

**Linda J. Cook, Elena Vinogradova, and Natalya Zorkaya**

**The Roles of Political Parties and Trade Unions in Social Policy Formulation in Russia's Regions**

March 22, 2006

**Abstract**

The Working Paper assesses the roles of regional political parties and social sector trade unions in social policy formulation, based on twenty interviews in Tula and Samara Regions and the Chuvash Republic during 2004. We conclude that parties' influence has been weakened by the centralization of power within party organizations and in the presidential administration; the absence of a coherent governmental social policy; the increasing homogenization of parties' social policy programs; and the dominance of United Russia. Cooperation of parties with NGOs focuses around pre-election campaigns rather than more sustained cooperation. Social sector trade unions articulate their members' grievances, particularly low wages and wage arrears. However, relations of unions with administrative authorities tend to be clientelistic. Union representatives participate in policy deliberations, but their influence is weak. Unions' links with parties are largely pragmatic rather than programmatic alliances. Neither parties nor unions in the regions examined played a strong role as mediating or representative organizations.