

NGOs and Government in Central Asia

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Frameworks for analysis

- Strong-weak CS/State opposition
- 3 sector analysis (CS, state, business)
- “3 C’s” analysis (Adil Najam)

3 C's analysis

- Confrontation: when NGOs and government consider each others' goals and strategies to be in opposition to one another
- Complementary: when NGOs and government share similar goals but have different strategies for achieving them
- Collaboration: when NGOs and government share similar policy goals and also prefer similar strategies for achieving them

NGO's as “policy entrepreneurs”

NGO activity areas

- Agenda setting
- Policy development
- Policy implementation

Types of role

- Monitors
- Advocates
- Innovators
- Service providers

(Adil Najam)

Example 1: role of ecological NGOs and their relation to the state

- In the period 1991-2005, NGO's were involved as "innovators" in a wide variety of mainly local projects.
- Kazakhstan's decision to get rid of nuclear weapons united CS and government.
- However, further lobbying by CSOs was necessary to ensure clean-up of Semipalatinsk polygon and to stop Kazakhstan entering the business of nuclear waste processing
- The failure to fully resolve the Aral Sea problem shows the importance of regional CS links and inter-governmental agreements. Unfortunately regional inter-government cooperation is at a low level in CA.

Example 2: Organisations for people with disabilities

- INTRAC's recent experience (2009-11) working with local NGOs for people with disabilities shows their weaknesses in areas like staff and strategy development. Many NGOs are working with a charitable or medical model, rather than the social model which is based on rights.
- The strengths of NGOs include the role of many experienced leaders, plus the fact that they have a clear mission, secure membership base and dedicated support from parents, social workers and volunteers in the community.
- Over the past five years, they have been one of the key groups of NGOs working within the new state social order framework.

Social order (contracting) in Kazakhstan

- Kazakhstan is the regional leader in social contracting. NGO and social sector experts have played a key role in piloting social order.
- Annual contracts (often covering only 6 months of actual work) are not suitable for long term social service delivery.
- Temporary helpers provided by labour exchanges provide valuable human resources to local NGOs, but also puts significant extra responsibility on their managers.
- There is a danger of incorporation of NGO leaders within state policy and structures and their loss of an independent stance.
- Some social contracts are awarded to “GONGOs” promoting official policy or political initiatives in a propagandist way.
- The intersectional aspect is key to coalition building – eg link between NGOs representing disabled people and women so as to tackle double discrimination

Case study 3: watchdog role of CS in relation to major infrastructure projects

The NGO Forum on Asian Development Bank (www.forum-adb.org) aims to:

- Monitor projects funded by ADB (eg road building)
- Raise awareness about ADB projects in the local population, helping people to use the ADB complaints mechanism where necessary
- Examine how ADB contributes to national programs
- Develop a common agenda between civil society and governments in relation to ADB

Some issues that have arisen

- Huge scale, multi-funded character of many projects
- Poor communications, lack of transparency in decision-making
- Corruption and inefficiency in project implementation
- Technical difficulties (procedure, time, language factors) in using the ADB's "accountability mechanism"
- Is national government an "ally" or "enemy" in the struggle with ADB?
- How to maintain a united approach within the Forum itself

Conclusions from the three case studies

- Associations like the Civic Alliance must take a broad view of the CS sector if we want to represent or support it properly.
- There is a “natural” difference of emphasis between service organization and advocacy organizations. However, the 3 C’s model shows the links between service and advocacy work.
- In the service sector, good work has been done but further reforms are necessary.
- In the advocacy sector, lack of multi-party representation in parliament and other bodies holds back the development of alternative policies
- The Civic Alliance, ecological, women’s and other coalitions need to develop wider solidarity strategies: eg, actions in support for workers in struggle, new policy to tackle rural / urban inequalities or defend the rights of religious associations, regional campaigns and interchange of experience in Central Asia and Former Soviet Union.