



The Baltic American Partnership Fund *(BAPF)*

*Ten Years of Grantmaking
to Strengthen Civil Society
in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*

BAPF GRANTEES 1998–2008 · LATVIA · NGO Center, Riga · Transparency International, Delna, Riga · Community Center “The White Home”(Balta Maja), Līvāni · National Consumer Rights Protection Association, Riga · (Latvian Association of Consumer Rights Protection), Riga · European Movement in Latvia, Riga · NGO Association and NGO Support Center, Tukums · Liepajas NGO Support Center, Liepaja · Madonas NGO Support Center, Madona · Zemgales NGO Support Center, Jalgava · Ziemeļkurzemes NGO Support Center, Talsi · Aluksnes NGO Support Center, Aluksne · Rezeknes NGO Support Center, Rezekne · Association of the Disabled and their Friends “Apeirons” · Educational Center for Families and Schools, Riga · Latvian “Save the Children”, Riga · Madona Regional Municipality · Aluksne Region/Aluksne Region Foundation · City of Jekabpils/Jekabpils Region Municipality · Latvian Volunteer Center, Riga · South Latgale Regional NGO Support Center, Daugavpils · Valmiera Regional NGO Support Center (Strategija), Valmiera · World Wildlife Fund for Nature–Latvia, Riga · Riga City Mission, Riga · Latvian–Estonian Institute, Valka · Riga Samaritan Association, Riga · Zelta Kamolins, Riga · Latvian Youth Council · Resource Center for Women “Marta”, Riga · NGO “Zalais ordenis” (The Green Medal), Jurmala/Green Medal “Undine”/Green Orden · “Papardes zieds” · Ludza Municipality Training Center/Ludza Region Municipality · Latvian Transatlantic Organization (LATO), Riga · Talsi Regional Community Foundation/Talsi Regional Foundation · Civic Alliance–Latvia (CAL) · Ziedot.lv (Donate.lv) · **ESTONIA** · Network of Estonian Non–profit Organizations (NENO), Tallinn · Estonian Newspaper Association, Tallinn · Caritas Estonia · Junior Achievement Development Foundation, Tallinn · Estonian TV, Tallinn · Estonian Law Center Foundation, Tartu · Jaan Tõnisson Institute, Tallinn · Daily Postimees, Tallinn · Foundation for Visually Impaired People, Tallinn · Open Education League, Tartu · Federation of Estonian 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Executive Summary

History of the Baltic–American Partnership Fund (BAPF)

The BAPF was established in 1998 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Open Society Institute (OSI). Each organization initially provided \$7.5 million to be spent over a ten year period on the continued development of civil society in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Particular focus was placed on the development of the non-profit sector, through which individuals can come together in an organized fashion to participate in and influence political, social and economic decision-making processes in their countries. The founders defined three long-term objectives for the BAPF: 1) a clear, supportive legal and regulatory environment for civil society, 2) the institutional development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 3) the financial sustainability of the NGO sector.

Since 1999, the BAPF and its local partners, the Baltic American Partnership Programs (BAPPs), have provided support to strengthen civil society in this region. This support has taken the form of grants, technical assistance, training and other learning opportunities to a diverse range of organizations and individuals who, in different ways, have contributed to the BAPF's primary objectives over the past ten years.

Major Achievements of the BAPF, its Partners, and Grantees

- Introducing the concept and practice of public benefit advocacy to a greater number of NGOs in all three Baltic countries;
- Enabling the passage of key legislation and policy reforms to support the work and independence of the non-profit sector and to encourage volunteerism and charitable giving;
- Establishing a pan-Baltic community philanthropy movement which includes a network of 15 community foundations in three countries;

- Supporting the development of new models and mechanisms for individual and corporate giving;
- Creating a strong, professional, and effective core group of NGOs and civil society leaders through long term institutional capacity building grants and networking and professional development opportunities within the Baltics, and with neighboring countries.

Primary Lessons Learned

- Efforts to pass favorable NGO legislation and policies delineating government/NGO relations (e.g. Estonia's Civil Society Compact) should be as inclusive of the NGO community and other stakeholders as possible. The process, which can be lengthy, is as important as the results. It can have a consolidating effect for the third sector, and raises awareness about common principles and challenges among non-profits, as well as within government itself.
- The importance of creative, proactive strategies and grantmaking to increase public awareness of civil society principles, and the role and work of non-profits and civic groups, should not be underestimated. The work of the BAPF and its partners and grantees has resulted in a much greater public understanding of the third sector in all three countries, but in retrospect, more might have been done in this area at an earlier stage.
- Carefully designed grant programs for individual NGOs, including multi-year negotiated institutional support, technical assistance, and professional development and mentoring for key staff, are critical to the long-term sustainability prospects of these organizations. From the donor perspective, providing institutional development grants, while sometimes risky and hard to assess, is a valuable way of understanding and responding to the real needs of non-profit organizations. From the grantee perspective, working collaboratively with the donor to

develop a realistic set of benchmarks against which institutional development progress can be measured, is equally valuable. The BAPF's grantmaking in this area has helped to break down the prevailing short-term project-based mentality of civil society organizations and their donors in the Baltics.

- Financial vulnerability of NGOs, particularly advocacy focused groups, is a particularly difficult challenge to address. The lesson from the BAPF's experience is "the earlier the better". While educating NGOs about fundraising techniques and building awareness about philanthropy among individuals and the private sector is important, it should be coupled with incentives and opportunities for NGOs to engage in active efforts to fundraise and involve local donors in their work. This concrete work, while often resisted by groups, allows them to "learn by doing", and helps them to frame their mission and objectives in language that is comprehensible to average citizens and members of the business community.
- Community foundations can be a powerful tool to stimulate local philanthropy and grassroots civic engagement, even in poor, small rural areas.

As one colleague in Latvia noted, the community philanthropy movement in the Baltics has broken the myth that "you have to be rich to give". The community foundations in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are less about resource accumulation and donor services than they are about building social capital in their communities, although increasing local funding and achieving financial sustainability are certainly long term goals.

- Civic engagement is another area where it is hard to measure the impact of grantmaking programs, both because of the long term nature of attitudinal change and because there are many other external factors affecting levels of engagement. For the BAPF, the key has been to support organizations outside the mainstream carrying out locally-based initiatives that have had a demonstration or catalytic effect. Identifying youth and women as target groups also helped in stimulating civic action.

Reflections

Conducting a Successful Experiment to Strengthen Civil Society

I first visited the Baltics in 1992, shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was a heady time, filled with promise and hope—not only for the region but for the world. As I drove across the three new states that were once part of the Soviet empire, the novel appearance of passport checkpoints made it abundantly clear that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were indeed independent entities. Once bundled together as fellow “captive nations” and only imprecisely differentiated, if at all, by many in the West, these proud and historically rich states had boldly reasserted their independence. A first-time visitor was struck by the uniqueness of the three capital cities, so close geographically, yet so distinct in their architectural style and urban soul: the stately Germanic flair of Riga, the old world splendor of Vilnius and the Nordic sensibility of Tallinn. In the years to come, the three cities would meld their unique historical lineages with a modern, cosmopolitan vision that reflected both their reverence for the past and enthusiasm for the future.

To say that much has happened since those early post-independence days is to invoke a worn cliché. But, like most clichés, this one also contains more than a measure of truth. The “New World Order” once proclaimed by an American president never materialized during the first decade of the post-Cold War era. From Bosnia and Rwanda to Somalia and Haiti, a “New World Disorder” was closer to the mark. As the once mighty Soviet Union disintegrated—not without bloodshed in the Baltics—its much diminished, but still intimidating, successor state, the Russian Republic, went through its own early traumas and emerged with its national pride badly bruised. Understandably, if also petulantly, it became particularly focused on the so-called “near abroad” over which its dominion once unambiguously extended and where hundreds of thousands of its conationals became, in the words of one

political scientist, a “beached diaspora.” The tensions generated by this post-Cold War demographic shift greatly complicated the nationbuilding tasks of the newly independent Baltic states, especially in Estonia and Latvia, and are still being felt today. Even in Lithuania, with its smaller Russian-speaking minority, the shadow of the Russian bear was ever present, not least because of the country’s contiguity to the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. Baltic dependence on Russia for most of its energy needs and inflammatory rhetoric on both sides only exacerbated the already strained relationships across the venerable boundary that once marked the divide between Western and Orthodox Christendom.

And yet, despite the internal political and economic struggles and the perceived external threat, three capable and supremely confident states emerged from this drama to reassert their rightful places on the world stage. Benefiting from highly educated and motivated populations, and variably enlightened leadership, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania re-joined Europe through their eventual admission into NATO and, shortly thereafter, the European Union. Crucial to their rebirth as fledgling democracies was the role of civil society—the essential intermediary between the market and the state. The ability of this diverse third sector to complement, critique, compensate for and, above all, assert its independence from the other dominant sectors of society was key to the progress achieved in all three Baltic countries.

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It was to help support sustainable civil society and promote public awareness and the legal and regulatory structures conducive to its effective functioning that the Baltic-American Partnership Fund (BAPF) was created in 1999. With co-funding from both public and private sources—the United States Agency for International Development and the Open Society Institute—BAPF served as an experiment of sorts for continued assistance to civil society orga-

nizations when bilateral and external philanthropic funding was being curtailed or ended. Through a remarkable multi-national, multi-institutional collaboration involving a highly competent executive directorship and, above all, the professionalism, intelligence and clarity of purpose of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians who led its national offices and served on its local expert councils, BAPF succeeded in giving an important boost to the third sector when its input into Baltic societies was most needed.

Almost ten years after this experiment was launched, the results have long outgrown the confines of the BAPF's metaphorical Petri dish. From the implementation of a landmark Civil Society Development Compact (EKAK) in Estonia, to the development of a community foundation movement in Latvia, to the establishment of an indigenous fund to promote and strengthen philanthropy in Lithuania, the BAPF has played a discernible, if difficult to definitively quantify, role in advancing the cause of civil society in the region. Over the past ten years, the national offices have, at various times, weathered a multitude of challenges related to those faced by their respective societies, from the sometimes halting progress of democratic consolidation and market reform to the nationalist-tinged backlash against certain segments of the third sector. As an American designed and funded organization, BAPF also had to be sensitive to changing perceptions about the United States' role in the world in a post-9/11 era, when the U.S. government's broad democracy agenda became inextricably linked to its ambitious and problematic engagement in Afghanistan and, particularly, Iraq.

Through it all, the BAPF persevered and prospered, even as the absolute size of its annual grantmaking began to diminish. A newly confident and capable civil society became a force that could not be ignored in either the halls of government or the board rooms of corporations. As the BAPF nears the end of its planned, decade-long lifespan, there is still work to be done. But the organization's most important legacy remains the individuals and institutions it has helped to support, whose contributions to Baltic society will continue long after the final grants funds have been dispersed. Traces of the BAPF's DNA can be found in scores of civil society organizations throughout the region that will work to strengthen the democratic process for decades to come.

It has been an honor and privilege to have been a board member since the BAPF's inception and its chairman since 2006, and to have been associated with such a dynamic and forward-looking organization. I have learned much from my Baltic friends and colleagues over the last decade and since my first post-Cold War journey across the newly demarcated borders of this region. I have seen remarkable progress in all three countries during this period and have no doubt that there is much more to come. I look forward to a future cross region excursion, not by car, as on my first one, but by maglev train or other characteristically cutting edge contrivance that befits a 21st century Baltic success story.

Stephen J. Del Rosso

Chair (2005–2008)

Baltic–American Partnership Fund



Helping Create Partnerships that Will Endure over Time

As the first chair of the Baltic–American Partnership Fund, it is a distinct privilege to look back and comment on this path–breaking, decade–long, \$15 million cooperative initiative to support market–oriented, democratic societies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by strengthening civil society and civic engagement in these Baltic countries.

I remember the late 1990s when representatives of the founders of the BAPF, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from the public sector and Open Society Institute (OSI) from the private sector, were thinking about ways to sustain the progress made since the time these countries declared their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. From the outset, I thought the need for the BAPF was abundantly clear. However, I agreed with my fellow board member, Juris Padeģs, who so aptly characterized the BAPF structure as a “finely tuned Swiss clock” and thus rather complex. A US publicly supported nonprofit organization was created to provide the legal entity for the BAPF, which would work through “partner” nonprofit entities in each of the three Baltic countries. They, in turn, would establish Baltic American Partnership Programs (BAPPs) to develop the frameworks and strategies for the use of the \$15 million provided by the founders. My question, then, was whether such a clock could work effectively for a decade? As the BAPF draws to a close, I am now convinced that this clock has contributed significantly to the overall value of the BAPF experience—in fact, providing added value that was not originally anticipated.

This finely tuned clock channeled American public and private grant funds through institutions in the three Baltic countries, to enable and empower local groups and individuals in addressing challenges in creating vibrant civil societies. As this report will reveal in other places, considerable progress has been made in the last 10 years to address these challenges and leave behind a stronger, more appropriate legal framework for the nonprofit sector; a greater number of responsive, effective

and transparent NGOs and other civic groups; an overall increased public recognition of the value of civic engagement which has helped to improve cooperation among the three sectors of society; and much more. I believe that the BAPF and the BAPPs deserve some recognition indeed for these developments in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

However, I want to focus on process and procedural considerations because of their importance in the long–term sustainability of healthy democracies in the Baltic countries. It is not a surprise that the work to create the conditions underpinning the

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long–term viability of civil society is not yet fully completed in the Baltic countries and will be an ongoing process, as is the case elsewhere in the world. History has shown that democracies need to pay sustained attention to fairness, equity and inclusiveness in society and to transparency, responsiveness and effectiveness in government, business and nonprofit institutions—the stuff that civil society and civic engagement address and nurture. This takes me to my belief that the way the Baltic–American Partnership Fund has functioned increases the prospects for continued attention to the “stuff” that civil society and civic engagement are all about:

- The BAPF board and staff emphasized that policymaking and programmatic reviews should benefit from a confluence of views from people and lessons learned in the Baltic countries and other “new” and “old” democracies. This practice encouraged the BAPP staff, local expert committees and other local partners to engage in their own well–thought–out efforts to use transparency, inclusiveness and other key principles and practices in their own work.

- Regular BAPF staff and board visits to the Baltic countries and with BAPP staff, local advisors, and a cross section of grantees and program partners in each of the countries contributed in useful ways to this operational plan.
- From the outset, a basic thrust of the BAPF was to enable local people to solve their own problems and challenges through ways that made sense to them, with the benefit of access to experience in other countries, so they would feel empowered as well. The BAPPs reached out to all parts of society in the Baltic countries—rural and urban people, minorities, youth, women, the elderly.
- The BAPF structure provided for partner institutions in each country that could review proposals in local languages and spend time helping local people to make applications for funds—which certainly increased the inclusiveness of access to foreign funds.
- Direct training and learning opportunities were made available to BAPP staff and existing and emerging civil society leaders in the region, which helped them strengthen civil society institutions, and cooperation and mutual respect with other sectors of society.

From the very beginning, the Baltic–American Partnership Fund emerged as a series of partnerships:

- While needing to maintain independent roles for overall policy guidance and institutional supervision, the BAPF board and staff functioned in many ways as partners with the BAPP staff and local experts on the ground.
- The BAPP staff related to grantees in collaborative ways more than as in the traditional grantmak-

ing equation of “we” (with the money and power) and “they” (the grantees doing the work).

- While appreciating the “watchdog role” of civil society, the BAPP grants sought to encourage cooperative, mutually reinforcing initiatives involving public sector, business, academic and civil society participants—thus, many types of partnerships.
- People at all levels in the BAPF and BAPP processes became acquainted and developed a framework of mutual respect and trust as members of a “team” or many teams of people working towards a common goal, with each member having a chance to speak up and influence the way things were being done.

It will take some years before the outcomes and impact of the Baltic–American Partnership Fund can be more fully assessed. In the meantime, the processes and procedures of this “finely tuned Swiss clock” can be observed, I believe, in the approach to grantmaking that the BAPF has nurtured. I believe that the partnerships at work did indeed enable many individuals and institutions to become more actively engaged in the issues and challenges facing the young democracies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; and that this empowerment will be felt long after the BAPF ends.

Moreover, I would point out that the Baltic–American Partnership Fund is the forerunner to similar, but larger initiatives in other parts of Europe—the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkan Trust for Democracy and the Black Sea Trust, which seek to strengthen civil society and civic engagement in other important regions of a continent emerging from half a century of various forms of autocratic rule. I hope that a decade from now representatives from these initiatives, and others, will come together to review and assess the value of such cooperative initiatives. In the meantime, I would like to express my appreciation to the many people who assisted or participated in the valuable efforts of the Baltic–American Partnership Fund and the Baltic American Partnership Programs.

William S. Moody
 Chair (1999–2001)
 Baltic–American Partnership Fund



Leaving Behind Strong NGOs Ready to Take on National, Regional and Global Challenges

When I joined the BAPF as its second executive director in 2001, I quickly recognized that my predecessor, Abbey Gardner, the BAPF board, and the local BAPP staff and advisors had already thought deeply about what we wanted to accomplish by the end of the BAPF's ten-year lifespan, while at the same time recognizing that there would likely be many twists and turns and new developments along the way. That thinking was compellingly embodied in a simple vision statement for BAPF's work that, in my view, has stood the test of time: to contribute to the development of "a society in which people have the attitudes, skills, mechanisms and structures that enable them to participate in public life and affect decisions at the community and national levels, and they are actively doing so."

As my colleagues Bill Moody and Steve Del Rosso note in their own reflections on the BAPF experience, there is much work left to be done in realizing the vision described above. However, I think the best proof of the great progress that has been made to date is reflected in the work and accomplishments of the BAPF's partners and grantees that are profiled in this report. They represent a small fraction of the groups that we have been privileged to support and work with over the past nine years. They are the people and the institutions that will carry on with the BAPF's civil society mission in the future, at the grassroots and national level, within the Baltic region and beyond. I firmly believe that Baltic NGOs are well positioned to offer their own expertise and experience in other regions of the world, and I know that many of them are eager to do so. They are increasingly plugged into philanthropy and development trends worldwide: they are involved and active in international networks; and they are also avid students and in some cases, creators of new technologies and approaches to civic engagement and social change. An innovative recent example (for which the BAPF can claim no

credit), is from Estonia, known to some as E-stonia. Two technology entrepreneurs developed software to identify and map 3,000 illegal dumping sites throughout Estonia on Google Earth. With support from the nonprofit, private and government sectors, and media, they organized a massive volunteer clean-up day on May 3, 2008. Over 50,000 individuals, out of a total population of 1.3 million, showed up to clear away 10,000 tons of trash across the country, aided by donated cell phones with global positioning systems to help volunteers locate the sites (for more information, see www.teeme2008.ee). This, to me, is the essence of "next generation" civic action, which we will see much more of in this region in the future.

Lest the picture I describe sound too sunny, let me emphasize that the challenges for civil society and the non-profit sector in the Baltics remain significant:

- Financial vulnerability, particularly for advocacy groups working on issues that remain controversial for these still conservative societies, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights, HIV and AIDS, gender equality, and criminal justice reform,
- Local philanthropic resources that are still embryonic, and usually not employed in a strategic fashion,
- Continued, if not increased, disaffection of the general populace with government,
- Still superficial engagement by government of civil society groups into policy decision-making processes,
- Ongoing need to increase the number of non-profits who employ professional standards of accountability and transparency in their work, and can demonstrate their impact and added-value to local donors.

It goes without saying that this list is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, there is a core group of NGO leaders that we believe can take on these challenges, particularly because of the bridges and mechanisms for constructive engagement with government and the private sector that have been built in the past decade.

I am particularly proud that the BAPF in its grantmaking has employed many principles and

approaches that are considered best practices for high-impact philanthropy world-wide, particularly as they relate to the task of strengthening the nonprofit sector. Some of this was structured intentionally, and some of it, frankly, was a result of learning by doing. Examples include:

- Providing sustained core support for institutional development purposes, with incentives such as matching funding to discourage over-dependency on one donor.
- Avoiding artificial distinctions between “service provider” and “advocacy” NGOs, as many organizations in the Baltics (as elsewhere) play a hybrid role.
- Making sure that relatively unknown concepts such as governance, public benefit advocacy, and community philanthropy were introduced without a “blueprint,” to allow for appropriate adaptation to the local context, and ownership by local actors.
- Respecting the insights of our local partners. This is certainly a common recommendation in international grantmaking circles nowadays but it is easier to say than it is to put into practice. It requires time, trust and sometimes contentious but ultimately fruitful conversations along the way.
- Allowing relationships and networks—within the three countries and across the region, among grantees and between program staff and local advisors—to develop over time in an organic, demand-driven fashion, rather than strictly as a donor-imposed framework. This was particularly

important given the enforced nature of collaboration among the three countries during the Soviet era.

The essays and profiles that follow highlight these and other aspects of the BAPF experience that we believe may be of interest to those working on similar issues in other countries, as well as anyone who has followed Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania’s remarkable transition over the past 15 years.

“I firmly believe that Baltic NGOs are well positioned to offer their own expertise and experience in other regions of the world, and I know that many of them are eager to do so.”

On a more personal note, while there are many people who have made invaluable contributions to the BAPF’s work, I would like to extend my particular thanks and appreciation to the three Baltic American Partnership Program directors in the region. Birute Jatautaite in Lithuania, Katrin Enno in Estonia, and Ieva Morica in Latvia have all displayed exemplary qualities of leadership, collegiality, flexibility and strategic thinking over the life of the BAPF. I do not believe it would be an exaggeration to say that they have been, and will continue to be, guiding forces in the further development of civil society in their countries.

Rebecca Tolson

*Executive Director (2001–2008)
Baltic–American Partnership Fund*



Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Throughout the life of the BAPF, the overall strategic objectives for its grant making in all three countries remained unchanged: 1) a clear, supportive legal and regulatory environment for civil society; 2) the institutional development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 3) financial sustainability of the NGO sector. Strengthening cross-sector cooperation and civic engagement were viewed as critical program goals, particularly in the early years of the BAPF's work. Creating sustainable and diverse funding sources for civil society became increasingly important as time went on.

As noted elsewhere in this report, having a common strategic framework was helpful to our work. There were many similarities in the challenges faced by civil society in all three countries, including the need to increase public awareness, create mechanisms for citizen and civic group engagement in government decision-making, strengthen the organizational capacity and advocacy skills of NGOs, rationalize legislation governing NGO activity, and stimulate local philanthropy. While BAPF did not have any truly "pan-Baltic" grantmaking, there was considerable exchange of experience when designing programs, and very little "reinvention of the wheel."

And yet, not surprisingly, there were also significant differences in the three countries' grantmaking in terms of what types of programs were developed to address the overarching strategic objectives, how resources were allocated, and which initiatives had the greatest impact and resonance in each country. While the BAPF did not invest a lot of time in formalized evaluation¹, the BAPF board, BAPF and BAPP staff, local advisors and partners engaged in continuous dialogue about the impact of our programs, and the relative successes and failures of our interventions.

Reflected here are some of the major programmatic outcomes and lessons learned in the course of the BAPF's grantmaking, as compiled by the program directors in each of the three countries. Some of these insights emerged relatively early on in the life of the BAPF, and remained ongoing themes in our internal strategy discussions; others are more recent and reflect a cumulative, retrospective understanding of the challenges posed and achievements made in strengthening civil society in these countries.

External Environment

Improving the Legislative and Regulatory Framework for NGO Activities

In Latvia and Lithuania, support was provided during the period 1999–2007 to key nonprofit institutions working with the executive and legislative branches of government to develop a clear and comprehensive set of laws governing the work of NGOs. This included the definition of public benefit status for nonprofits, and the accompanying designation of tax benefits to qualifying organizations. In Lithuania, the BAPP also supported a successful lobbying initiative to establish a special tax facility, through which individuals may now allocate 2 percent of their income tax annually to charities of their choice.

While conditions were generally favorable for the passage of NGO-related legislation, the process was lengthy and complicated. As Ieva Morica, the BAPP Latvia program director, notes, "since previously NGOs, trade unions and political parties were all

¹ With the exception of a comprehensive external assessment conducted in 2006; see www.bapf.org/BAPF_BAPP%20Assessment.pdf for the full report.

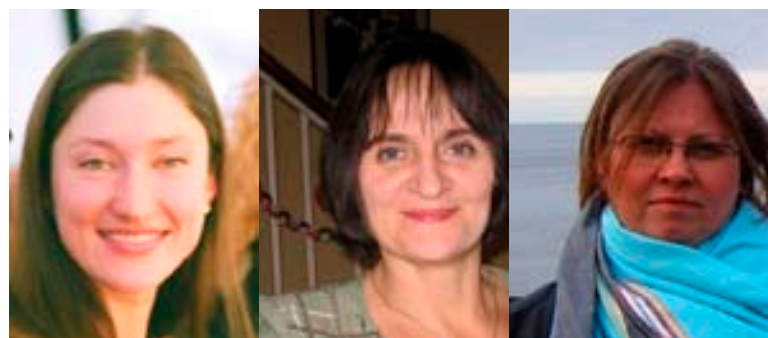
*Baltic American Partnership Program Officers
Ieva Morica (Latvia), Birute Jatautaite (Lithuania)
and Katrin Enno (Estonia)*

covered by the same law, ... a lot of time was spent on the inclusion of all concerned stakeholders in debates [on draft legislation] and finding the right compromises.” Other factors critical to the success of these programs included the following:

- Utilizing experience from other countries in the region undergoing similar legal reforms, and the expertise of groups such as the International Center for Non-Profit Law, which consulted the legislative reform initiatives in both Latvia and Lithuania.
- Building the professional capacity and expertise of the partner institutions to advocate for legislative and regulatory reform, and to monitor legal developments of relevance to the NGO sector on an ongoing basis. While groups like Civic Alliance in Latvia and the NGO Law Institute in Lithuania face organizational and financial sustainability challenges as the BAPP’s support ends, they have nonetheless gained widespread visibility and credibility in their communities, which will hopefully enable them to continue their important work in the future.
- In Latvia’s case, including a wide range of NGOs in consultations on draft legislation, which gave them a sense of ownership in the process and a deeper understanding of the framework in which they carry out their activities. In Lithuania, the situation was not quite as favorable: according to Birute Jatautaite, the BAPP Lithuania program director, “low interest among non-profit organizations in the development, revision and monitoring of legislation can largely be attributed to the fact that the majority of NGOs still lack the motivation, human and/or financial resources to address wider [sectoral] issues.”

NGO/Government Relations

In Estonia, the legislative framework for NGO activities and charitable giving was quite favorable from the very outset of the BAPP’s work. The BAPP Estonia chose instead to concentrate resources upon efforts to strengthen relations between the third sector and government, most notably, through its support for the development of an Estonian Civil Society Concept (or EKAK, as it is known), a landmark document that was passed by the Parliament in 2002, after wide-ranging and



sometimes contentious consultations between the government and NGOs.

The EKAK laid out a set of principles governing relations between the two sectors, and committed the government to a series of actions designed to support the work of the third sector, the implementation of which is ongoing to date. The underlying principle of EKAK is that the public and nonprofit sectors are equal partners in the development of society, and that the nonprofit sector should remain independent even if it receives funding from the state. As noted by many civil society actors in Estonia, the process of developing the EKAK was at least as important as the substance of it. It was an effort that helped to consolidate the third sector around an important set of common goals, and acclimatized government to the heretofore uncommon practice of involvement of NGOs and individuals in important policymaking decisions. As Katrin Enno, the BAPP Estonia program director notes, “The process did not end with the adoption of EKAK. It went on with the working out of other, equally important procedures and policy documents, such as the Code of Good Practice on Involvement, the Code of Good Practice on Public Service Delivery and the Code of Good Practice on Funding (both of which are still in draft form as of July 2008), the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007–2010 (KATA in Estonian), and the government-sponsored public participation portal, www.osale.ee.”

In Latvia, a similar memorandum of understanding between the government and NGOs was signed in 2005, but the process was not as wide ranging, and it is still largely seen as a gesture of good will on the part of government towards the nonprofit sector. In Lithuania, ongoing efforts to develop such a policy document are viewed as important for the further

strengthening and consolidation of the third sector. The BAPP Latvia and BAPP Lithuania, through their grantmaking and collective advocacy with their grantees, certainly were able to contribute to the institutionalization of certain mechanisms for engagement of NGOs and individuals in government policymaking and development of legislation. However, it seems that the political culture in these two countries does not yet support the type of meaningful consultation that is accepted to a greater degree in Estonia today. “Active citizenship is not yet seen as a value and asset by government officials and politicians,” says Morica of the Latvian context.

Public Awareness

While we cannot attribute the relatively favorable state of NGO/government relations in Estonia to any one factor, and surely not to the BAPP’s interventions alone, it is worth noting that prior and parallel to the EKAK development process, the BAPP Estonia invested considerably more resources than its counterparts in Lithuania and Latvia in programs designed to increase public awareness of the concept of “civil society” and of the work of nonprofit organizations. Between 1999 and 2003, approximately \$250,000 was spent to support the publication of a monthly supplement to the major Estonian newspapers, the NGO Special (kodanikuühiskonna häälekandja Foorum in Estonian), which provided a forum for discussing sector-wide policy issues, and highlighting the concrete work of individual organizations. According to an assessment conducted in 2003, the publication had the added benefit of providing indirect “training” and awareness building on civil society issues for journalists in the mainstream press. Today, while the supplement no longer exists, there is ample coverage of NGOs, their issues and their policy concerns by the media, and the tenor of that coverage is largely positive.

Latvia and Lithuania also supported various public awareness campaigns and media initiatives, but on a smaller scale. There is no evidence to suggest that allocating a larger amount of resources toward specific public awareness building initiatives

in these two countries would have yielded results similar to what was achieved in Estonia. There were many political externalities in Latvia and Lithuania that presented great challenges to the efforts of the BAPPs and their grantees to strengthen the public image of the third sector. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that, overall, the BAPP probably underestimated the extent to which public awareness efforts needed to be undertaken from an early stage, whether through support of media campaigns, other strategic approaches, or a combination of activities.

Institutional Development and Advocacy Capacity of NGOs

A major goal of the BAPP’s grantmaking was to contribute to the institutional development of NGOs. BAPP Estonia’s strategic focus on public awareness and building an infrastructure for civil society organizations² meant that it allocated comparatively less resources than Latvia and Lithuania to grant programs for individual NGOs.

Nevertheless, all three BAPPs devoted a great deal of attention to the question of how best to strengthen individual nonprofits given limited resources and a finite timeframe. In the early years of our grantmaking, there were particular efforts to reach out to a diverse range of NGOs, in terms of size, geography, issue area, and institutional profile (service providers, advocacy groups, and “hybrids”). This was viewed as important given the tendency of previous donors in the region to focus primarily on a relatively small circle of national level NGOs, who in most cases were doing good work, but tended to monopolize resources and did little to develop networks and relationships outside the capital cities.

Great care was also taken in designing flexible delivery models for institutional assistance that would meet the needs of individual NGOs. Recognizing that NGOs’ predominant mode of operation was to live from project grant to project grant, the

² Most notably, support between 1999 and 2003 for a network of NGO resource centers throughout Estonia that was then largely incorporated into a government funded network of county development centers in 2003.

BAPPs provided institutional development grants that combined core and project support, technical assistance, professional development opportunities within the Baltics and without, and access to consultants. Although there was initially some concern among the BAPPs that multi-year grants would foster a culture of dependency among recipients, they gradually came to be recognized as an important way to strengthen the effectiveness and long-term sustainability prospects of NGOs. Core support was usually provided under the condition that BAPF's portion of a group's operating budget did not exceed a certain percentage, and matching requirements were often built into the structure of grants. A number of programs in all three countries awarded grants to NGOs for the purposes of building fundraising capacity, increasing membership and donor outreach, and developing earned income strategies.

In the second half of the BAPF's lifespan, the scope of the BAPPs' institutional development grantmaking narrowed to a smaller group of organizations that had already demonstrated the capacity to play a leadership and peer educator role across issue areas within the third sector, with particular attention to groups willing and able to engage in advocacy work. In their final two years of grantmaking, the BAPPs have made funding available on a challenge basis to a limited number of mature organizations for the purposes of reserve fund building, in the belief that this will enable certain leading groups to work and plan more effectively for the future.

As all three program directors note, this is a program area that is difficult to assess. Institutional development is a long-term process and outcomes cannot be measured in as concrete terms as other aspects of the BAPF's work. There is, however, a core group of NGOs in each country that have, with the BAPPs' financial support and technical assistance, gone through a serious process of organizational learning and growth, with important skills gained and capacity built in the previously neglected areas of strategic planning, fundraising, governance, and advocacy. They are the organizations that will play a leading role in further civil society development efforts in all three countries. There is, admittedly, some concern that without a donor like the BAPF in the picture, the gap between these professional leaders and smaller groups in more rural areas, for example, will grow more pro-

nounced. However, it is expected that some of the intermediary infrastructure institutions built with the BAPF's support (such as the community foundations in Latvia and Lithuania, and the regional resource centers in Estonia) will assist less experienced organizations in the future.

What were some of the keys to success and lessons learned in developing and implementing an effective institutional development grant program for NGOs? They included the following:

- Building a relationship of trust and openness between the donor and the grantee, through which the recipient organization feels secure in discussing complex organizational problems and developing ways of addressing these problems collaboratively with the donor.
- Recognizing the personality, strengths and weaknesses of the individual leaders of organizations. Some of the best advocates and most visionary leaders are not good managers and vice versa. The donor must work carefully with the grantee to ensure that qualities lacking in the leader are built in other parts of the organization, at the board and/or staff level.
- Identifying the key areas where an organization needs support and development. Usually it is a complex mix of different, but interlinked issues, such as organizational leadership, governance, staff capacity, and strategic review processes.
- Providing negotiated general support over a multi-year period, based on realistic, mutually agreed upon strategic objectives for the organization and the grant during that period. This gives the grantee considerable autonomy while still providing the donor a reasonable degree of assurance that the funds are being used wisely.
- Keeping in mind that there are important "second" and "third" tier organizations that may not have reached the same level of professionalism and effectiveness as the "leaders", but which can benefit equally, if not more so, from support for institutional development purposes. This may involve a higher degree of risk and a larger amount of time on the part of the donor, but it is an important way of ensuring that the sector remains diverse and reflective of voices at the grassroots level.

There are encouraging signs that the BAPP's provision of institutional development grants over the past nine years has helped break down the prevailing project-based mentality of civil society organizations and their donors. Birute Jatautaite states that the BAPP's grantmaking has "empowered NGOs [in Lithuania] to think more creatively and be more entrepreneurial in managing their organizations." In Estonia, NGOs used the example of BAPP's multi-year institutional grants to advocate successfully for longer-term, less-restricted funding from public sector institutions.

Building Local Sources of Funding

And yet, there are still huge challenges on the funding front, especially for advocacy groups. Strengthening the financial sustainability prospects of NGOs has been a strategic priority of the BAPP from the beginning, but it is only in the past few years that we have been able to see any real gains in terms of nonprofit capacity to diversify its funding sources, and willingness and ability of business, individuals and government to provide financial support for the work of the third sector. As Ieva Morica explains, over the years, "BAPP paid a lot of attention to fostering a culture of public benefit advocacy, and extensive support was provided to projects that promoted the NGO advocacy role vis-à-vis the state. As a result, advocacy NGOs are skillful and competent in talking about their issue areas with government and EU officials, but it is difficult for them to explain their added value to businesses and individuals [in Latvia]." And of course, as in every other country, there will always be independence and credibility issues which place limitations on advocacy groups' ability to accept funding from government and business.

There is a collective understanding within the BAPP that more proactive strategies to help NGOs with fundraising might have been helpful earlier on in our work. Morica notes that in Latvia, the BAPP's first grants in this area were mainly targeted at providing information about philanthropy, operating under the assumption that the time was not yet ripe for intensive efforts to stimulate charitable giving. However, as an ancient Chinese proverb

says, "Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I'll remember. Involve me, I'll understand." Encouraging organizations to engage actively in fundraising at an earlier point might not have yielded much in the way of actual financial support, but it would have contributed significantly to strengthening the culture of giving in the country. Similarly, Jatautaite believes that an earlier launch of the NGO reserve fund program would have been more beneficial in showing organizations how to "save and earn" at the same time.

Public Funding

In Estonia, throughout the life of the BAPP, there has been significantly less concern about the financial sustainability of NGOs, largely because of the expectation that public funding would form the bulk of third sector support. This was a position which, frankly, was of concern to the BAPP at the outset, since dependency on government support seemed to raise the specter of an NGO sector beholden to the interests of the state. While some of this concern still exists today, there seems to be a growing body of evidence that at least in Estonia, this model works without compromising the independence of the sector unduly.

This may be due to the strategic framework and equal partnership principles laid out in the EKAK as discussed above, as well as to the BAPP-supported efforts to create transparent and independent mechanisms for the channeling of state support to the NGO sector. This work began in 2001, and culminated this year in the establishment of a National Foundation for Civil Society, a separate grantmaking entity with a board consisting of government and nonprofit sector representatives and a state-funded budget of approximately \$2 million annually. The BAPP Estonia considers the establishment and mission of this foundation to be a significant part of its grantmaking legacy in Estonia.

In Latvia and Lithuania, there has been some progress made in encouraging public funding for the nonprofit sector, particularly at the local level. However, the results overall have been minimal. This may be due to the prevailing political culture as discussed earlier, and more recently, because of the economic slowdown and austerity measures that place non-profit sector development low on government's list of priorities.

Corporate, Community and Individual Philanthropy

In contrast, the growth and nurturing of indigenous philanthropy, particularly in Latvia and Lithuania, represents a success story for the BAPPs and their partners, albeit one still in its opening chapters. A number of these successes are described in greater detail elsewhere in this report, including the community foundations movement that was started with the BAPP's support and the indigenous philanthropy development foundations—the Partners in Ideas Fund, and the Civic Responsibility Foundation—established by BAPP Latvia and Lithuania in recent years. Estonia has also witnessed a significant growth of interest in corporate and individual philanthropy, often with an entrepreneurial orientation, but it has flourished largely independently of the BAPP Estonia's work. One of the more prominent actors in this field is the Good Deed Foundation, the first venture philanthropy fund in the region (www.heategu.ee).

Despite these promising signs, a great deal of additional work remains to be done in order to bring private philanthropy to a level where it can have significant impact on the ongoing process of social change in the three countries. Fortunately, the intermediary institutions mentioned above have embraced this challenge as their central mission for the future.

Civic Engagement

While the BAPPs allocated comparatively few resources specifically for “civic engagement programs,” the concept of civic participation lay at the core of most of our grantmaking programs, from support for community foundations and community-based initiatives, to the creation of mechanisms for citizen and NGO input to policymaking processes at the local and national level, to the broader introduction of the NGO sector to the concept and practice of public benefit advocacy. Although progress in this area has been made, it is extremely hard to measure what is, in essence, long-term attitudinal change. Levels of civic participation are still low in the Baltics, as throughout the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, due to a complicated

mix of political, economic and social factors. A Civic Empowerment Index carried out by the Lithuanian Civil Society Institute in 2007 found that “society's prevailing disbelief that citizens' collective action can make a difference or help achieve significant outcomes” is a major barrier to increased civic engagement.

In retrospect, it is possible to say that the BAPP could or should have done more direct grantmaking in the area of civic participation. However, it is equally fair to conclude that it would have been very hard for the BAPP to have had more than an incremental effect on civic engagement levels even if it had devoted all of its resources and time explicitly to this goal. We do believe that many of the BAPPs' programs have had a catalytic effect on a wide range of individuals at the community level, encouraging them to become more active in a variety of ways, some of which are profiled more specifically elsewhere in this report. Not surprisingly, youth was a specific group targeted by our grantmaking, given their centrality to the process of change in the region. There are encouraging signs that they are engaging more directly in civic life, both at the national and community level. While the BAPP's involvement in the region has ended, we feel confident that other actors, most of whom appropriately will be Baltic and young, will step in to ensure that these still fragile participatory democracies are enriched and strengthened with new, creative ideas and approaches.

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Essays

Fostering a Culture of Cooperation in Estonia

Looking back to the development of Estonian society after the restoration of the country's independence in 1991, it is easy to see that one of the greatest challenges to be met was the re-emergence of civil society after fifty years of rule by the Soviet regime.

Paraphrasing the observations of noted political scientist Ralf Dahrendorf from 1990, political changes can be introduced in the course of a few days, weeks and months; economic restructuring can bring results after a few years; but creating civil societies is a task that requires the lifespan of a generation. The harm done by the Soviet regime that was perhaps most difficult to repair was the destruction of independent institutions and citizen participation. After liberation from totalitarian government control, new, pluralist societies needed to be created. The informal networks of friends that still existed could help people to survive, but they could not become instruments of any long-term projects; they were based on trust between individuals, but they did not foster cooperation between people unknown to each other. In the early 1990s, Estonian society did not possess much of what is commonly referred to as "social capital"—the readiness of people to act jointly for common goals. Both the people and the new institutions had to learn to work together and see themselves as having a role in social, economic and political decision-making.

By the time the BAPP began its work almost ten years ago, the most basic environment and infrastructure for the functioning of civil society organizations was already in place in Estonia: laws and regulations that allowed unrestricted registration and operations of nonprofit organizations, certain tax benefits for individual and corporate donations and a few organizations that provided basic consultations and trainings on nonprofit issues. However, the government, private sector, and even organized civil society itself did not recognize the sector's

role and potential as an influential developmental force and invaluable component of a free and democratic society. The public perceived nonprofit organizations as belonging primarily to the spheres of culture, sports, social welfare and education, as opposed to the public space of deliberation and participation in decision-making. Accordingly, BAPP Estonia's policy of promoting the environment that nurtures organized civil society and civic participation was both important and timely. From 1999 to the present, BAPP supported a range of activities designed to build public awareness and to create a network of individuals and organizations with a shared sense of identity as civil society actors.

“By organizing themselves, citizens are able to guard and promote interests that otherwise remain unobserved or neglected by the government and businesses.”

As to the establishment of new nonprofit organizations, their growth in the past ten years has been no less than astonishing. From 6,000 registered voluntary associations, foundations and other nonprofit organizations in 1998, their number now totals more than 25,000. Although the development has been fastest in the capital, Tallinn, and in some other larger cities, there are numerous active organizations in all rural regions as well. They have become more visible in public debates, and their positions are increasingly taken into account by the state and local governments. The space of organized civil society that was virtually empty in early 1990s has by now been filled by a mushrooming of new actors.

However, the mere number of organizations does not yet tell much about the strength of organized civil society. What matters is what the organizations do. There are many widely different functions that they can be expected to fulfill. They should be able to represent various interests in a pluralist society; as Alexis de Tocqueville put it in his classical treatment of American democracy, voluntary

Kristina Mänd



associations are, among other things, independent power centers that prevent democracy from becoming just a form of dictatorship by the majority. By organizing themselves, citizens are able to guard and promote interests that could otherwise remain unobserved or neglected by the government and businesses. In order to be able to take care of that task, nonprofit organizations are in need of professional leadership and administration. Support for numerous NGO training and networking activities has been one of the areas of focus for BAPP. Today we can say that Estonian civil society is represented by a number of well-trained and visionary activists, and organizations are increasingly more professional and focused in what they do.

Also of critical importance is the relationship between civil society organizations and the state.



Having to cooperate or contend with well-informed and capable NGOs is perhaps not the dream of all politicians and government officials. However, there is a global trend of shifting from “government” to “governance,” of moving from centralized decision making to cooperation among government, business, and nonprofit actors. Even if this may lead to a slowing down of decision making processes, it will pay back in the sense that the policies adopted will better reflect society’s actual complexity and plurality, and will have greater “buy-in” from the people. The relations between government and the non-profit sector have been central to the BAPP’s strategic thinking and grantmaking from the outset.

The development of a society also requires that ordinary people, not just well-trained professional activists, are involved in local development. Taking care of one’s own environment and having a say in how it develops—this is civil society in its most concrete form. At its best, voluntary activism becomes part of a way of life in which ordinary people shoulder some of the responsibility for their community. In the activities of the BAPP, this priority has been addressed through support to small-scale projects implemented by local associations and informal civic groups, and by community philanthropy projects. At the same time, we must admit that less than a third of the Estonian population participates in voluntary associations of different types, according to survey results from 2008. There is still some way to go forward.

To conclude, we must agree with Dahrendorf: building civil society is a process that requires time. Above all, it asks for a profound change of attitudes. From individuals busily occupied with their own problems and aspirations, people need to become citizens who realize the ways in which their own well-being is intertwined with that of others. A culture of survival needs to be replaced by a culture of cooperation.

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The Advocacy Legacy in the Baltics

In my view, the most significant and fragile aspect of the BAPF's legacy in the Baltic states is the contribution made to the development of advocacy NGOs. Recent studies by major political scientists show that countries where more people are ready to sign petitions or to mobilize in order to impose political change on the government, are less corrupt and have more effective democracy. The difference between formal democracy and effective democracy is not in the number of people who join voluntary associations. It is in the number of people who are so attached to the ideal of democracy that they are prepared to demand it from their governments and to criticize elite behavior whenever it does not conform to high standards of integrity and transparency. It is such people that join advocacy NGOs and watchdog organizations.

Postcommunist societies are not particularly rich in such individuals. In the years when BAPF was active in the Baltic states, it accomplished the task of identifying and fostering advocacy NGOs that gathered such people and mobilized their talent and determination to have an impact on the public agenda. The exact contribution of these organizations to the democratic transition of the three countries is difficult to calculate. It is often badly underestimated. Whereas unconventional protest actions and politicians complaining about 'unreasonable' demands made by NGO activists are regularly shown by the media, the more routine, day-to-day work by these organizations to improve public policy often remains unseen. Who knows how many municipalities have been enabled by NGO experts to create better regulations for construction and development, ensuring that corruption risks were lower, and that the rights of individuals and nature were better protected? How many populist and irresponsible decisions in politics were prevented by NGOs keeping an eye on spending by political parties during election campaigns? How many individuals felt free to be themselves owing to the raised voice of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights advocates?

It would be naive to expect that people engaged in these types of advocacy could always have the support of the general public. Advocacy NGOs are not exactly universally popular—not in developed democracies, and still less in the countries that have experienced many decades of oppressive regimes and imposed uniformity. Unconventional public action and elite-challenging activities are frowned upon. In that, rather than in the lack of resources, lies the cause of meager financial support of advocacy NGOs by local donors. Still, over the years that the BAPFs have spent supporting the development of this field, remarkable progress has been achieved.

“The spirit of civic activism will endure among the predominantly young, ambitious and courageous membership of Baltic advocacy NGOs.”

This progress is most visible not in the institutional capacity of advocacy NGOs (they remain relatively weak), nor in public recognition (the legitimacy of NGOs engaging in public policy is still held in doubt by part of the media and political elite). The progress achieved is most visible in the better responsiveness of political institutions to civil society initiatives. Much of this progress is down to boring technical details—a public agreement here, a working group there. Civil society participation achieved in this way is still inefficient, manipulated and fragmented. Nevertheless, if one were to compare the situation at the time when the BAPFs began their work and the situation today, the difference is obvious. Today, the participation of civil society organizations in public policy processes is a fact, and there are enough individuals, both in civil society and in public administration, who see this participation as a norm. One hopes they would cringe if someone tried to take that participation away from them.

Another major asset that developed owing to the BAPFs' skillful intervention is the courage and confidence of individuals engaged in civic activism.



Organizations may suffer from lack of funding and fickle leaders; they may stagger and even fail. But the spirit of civic activism will endure among the predominantly young, ambitious and courageous membership of Baltic advocacy NGOs. Though they are not many, they are determined and capable, and convinced that their societies will do better if their voice is heard.

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Philanthropy in Lithuania: Keeping Up With the World

Over the last several years, official statistics on individual and corporate giving in Lithuania have shown tendencies of growth. However, it is predicted that economic recession might slow this trend in the near future. It remains to be seen whether this prognosis is correct. The scope and nature of actual philanthropic giving is difficult to assess with precision since existing statistics include a broad range of charitable activities, including sponsorship of sports and leisure events, which is still one of the most common forms of corporate philanthropy in Lithuania today. In the past few years, BAPP Lithuania has explored the field in greater depth by commissioning several informative studies on both the legal and practical aspects of philanthropy in the country, including corporate giving trends, and regulations governing foundation operations and the establishment of endowments.

Where does philanthropy in Lithuania stand in relation to wider global developments? In Europe, the United States, and, increasingly, Asia, several distinctive trends in the development of philanthropy can be discerned, including the search for and funding of social entrepreneurs, more extensive donor involvement, venture investment, consideration of higher payout rates for endowments and market-based approaches. The perceived inability of government and more traditional forms of philanthropy to address society's needs fully has led to heightened interest in the activities of social entrepreneurs. The idea of funding entrepreneurs has appealed to businesses and business-minded individuals in our region and beyond. However, Lithuania's donors currently are in no hurry to include social entrepreneurship as a target for assistance. Supporting an individual who is neither a young person with a specific professional or academic talent nor a person in need with a poignant story, is still considered problematic. Unwillingness to provide this type of support can be explained in part by the business sector's discomfort with a less formalized and purportedly less reliable process, in which donors are not asked directly for funds and where there is no organization to back the project. An equally credible reason is that Lithu-

ania's business donors, who increasingly follow the principles of corporate social responsibility, are not yet sufficiently committed to becoming genuinely and proactively involved in the search for solutions to social problems.

“The increase in charitable giving, regardless of its form, is a sign that society is ready to do more, and not only with small financial contributions.”

Are there social entrepreneurs in Lithuania? It would be easier to identify and nurture them if an environment of trust, encouragement and financing were built to support their work. For this purpose, a more intensive engagement of donors is needed, characterized by a hands-on approach and broader conception of support, which would include not only financial assistance but also the investment of business leaders' time and competence. Nonprofit social initiatives can greatly benefit by incorporating skills and approaches from the business sector. Thus far there are but a few examples of hands-on business engagement in social projects, including the Food Bank with which I am involved. In our case, the employees of Kraft Foods Lithuania actively participate in volunteering for food bank collections, and assist with strategic planning, networking, and new project development. This type of effort should be applauded as the beginning of a more intensive and creative engagement of the business sector in philanthropy. The Civic Responsibility Foundation, established recently by the BAPP, shows potential to stimulate philanthropy in Lithuania and to help increase corporate social responsibility. It will employ some of the methods that the BAPP itself has used, including multi-year investments in the institutional capacity of individual NGOs, and non-financial support such as technical assistance, executive coaching, strategic planning and legal and financial advice.

In individual philanthropy, there is also a lack of innovative approaches to giving and low awareness of new developments in philanthropy worldwide. “Traditional” charity for “traditional” causes such as children and the elderly predominates. And yet, the



increase in charitable giving, regardless of its form, is a sign that society is ready to do more, and not only with small financial contributions. There are indications that public consciousness is changing, and a new generation is emerging with a stronger sense of community and more willingness to contribute to good causes. Students and young professionals increasingly take the initiative to volunteer with social and environmental projects. They usually choose large, nationally known NGOs. Smaller civic organizations whose work has gained visibility and credibility already enjoy the growing support of local communities. The seven community foundations that have been established with support from the BAPP today cover only 13 administrative regions out of 60, but they have become an exemplary philanthropic mechanism for people and businesses who want to support local NGOs and voluntary activities in their own communities.

So how can Lithuania's philanthropy keep up with developments in the world? One priority is to educate Lithuania's donors—both corporate and individual—and foster their engagement. More interesting and innovative volunteering opportunities should be offered to individuals and businesses. Programs on philanthropy and corporate social responsibility should be initiated in Lithuania's business and management schools. The creation of a robust and active philanthropic environment requires much greater involvement from all sectors, including formal and informal groups, in order to develop effective strategies to address society's needs in the future.

Jolanta Blazaitė

*Board member of the Food Bank Lithuania
Project Coordinator of the Community Change Centre*

Building Community Foundations in the Baltics

Eight years ago, when the BAPF began its initial work to develop pilot sites for community philanthropy in the Baltics, there were just a few people in the three countries who were familiar with the concept of community foundations. The establishment of a long-term, sustainable mechanism for community support or, in other words, a community foundation, was a great challenge initially.

We have worked hard to learn the concepts behind community-based philanthropy and develop a model that works in the Baltics. Traditionally, NGOs in this region have been supported by foreign donors and had good project proposal writing skills. It was hard to imagine an environment without foreign donors and with NGOs reliant on local resources. It has been very hard to explain to local donors what a community foundation is, what an endowment means, and why open grant competitions should be held. Research, meetings and working groups, discussions, seminars, consultants, study visits, and community forums—all of these activities led to the establishment of the very first community foundations in 2002. The number of foundations has increased gradually every year.

Today we have 15 community foundations (CFs) in the three Baltic countries (2 in Estonia, 6 in Latvia and 7 in Lithuania) that together serve almost 15 percent of the total population. The foundations have supported a wide range of community-oriented projects, primarily with local resources—from cultural heritage initiatives, to the building of new sports and recreation facilities, to academic scholarships for disadvantaged children.

The foundations have raised money from a variety of sources, using a range of methods, including traditional fundraising events, modest income generating activities, and the establishment of donor-advised grant programs. In 2007, approximately 27 percent of the CFs' income came from the business sector, 23 percent from international donors (primarily the BAPF) and EU funds, 18 percent from national and local governments, 17 percent from individuals, 14 percent from national foundations, and 2 percent from service provision and endow-

ment generated income. In Lithuania, CFs also benefit from the "2 percent facility," through which individuals may assign 2 percent of their annual income tax to charitable organizations. In 2007, 14 percent of the Lithuanian CFs' income came from these tax assignments.

Breaking the Myths

Community foundations in the Baltics have been established in towns with populations ranging from 3,700 to 177,000. Our experience had shown that community foundations can work effectively in comparatively small, resource poor locations. It is much easier to reach NGOs and civic groups in small communities, the results and activities are more visible, and donors understand the needs much better. The Lielvarde Community Development Foundation in Latvia, which works in a community of 7,500 inhabitants, is a good example. At the beginning, we were skeptical about the feasibility of establishing a foundation there. Today, the Foundation has initiated the development of a water science and playground center in Lielvarde, a unique place for water discovery not only in Latvia, but in the Baltics as a whole. Investment in this project is calculated to be about \$US4 million.

"We now know that people in less affluent regions are responsive to charitable initiatives, debunking the myth that in our society only rich people can donate money to good causes."

We now know that people in less affluent regions are responsive to charitable initiatives, debunking the myth that in our society only rich people can donate money to good causes. The profile of donors in all three countries has been diverse, ranging from entrepreneurs to teachers, pensioners and schoolchildren. One innovative example of involvement of people in charity and decision-making processes is an approach which has been implemented by the Talsi Region Community Foundation in Latvia. The Foundation was established by 43

local residents, which has grown to 80, each of whom donates a minimum of \$40 annually. This membership gives them the opportunity to vote for projects considered through the Foundation's grant competitions. This proved to be a great motivation for people to donate. Similarly, a CF in the Lithuanian town of Alytus runs a fund-raising campaign called "A Friend of Alytus," which started with 10 individual donors, and has grown to 50 in a relatively short period of time.

Endowment building has been one of the biggest challenges for Baltic community foundations. It is still hard to develop, but trust from many people in our communities has been achieved. Our slogan has been "When, if not now!" As compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where a number of international foundations provided significant support for endowments, the Baltic CF endowments are being built primarily from local sources, with some modest challenge grants from BAPF.

Working Together in the Baltics and Beyond

In 2006, the community foundations in Latvia and Lithuania established national associations, to facilitate collaborative work within their countries and with each other. While Estonia does not have a similar association, individual community foundations have worked with their counterparts in the other two countries.

In Latvia, the CF association has participated for three years in the national fundraising campaign

"School Bag," which provides school supplies for students from families who cannot purchase them on their own. The foundations have worked together on other initiatives providing small grants for community projects. The Civic Responsibility Foundation, a BAPP successor organization in Lithuania, is planning to assist Lithuanian CFs with a joint fundraising and local philanthropy promotion campaign in the near future.

There have also been several pan-Baltic activities in recent years. In 2004, the Talsi Region Community Foundation in Latvia organized the first Baltic region conference on community philanthropy. In 2005, the Samogitia Community Foundation in Lithuania organized a best-practice sharing meeting for all of the Baltic community foundations, with guest speakers from the Charities Aid Foundation-Russia, which had served as a technical assistance partner for the community foundation initiative in Latvia and Lithuania in earlier years. In 2006, the Peipsi Centre for Transborder Cooperation in Estonia organized an international conference about CF cooperation with the public sector.

Despite the fact that community foundations in the Baltics are young, small and still learning, we have the capacity to participate in development cooperation activities and offer our experience and knowledge to Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. As one example, the community foundation in Visaginas, Lithuania (a town with an Armenian community), has provided technical assistance which resulted in the establishment of the first community foundation in the Lori region of Armenia, an area of 250,000 people which is still grappling with the effects of a major earthquake in 1988.



Achievements and Future Challenges

Community foundations have been an effective vehicle for attracting private capital for community needs. Successful community foundation development depends on different factors. We have learned that having the right people in the right place at the right time is essential for the sustainability prospects of community foundations. The CFs with leaders who are motivated and believe in the concept have achieved good results.

Partnership with either local or national governments was also important for us. In some cases, local governments are among the founders of CFs. Some municipalities provide financial support and grants for community foundation activities; some cooperate in organizing grant competitions. For example, the Viljandi County Community Foundation in Estonia developed a scheme in which local governments are called upon to allocate 1 Estonian kroon per resident annually as their contribution to the endowment of the foundation. The mechanism is not burdensome and enables a regular exchange of information between the Viljandi County Community Foundation and local governments, and thus builds their sense of ownership.

Further development of the community foundation movement in all three countries will require sustained promotion of the community philanthropy concept, increased outreach to the private sector, and ongoing access to learning, training, peer exchanges and international networking opportunities.

Our Advisors and Friends

The BAPP has been the main external donor for community foundations in the Baltics to date, but its assistance has extended beyond financial sup-

port. The BAPP offices have been always open for us and the BAPP board and staff have always included meetings with community foundation leaders in their visits, appreciated our work, and given us belief that we were on the right track. The BAPP program directors—Ieva Morica in Latvia, Birute Jatautaite in Lithuania, and Katrin Enno in Estonia—have always been involved partners. We will miss this support in the future. We also benefited from valuable technical assistance and mentoring from organizations and individuals with community philanthropy participatory planning experience in other countries, including the Antioch New England Institute in the United States, the Charities Aid Foundation in Russia and the Ekopolis Foundation in Slovakia.

We know that there is still lot of work that we need to do and that we are still small and young in the global context. Most important, however, is that we were able to develop philanthropy, inspire a greater sense of civic and community responsibility among many individuals and corporations, and involve people in decision making and activities which make our lives better.

Inese Danga

*Executive Director
Community Foundation
Movement in Latvia*

Grantee Profiles – Telling the Story of Civil Society in the Baltics

Estonia

The Estonian Fund for Nature and the Estonian Environmental Law Center

In 2001, the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF), one of the leading environmental groups in the country, began providing free legal aid on environmental issues to citizens and other environmental groups. After only a few years, this work had yielded significant results at the highest levels of the Estonian legal system. In 2003, ELF represented a group of community activists in a court case against the Estonian government. The issue at hand was protection of a national park with over 100 species of plant life in the center of Estonia, under threat because of government plans to build a prison hospital in its midst. Over the course of two years, the legal struggle continued all the way to the Estonian

Supreme Court, which eventually ruled in favor of ELF's clients. This was the first time in Estonian history that a group of citizens sued and won a case against the government. Thus ELF's first efforts had great significance not only for the environmental movement, but for all of those working in the area of civil society development and civic engagement.

“When local groups are active and successful in the areas of environmental protection and community development, they tend to become involved in other areas as well.”

–Kart Vaarmari, director

Since then, this small but agile group of lawyers and environmental activists has taken on 16 court cases, winning approximately half of them, on matters ranging from mining in residential areas to protection of endangered wetlands. In many instances, important legislative precedents have been created where none existed before. In a recent case, the Supreme Court ruled against an environmental group that had challenged the decision of a local government agency to issue a peat mining license for a protected nature area. Although this was a disappointing outcome, ELF was heartened by the fact that the Supreme Court stated unequivocally



*Kärt Vaarmari, Director,
Estonian Environmental Law Center*



Celebrating the Establishment of the Estonian Environmental Law Center

for the first time that even informal environmental groups have legal standing in court cases.

In 2006, ELF and some individual public interest lawyers working for other environmental NGOs decided to create a new entity for this legal advocacy work. By this time, ELF's legal activities had won tremendous positive recognition from Estonian environmental activists, media and the general public, but also negative attention from the Estonian government. This was reflected in the Minister of Environment's refusal to finance ELF's activities from public sources. It had also become clear that litigation work alone was not sufficient to make the actual difference in implementation of environmental law. There was a great need to have competent lawyers who would participate in legislative processes, to bring information about environmental rights to citizens and NGOs, and also to educate civil servants and advise government. In order to carry out all of these activities in a financially sustainable way, a spin-off organization was established—the Estonian Environmental Law Center (EELC).

Though passionate about its cause, and never hesitant to take legal action when appropriate, EELC is pragmatic about the need to work in partnership with government and business to protect the environment and create sustainable local development policies. This is not always easy, given the complex nexus of political and economic interests that often come to the fore when land use issues are being considered. Although EELC lawyers now count businesses and government ministries among its clients, offering expert assistance with environmental impact assessments and land use policy development, there is no doubt as to its primary

mission and constituents. As Kart Vaarmari, the determined lawyer at the helm of EELC states, “We want to make environmental decisions transparent and well calculated.” She is cautiously optimistic about growing levels of citizen engagement, noting that when local groups are active and successful in the areas of environmental protection and community development, they tend to become involved in other areas as well. However, they often have less legal recourse than in the environmental sphere, where the legislative framework is extremely well developed. In Vaarmari's opinion, influencing government policy in Estonia is still difficult, although government does take citizens and NGOs more seriously that it did ten years ago. For the moment, EELC remains one of the very few organizations with the capacity and will to use litigation as a public interest advocacy tool.

Lea Nilson
and Lagle Parek,
Directors, Pirita Society



The Pirita Society

Pirita is a picturesque, historic suburb of Tallinn nestled against the Baltic Sea, which has found itself grappling with the challenges of urban sprawl, rising land prices, avid real estate developers, and increased traffic and pollution. Lea Nilson and Lagle Parek are two committed and energetic leaders of the three-year-old Pirita Society, a grassroots group which was established because of concerns that Pirita residents had little say in the further development of their community.

With a small grant from BAPP Estonia, the Pirita Society, which began with 60 members and has since grown to over 120, initiated a set of roundtable discussions in 2005 with participation from local government and residents, to map key issues and priorities. Since then, the group has engaged in a wide range of activities designed to create a greater sense of community in Pirita, to preserve historical buildings and green spaces, and to increase local government receptiveness to citizen input. “We need a critical mass of people exerting influence” says Nilson, “and we want to look for constructive approaches to educating people so they are not just ‘against’ something.”

This type of grassroots organizing is still something relatively new, but it has attracted people across different groups in the community—from pensioners to schoolchildren to working professionals. Today the Pirita Society is an active participant in the urban planning processes taking place at the local government level. Their methods are both formal and informal, and display increasing sophistication in terms of their use of public pressure and media coverage. Faced with the threat of a casino opening in near proximity to a local school, the Pirita Society recently circulated a petition among residents. As the number of signatures reached 300, the City Council quickly backed down in its earlier support for the casino. A small victory perhaps, but

important, in that it represents one in a series of actions that will build a culture of civic participation over time.

“We need a critical mass of people exerting influence and we want to look for constructive approaches to educating people so they are not just ‘against’ something.”

—Lea Nilson, director

The Pirita Society has not stopped at the physical boundaries of their community. Recognizing that there are many common concerns and challenges, they have reached out to neighboring regions, and sought to engage them in joint discussions and initiatives. A recent proposal was made to the Tallinn city government to establish national park status for Pirita and various tourist attractions, such as the summer palaces and surrounding forested areas. While this proposal was rejected, the Pirita Society and its partners will continue their efforts to argue for the protection of historic and green spaces, and for sustainable development policies that might very well increase Estonia’s attractiveness as a tourist destination, as well as address quality of life concerns for its residents.

“Pirita: Where are you heading?” seminar organized by Pirita Society, February 2008



Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations

Since 1991, well before BAPF started its work, the Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations (NENO) has played the important and complicated role of bringing together a diverse range of Estonian NGOs and civic groups to define, defend and promote the common interests of Estonian civil society. NENO today has 98 member organizations, many of which are themselves umbrella organizations, which means that their reach is wide indeed. As described by Urmo Kübar, NENO's current director, their work has had three pillars: first, to create and nurture values of civic activism; second, to create a supportive environment to translate these values into action; and third, to strengthen the skills and information available to non-profits in Estonia. Addressing these ambitious goals has been far from easy. As Kübar notes, "Ten years ago, we constantly had to explain the concepts 'third sector' and 'civil society.' Awareness of, and support for the work of nonprofits was quite low. Today, the situation is quite different. No one questions the need for civil society organizations."

No one organization can claim to speak for an entire sector, and NENO would be the first to say that its legitimacy has derived largely from its ability to provide concrete added value to the work of its members and other NGOs. Throughout the past ten years, NENO has consistently advocated for improvements to legislation and infrastructure that benefit the nonprofit sector as a whole. From 2002 to the present, it has played a central role in the development, passage and subsequent efforts to implement the Civil Society Development Compact (EKAK), a document approved by the Estonian Parliament which lays out the principles of cooperation between the public and private sectors, as well as mutual obligations. While many of the provisions of the EKAK are far from realized, the process of reaching agreement on its core elements has paved the way for other, significant efforts to strengthen and support civil society, in which NENO also played a leading role. This includes the Estonian Civil Society Fund, through which the government will provide approximately \$2 million annually in funding for nonprofit groups, as well as the Manifesto of Estonian NGOs, a collaborative effort of hundreds of NGOs, many of whose central points were included

NENO's annual award ceremony, "NGO of the Year"





*Urmo Kübar, Director,
Network of Estonian
Non-Profit Organizations*

in the policy platform of the current coalition government. As a result, the Estonian nonprofit sector is considered to be one of the most sustainable in Central and Eastern Europe, according to the 2007 USAID index.

NENO is not interested in self-perpetuation for its own sake, nor does it believe that other NGOs should occupy themselves solely with their own institutional sustainability. Kübar believes that the primary challenge for NENO and other groups is the creation of values which support civic action and positive social change. There is still a lack of talented, committed people working on critical problems facing Estonia today, whether in the public, private or nonprofit sectors. The goal should not necessarily be to attract more people to the work of nonprofits, but to build partnerships across the sectors to achieve common goals.

With much of the groundwork established for civil society groups to play an important role in advocacy, policy development and service provision, NENO will focus in the future on further efforts to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the non-profit sector. As domestic philanthropy grows in Estonia, there is an increasing need to find ways of documenting and evaluating the work of

“Ten years ago, we constantly had to explain the concepts ‘third sector’ and ‘civil society.’ Today, no one questions the need for civil society organizations.”

–Urmo Kübar, director

nonprofits. While recognizing that such measurement is complex, and involves qualitative as well as quantitative factors, NENO will work to develop a GuideStar-type model for the Estonian context, among other activities.



Opening event for the “Youth is Watching” initiative organized by NEXT

Latvia

NEXT

Two years ago, five young friends from the Kurzeme region in western Latvia established a nonprofit organization called NEXT. They shared a concern about their lack of influence over the future course of Latvia, and a desire to somehow bridge the seemingly intransigent and growing gap between the people and politicians. Seed money from BAPP-Latvia for their first project, Youth Is Watching, “empowered us to empower others”, says Liene Zilite, one of the original founders of NEXT and current board chair of the organization.

“We believe that every young person can be a positive resource or a problem in society. If you invest in them, they become a resource.”

–Liene Zilite, founder

The project provided the opportunity for young people in one-third of the municipalities in the western part of Latvia to watch local government decision making in action. Participating municipalities offered unprecedented access to their meetings and sessions. The young participants received training on the role and responsibilities of municipal government, the scope of its authority, and their rights as citizens to participate in decision making. Zilite emphasizes that the goal of the project was

not just to observe, but to build relationships between local government representatives and their constituents. These relationships were leveraged to enable both sides to work together on projects and issues of concern for the community as a whole. In one small town, youth participants in the NEXT initiative organized a protest over long unfulfilled plans to build a sports center. As a result, community residents together with their emboldened local officials successfully lobbied the national government to provide funding for the center.

NEXT has plans to expand Youth Is Watching to all the regions of Latvia. It has raised funds from prominent local businesses that were used to secure additional funding from the European Commission. NEXT is a good example of a small grassroots group that is determined to have a large impact on the way government interacts with citizens on the local level. “We believe that every young person can be a positive resource or a problem in society. If you invest in them, they become a resource,” says Zilite with conviction.



Liene Zilite,
Founder and Board Member, NEXT, Latvia

Partners in Ideas Fund

In 2006, after a study tour to the United States to look at emerging models of “venture philanthropy,” the BAPP Latvia established a new grantmaking and technical assistance institution, intended to serve as a central part of the BAPP’s legacy for Latvian civil society.

In just two short years, the Partners in Ideas Fund has taken major steps to establish its presence and reputation as a bridge between the nonprofit and private sectors, and to incubate socially responsible, innovative projects with a potentially wide impact. The first is Mission Possible, an initiative modeled on Teach for America, to train and place young teachers in the public school system. The project has already garnered tremendous public attention and support, with close to \$1 million dollars in private sector funding secured for its activi-

ties. A second project, still in its initial phases, is to create a business opportunity fund for people with disabilities, in partnership with a well-known NGO, Apeirons, which has worked on rights protection and service provision for the disabled for years. Partners in Ideas has already attracted prominent local businesspeople, international companies, financial sector professionals, a local venture capital fund, and a leading business school to work as pro-bono advisors to this initiative. The long-term goal is to provide the space, expertise and initial capital for disabled persons to develop promising business ideas.

As with the Civic Responsibility Foundation in Lithuania, the Partners in Ideas Fund seeks to capitalize on growing opportunities to create meaningful corporate philanthropy in Latvia. PIF’s director, Sabine Sild, believes that there is already evidence of real philanthropy among members of the busi-

Partners in Ideas Fund board and staff.

From left to right: Juris Vaskans, Atis Zakatistovs, Sabine Sild, Ieva Morica





Sabine Sile, Director of the Partners in Ideas Fund talking to students at a school about PIF's project "Mission Possible"

ness community—people who believe in the mission of social change in Latvia, not just the good will and cause-related marketing benefits of sponsoring individual charitable events. PIF wants to be a leader and facilitator of a social entrepreneurship movement in the country, working with capable and committed individuals from both the nonprofit and private sectors. The foundation sees itself as action-oriented, but dedicated to education and awareness-raising as well. As Sile explains, it is still difficult for corporations in particular to understand that the advocacy and policy work carried out by nonprofits may not yield concrete results in a short period of time. "I am optimistic, however, that over the next five years" she says, "the level of understanding among businesses of corporate social responsibility and strategic philanthropy will increase significantly."

"I am optimistic that over the next five years the level of understanding among businesses of corporate social responsibility and strategic philanthropy will increase significantly."

—Sabine Sile, director

Ziedot (“Donate”) Foundation

By any objective standards, the Ziedot Foundation should be considered an unqualified success story in Latvia. It was established just over four years ago, as an outgrowth of the Riga NGO Center’s philanthropy development program, with support from BAPP and the leading bank in Latvia, Hansabank. The concept was basic: an Internet portal called Ziedot (www.ziedot.lv), through which individuals and businesses could donate money to NGOs working on a wide range of issues, including children, the elderly, animal welfare and the environment. To date, this site has raised over \$2.5 million, primarily via small contributions from individuals. Although the initial concept envisioned Ziedot primarily as a collection and distribution mechanism, its early success has spurred a broader role for the foundation, including corporate philanthropy advisory services, a volunteering program (which will evolve into an Internet-based platform in the future), training for NGOs, and a support and convening function for the growing network of community foundations in Latvia. For three years Ziedot has organized an annual award ceremony for “the best NGO of the year,” which is one of the largest and most visible events that recognizes and celebrates the contribution of NGOs to society. Ruta Dimanta, the director of Ziedot, says “I am proud that we have played a major role in making charitable giving a part of everyday life in Latvia.”

To be sure, economic conditions are still difficult for the average citizen, but the environment is much more favorable than it was five years ago. Ziedot has expanded the channels for individual giving further in recent years, with a donation box pro-

gram established at a local supermarket chain, and a joint initiative with Hansabank, through which a percentage of individuals’ credit card charges are donated to a series of charitable initiatives pre-selected and vetted by Ziedot. Dimanta hopes that in five years time, Ziedot will be the largest independent foundation in Latvia, with a diversity of donors and services, and a continued mission to develop the culture of philanthropy and civic involvement throughout the country.

“I am proud that we have played a major role in making charitable giving a part of everyday life in Latvia.”

–Ruta Dimanta, director



*Ruta Dimanta, Director,
Ziedot (“Donate”) Foundation, Latvia*



Papardes Zieds' training of peer educators

Papardes Zieds

Papardes Zieds, an organization which was established in 1994 to work in the often controversial field of young people's reproductive rights and sexual health, is one of the few NGOs in Latvia that has successfully navigated the complicated path between service provision and advocacy. Since 2002, Papardes Zieds has worked tirelessly to establish a network of youth health centers throughout the regions of Latvia, using a peer-based model of education and training that has gained wide recognition at both the grassroots and national levels. The organization provides consultations to 4,000 teenagers annually, half through an e-mail hotline and the other half through direct training sessions.

"We view young people not just as clients," she says, "but also as colleagues and partners."

—Iveta Kelle, director

Iveta Kelle, the dedicated executive director who has worked in different capacities within the organization since its establishment, believes that one of the keys to their success has been the active involvement of youth in their work, particularly as peer educators. "We view young people not just as clients," she says, "but also as colleagues and partners." The same holds true for an extensive network of NGOs dealing with similar issues in Latvia—organizations Papardes Zieds has mentored, strengthened and worked with on a coalition basis for many years.

Through its service model, Papardes Zieds has been able to shape government attitudes and approaches to sexual and reproductive health, despite

significant resistance to its creativity and openness in addressing issues that remain somewhat taboo in Latvian society. The organization has succeeded in obtaining municipal and state funding for its centers and related educational activities, has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Health for the implementation of various projects, and was most recently asked by the Ministry of Children and Youth to do a series of trainings for a network of state-supported youth centers.

Kelle and her colleagues are often in the public eye, never hesitating to speak out on issues of concern, such as the lack of evidence based-training materials for teachers, and the generally weak state of health education in the country. They are scrupulous and savvy in their efforts to cooperate and build bridges with opponents wherever possible, but not at the expense of their identity as advocates and educators on often sensitive topics. The task of securing state and private sector funding for their work remains a challenge, but Kelle is optimistic that Papardes Zieds' accumulated professional expertise, credibility, and institutional maturity will go a long way toward convincing enlightened individuals of the importance of supporting their work in the future.



*Iveta Kelle, Director,
Papardes Zieds, Latvia*

Lithuania

Save the Children– Lithuania

In many ways, Rasa Dicipetriene, the leader of Save the Children–Lithuania (STC), represents a new generation of nonprofit practitioners, while at the same time demonstrating that the Soviet era did not entirely extinguish personal values of civic and community responsibility. The mother of two children and a nurse by training, Dicipetriene says, "My grandfather taught me to care for others, and to give back to the community. I believe in the value of nonprofit work." After almost a decade work-

"My grandfather taught me to care for others, and to give back to the community. I believe in the value of nonprofit work."

*–Rasa Dicipetriene,
general secretary*

ing in the Lithuanian private sector as a corporate sales manager for Air Baltic, Dicipetriene joined Save the Children, first working in a voluntary capacity and later in a staff position, at a time of significant transition for the organization. STC had gained a well-earned reputation over 17 years as the most effective and visible NGO working in the area of children's rights in Lithuania. And yet, it struggled to attract domestic sources of funding for its ambitious agenda, remaining largely dependent on external sources of support (of which BAPP Lithuania was one, but by no means the largest, foreign donor).

With the combination of her business experience and contacts and her strong personal belief in the mission of Save the Children, Dicipetriene developed a plan to mobilize private sector resources in support of STC's core activities. One of its centerpiece programs over the last few years was a campaign to stop bullying and violence in the schools. Eighty community groups took part in the program, which included education and awareness raising among teachers, students and families across Lithuania. Children's Groups Against Violence were estab-

A month long campaign "No to Violence Against Children" organized by STC–Lithuania



lished in 78 schools, with more than 700 students organizing a range of anti-violence and bullying activities.

During this work, STC carried out a study which indicated that 48 percent of children face some degree of violence in their families, and that every second family uses physical means of discipline with their children. As a result, STC decided they wanted to change parents' attitudes and reduce the culture of violence in the home. This was linked to pending legislation that would prohibit corporal punishment against children in Lithuania. STC knew that without education, there would be little chance that the new law could be implemented effectively. A program named Raise Children Responsibly was developed, and Dicipetriene was in short order able to secure a commitment from a major Lithuanian telecommunications company for more than \$400,000 over a three-year period. In previous years, the maximum that STC raised from the private sector was \$60,000 annually, and this was usually dispersed over a wide range of small activities.

To a certain extent, STC's recent success in obtaining private funding reflects good timing and a growing willingness and capacity of Lithuanian businesses to become more actively involved in philanthropy. However, it was also a matter of organizing and presenting STC activities in a more strategic way. In Dicipetriene's view, STC needed a clearer framework, which showed the linkages between service provision, attitudinal change, and legislative and policy reforms in the area of children's rights. In the future, STC will likely shift the balance of its work more heavily toward advocacy and policy development, and somewhat less on service provision. It will, however, remain closely involved with the strong network of day care centers and children's groups in the schools that were developed by STC. Save the Children-Lithuania is also positioning itself to become more of a player in the international context. According to Dicipetriene, "Lithuania is ready to help others as well."



*Rasa Dicipetriene, General Secretary,
Save the Children-Lithuania*

Center for Equality Advancement (CEA)

Advocacy work in the field of gender equality remains a challenge in Lithuania, despite slow progress made in the last 15 years. Although laws now on the books prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, women remain on the fringes of political, economic and social decision-making processes. Lithuania's cultural traditions are conservative, and the resurgence of the church in many aspects of political and personal life has complicated efforts to defend women's reproductive rights, strengthen their access to the labor market, and promote family-friendly policies in the workplace.

Despite these barriers, Virginija Aleksejune and Margarita Jankauskaite, executive director and project manager, respectively, of the Center for Equality Advancement (CEA), remain undaunted. Over the past five years, they have forged ahead with a series of innovative projects designed to raise public awareness, improve legislation, monitor government policy, and most importantly, address

the real concerns of Lithuanian women. In an effort to encourage a more equal balance of responsibility in child-rearing, and to help reshape traditional gender roles in the family, CEA worked together with the Ombudsperson's Office over the past three years to introduce the concept of paternity leave into Lithuanian legislation, and to promote it as a socially acceptable practice among Lithuanian citizens. As a result, paternity leave has become a more common practice and a recognized part of public discourse. "CEA promotes the idea of paternity leave," says Aleksejune. "Now it is trendy to say 'I am on paternity leave.'" Another direct result of the project was the adoption of a new law that allows a father to take one month of paid leave together with the mother, when their child is born. Today about 60 percent of fathers in Lithuania are taking advantage of this opportunity.

CEA bears no illusions about the long-term nature of their work, but holds out great hope for the younger generation of women whom they char-

Picket organized by the Center for Equality Advancement to protest against a new government policy. The large sign reads "The bodies of women are battle fields"





*Virginija Aleksejune,
Director,
Center for Equality Advancement,
Lithuania*

*“CEA promotes the idea of
paternity leave in Lithuania.
Now it is trendy to say ‘I am
on paternity leave.’”*

–Virginija Aleksejune, director

acterize as a “new wave of activists”. With their support, a student group, New Generation Women’s Initiative, has been established, and according to Aleksejune and Jankauskaite, they will carry on the fight for women’s rights in new and innovative ways. Even as CEA continues its efforts to educate the general public, politicians and employers about gender equity issues, it seeks also to build partnerships with other actors in the human rights field in Lithuania. There are individuals who face multiple levels of discrimination—women who are disabled, or are members of an ethnic minority group, for example—and there is much to be gained from a more robust collaboration among the relatively small community of organizations that advocate for their rights and interests.

Civic Responsibility Foundation

In the remaining few years of its existence, BAPP Lithuania has worked to develop a legacy grant-making institution, which will serve as a “next generation” vehicle for philanthropy and civil society development in Lithuania. The Civic Responsibility Foundation (CRF) has a dual mission—first, to help businesses find good ideas for their philanthropy and to spend their charitable dollars more effectively, and second, to assist NGOs in demonstrating the impact of their work and identifying local sources of funding to support it.

“Business is already eager to support the third sector, but we need to find the spark that will create more meaningful partnerships and common projects between the two.”

—Mindaugas Reinikis, director

Although still in its early stages of operation, the CRF, incubated and mentored by the BAPP itself, has developed four program priorities: to strengthen volunteerism, which is still a relatively new phenomenon within society at large; to contribute to the institutional strengthening of NGOs; to promote and develop philanthropy as a concept and practice; and to support local initiatives, largely through partnership with the network of community foun-

dations that was established with the BAPP’s help. The CRF also plans to develop a package of services for businesses, including a program to encourage the implementation of socially responsible business practices, and the development of more strategic approaches to corporate philanthropy. According to Mindaugas Reinikis, the CRF’s executive director, “business is already eager to support the third sector, but we need to find the spark that will create more meaningful partnerships and common projects between the two.”

With an exit grant from BAPP to cover its operational expenses for the next few years, CRF’s goal is to raise \$2.5 million over the next three years from local donors, for re-granting to NGOs with a proven track record of effectiveness in their field, transparency of operations, and broad credibility. As an initial step, CRF has already made its first grant to a community group in Vilnius that provides after-school services to disadvantaged youth, with funding from a local business. In order to strengthen individual philanthropy and corporate giving, CRF plans also to launch a magazine devoted to philanthropy-related issues by the end of 2008, as well as an Internet-based platform for charitable giving.

CRF has developed informal relationships with peer institutions in Latvia and Estonia, for experience sharing and to explore possibilities of working on a collaborative basis with Baltic businesses operating regionally. It has also reached out to networks outside the Baltics, including the European Foundation Centre and the European Venture Philanthropy Association.

Mindaugas Reinikis and Sima Balciute of the Civic Responsibility Foundation meeting with their Latvian colleague Sabine Sile of the Partners in Ideas Fund



Snapshot of Funding by Program Area

Overview of Grants Made 1999–2008

	ESTONIA	LATVIA	LITHUANIA
Total Number of Grants	569	456	609

Total Funding 1999–2008 by Strategic Area

	ESTONIA	LATVIA	LITHUANIA
Institutional Development	\$2,000,166	\$2,162,766	\$2,124,786
Improving Legislative, Regulatory Environment and Infrastructure for NGOs	\$702,240	\$556,401	\$287,784
Building Public Awareness	\$498,793	\$91,585	\$162,300
Philanthropy Development	\$204,382	\$540,026	\$621,191
Civic Engagement/ Cross Sector Cooperation	\$395,073	\$408,318	\$557,860
TOTAL	\$3,800,654	\$3,759,096	\$3,753,921

	ESTONIA	LATVIA	LITHUANIA
Percentage of grants smaller than \$1,000	27%	15%	14%
Percentage of grants between \$1,000 and \$10,000	51%	57%	71%
Percentage of grants greater than \$10,000	22%	28%	16%

BAPF Funding for Community Foundation Development by Category

	2000–2008 TOTAL
Technical Assistance, Training, International Study Tours, Conferences	\$226,769
Project and institutional support grants for community foundations and national community philanthropy support organizations	\$639,374
Matching funds for CF local grant competitions	\$26,463
Grants for community foundation endowments	\$70,200
TOTAL	\$962,806

BAPF Funding for Community Foundation Development by Country

	2000–2008 TOTAL
BAPP–Estonia	\$198,677
BAPP–Latvia	\$299,173
BAPP–Lithuania	\$357,791
Other*	\$107,165
TOTAL	\$962,806

*Includes the study tour conducted by BAPPs to the U.S. in 1999, consultancy provided by Antioch New England Institute for Pan-Baltic Participatory Planning/Community Philanthropy Project and contribution to Quebec Labrador Center for the Environment.

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From 1998 to 2008 the Baltic American Partnership Fund contributed to the development of societies in which people have the attitudes, skills, mechanisms and structures that enable them to participate in public life and affect decisions at the community and national levels.