tier NGOs tend to be stronger in advocacy than other areas, and with a few exceptions, NGOs have gradually improved cooperation with government counterparts in recent years. The average advocacy score for the subregion showed slight improvement in 2009. NGOs in Montenegro succeeded in pursuing more effective advocacy efforts despite increased government harassment. While Kosovo NGOs' opinions were not always taken into consideration in policy decisions, NGOs demonstrated increasing coordination and tenacity, particularly at the local level. Serbian NGOs successfully lobbied for the passage of new legislation on NGOs and anti-discrimination, as well as regulatory reforms related to access to information and other issues. In Macedonia, where government mistrust of NGOs is a persistent issue, NGOs were unable to have a significant influence on the content of legislation and the advocacy score worsened.

The average score in service provision did not shift in 2009. NGOs are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their provision of services, but the lack of sustainable funding mechanisms is an obstacle in many Southern Tier countries. In Bulgaria, the situation worsened as a direct result of the financial crisis, which reduced public resources for contracting NGO services. In Kosovo, on the other hand, local governments stepped up their cooperation with NGOs in the provision of social services. This was also the case in neighboring Serbia, where NGOs provide a wide range of services to vulnerable groups.

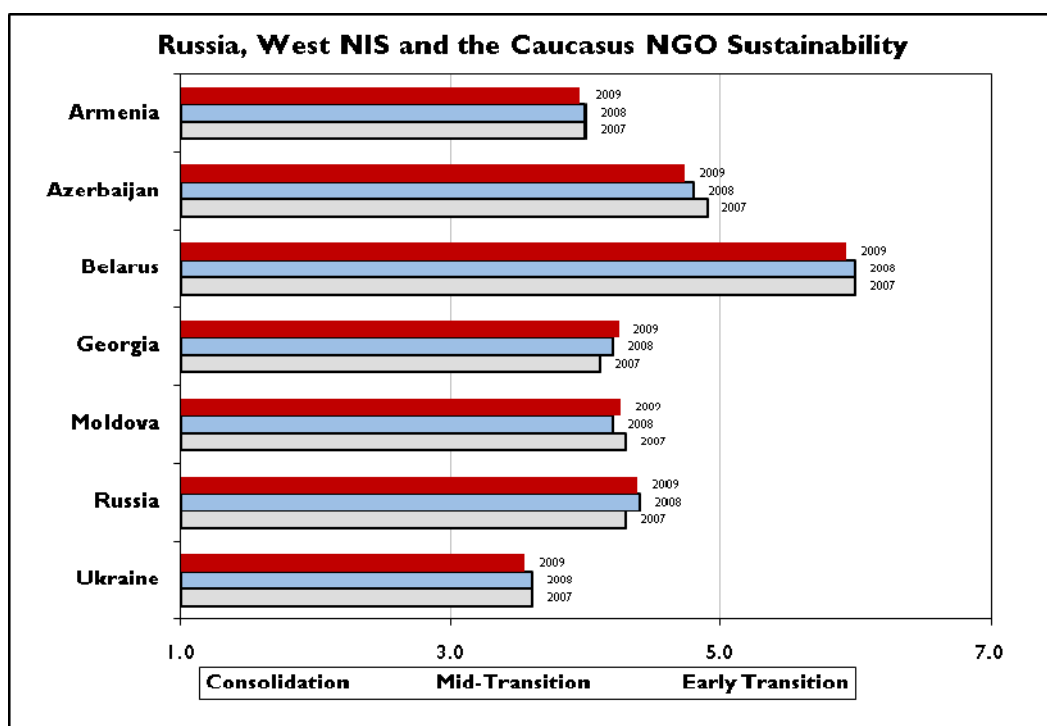
Most countries in the Southern Tier have relatively strong infrastructure for NGO sector development, including resource centers, community foundations and networks of local trainers. The situation in this dimension was relatively fluid during the year, with more than half of Southern Tier countries experiencing changes in score. NGO infrastructure improved in Bosnia, Croatia, and Romania. In all three countries, local-level resource centers promoted NGO sector development in diverse regions, and intersectoral partnerships expanded. In the case of Romania, EU Structural Funds helped to encourage the establishment of partnerships between NGOs and central and local government bodies. Albania and Kosovo suffered declining infrastructure scores; funding problems weakened resource centers in Albania and in Kosovo the low level of resource centers' activity reduced NGOs' access to training, especially in the Serbian language.

The situation with NGOs' public image in the Southern Tier did not change in 2009. NGOs are becoming increasingly savvy about attracting media coverage, but continue to encounter problems ranging from a lack of media professionalism to government resistance to their work. Bosnia, Kosovo, and Serbia all had

improved public image scores. Serbian NGOs benefitted from a more supportive government attitude and took proactive steps to engage the media, though journalists still lack awareness of NGOs' role. The Bosnian media became more interested in NGOs' activities and even began to devote more coverage to NGOs' watchdog role, seeking NGO views on stories involving corruption and other controversial issues. NGOs in Kosovo used new media tools and other techniques to increase their visibility; one NGO facilitated debates between mayoral candidates that aired on national television. In Macedonia, meanwhile, public opinion polling showed that levels of public trust in NGOs fell compared to the previous year. One of the likely contributing factors was the trend of political parties creating NGOs and think tanks to propagate their ideologies.

Eurasia: Russia, West NIS, and the Caucasus

The situation of NGOs is fluid, but still difficult in the Eurasia region. Of the Eurasian countries, Ukraine has the highest level of overall NGO sustainability, while Belarus has the lowest.



The legal environment for NGOs in Russia, West NIS, and the Caucasus is still in the mid-transition phase, though in 2009 the number of countries with improved scores outnumbered those with declining scores. In Belarus, NGOs continue to face a restrictive legal environment, but noncommercial entities such as associations of entrepreneurs were able to register more easily. Azerbaijani NGOs successfully averted the inclusion of negative provisions in the new NGO Law, though the final version of the legislation still contained several provisions of concern to NGOs. In Russia, a presidential working group focused on improving the legal framework for NGO activities. Georgia and Moldova experienced setbacks in their legal environment scores. Moldovan NGOs faced difficulties and delays re-registering as required by the amended Law on Public Associations and NGOs involved in elections activities experienced government harassment. A legislative amendment threatened to restrict the ability of NGOs in Georgia to organize public demonstrations and gatherings.

In terms of organizational capacity, two countries improved in 2009. In Azerbaijan, NGOs demonstrated greater capacity to conduct strategic planning, to reach out to constituencies and to engage volunteers. Cooperation among NGOs, authorities, businesses, and the public improved noticeably in Ukraine. In Georgia, however, NGOs struggled to survive in the face of decreasing donor funding and often were reduced to only one or two employees, particularly in the regions of the country.

Financial viability remains poor in Russia, West NIS, and the Caucasus, where domestic funding sources are underdeveloped and donor resources have dwindled in recent years. In 2009, both Russia and Ukraine saw public and private funding for NGOs decline due to the financial crisis. Only Azerbaijan experienced an improved score in this dimension; NGOs actively sought funding from diverse sources and the government distributed \$3.5 million in grants to NGOs.

The advocacy dimension improved in several countries, leading to a slight improvement in the average score. Armenian NGOs managed to lobby against proposed negative changes to several key laws and contributed to discussions on the state budget. Ukrainian NGOs were particularly active in the fight against corruption. In Azerbaijan, NGOs mobilized campaigns on anti-corruption measures and made recommendations on the tax system that were accepted by the government.

The environment for service provision is generally weak in this subregion and the situation did not change in 2009. Governments in the region usually lack mechanisms for outsourcing services to NGOs and it is rare for NGOs to recover costs. In Russia, where NGOs faced greater competition from other service providers for a shrinking pool of funds, the score dropped.

The infrastructure dimension is still one of the strongest of all the dimensions in Russia, West NIS, and the Caucasus, though Russia experienced deterioration during 2009 as resource centers for NGOs appear increasingly less sustainable and are unable to retain qualified trainers. In Belarus, the situation improved; leading NGOs began filling the need for resource center services and an NGO became the first in Belarus to redistribute foreign funds.

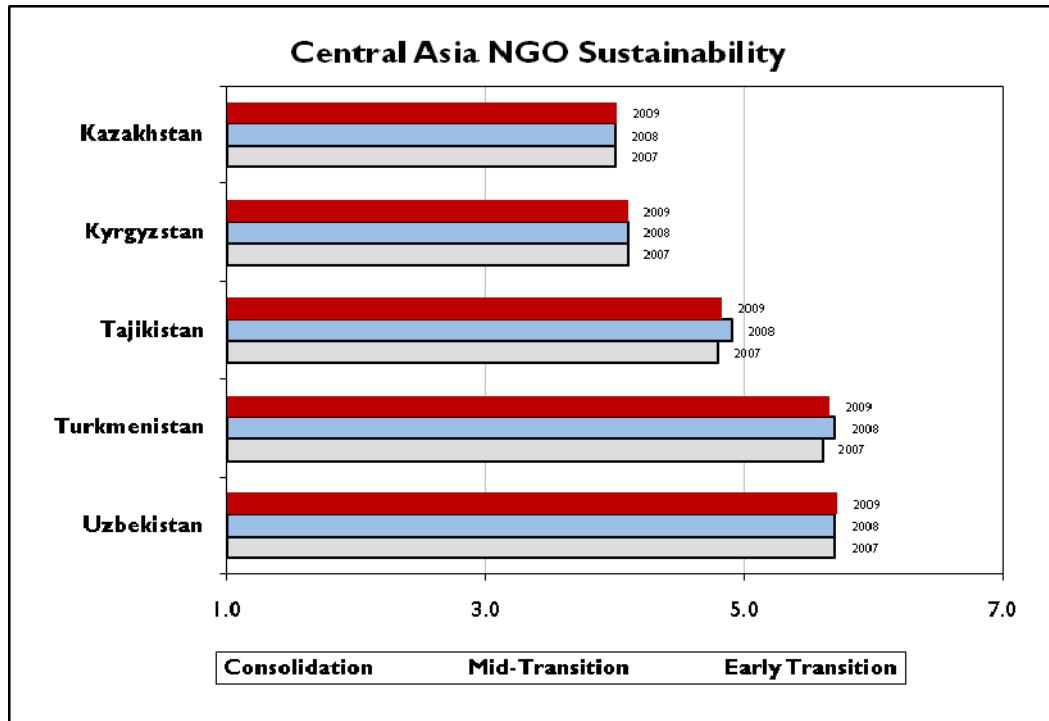
NGOs face numerous challenges to improving their public image, ranging from government opposition to their activities to weak media independence to poor NGO capacity in public relations. NGOs in Azerbaijan and Ukraine made progress during the year, however. The Azerbaijani media is paying more attention to NGOs and some NGOs have their own media programs. Ukrainian NGOs became more active in media relations and public outreach. In Georgia, meanwhile, NGOs took an increasingly backseat role amidst tumultuous political developments, failing to counteract prevailing public perceptions of NGOs as pro- or anti-government actors.

Central Asia

Average scores for the Central Asian countries are the lowest among the subregions covered by the NGO Sustainability Index. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are the lowest-scoring countries in Central Asia while Kazakhstan maintains the highest score.

Four of the five Central Asian countries experienced changes in their legal environment scores, although this did not affect the average score in this dimension. Positive changes were noted in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In Tajikistan, the registration of some forms of noncommercial organizations has been simplified. A significant change to the legal environment for NGOs in Kazakhstan was the lifting of the ban on state financing of public associations. The government of Turkmenistan did not register any NGOs in 2009, but a new law enabled some organizations that had tried unsuccessfully to register as NGOs to register as “economic societies.” Several factors contributed to a decline in score in Uzbekistan, such as tighter tax rules for NGOs and more cumbersome reporting requirements.

Low levels of volunteerism, resource constraints and weak ties with constituencies are among the challenges in organizational capacity in Central Asia. During the year Tajik NGOs exhibited growing professionalism and took steps to improve transparency and internal governance of their organizations. Staffing problems brought down the score in Uzbekistan, a result of the strict new tax rules that made it more difficult for Uzbek NGOs to retain paid staff.



Like their counterparts in other subregions, NGOs in Central Asia faced threats to their financial viability during the year as a result of the financial crisis and changing donor priorities. The already difficult financial picture was not significantly affected, however, and scores did not change in this dimension.

The situation with advocacy in Central Asia varies widely, with very little advocacy activity in Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan versus relatively active NGOs in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Advocacy scores improved in 2009 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan took a more strategic approach to advocacy and succeeded in establishing new structures for working with authorities. NGOs in Tajikistan contributed to policy documents and laws on women’s rights, human rights, and the operation of small and medium-sized businesses.

Service provision is among the stronger areas for Central Asian NGOs. Tajikistan was the only country to show a change in this dimension, slightly improving its score as NGOs exhibited greater professionalism and as local authorities became more receptive to NGOs’ contributions to addressing societal problems.

Infrastructure was the only area in which the average score changed in 2009, taking a turn for the worse. Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan experienced declines as NGOs lost key support structures. In Kyrgyzstan, where numerous information and resource centers were forced to close due to lack of funding, some NGOs responded by establishing informal networks in the regions. The closure of a key civil society support program in Turkmenistan forced a network of resource centers to cope with the loss of funding as well as legal status. Some adapted by providing more limited services, while others closed down.

Little movement was seen in the public image dimension in Central Asia, with the exception of Turkmenistan, which had improvement in its score. The government of Turkmenistan showed a somewhat more open attitude toward NGOs, and some Turkmen NGOs placed ads in newspapers as a way to publicize their activities.

CONCLUSION

The year 2009 did not produce significant changes in NGO Sustainability Index scores at the subregional level. Average scores for the Northern Tier and Eurasia stayed steady for the sixth year, while the Southern Tier average score has not changed for the past three years. The Northern Tier had the most countries with backsliding in scores, reflecting the fact that NGOs even in consolidation countries can be adversely affected by changes in economic and political conditions. Meanwhile, Eurasia had the most countries showing improved scores, proving that the situation continues to be dynamic in early- and mid-transition countries even if they have a ways to go before bridging the gap with their counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe.

The year saw progress in a historically low-scoring country, Belarus, and in two countries at the bottom of their respective subregions: Slovenia and Serbia.

While the year highlighted NGOs' vulnerabilities to global and national trends, it also demonstrated their ability to adapt and respond to those trends, whether by switching to lower-cost communications tools, pursuing more in-kind donations, or launching advocacy efforts to thwart negative legislation. It is perhaps promising that overall sustainability scores in the subregions stayed steady even as economies tumbled, but the year's financial difficulties will no doubt continue to have reverberations on various aspects of NGO sustainability.