

STUDYING THE CONTRIBUTION OF RUSSIAN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS TO ADDRESSING DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS

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Abstract

Since 2016, Russia has seen a birth rate decline and simultaneously an increase in mortality. To overcome demographic problems, the government undertakes measures to stimulate the birth rate and searches for new formats of parenting support. We carried out a study to explore today's role of Russian non-profit organisations in parenting support. It included two stages. First, we analysed how widespread non-profit organisations which deal with helping and supporting women, families, and children are in Russia. Second, we analysed the structure of Russian non-profit organisations in terms of parental labour stages when their support usually takes place. The major results are the following: 1) in general, the non-profit sector in Russia decreased in 2017-2021 by more than 6%. 2) we identified a structure of women's non-profit organisations in Russia. The main conclusions are as follows. Firstly, the negative dynamic of the non-profit organisations' number reduces opportunities for their involvement in stimulating the birth rate and supporting parenting. Secondly, the structure of Russian non-profit organisations by areas of their activities related to providing help with exercising parental labour functions may provide the foundation for distributing responsibility and authority; it is important to incentivise the contribution of non-profit organisations to parenting support.

Key words: fertility support, support of parenthood, non-profit organizations, human capital, demographic policy

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Introduction

Today, Russia is developing under the influence of global challenges, and one of them is population ageing aggravated by the population decline. The situation deteriorated in the pandemic. In 2016-2021, the natural population decline in Russia accounted for more than 1.38 million people (Natural population movement, 2022). If this negative tendency persists,

it will pose threats to the national security of the country in the long term. Meanwhile, the population decline occurs in the midst of demographic policy measures pursued by the government to raise the number of children in Russian families. This context requires new formats of the birth rate stimulation and parenting support to overcome demographic issues.

One of such formats aimed at enhancing the demographic policy effectiveness may be the proactive involvement of non-profit organisations (NPOs) into the birth rate stimulation and parenting support. Non-profit socially oriented organisations make a crucial contribution to supporting people and helping in critical situations worldwide. Foreign researchers explore why people turn to these organisations, their role in addressing family problems, reproductive health and family planning issues, the effectiveness of NPOs, and so on. (Herman & Renz, 2008; Sadabadi & Rahimi Rad, 2021; Sibisi & Makka, 2021). For example, Sellnow-Richmond, Novak, and Seeger (2021) study functions of NPOs which provide services associated with reproductive health; Abiddin, Ibrahim, and Aziz (2022) analyse the role and impact of NPOs on the sustainable development of society; Chan et al. (2022) draw attention to challenges met by NPOs which work with pregnant women; Kemp (2015) considers different options for rating NPOs related to healthcare and reproductive health issues. Researchers in Russia concentrate on legal aspects of socially oriented NPOs' activities (Dzuybak, 2018), identify specificities of Russian NPOs and opportunities for their incorporation into the social sphere (Moskvina & Mashovets, 2018), explore the contribution of NPOs to the social life of the region (Artamonova, 2019), and so on. NPOs which specialise in helping to exercise parental labour functions perform a wide variety of functions: providing support in addressing reproductive health concerns and social support of motherhood, establishing family centres, and so on. Utting & Pugh (2004) point out to the special role of NPOs in providing childcare and family support services. It should be noted that parental functions change according to the age of the child; therefore, there is a need in different types of help, which NPOs can offer to parents. Researchers from the Ural region of Russia identified 6 stages of parental labour and described parental functions at each stage (Table 1).

Authors from Russia also argue that most of the teams who contribute to the protection of citizens' social interests are dominated by women. Bukina (2017) suggests determining and closely studying women's NPOs (i.e., those that help women, e.g., maternity support charity funds, or those which consist of women and aim to meet certain social goals, e.g., the Soldiers' Mothers Union).

Our study aims to analyse indicators, which characterise the pervasiveness of Russian NPOs specialising in helping women, families, and children, and to explore women’s NPOs, which assist in exercising parental labour functions at different stages. The study is of high relevance in the existing socio-economic context and in light of the negative demographic tendencies.

Tab. 1: Characteristics of parental labour stages.

Parental labour stage	Parental labour functions at the stage
Prenatal (pregnancy and delivery)	Mother is protecting her health (healthy eating, avoiding harmful habits, comprehensive examination of the couple, psychological trainings for preparing to parental labour, etc.)
Infant (after the childbirth until 1 year of age)	Childcare and child development (purchasing infant food, hygiene products, clothes, taking children to developing classes, early development children centres, etc.)
Preschool (1-6 years of age)	Childcare, child development, and childrearing (paying for the kindergarten, attending extracurricular classes, exhibitions, buying special literature, teaching materials, etc.)
School (7-17 years of age)	- childcare, child development, and childrearing (attending extracurricular classes, purchasing clothes, food, supplies for school) - teaching children to deal with problems by themselves, building communication, etc.
Professional development stage, incorporate stage (above 17 years of age)	Helping to prioritise when choosing profession or career models, providing psychological support, etc.

Source: developed by authors based on Bagirova & Bykova (2015)

1 Data and Methods

1. To study the dynamic of NPOs in Russia, we used data provided by the Federal State Statistics Service for 2017-2021. We selected this period because it provided the necessary data on the informational resource chosen. We analysed dynamic sets of the following indicators:

- number of NPOs in Russia;
- number of NPOs specialising in supporting socially important youth projects, children and youth movements and organisations;
- number of NPOs specialising in preventing social orphanhood, supporting mothers and children.

To evaluate the pervasiveness of NPOs which aim to help women, families, and children in Russia, we determined the shares of these organisations in the total number of NPOs.

2. To identify women’s NPOs, which help exercise parental labour functions at its different stages, we used data from the Russian Federal Tax Service, analytical agencies,

women’s forums in Russia, and so on. The analysis of the aforementioned organisations was carried out in the following order:

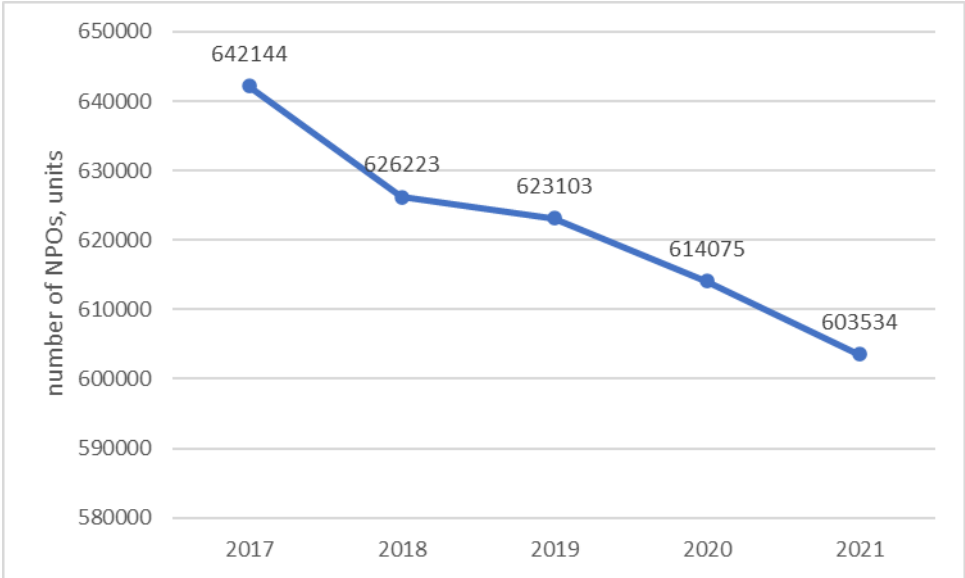
- out of the total number of NPOs, we selected those which identified themselves with “women’s non-profit organisations” (i.e., organisations, which aim to help women in different life situations and do not presuppose a large-scale involvement of men);
- after that, we studied which help women’s organisations provide in terms of parental labour functions. Depending on the parental labour stage in which help is offered by the NPO, we managed to identify the number of women’s NPOs at each stage;
- we determined the structure of women’s NPOs by the type of their activities in terms of parental labour functions support.

2 Results

The key results of our study are as follows.

1. Since 2017, Russia has seen a shrinking number of NPOs (Figure 1). In 2017-2021, their number dropped by more than 6%.

Fig. 1: 2017-2021 dynamic of NPOs’ number in Russia



Source: authors' calculations

2. There is a small share of organisations actively working to support socially important children’s and youth’s projects, to prevent social orphanhood, and to support motherhood and childhood in Russia. In 2019-2020, their number also dropped (Table 2).

Tab. 2: Indicators of structure and dynamic of organisations which aim to support women, families, and children

	Number of NPOs, units		Share of NPOs which support families and children in the total number of NPOs in Russia, %		2019-2020 dynamic of NPOs, %
	2019	2020	2019	2020	
NPOs specialising in supporting socially important youth's projects, children and youth movements and organisations	7794	7626	1,25	1,24	-2,16
NPOs specialising in preventing social orphanhood and supporting motherhood and childhood	5133	5021	0,82	0,82	-2,18

Source: authors' calculations

3. The analysis of women's NPOs helping with parental labour functions allowed us to identify their areas of activities and structure in Russia. Nearly 23% of them offer help during the preparation for the childbirth; more than 34% assist in childcare, childrearing, and children's development; more than 29% provide support to parents when they face difficult life situations and offer consultations to deal with the relationship between parents and their teenage children, and so on (Table 3).

Tab. 3: Share of women's NPOs which help exercise parental labour functions at its different stages, 2017

Parental labour stage	Areas of activities of NPOs which assist in fulfilling parental labour functions	Number of NPOs	Share in the total number of organisations analysed, %
Prenatal	- organisations related to reproductive health; - organisations which are oriented at the social support of women; - organisations where woman is the subject of charity activities	818	23,7
- Infant Stage - Preschool Stage - School Stage	- organisations which are oriented at the social support of motherhood and childhood; - communities of parents whose children are at the age of 1-17 years (including families with many children); - family centres, children's educational organisations which work with children under the age of 17	1182	34,3
Professional development stage, incorporate stage	- communities of parents whose children are above 17 (including families with many children); - mothers' and parents' organisations against drugs	1010	29,3
Total number of women's NPOs analysed	-	3447	100

Source: authors' calculations

3 Discussions

We obtained results which prove that NPOs work on specific tasks within individual demographic policy instruments. At the same time, the opportunities for NPOs to participate in solving demographic problems are limited in Russia. The predominantly social orientation of these organisations - which does not imply high profitability - as well as dependence on external funding led to a reduction in the total number of NPOs in the context of the deteriorating economic situation in Russia. The negative trend of reducing the number of NPOs is also seen among organisations aimed at supporting socially important youth projects, motherhood, and childhood in Russia, and preventing social orphanhood; their share in the total number of NPOs is small. In the long term, it may negatively affect the opportunities for their involvement in addressing demographic problems. To tackle this issue, additional research is required to identify the stages of parental labour at which NPOs' assistance is the most necessary and effective; subsequently, NPOs should be encouraged to be involved in these areas.

We believe that NPOs can actively participate in Russian demographic policy. Table 1 demonstrates the sets of functions that NPOs could perform at different stages of parental labour. Depending on the stage, parents' need for NPOs assistance (and its functions) will change because parents perform different parental labour functions while their children grow, and, as a result, their needs for NPOs' assistance can change as well.

Tab. 4: Possible NPOs functions to support demographic policy at different parental labour stages.

Parental labour stage	Possible NPOs functions
Prenatal stage (conception, childbirth, first months after birth)	consulting, assistance with reimbursement for the successful pregnancy preparation/childbirth
Infant stage (the child is below 1 year of age)	consulting, assistance with reimbursement for childcare and child development
Preschool stage (the child is 1-6 years of age)	consulting, assistance with reimbursement for childrearing and child development; assistance with reimbursement for private medical care and medicines
School stage (the child is 7-17 years of age)	- consulting, assistance with reimbursement for childrearing and child development; - assistance with reimbursement for childcare; - assistance with reimbursement for buying school supplies
Professional training stage, incorporation stage (a child is over 17 years of age)	- consulting, assistance with reimbursement for childrearing and child development; - assistance with reimbursement for childcare; - providing advice on choosing the future profession, etc.

Source: developed by authors

Our research also shows that women proactively contribute to addressing social and other issues. According to the NAFI Research Centre, the index of women's entrepreneurial activity in 2017-2021 increased from 69 to 71.1% (Index of women's entrepreneurial activity, 2021). The factors contributing to the increase include new educational programmes on doing business for women (including women on parental leave), and their state support. The positive trend of women's involvement in entrepreneurship has led to the fact that various women's organisations are playing an increasingly important role in the socio-political life of Russia. The analysis of women's NPOs showed that more than 87% of the NPOs analysed help perform parental labour functions at its various stages. Russian researchers argue that women's NPOs are the most gender-sensitive to certain social problems; they attract the government's and society's attention, establish social partnership with business structures (Bukina, 2017). The structure revealed that the majority of women's NPOs (more than 34 %) help perform the parental labour functions at the infant, preschool, and school stages, contributing to the development of children's human capital. At the same time, it is also important to pay attention to other stages of parental labour. The data on the proportion of women's NPOs that help exercise the functions of parental labour can lay the foundation for further research on the effectiveness of NPOs at different stages of parental labour. In addition, they can be used for developing programmes to enhance the participation of Russian NPOs in tackling demographic problems.

Conclusions

The results of our study allowed us to draw the following conclusions. Firstly, the negative dynamics of the NPOs' number may adversely affect their involvement in activities to stimulate fertility and support parenthood in the long term. To overcome this negative trend, it will be necessary to solve organisational, legal, financial and other problems that NPOs face as part of their activities.

Secondly, the structure of Russian NPOs revealed in terms of their directions in parental labour assistance can become the basis for the distribution of responsibilities and powers to enhance the NPO's participation in supporting parenthood.

Thirdly, we identified the functions that can be performed by Russian NPOs as an institute to support demographic policy in Russia. By interacting with actual and potential parents, providing consultations and financial assistance to them, non-profit organisations can have a positive impact on solving Russian demographic problems; therefore, it is relevant for the state to stimulate this impact financially and organisationally.

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