

# Boris Tsyrunikov

Founder, Togliatti Community Foundation, Russia



**In 1998, Boris Tsyrunikov set up the first community foundation in Russia. At that time Russia was far from being a giving nation, and the idea of community foundations was received as a fairy tale that would never come true. The power of Togliatti's success was tremendous: since then over 40 community foundations have been set up across Russia, many with direct help from Boris himself, now a recognized leader of the country's community foundation movement.**

To further development of the field, Boris created the Community Foundation Partnership, which sets standards and acts as a platform for peer exchange both in Russia and in neighbouring countries including Ukraine,

Kazakhstan and Latvia. Its support is vital to the development of philanthropy, especially in Russia where such platforms are few and far between.

Boris has a number of other 'firsts' to his credit, including setting up the first youth bank and the first reserve fund at a community foundation in Russia. He also works with companies developing their philanthropic activities, which is creating a basis and setting a precedent for business to be involved in social change. Meanwhile, the youth bank involves young people in the grant-giving process, helping them understand philanthropic approaches and the value of philanthropy generally.

Boris is an acknowledged authority on philanthropy, serving on the board of the Russian Donors Forum and as an expert to the Public Chamber and to the Ministry of Economic Development. He is also involved in educating Russian officials in philanthropy. Due to his work, support to community foundations has become one of the government's priorities for sector development.

I became involved in the development of the Togliatti Community Foundation because three things captured my interest. First, I like to start something new and innovative. Second, it was close to my heart because I was involved in community issues. Finally, it was a sector and direction that gave my city the possibility of further development.

The community foundation has prompted the conscious development of institutional philanthropy. That's a huge difference for Russia – it is about social investment rather than duty. We have also made the community foundation model clear for Russians. Everyone can be involved in constructive development instead of complaining. It has become obvious to public officials in different Russian regions that one can't sustainably develop a territory without a community foundation in it. Intelligent mayors and local business finally got it.

My role is as a storyteller. The most important thing is to find the right story for each individual, which allows them to find their own place in the picture. I have

a successful community foundation story that I can share, so people listen to me and go with me along this way.

I'd like to help all foundation staff to understand that their major goal is not funding community initiatives but identifying and achieving social changes. Foundations should be future-focused. We have to make opportunities for everyone to express themselves, to be involved in development. I'm also planning to give more attention to developing the Community Foundation Partnership, building more alliances and joint projects, establishing new community foundations.

There is a tendency for public officials in Russia to change, and it is a huge challenge for foundations to establish and maintain long-term relations with them. We are trying to overcome it, involving them in projects, inviting them to become members of consultative and expert boards, to learn from us.

I think the biggest challenge for Russia generally is attitude. Often, for recipients, charitable support is a due and giving a chore. It's a legacy of the Soviet era. NGOs

have to become clearer about what they do and how they present themselves. It would make it easier to find donors. If we can find a way to reach donors, we can teach them and help them to express themselves, to feel the joy and happiness of philanthropy.

**O**lga Alexeeva understood the philanthropic potential of new wealth emerging in fast-growing economies. CAF shared this vision with Olga, who was a highly valued member of the CAF team for many years. She first led CAF Russia before moving to London to head up our global philanthropy services. CAF has been supporting the development of philanthropy and civil society in emerging economies for the past 20 years, and we continue to promote more, and more effective, giving around the world. We are delighted to support this supplement, which celebrates Olga's legacy and showcases the significant achievements of the shortlisted candidates.

**John Low**  
Chief executive, Charities Aid Foundation

**CAF** Charities Aid Foundation