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viewpoint

NGOs as Part of Civil Society in Central Asia

This article sets out to explore the changing nature of NGOs as part of Civil Society in Central Asia, giving an overview of the challenges they face as they work towards carving out their roles. Compared to other former Soviet countries, the NGO sector in Central Asia has emerged relatively recently. American and European donor organisations have had a significant influence on the development of NGOs, not only through funding but also by introducing Western concepts. To take one example, in Kyrgyzstan with its small population of five million there are currently 5,000 NGOs. In some ways it is healthy that there are so many organisations eager to solve people's problems in various fields. On the other hand, how many of those 5,000 are 'real', sustainable and effective? In reality, barely 250 to 300 NGOs will be able to sustain their work since so many donors have left, local businesses are still too weak to engage in charitable giving and also because the legal frameworks are unfavourable. Some governments in the region do not see NGOs as having an important and valuable role in social development, but rather see the NGO sector as a competitor for funds.

Three to five years ago, NGOs in Central Asia primarily responded to the problems related to women, the environment and healthcare at a micro level. Nowadays, NGOs are trying to address underlying problems and their causes rather than their symptoms alone. This is an important step in the development of Civil Society. NGOs are now trying to understand the context of the region better: how development is taking place in relation to democratisation, globalisation, human rights, government behaviour, action and transparency, issues of corruption, legal processes,

donor influences on the country and so forth.

Furthermore, in order to participate in decision-making processes and to influence decision-makers with regards to development conditions and protecting rights, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have started to unite in networks, coalitions and associations. This would not have been possible two to three years ago. The concept of Civil Society is thus gaining popularity and dynamism. This growing unity and professionalism has been evident in several NGO actions aimed at ending various intensive forms of government control which violated the rights and freedoms of citizens, such as the registration of all types of printing equipment including small home printers, and controls over NGOs, the media and political parties.

During the transition period when the Central Asia region was on the verge of mass unrest, criticism of the authorities and constructive suggestions from NGOs did not, however, result in increased destabilisation. In fact, NGOs provided training on tolerance, advocacy and lobbying, as well as organising public debates and round tables on various problems. These activities helped both NGOs and the communities to look at the problems facing society from different perspectives and to reach the conclusion that the situation in the respective countries could only be resolved with positive participation: in other words, a 'civilised' Civil Society needed to be built. As one member of the Board of Directors of Interbilim – businessman Emil Umetaliev – said about Kyrgyzstan: 'NGO activities currently prevent conflict in the country by relieving social tension.'

In this issue: Asiya Sasykbaeva of Center InterBilim provides an overview of the development of the NGO sector in Central Asia; INTRAC staff reflect on aspects of INTRAC's programme in the region including work with rural communities, the Analytical Skills Training Programme and the Education, Training and Support Programme; country profiles of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

NEW WEBSITE: Visit INTRAC's new website www.intrac.org

Case Study: NGOs in Kyrgyzstan

The main problem hindering the development of the NGO sector is the lack of funding. The donor agencies on which many organisations depended left on completion of their programmes or reduced their funding and many NGOs have been left in the lurch. Meanwhile, the state is still not able to see the value of NGOs in addressing social and other objectives. The local business sector is generally not able to contribute to NGO development either; the obstacles for them are laws which do not provide any benefits to those who help NGOs financially.

With this background, NGOs have jointly prepared a plan for ‘Amending the Tax Code of the Kyrgyz Republic’, proposing legislation for preferential taxation for non-profit organisations. The suggestion is to introduce the terms: “grant”, “humanitarian aid” and “charitable purpose” and to eliminate taxes on donations. It is also proposed to encourage the practice of charitable contributions from the business sector. However, these issues have not yet been considered in Parliament. If there is a positive outcome, there is hope that in the Republic the business sector will start to think about social programmes and providing financial aid to NGOs. Nevertheless, the NGO sector remains caught up in the fight for its own existence.

It is also important to remember that in general the NGO sector is still weak, and the authorities use this fact to their own advantage. Pressure from the authorities forces NGO leaders into cautious, defensive positions and in spite of having obtained a sound theoretical base they cannot use it in practice. Very often they have no choice but to join the pro-governmental movements and campaigns, as well as being divided against other NGOs. This has an impact on the development of Civil Society as a whole since NGOs are at the forefront of social thinking.

Some NGOs in the region risk their lives by daring to criticise those who are clinging to power at any cost. Today, more than ever, NGOs who serve as ‘guardians of peace’ need all possible support as they fight for equality and freedom and as they work to prevent people in the region facing starvation and despair.

Written by Asiya Sasykbaeva
Executive Director, Center InterBilim,
Kyrgyzstan

This edition of *ontrac* is dedicated to the development of Civil Society in Central Asia, and in particular the emerging role of NGOs. The edition includes profiles from a number of countries around the region, including Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It has been compiled in the region and draws primarily on INTRAC’s ongoing and varied work. **For further information about INTRAC’s Programme in Central Asia, please contact Anne Garbutt, Regional Manager for the Former Soviet Union, INTRAC a.garbutt@intrac.org or Charlie Buxton, Central Asia Programme Manager at the Regional Office in Bishkek charlesb@intrac.kg**

INTRAC Publications

INTRAC’s Central Asia Programme has translated some INTRAC materials into Russian as part of a short translation series. These include:

- NGOMPS 07 Chapter 1 of *Demystifying Organisation Development* by Rick James
- OPS32 *Negotiating Partnerships* by Alan Fowler
- A chapter on ‘Mobilising Non-Financial Resources’ from *The Virtuous Spiral* by Alan Fowler
- A Policy Briefing Paper on *Impact Assessment* by Jerry Adams
- An agreement has also been signed with Winrock International to translate and publish NGOMPS 13 *Evaluating Empowerment*.

New Publications

Available Now

NGO Responses to Urban Poverty: Service Providers or Partners in Planning?
Carol Sahley and Brian Pratt, March 2003

If urban development is to move forward in a pro-poor manner, there will have to be far greater investment in NGOs. If this is not done, then there is a danger that they will remain simply providers of welfare services or involved in isolated small-scale initiatives with little wider impact. Detailed case studies of urban NGOs in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Peru and South Africa illuminate the critical factors necessary for effective NGO performance in the city and define a capacity building agenda for NGOs to realise this potential in urban poverty alleviation. NGOMPS 9, 137 pages, ISBN: 1-897748-47-7, paperback, £15.95

Coming Soon

Changing Expectations: The Concept and Practice of Civil Society in International Development

INTRAC

This book is from INTRAC’s 10th Anniversary Conference, December 2001, the aim of which was to ‘Critically review the use and operationalisation of the concept of Civil Society and its strengthening in the practice of the international development system’. NGOMPS No.16, ISBN 1-897748-70-1, paperback £14.95

For further information about INTRAC’s publications please visit our website: <http://www.intrac.org/pubs.html> or e-mail s.windsor-richards@intrac.org to request a brochure.

Working with Rural Communities in Central Asia

This article outlines the situation of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and communities in rural areas of Central Asia and presents an overview of the problems they face.

Despite their generally common cultural roots, many of the Central Asian countries chose individual ways of development upon becoming independent in the early 1990s. The transition period resulted in a nose-dive in production levels and a massive growth of unemployment in cities and villages. The rural sector was badly affected: the infrastructure that had been well-established in the Soviet period declined; collective farms were dissolved and small peasant farms took over, obtaining land plots (ulush, in Kyrgyz) without even knowing what they could cultivate on them. In Uzbekistan, collective farms were preserved, although in a slightly modified format.

In spite of these changes, the rural population remained isolated and lacking support in addressing its situation. In response, local voluntary organizations (NGOs), donors and local government started external interventions in rural communities. Their aim was to encourage the communities to be self-reliant and to mobilise their own resources to improve their livelihoods. In this context of external intervention, donor agencies and local NGOs have used several different concepts of community. In Kyrgyzstan, 'community' is used to describe a self-help group, a community-based organisation or a group initiative and, in urban environments, the residents committee of an apartment block. However, in my view the following definition presents a very clear description of a real community:

A community is a group of individuals united by ties and relations or common interests, e.g. having a common history, values, self-consciousness, property, physical characteristics, and engaged in similar activities or living in the same territory.

Of the many different models and approaches to working with communities, two approaches occur most often in practice:

- 1. External interventions:** when donor agencies and local NGOs identify the needs of rural populations and allocate certain funds to resolve a set of socio-economic problems. All the responsibility for project implementation rests with the 'initiative group', whose members are elected by the community itself.
- 2. Internal initiatives:** self-generated community initiatives, e.g. a group of people establishing a residential association with common interests to mobilise internal resources and solve the problems affecting themselves or the entire village.

In Kyrgyz villages it is customary to hold a monthly general meeting, the village assembly. At village assemblies the people discuss their problems, identify priorities and solutions. Projects are implemented with the communities' own resources and focus on rehabilitation and building rural infrastructure; for example, improving rural water supply, the construction of public baths, repairing schools and providing micro-credit. Every member of the initiative group in a community understands that only by working together can they solve the village's problems. The relationships among community members are based on feelings of responsibility, trust, openness, kinship, and a desire to help themselves

and others. The ethnicity and social structure of a community have an important bearing on the group's dynamics.

Despite the high levels of activity amongst rural communities, their capacity is insufficient to ensure sustainability. When we speak of sustainable community development, in some CBO leaders' words, there is a threat of losing the capabilities they have at their disposal. Many of the community projects depend on donors' support, and in the event of their retreat the projects would collapse.

A critical factor is the collaboration between NGOs, CBOs, and local government. All these stakeholders are involved in the solution of development tasks at different levels. CBOs have proved their worth in the improvement of rural living standards but they need to improve their knowledge of issues such as self-government and mutual aid. Furthermore, for local governments one of the key issues is access to information for the population and so awareness-raising of the local population should be improved; this is a challenge for the whole of Civil Society.

In conclusion it may be that funding is not the best way of enabling solutions to community problems, but rather supporting the realisation by the people themselves of how to provide maximum benefits for their own community.

Written by Chinara Tashbaeva
Community Development Adviser –
Kyrgyzstan, INTRAC



INTRAC and Tree of Life trainers and participants from the Analytical Skills Training Programme in Kyrgyzstan, February 2003.

Welcome to Capacity Building News No. 13, which continues the theme of Civil Society development in Central Asia. In this edition, Simon Forrester writes about INTRAC's Analytical Skills Training Programme in Kyrgyzstan whilst Guljahon Mavlani reflects on the Education, Training and Support Programme for NGO Support Organisations in Uzbekistan.

Enabling Analysis: Enhancing Civil Society's Role in Development

Programmes aimed at strengthening the role of Civil Society (CS) require the development of analytical skills as well as organisational and management capacity. In the countries of the Former Soviet Union, analytical skills have traditionally been the monopoly of research institutions and state statistical agencies. Furthermore, they have been largely associated with the formal acquisition and implementation of discrete research tools, whether quantitative or qualitative. Thus the results of research programmes have not readily provided policy-relevant information that emerging CS activists can easily use. Neither have they produced a cadre of critical and informed analysts from outside the state sector that can guide programme development and constructively engage with government and other actors.

The twelve years of post-Soviet nationhood for Kyrgyzstan have provided a multitude of challenges: acute economic decline, decaying social infrastructure, territorial insecurities and ethnic tensions. The collapse of the centrally planned economy and Soviet state structures has led some to dub the country an 'island of democracy' in Central Asia. Yet, in the face of the challenges posed by these problems, fledgling democratic institutions and processes in Kyrgyzstan are both extremely fragile and alarmingly unstable. In such an environment CS actors struggle to define, find and strengthen their roles.

How then can those involved in Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan look critically at their own surroundings and begin to understand the context of the country's development in the new world order? How can CS actors engage meaningfully with the state, businesses, and the agents

of international development and globalisation?

• *Enhancing analytical skills makes for more robust and effective NGOs*

Over the last few years INTRAC has been working with a number of significant CSOs in Kyrgyzstan promoting opportunities to debate and address these questions. One such process has been the piloting of a training programme to strengthen the research and analytical skills of NGO practitioners. The programme set out:

- to increase competence to conduct research;
- to re-think what 'analysis' means;
- to enlarge the research agenda;
- to open up new ways of thinking;
- to expose NGOs to different world views and create more 'questioning' approaches.

This course, entitled the Analytical Skills Training Programme, ran over a period of ten months starting in 2002. It was delivered in five modules to a group of 20 NGO practitioners by a training team that encompassed both international and national people. A partnership with a local NGO, the Sustainable Human Development Centre 'Tree of Life', provided a solid foundation on which, in months to come, the course will be adapted for local delivery throughout the region, using local trainers and course 'graduates' as resource people.

It is too early to talk about the impact of ASTP in Kyrgyzstan, however there are clear outputs which demonstrate an increase in research capacity. An indigenous pool of CS analysts has emerged who are 'localising' the global concepts of poverty and social exclusion, participation and empowerment, and debating them within the local development arena.

With each ASTP participant working on an original piece of research as course 'homework', the programme has provided a dissemination spring-board for debate and action on various research findings. For some of the course participants who are engaged in social development, the output has meant a strengthened role in partnership with local government, using their new analysis to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups. For others, it has enabled links to be made between macro policies and micro-level outcomes for poverty reduction strategies. Meanwhile for NGOs with missions to support the democratic process, participants have mapped the engagement of their communities in local decision-making and are able to enhance their advocacy based on improved analysis from the results.

ASTP has helped to demonstrate that an applied strategy of enhancing the analytical capacity of CSOs contributes to a more robust and effective third sector. INTRAC will continue to support the ASTP follow-up work in Kyrgyzstan, as well as responding to similar capacity-building needs identified in other countries of Central Asia.

Written by Simon Forrester

Country Manager – Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, INTRAC

If you would like to receive an information sheet on ASTP in Kyrgyzstan and the research topics undertaken by the participating NGOs, please contact Simon Forrester at icap@intrac.kg, INTRAC, 107 Kievskaya, Bishkek 720001, Kyrgyz Republic.
Tel. (996 312) 611402
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Supporting NGOs: Are We Heading in the Right Direction?

How many capacity building initiatives are needed to build a strong NGO sector in Uzbekistan? Even INTRAC would not dare to an answer such a question! However, a group of organisations open

to learning can make a good start, and this article is about one such group.

Current training programmes in the region aimed at building and developing NGO capacity run the risk of being compared

with day-time television: providing pleasure but hardly memorable. How can the requirements of these organisations be better met, avoiding the provision of irrelevant information? What indicators of success should be used for training, and

finally and more importantly how can they integrate into the local context? These were some of the issues INTRAC faced while planning and implementing its Education, Training and Support Programme (ETSP) for NGO Support Organisations (NGOSOs) in Uzbekistan in 2002.

The concept of the programme was very innovative, especially for local organisations. It had already been tested in the two other Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In Uzbekistan the training model consisting of five modules, each of which dealt with key aspects of the organisational work of NGOs:

- 1) The Role of NGOs in Building Civil Society
- 2) Strengthening Expertise and Working Skills
- 3) Tackling Organisational Issues
- 4) Moving Towards Sustainability
- 5) Learning From Experience: Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment

Although the programme had been successfully implemented in two neighboring countries, a lot of changes were introduced to adjust it to the Uzbek environment. Unlike the two previous ETSP training workshops, the participants of the Uzbekistan training were representatives (mainly leaders) of the organisations providing support for NGOs. This factor necessitated the changes to the programme context and approaches to delivery in general.

Home assignments were given at the end of each module. Participants prepared

presentations of their assignment for the beginning of the next module.

Interestingly, at first the presentations were given as demonstrations of their work to a group of potential competitors. However, from about the third module onwards participants preferred to lead their presentations in a more interactive way and were interested in getting feedback from the group and discussing the issues openly. Another innovation was visiting participants' organisations after each module in order to assist them in their assignments and to provide them with consulting services on the topic.

Although it is too early to evaluate the outputs of the training, it is fair to say that the aim of this programme was not only to give ready-developed tools and techniques for achieving sustainability or organisational development. Rather, the programme provided the participants with more questions than easy solutions. An important achievement has been that participants from all over Uzbekistan, and also several organisations from Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, have formed a group that is eager to continue the work even after finishing the programme. They will apply their learning during nine months of joint training in the activities of their own organisations. Two of the five ETSP modules were conducted in Samarkand and Bukhara, not in Tashkent as had been planned. This was made possible due to the significant support provided by the local organisations which also participated in the programme. The visits to these organisations by the participants provided new insights and ideas.

The joint work has shifted the participants' perceptions of issues they face on a daily basis. They now have a different approach to the role of support organisations, and many arrived at uncomfortable conclusions concerning their own activities. They did not think that their organisations would change quickly, and organisational development ceased to be an absolute notion for many participants. Besides developing unique materials, an experience of long-term research and taking an academic approach, INTRAC also provided a setting where the participants of the training could share their knowledge and experience. The material for the sessions which had been developed and presented by a team of local trainers also represents an important resource.

During one of the training modules, INTRAC introduced the concept of the **learning organisation**. Such organisations believe their priority is dynamic development. Is it possible that the group's work on the learning organisation can be considered to be the most important output of the ETSP: a starting point for changes that could lead to the development of the NGO sector in general? Is that the right direction for such programmes to be heading?

Written by Guljahon Mavlani

ETSP Trainer and Programme Assistant – Uzbekistan, INTRAC

For further information on ETSP and INTRAC's programme in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, please contact Country Manager Lola Abdusalyamova at intrac@eanetways.com.

INTRAC People

We were sad to say goodbye to **David Marsden** who left **INTRAC** at the end of his secondment from the World Bank in February. We thank him for all his work and support over the past year.

Thomas Grammig joined **INTRAC** in February 2003 as Research Co-ordinator after four years as Academic Director in the Leadership for Environment and Development (Lead-Europe) Foundation in Geneva.

Welcome back after maternity leave to **Vicky Brehm** who has returned to her post as Researcher and Editor of **ontrac** and the NGO Bulletin *Informed*. Vicky is also continuing her research work on partnerships. **Mia Sorgenfrei** returned to **INTRAC** for two months to co-write a paper with **John Hailey** for **INTRAC's** 5th Evaluation Conference that was held from 31st March to 4th April 2003.

Bahodir Fozihujjev has joined our Central Asia team as the Community Development Advisor in Uzbekistan, bringing valuable experience of community and economic projects in the Kokand area of Fergana Valley.

INTRAC said goodbye to three volunteers: **Alix Rosenberg**, **June Williams** and **Vanita Sharma**. We would like to thank them and wish them all the best for the future. We would also like to introduce our newest volunteer, **Tabitha Ross**, who has been with **INTRAC** since March.

Written by **Natasha Thurlow** Email: n.thurlow@intrac.org

NGOs in Turkmenistan: Potential for Growth

Turkmenistan is perhaps the least known country in Central Asia. Its authoritarian political regime, led by President Niyazov (or “Turkmenbashi” – spiritual/moral leader of the Turkmen people), plus the restrictions on human rights and access to information have left little space for Civil Society development during the dozen years since the country gained independence. Turkmenistan presents a difficult environment for NGOs. Inadequacies in legislation and its implementation force NGOs to find alternative ways to register their organisations in order to function legally (for example, under the umbrella of government-sponsored NGOs). The lack of reliable statistics means that it is hard to give figures for the changes that are occurring. This negative conjuncture is far from favourable for the development of NGOs in Turkmenistan and this explains the many sceptical views about the possibilities for Civil Society to grow.

However, having visited Turkmenistan in November 2002 – four years after INTRAC’s first visit – and having met local NGOs and donors, we found some cause for encouragement about Civil Society. NGOs in Turkmenistan have grown not only in quantity, but in quality. They more often now question conceptual terms, NGO values and principles; many NGO leaders clearly define their organisations as completely new formations independent of government, representing the interests of particular groups of the population and interacting with other actors in Civil Society.

NGO Development in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is among the thirty poorest nations on earth. Its six million population gained independence after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, but soon collapsed into civil war. The five-year conflict left 50,000 killed, over one million displaced, 560,000 refugees, 55,000 orphaned and 20,000 widows, touching virtually every family in the country and producing a huge number of people in need of financial assistance. Compounding this, Tajikistan has suffered successive natural disasters since 1998: major floods, landslides and drought.

The war proved a mental trauma, but also

One indicator of the growing maturity of Turkmen NGOs is their constructive attitude towards building social partnerships with government. The majority of them recognise the importance of establishing good relations and that it is up to NGOs to improve their image in the government’s eyes by working hard and achieving real results for people. While in some neighbouring countries NGOs have taken a more radical stance and emphasise the role of NGOs as counterbalance to the state, Turkmen NGOs seem generally against open confrontation and want official recognition and support. In the social sphere there may indeed be some common ground where the government has attempted to retain a social welfare safety net. At the local level relations appear easier. There were several examples where NGOs were able to establish partnerships with local authorities in key sectors such as health, environment and community infrastructure development. Other NGOs are persevering with their work in civic education and human rights.

A positive development is the improved co-ordination within the donor community. Despite a difficult political environment, international agencies are making substantial efforts to support Civil Society and NGOs in particular. Many NGOs we met highly appreciate the support provided by Counterpart Consortium, the main NGO Support Organisation in Turkmenistan. Donors tend to follow similar approaches in their relations with NGOs and share information. Given the overall context,

a watershed or disjuncture from Soviet times. The destruction of institutions and loss of social cohesion has forced people to build anew. There is an urgent need for Civil Society organisations to play a role in this process. The legacy of the war provides the NGOs’ agenda of work; dealing with displaced populations and the trauma of broken homes occupies much of their attention for many of them.

The seventy years of Soviet cradle-to-grave welfare system has vanished, replaced by privatisation and privation. Tajiks have been unprepared for the challenges of contemporary capitalist-based life. It is not easy to re-

most donors think it is better to try to focus in a positive way in areas where the Government welcomes Civil Society inputs. They have been able to involve NGOs in some potentially sensitive programmes such as drugs, HIV/AIDS and assisting refugees.

Many NGOs in Turkmenistan are very young and concerned primarily with finding a means of survival and establishing themselves. Despite not having enough time to mature properly and to create NGO coalitions, NGOs assess relationships within the sector quite positively. Competition for grants among NGOs is not as intense as in other countries in the region, where NGOs are more numerous and competitive pressures have had a negative impact on inter-relations. By contrast, a special and positive spirit pervades Turkmen NGOs. This should encourage NGO supporters to continue helping them. Committed and hard-working NGO people are eager to improve their own potential and the lives of different groups of people. Undoubtedly, NGOs in Turkmenistan have potential for further growth. It is a real hope that, step by step, they will bring changes to their society.

Written by Anara Musabaeva, Consultant to INTRAC in Turkmenistan and Charlie Buxton, Programme Manager Central Asia, INTRAC

The full mapping report is available from INTRAC (charlesb@intrac.kg).

conceptualise many traditional views and stereotypes, reject old dogmas and live without mechanisms of social or collective support. Converting citizen passivity to activity is key to NGO development. Tursunoy Isomoddinova, leader of an Dushanbe NGO *Nilufar*, sums up the huge challenge that transition brings to citizens:

‘Soviet practices made people passive, with a comprehensive social welfare system. Initiative and direction are needed and people will follow for sure; I lead by example, such as first into the river to remove stones and clear the river channel.’ (INTRAC 2003.)

NGOs are divided into three groups: dormant ones seeking funds alone; NGOs who work, and those who have “two pockets” getting grants through family connections and government contractors. Local NGOs have problems dealing with the formalities of a modern bureaucratic state. For example, to be and remain an NGO is as an obstacle course: the registration process is a hoop to jump through, while it does not get any easier walking along the “responsibility tight-rope” between their communities and co-optation by government (INTRAC Workshop 2003).

Indeed, a common understanding of NGOs is that they should solely support social programmes of the State. Kurbon Vose, the Chief Advisor to the President of Tajikistan for Public Associations, proclaims that, ‘The Government of Tajikistan pays special attention to co-operation with NGOs... for the accomplishing of social programmes of the Government and lessening... of the Government work. The Government cannot solve the problems on its own,’ (INTRAC Workshop 2003). The inability of the Government to tackle effectively many of the social and economic problems that afflict the country has provided a significant space for NGO development. There has been a gradual increase in understanding by government officials at various levels, of the work of NGOs and a decrease in resistance to their efforts. They are now increasingly

perceived as ‘non-government’ (*na-doulati*) rather than ‘anti-government’ (*gheir-e-doulati*). A round-table discussion between the President and over 100 local NGOs held in June 2002 symbolises the new state of relations positively for many Tajiks.

Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia where an Islamic political party is legally operating and occupies seats in parliament. Shamsiddin Karimov of the Academy for Educational Development believes that, ‘he who would use the religion to develop and build Civil Society would win’. The moral dogmas of Islamic religion correspond to traditional civic culture. Islamic structures are in direct contact with the people at the grassroots and 93% of the population are Muslims. They are citizens and need to be involved, but ‘there appears to be a cultural clash: with Madrassahs practising traditional Islamic patterns of patience, understanding and tolerance, while NGOs seem impatient and pushy’ (INTRAC 2003). In fact NGOs often represent the urban, educated, secular elements in society.

There are less than 1,000 NGOs. Most are located in the capital, Dushanbe, and Khujand, the industrial capital of the north. Tajiks have time and ideas, but not the money, and therefore are saddled with outside agendas; fund-driven NGOs are springing up only where international donors offer opportunities. Not all NGOs

are non-governmental by strict definition; many have missions so wide that they resemble government plans to address all the country’s needs. This general definition of aims, however, allows considerable flexibility and accommodation of changing donor demands and interest. Active NGOs receive 90% of their financial support from donors. Given the low level of development of most local NGOs, however, international donors appear to accept a light reporting touch, and there is more honesty in the relationships between them and local NGOs. The cynicism that often surrounds relationships between NGOs and such donors seems to be lacking in Tajikistan. Post-conflict, development in the country remains a peace-building process initiated by the international community and implemented by local partner NGOs.

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INTRAC (2003) Workshop on ‘NGOs and Public Mechanisms of Social Partnership in Tajikistan’, Dushanbe, 24th January.

Written by Simon Heap, Senior Researcher, INTRAC

The full mapping report is available from INTRAC (s.heap@intrac.org).

Changing Relations: the Kazakhstan Government and NGOs

With the adoption of each new law regulating the relationship between government and NGOs, some of us are inclined to hope for the better, while others find in this the confirmation of their saddest forecasts. Certainly this has been true in Kazakhstan.

The start of a relatively structured relationship between government and NGOs came in 2000 when President Nazarbayev, in his traditional address to the people, for the first time mentioned NGOs and spoke of their important contribution in the country’s development:

‘Non-government public organisations already play an important role in advocacy activities, in realisation of public groups’ specific interests and in social stabilisation in Kazakhstan. Substantial state support is necessary,

in particular, through a system of grants, for the implementation of socially important projects. It is time to start wide-scale work in this respect.’ (President’s address, October 2000).

The term NGO had not previously been mentioned in legislation and the great majority of people (including government officials) did not know its exact meaning. However, shortly afterwards at the beginning of 2001 a law was adopted on NCOs (Non-Commercial Organisations), and later, an equally important document, the ‘Concept of NGOs State Support’. Finally, in 2003, discussions have begun about a programme of state support and a draft law on NGOs. This round of development will be completed by the adoption of the draft law on state social orders or contracts (an essential basis for state financial support for NGOs). Thus,

things have been moving fast during the last three years!

During this time there have been widely differing views of the developments and their implications for NGOs. Supporters of the proposals point to the new legal status of NGOs, the recognition that the state should support them financially, the gradual devolution of these responsibilities from the President through the government apparatus to the *akimats* (town halls). They agree with a degree of accountability and transparency of NGO operations required under the new legislation. The opponents, on the other hand, have pointed out technical shortcomings in the legal definitions of NCO and NGO (for example, an NGO must carry out ‘useful public activities’ for ‘the benefit of society’), and that the areas of work which can be funded (including social, health, environment,

family support, educational and cultural activities) are too restrictive. They argue that contracting is not support for NGOs per se, rather a joint way of tackling social problems, and contracts may not be truly open to all. They worry that the State is trying to control NGOs.

From the general trends in relations between government and NGOs in Kazakhstan today, the following factors emerge:

- An opposition group of advocacy and human rights organisations has become considerably more radical.

- A number of NGOs working in the area of social and public policy have taken major steps forward in co-operation with government bodies.
- Government bodies have begun to discuss draft law and consult with NGOs in a way which was unknown just 2-3 years ago. At the same time there are concerns that not all comments and critical remarks are taken into account.
- Criticism regarding the absence of basic legislation on NGOs has given way to criticism about its quality.

Thus, the multi-faceted character of development in Kazakhstan is obvious. Which facet becomes the dominant one depends on the strength of different trends and on the professionalism of the people leading the reforms. Much work remains to be done.

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This is a summary of a longer article with further details about the legislative developments in Kazakhstan. For a copy, please contact ide@nursat.kz

INTRAC Training

We are pleased to announce our programme of short courses taking place from May to October 2003:

Financial Management for Non-Financial Managers – 7th to 9th May 2003

The aim of the course is to help participants to understand and interpret financial information in order to improve decision-making. The course will cover the basics of financial management within an NGO and highlight the key areas to monitor. It is intended to provide practical skills and techniques.

Human Resource Management for NGOs – 14th to 16th May 2003

This course aims to provide participants with an increased understanding of organisational effectiveness and the role that good human resource development and management play in enabling NGOs to achieve their strategic goals in a sustainable way.

Managing Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation – 2nd to 6th June 2003

Donors' demands for greater accountability, together with our own need to learn from and build on our own experiences have led to rapid developments within the field of monitoring and evaluation. This course looks at the growing importance of participatory methods and the limitations of more traditional linear, cause and effect interpretation.

New! Train the Trainer – 9th to 11th June 2003

Development staff are increasingly called upon to deliver presentations and training. This course introduces participants to participative learning techniques, and the effective way to plan an event. Participants will have an opportunity to run an interactive training session and to receive useful feedback.

Effective Management for Development – 15th to 19th September 2003

This course aims to develop and improve the management capabilities of NGO staff and development workers. It will also help participants to gain an awareness of the impact of their management style, develop greater insight into their leadership role, and increase their confidence in being able to facilitate organisational change.

Capacity Building: An Organisational Approach – 22nd to 26th September 2003

This is an introductory course on capacity building, focusing on understanding the process of capacity building and strengthening, from the perspective of organisations. This course concentrates on building the capacity of organisations, and looks at this organisational approach for NGOs.

New! Strategic Thinking – 6th to 8th October 2003

NGOs are constantly having to make difficult choices when faced with the massive scale of poverty and distress, compounded by the limited resources in the non-profit sector. This and the nature of NGO work require strategic thinking and action. Strategic thinking is a dynamic process, which should be responsive to changing circumstances.

Advocacy and Policy Influencing – 13th to 17th October 2003

This course aims to give participants, from Northern and Southern NGOs, a thorough understanding of the policy formulation process and how they can influence it. Participants will be exposed to skills required to formulate effective advocacy strategies, implement appropriate workplans and incorporate monitoring and evaluation systems.

For further information please contact Rebecca Blackshaw at r.blackshaw@intrac.org, or go to our website www.intrac.org