

Responsibility, transparency and legitimacy of socially-oriented NGOs in Kyrgyzstan

Anara Musabaeva, January 2013

Summary

Over the last two to three years, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have increasingly been considering issues of legitimacy and accountability to their target groups. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are facing a number of fundamental questions, including: How to build relations with a state that exhibits an increasing tendency to criticise NGO activity? How to improve one's public image and credibility in the eyes of the general population? How to convince both target groups and donor organisations that NGO activity is effective and has a real impact on the development of the country? So far, no coherent responses have emerged from within the NGO sector, but NGOs have come to realise that answers to these questions will have to be found.

This study analysed the NGO sectors' existing comprehension of accountability and its mechanisms, and the degree to which NGOs understand the implications of, and are willing to address, issues of legitimacy and social responsibility. The study produced recommendations to NGOs on how to improve their accountability to target groups and the community at large. The broad conclusion is that, if NGOs intend to continue to position themselves as democratic institutions of civil society and as checks and counterbalances to the state, they must appreciate the need to provide an example of good governance, transparency, legitimacy and responsibility to target groups and society in general.

Introduction

Background

Questions regarding the responsibility and legitimacy of NGOs, the most active and organised part of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, became even more relevant recently, as the country went through a severe national tragedy. Mass protests against the corrupt and anti-national rule of President Bakiyev and his family culminated in shootings and riots, and led the second president to flee the country. This was followed by the establishment of an Interim Government, its crisis of legitimacy, and chaotic attempts by both the government and society to identify ways for the country to develop. This all occurred against the background of speculation about the role of external actors in shaping the future of the state and the people.

The importance of this issue to NGOs, now that Kyrgyzstan is facing key questions around its existence as an independent democratic country, is clear. Apart from well-known problems like public sector sustainability and institutional development, NGOs currently face

another serious challenge. This challenge arises from the question as to whether the NGO sector can mobilise civil society and bridge the gap between citizens in a society of total disbelief - disbelief for power, for institutions, for parties, and for each other. Will NGOs be able to respond to this challenge? This depends on whether NGOs succeed in building the confidence of broad social groups, and on how they solve the issue of legitimacy and responsibility - not only to their target groups but also to the broader community.

Kyrgyzstan, called an "island of democracy" only ten years ago, could not cope with the problematic tasks of building a legal state, democratic institutions and a strong civil society. The events of April 2010¹ were the result of people having lost faith in the legitimacy of the state and its bureaucratic system, as the state was unable to provide a decent life for its citizens and did not listen to the voices of ordinary people. The trend of relations between the state and civil society in recent years is of the government exercising growing control over all spheres of society, including the development of civil society. The government has continually been trying to increase the accountability of NGOs and narrow the space for their activity, excluding anything that may in some way relate to the political sphere.

Despite being under strict control and pressure by the state machinery, NGOs have tried to continue working under such adverse conditions. For example, NGOs have provided various social services to fill the gaps in the existing system of social development, and have also tried to protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups of citizens, and involve the state in social partnerships. Many of these attempts have been in vain: political authorities largely instrumentalised NGOs for their own purposes; as providers of services that the state could not provide, or as a "facade" imitating the participation of civil society in policymaking which, in fact, did not involve the interests and aspirations of the majority of citizens. Moreover, the state created decorative forums for political discussions, to which select NGOs that are perceived to not pose a threat to state policy are invited. This resulted in a division within the NGO sector. Thus, most socially-oriented NGOs did not get tangible government support, despite rhetorical backing by the state. In addition, efforts by some socially-oriented NGOs to seek ways to cooperate with state authorities (within the existing restrictions) were criticised by those NGOs who did not consider themselves loyal to the (in their view) corrupt authorities. The state in turn often questioned the possible contribution of NGOs to development and blamed them for not having representative legitimacy²; NGOs are perceived as lobbyists and agents of international organisations and foreign governments. Foreign funding to NGOs makes them vulnerable to such accusations – between 70-100% of the budget of a typical NGO in Kyrgyzstan is funded by international donors.

NGOs often find it difficult to answer questions about their legitimacy, i.e. to what extent they are authorised to speak on behalf of certain groups, the public, or the whole nation. NGOs do not always know how to respond to allegations of a lack of accountability. Also, the difficult relationship between the government and NGOs contributes to a negative image among the general public of NGOs as actors unable to contribute to the development of society.

¹ The tragic events in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010, when the government shot dozens of its citizens who rebelled against the corrupt family government of President Bakiyev, exposed the existing problems of legitimacy and state responsibility to its people. During the mass uprisings of 7-8 April in the central square of Bishkek, 85 people were killed and about 1,500 injured – including both protesters and police.

² Meaning the absence or lack of representation of the target groups (certain social base), especially in those NGOs that had no mass membership.

Opinions on NGOs amongst the general public are often controversial. The target groups that receive direct or indirect benefit from certain NGOs are well aware of these, but the wider population often wrongly perceives NGOs as purely humanitarian organisations, or holds other negative preconceptions³ – for example, seeing NGOs as channels for receiving money from foreign donors, or as vehicles for promoting the individual interests of the people working at the NGOs. Admittedly, NGOs themselves have partially contributed to the creation of such perceptions, since they exhibited insufficient openness and transparency, a lack of solidarity with each other, and an inability to show the specific impact of their work on the lives of specific groups. Furthermore, donor agencies, often more concerned with their goals rather than the real needs of the people, are dictating terms and priorities, and have also contributed to the lack of accountability and legitimacy of local NGOs.

What is the problem and what to do?

The issue of accountability is important not only for NGOs, but for all types of organisations and groups. Insofar as civil society organisations, in particular NGOs, often position themselves as checks and balances in relation to public bodies, NGOs arguably have a responsibility to set an example of legitimacy and accountability. This is particularly important in the current situation of instability and precariousness persisting in Kyrgyzstan after the events of April 2010, as it seems that no one has legitimacy, and distrust prevails at all levels of society (individual, institutional and macro).

In recent years, there has been an understanding in the NGO sector that "upward accountability" - in relation to donors, who provide funding to NGOs, and to public authorities, who create the legal and regulatory framework for NGOs - is more or less adequate. At the same time, with "downward accountability", i.e. in relation to target groups, there are problems, including: lack of feedback by, and participation of, target groups in decision-making and monitoring of NGOs' activities; and NGOs' transparency in relation to the groups.

The main questions for NGOs are 1) how to balance their accountability to the state and donor organisations with their accountability to their target groups, 2) how to achieve legitimacy in the sense of recognising their target groups and 3) how to build trust among the population.

Finding solutions to these questions is important for NGOs, as improved accountability to their target groups will help to strengthen their reputation as important social actors, increase the confidence of both donors and the state, and, ultimately, promote fundraising for socially useful activities. Improved accountability and legitimacy of NGOs is also important for target groups, since they could move beyond being passive recipients of services provided by NGOs, and become active participants in decision-making processes. Improved "downward" accountability of NGOs would benefit wider society because, in Kyrgyzstan, state institutions (at the moment) are often not trusted nor recognised as legitimate by the public. A strong civil sector could help to prevent a dysfunctional or failed state. Finally, improved NGO accountability can help persuade governments to improve their own transparency, accountability and incorporation of citizen feedback.

³ See The Portrait of Kyrgyzstan: opinions and reality. Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek: Soros Foundation, 2006

This paper now provides a description of the applied research methodology. It then scrutinises the prerequisites for problems of NGO accountability and responsibility, and analyses various aspects of the accountability of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, particularly their self-perception of issues of accountability, legitimacy, and the willingness for collective self-regulation. The final section provides reflections on possible options for NGOs' accountability development, drawing conclusions and recommendations for NGOs.

Methodology

The study built upon a review of secondary sources about international experience with issues of NGO accountability and mainly employed qualitative analysis. In-depth interviews were undertaken with leaders of the most prominent socially-oriented NGOs and experts in civil society development. Written semi-structured interviews were also carried out with key employees of experienced NGOs working on social issues. To cover the range of views held by activists of different organisations, focus group discussions were conducted with NGO and NGO network participants, as well as the target groups of NGOs involved in the study. Data collection and field studies were conducted both in the North and in the South of the republic. Twenty-five NGOs in total participated in this study.

This study sought to address NGO accountability as a multidimensional problem, but also had its limitations. The restricted resources available limited the number of NGOs that could be covered, but, nevertheless, the participation of reputable and experienced NGOs provides a picture of the range of views within the NGO sector. The participants of written interviews also sometimes found it difficult to formulate answers to some conceptually difficult issues of NGO accountability, which may impact on the quality of the data. However, most NGO participants have an understanding of this concept and could discuss the issues involved.

This study is primarily aimed at NGOs, although it may also be useful for government agencies, donors and individual experts. The research study aims to help the NGO sector to comprehend their role within society, searching for answers to the conceptual issues of civil society development and the NGO sector in particular. The paper does not consider issues related to the accountability of NGOs to government and donors.

Responsibility, accountability and legitimacy of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan today

Why do we have what we have?

When Kyrgyzstan became independent after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, public associations and organisations, modelled on Western NGOs, started to appear in the country. The Western 'democracy project' generously financed the establishment of NGOs, as the idea of civil society being the key to democracy emerged as dominant in the international discourse concerned with the transition states. In this discourse, the notion that the post-communist countries of Central Asia lacked a civil society became dominant, so establishing NGOs was highly promising. As a result of the support by international donor agencies in Kyrgyzstan since independence, a large number of NGOs were established,

leading researchers studying Kyrgyzstan to label it "the land of NGOs". Public policy at that time was liberal and conducive for the establishment and operation of NGOs. The large number of NGOs was seen by the international community as a sign of democratisation, with Kyrgyzstan labelled the "island of democracy", and the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan the most numerous and active in Central Asia. NGOs of Kyrgyzstan became a significant force in the country and a certain degree of political pluralism was reached because of them. NGOs became active participants in addressing critical issues of society; they initiated ideas for the development for society as a whole or in individual areas. NGOs also provided essential social services and participated in various poverty reduction projects.

The general development of NGOs during the 1990s was spontaneous and chaotic. The NGO sector became a new field of activity, where many people, having dropped out of the professional fields and forced to find new strategies for survival, found employment. Very few engrossed in philosophical thoughts about what these NGOs were, what civil society meant, and what the role of an NGO should be in society. During the 1990s people in new the newly-created NGOs thought more about practical things. They thought that their good intentions and goals, like the desire to help vulnerable people, were sufficient justification for NGO activity, giving them viability and social significance. There were also many 'mayfly' organisations - attractive foreign grants were the main incentive for the creation of such structures. As a result, over the years after independence, a fractured yet fairly large community of NGOs has been created in the country. According to various estimates, the number of registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan ranges from 8,000 to 12,000.⁴

From the time of Akaev's presidency, and especially during the last years of President Bakiyev's rule, the working atmosphere for NGOs has changed dramatically. NGOs have come under intense criticism by the state, being accused of not representing those groups on whose behalf they are allegedly working but rather certain groups of interests – in fact, they have been charged with being a kind of business. There were also more radical accusations that NGOs are lobbyists for international organisations and foreign governments. Almost complete dependence on foreign funding made NGOs vulnerable to such accusations. Donor organisations have also begun to doubt the effectiveness of NGOs as developmental actors, and started shifting funds to government channels. This was a worldwide trend, reflected in the Paris Declaration of 2005 to improve the effectiveness of official development assistance. The Paris Declaration has shifted emphasis from donor engagement with civil society towards greater cooperation with governments of developing countries. The subsequent Accra Agenda for Action, adopted in 2008, which was attended by representatives of civil society from many countries⁵, has not significantly modified donor support for development. The global economic crisis of 2008-09 worsened the situation for NGOs, as many donor agencies reviewed and eventually decreased their development assistance budgets.

In addition to these external challenges, Kyrgyz NGOs have observed that public perception of NGOs is not always clear, and sometimes incomplete or distorted. Increasingly, NGOs have been accused of "grant eating", and their positive role for the country's development

⁴ This variation is due to the fact that according to the existing legal provisions many different types of organisations can be registered by the Ministry of Justice in the category of non-for-profit organisations. There is debate as to whether they can all be considered NGOs.

⁵ See 'ONTRAC 40: Civil Society and Aid: Where Now?'. Sept 2008. Oxford, INTRAC. Available at: www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=480

challenged. Demands for NGOs to be accountable arose within the NGO sector and in society as a whole.

In their early years, many NGOs did not consider their accountability to their target groups, although some international NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan raised such questions.⁶ Internationally, throughout the 1990s many NGOs raised issues of accountability and responsibility. Many humanitarian and development NGOs have come to understand that in order to be trusted they would have to comply with at least two conditions: firstly, NGOs would have to justify the specific positions voiced in advocacy campaigns on social development and human rights issues in light of the groups on whose behalf they claimed to be acting. Secondly, NGOs would have to prove their positive developmental impact, i.e. their effectiveness as developmental actors.

During the 1990s, the external environment made it difficult for Kyrgyz NGOs to consider such matters. Yet, gradually, with increasing capacity of organisations and their staff, questions relating to accountability, responsibility and legitimacy came to be discussed. Many organisations realised that they have to think not only about the practical implementation of individual projects, but also about how to link individual projects with their long-term mission, how to build an integrated programme approach to activities, how to conduct strategic planning, and how to consider the opinion of target groups and stakeholders. Many NGOs have undertaken significant work to improve their management structure, and have begun to develop long-term and strategic planning.

It's time to think and act: NGOs' responsibility in the current climate

In the past two years, NGOs have been under great pressure. The state has been very sensitive to NGOs' involvement in human rights and legal issues, trying to limit the scope of their activity, and sometimes openly accusing them of promoting the interests of international players. Despite declaring a policy of close cooperation with civil society, the state has shown that it intends to cooperate only with loyal NGOs. "Undesirable" NGOs were pressurised or, at best, isolated from the decision-making processes. Decorative-type advisory bodies, created by the government, did not create the conditions necessary for effective participation by NGOs in decision-making or policy development. For example, the newly established 'Public Chamber' was designed to be a platform for communication between the government, business and civil society, yet has not fulfilled this role. In early 2010, President Bakiyev initiated the so-called 'Kurultai Agreement' – the Council of People's Representatives – which was supposed to consist of delegates elected by the population of territorial-administrative units, as well as delegates from professional and creative unions, business associations, religious groups, and ethnic and other associations. NGO representatives were only invited to the Kurultai after criticism of the organising committee, but the invited NGOs barely had the right to speak. Keynote speeches during the session sounded simply like public approval of presidential policy, leading to a very negative perception of the results of this meeting. It was perceived as a pre-orchestrated event to legitimise authorities whose power was already tottering because of the total distrust of its citizens. Thus Kurultai, designed to be a communication platform for deliberation between

⁶ For example, in 1998-99 INTRAC conducted a survey on NGOs in the countries of Central Asia, which highlighted that NGOs in the region are often not linked to specific target groups.

the authorities and the public, was to some extent an irritant for public opinion, sparking the subsequent mass protests that led to the events of April 2010.

The desire of the state to increase control over NGOs became especially evident in 2009, when a number of Members of Parliament initiated a law on non-profit organisations which introduced tighter regulations - especially in terms of funding. Though conflicting views have led to a temporary moratorium on this law, with the political changes after April 2010 its fate remains unclear.

Now, in a situation characterised by a lack of credibility of public institutions and doubts about the legitimacy of the state, the problem of displaying responsibility and legitimacy is even more acute for NGOs. Since the state and civil society interact frequently, representatives of the latter cannot demand government legitimacy without recognising the need for their own legitimacy. Currently, NGOs are trying to consolidate and formulate recommendations to the Interim Government. But who are the NGOs - expert think-tanks or the representatives of civil society? Who do these NGOs represent? On whose behalf do they act, and are they authorised by any group? NGOs have no clear answers to these questions, and therefore the current situation exposes issues of responsibility, accountability and legitimacy of NGOs even more.

Accountability of NGOs to target groups: NGOs' perceptions of the problem

Our research revealed that the perception and understanding of the issue of accountability to the target groups within the NGO sector varies. During discussions, it became clear that not all NGO leaders and staff agree with the suitability of the Russian term "podotchetnost" ("accountability" in English). Some NGOs (although relatively few) believe that accountability concerns only the financial side. Since they value only the financial side, they believe that accountability to the target groups should be limited or even minimal. This is a paternalistic approach whose core idea is best captured as: "We are doing good to them, they do not pay for it, everything is done at the expense of donors, so can there even be a question about accountability to the target groups?".

However, most of the NGOs studied understand the question of accountability to their target groups more comprehensively. According to participating NGOs, accountability applies not only to the finances spent on NGO projects, but also to the relationship with the target groups, the intentions and mission, methods of working with the target groups, and the impact of NGO activities on solving the problems and needs of the target groups.

Analysis of the collected data showed a not always clearly articulated, yet very firm, understanding of the following aspects of NGO accountability: i) internal vs. external accountability, ii) "upward" accountability (to donors and the government) vs. "downward" accountability (to beneficiaries, target groups and the general public), and iii) functional (short-term) accountability vs. strategic accountability (long-term and focused on sustainable impacts on the social and political processes).

The overwhelming majority of respondents recognised that the accountability of an NGO to the donor is a top priority, which is understandable since the sources of funding for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are mainly grants from foreign organisations. According to one expert, an

understanding of why to report to target groups is not yet clearly established in the NGO sector. The explanation for this, she believes, is in the basic philosophy of an NGO, which follows one of two principles: either "NGOs are for the people" or "people are for the NGOs". In fact, many NGOs do not have a real, specific target group. These NGOs often claim to work with the problem, not the people, and since the problem affects the interests of particular groups, these groups are by default "recorded" as the target group or beneficiaries.

However, our research led to the strong impression that NGO leaders are well aware that accountability to donors and the state must be balanced with accountability to target groups. Almost all the leaders agreed that preference is given to accountability to donors and that it is therefore necessary to improve accountability and responsibility to target groups. In response to questions about current forms of accountability in the NGO sector, many people noted that NGOs seek to improve the management structure, to separate the operational management from the board of directors or the supervisory board, to introduce or improve a monitoring and evaluation system for the project cycle, and to make partner recruitment or selection procedures more transparent. For target groups and the wider public, NGOs try to produce reporting publications and brochures, including financial information. A number of NGOs working with local communities systematically explore needs assessment methods with participation of stakeholders, including PRA, PSA, stakeholder analysis and others. Along with this, there is an understanding that NGOs do not always think about the long-term impact of their activities in society, preferring functional approaches to accountability and caring more about how to show the results of ongoing project activities.

One of the main problems that this research uncovered is that target groups themselves are unwilling to make accountability "demands" on NGOs in relation to the activities they undertake, or purport to undertake, for them. Although some target groups proposed to change particular NGO project activities in accordance with their needs, they mostly preferred to tacitly accept what was offered to them by NGOs. Sometimes this is greatly appreciated, especially social activities at local level. This is typical of rural areas, which are especially underprivileged and often neglected by both government and development agencies. Sometimes, NGO assistance is accepted, if not with gratitude, then at least neutrally. This reaction can be expressed as "just take what is offered; in any case, it won't harm" – in relation both to material, humanitarian aid, and also about awareness and education. This is how the principle "it might be useful" works.

Focus-group discussions, conducted with NGO beneficiaries, including representatives of vulnerable groups, and small NGOs, confirmed major NGO leaders' concerns about the unavailability of target groups and beneficiaries as full partners and participants in processes of development and decision-making. According to a leader of a major Bishkek NGO, NGOs' efforts to provide channels for effective consultation with the beneficiaries of projects will remain a one-way street until there is active feedback from the target group. The target groups behave as users of services (service recipients), and do not see themselves as full partners with ideas and demands, and with whom cooperation is needed. One possible explanation for this would be a post-Soviet mentality, as exemplified by an interviewee who was accustomed to someone else making decisions for him on how live, providing social services, care, etc. Previously, it was an all-powerful state – now it is an NGO or charity. People tend to take what is available, but are not yet ready to more proactively determine

their own lives, making decisions and exercising choice. This is not always to be blamed on NGOs, as it is a reflection of a society with a particular civil and political culture.

In the course of the study, discussions on the perception of NGO accountability were held with experts, and staff and leaders of NGOs. Questions were asked about how accountability to target groups should be understood, what the accountability components are, whether they are present in the NGOs' work at the moment, and what challenges NGOs face in improving their accountability. The answers to these are sometimes specific to different types of organisations, but there are many common characteristics as well. It was found, for example, that NGOs themselves have identified several types of accountability to their target groups.

Thus, organisations that provide social services tend to rely on the concepts of quality and quantity of provided services. Some spoke about their services or the work that their organisation provides to certain groups as 'being in demand'. Although during discussions the words "efficiency of NGOs" were rarely heard, a conclusion can be drawn that the efficiency, quality and relevance of the services provided is seen by NGOs as a certain type of accountability and responsibility to their target groups.

The next type of accountability associated by NGOs to their target groups was their degree of internal democracy and the soundness of their organisational structure. Thus, many NGOs believe that the existence of an independent board of directors or supervisory board, a transparent financial reporting system, a democratic management structure, and adequate personnel policies and incentives may indicate accountability.

The study also examined the link between NGO accountability and transparency problems. All participating organisations noted that the transparency of an NGO is an important component of its accountability and legitimacy. Some organisations perceived themselves as very transparent and therefore did not see any problem in this regard. Yet, most organisations believe that greater transparency is needed. However, many NGOs had different opinions on the extent of transparency needed in relation to their target group and the risks of "excessive" transparency for NGOs operating in a context of an authoritarian political regime. Some NGOs believe that the more transparent an organisation is (including its financial affairs) the more trustworthy it is. Such NGOs argue that the publication of reports, including in the media, inspire confidence. However, a significant number of NGOs believe that transparency should focus on the activity itself and its results; with financial transparency, it is necessary to "balance" transparency, i.e. not to unnecessarily "highlight" the organisations' finances. These views result from the perception that excessive financial transparency generates jealousy among government officials as to the resources of NGOs, and increases their desire to control the flow of funds to the NGO sector.

Some NGO leaders noted that the corrupt political system is also an obstacle to greater transparency of NGOs. On the other hand, considering the "balanced transparency" argument, in poor countries even relatively small funds spent by NGOs can cause jealousy and misunderstanding by ordinary people. There is no consensus on this point, although some experts believe that NGOs' fears about the danger of excessive financial transparency are not justified. These experts argue that if an NGO reports their finances to the tax and other fiscal services, why not also report to target groups? NGOs' fears are explained partly

by the fact that NGOs are not very experienced and do not know in what format to disclose and distribute information without risk to themselves. Others explain these fears with the mismatch between performance and invested resources, which results in the reluctance of NGOs to be completely open. There may be a problem of corruption in the NGO sector, but many NGOs prefer to avoid discussing this topic.

During the discussions, one NGO leader expressed the view that "transparency is worth the money", meaning that lack of funds prevents his NGO from having frequent contact with its target groups, publishing reports, etc. Some experts also mentioned that donor reporting requirements alone are often so complex that local NGOs do not have time left for transparency and accountability towards their direct stakeholders. Due to the fact that NGOs lack time (and sometimes do not consider it important) to inform various audiences about their work, their public image is quite contradictory. As noted by one expert, a survey in 2009 revealed that the stereotypes of NGOs as "grant eaters" and agents of foreign funds are still strong among the general public. In one focus-group discussion, an NGO representative said that the term "grant eaters" was coined two or three years ago when scandals in the major NGO associations in relation to the misuse of donor funds had been revealed. Thus, it was recognised that NGOs should feel responsibility for the prevention of corruption in the sector.

The legitimacy of NGOs

One complex issue discussed in the study was the question of NGO accountability to target groups relative to the legitimacy of NGOs, as well as the sources of this legitimacy. Interestingly, differences in the comprehension of NGO legitimacy were quite large, which makes it difficult to summarise the more common grounds in understanding legitimacy by the study participants. Often, participants did not distinguish between concepts of legality and legitimacy. Some participants argued that because NGOs are legally registered with the Ministry of Justice, pay taxes and perform other legal obligations, they have the legitimacy to do their work. Other participants believed that the legitimacy of NGOs is equal to trust, especially trust of the target groups and the confidence of partners and the general public. According to one NGO leader, "keeping a promise, made to the target groups, builds trust and trust gives a sense of legitimacy to the organisation". As suggested by the leader of a major NGO working on women's rights, legitimacy above all means consistency of the organisational mission and some continuity in its values and operating principles. Constantly changing an organisation's mission to accommodate different market factors does not engender trust, and therefore does not reinforce the organisation's legitimacy.

NGO legitimacy issues were associated with the relationship between an NGO and the wider society, its transparency, and its commitment to its mission. It is noticeable that only some NGOs proposed the basis of NGO legitimacy to be the representation of certain groups. The impression was that the view that NGOs should have a certain social base or represent real groups of people is not very common in the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, some civil society experts believe it is important for NGOs to have a representative legitimacy. Without such legitimacy, supporters of this view argue, NGOs will always be subjected to criticism, and will always have difficulties to answer, for example to the state, around the question of whose interests they defend and lobby. Experts argue that NGOs can obtain such representational legitimacy not only by becoming a membership organisation or involving their specific supporters, but also by building relationships and communicating with

the structures that exhibit such representational status. Such structures can be membership organisations, trade unions, perhaps even political parties and government agencies. Such a view raises other issues, such as: Is it right for an NGO to liaise with political parties? Are NGO-political party alliances natural or not? So far, there are no answers to these questions.

One NGO leader stated that his organisation is legitimate because it is legally registered and carries out legal activity. However, there is a concept of "authorisation", i.e. when a group of people (for example, the NGO beneficiaries) empower NGOs to speak on their behalf. So, this respondent believes that the "authorisation" may only be delegated and that no NGO can claim to have the authority to speak on behalf of a group which has not delegated such authority. Social NGOs working with rural communities, in particular, have argued that they have this authorisation from their target groups. Here, attention has to be paid to the differences of urban and rural NGOs: in rural areas, people often perceive NGOs as advocates in their relations with the local authorities. The village is easier to mobilise since people have more direct contacts, but also exhibits a greater welfare mentality, meaning that high expectations persist that someone will come to solve the community's problems.

It is possible to link the issues of an NGO's "authorisation" to act on behalf of its target group and its legitimacy in the sense of holding the confidence of this group, with the question of who the NGO represents. The issue of representation is complicated and controversial. During the study, we tried to talk with NGO representatives about whether or not NGOs represent target groups, if representation is a necessary or important source of NGO legitimacy, and in what forms such representation can be performed. It transpired that most of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan do not consider the question of representation of target groups as a serious problem. Both donors and citizens perceive NGOs to be the focus of the professional middle class, acting as mediators between the people and the government. According to some NGO leaders, this is quite normal, and it is wrong to require NGOs to have representative structures. Proponents of such position believe that NGOs have different roles to play in society. According to one NGO leader, the ideas that arise in the non-profit sector cover a wide range of people and issues (national and even global). NGOs are transforming society through various innovations, but the result is either attributed to the state or people start thinking that they have achieved everything themselves. In particular, respondents pointed out that the problem of "whom do NGOs represent" exists, but that it might often be artificial and exaggerated. This view is promoted by some NGOs who like speaking on behalf of all NGOs, or on behalf of the public. In this case, it is debatable whether they have the moral right for such claims. On the other hand, governments and political parties like to raise the issue of representation when they want to minimise the role of NGOs within society.

The positions held by Kyrgyz NGOs representatives mentioned above echoed the views of some international experts, who believe that NGOs do not have to be representative institutions because they do not have to procure the votes of an electorate, that their role is different. This role is to support innovation and alternative thinking. Therefore, the question to ask NGOs is not "whom do you represent?", but "what do you represent?".⁷

Some experts have identified another component of broader legitimacy, about NGOs' respect for democracy and the extent to which NGOs are beneficial for society as a whole rather than just for limited groups of people. As one NGO leader expressed, "it is important at

⁷ Discussion on NGO Accountability, UN Headquarters, New York, 19 January, 2007.

this stage for Kyrgyzstan's NGOs to understand the role they play in civil society, and even to find out what civil society is, because there is still no common understanding of the role for civil society shared by the majority of NGOs, and in particular, the role for NGOs in developing the country". Thus, some NGO leaders in the study believed that NGOs should not be involved in politics and deal only with social issues. According to this view, NGOs involved in politics basically serve as political parties or are closely associated with them, and their activities hinder the creation of a positive image of NGOs.

However, a second perspective holds that NGOs do not operate in a vacuum and that there are no purely social or economic problems - the latter are always closely interrelated with politics. Proponents of this view argue that any participation in decision-making on issues related to the lives of citizens on local or national level is a matter of politics. Currently, there is no consensus on the role of NGOs and whether they should be associated with politics. As one expert noted, the issue should be considered on the basis of how an NGO determines its legitimacy (including size) and accountability (to whom, how, and for what actions, etc.). According to this expert, as long as an NGO is working at the local level and carrying out a small amount of activity – that is useful to the particular target group - it has the right to get involved in politics. Its accountability and legitimacy are limited. In contrast, once an NGO is pursuing national-level goals, representing a large group of people, it would be required to prove the extent of its legitimacy in terms of possessing credibility with that group of people. Such an organisation must consider whether it has the moral right to represent the interests of this group.

The legitimacy of NGOs is especially important to discuss in the current context of violent conflict around the legitimacy of the Interim Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. Of course, the legitimacy of the government itself is a much more important matter, but since NGOs position themselves as checks and balances within society, addressing deficiencies of the undeveloped party system, it is clear that NGOs need to think about their legitimacy.

As there is no commonly shared definition of NGO legitimacy, for the purpose of our study we refer to it as a special status that allows an organisation to operate with the consent of the people it represents. Yet, here a problem occurs: most NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are organisations which gave themselves a performance mandate - no one gave them their mandate or authorised them to choose a particular field of activity. Therefore, the presence of *legality* (legal compliance with the existing law) is not a sufficient basis to talk about legitimacy. Here, apparently, NGOs have to rely on *moral sources of legitimacy*.

This study has discussed the sources of legitimacy for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, reflecting a growing concern about this issue, which is shared not only by experts but also by NGO leaders and staff members. Organisations that work directly with target groups believe that the most important and obvious form of legitimacy results from the support NGO activities enjoy from its target groups. For example, NGOs working with self-help groups have stated that they feel legitimate as they get tangible support from the people they work with.

The study participants mentioned that member organisations, in theory, should have the highest degree of legitimacy, since there are real members with real interests behind them. But, in practice, most NGOs (not only in Kyrgyzstan) do not belong to this category. What should be done in this case? While it might be appropriate to discuss the case of a large

organisation such as Oxfam, which receives donations from hundreds of thousands of people, in Kyrgyzstan, the country has not (yet) developed reasonable corporate or private philanthropy. Support by volunteers is another great source of legitimacy for many Western NGOs, but volunteering is also not developed sufficiently in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the question remains: what could be the source of general legitimacy for NGOs in this context? Perhaps support by the media, who, after all, form public opinion, or, the intellectual support of well-known scientists and public figures?

During this study, some NGO leaders and experts noted that an NGO can receive its legitimacy due to a display of competence, knowledge in a particular area, or valuable contacts that deserve public trust. For example, an organisation working for children's rights for many years probably has a reason to believe that its knowledge of the problems of the children concerned, and the continued cooperation with relevant government agencies, entitles it to claim its expertise and experience as a source of legitimacy.

Some organisations said that the best sources of organisational legitimacy are good, honest work and high-quality services that lead to real changes in people's lives. For one NGO leader, the affected change in the lives of at least a few particular people (in this case: children) is evidence for the legitimacy of her organisation. In some cases, study participants also addressed the importance of a good reputation held by both the organisation and its leader, and the consistency of an organisation in the selection of its mission, principles and values as sources of NGO legitimacy.

Are NGOs ready for collective self-regulation?

In many countries NGOs have developed different mechanisms of collective self-regulation at the sectoral and national levels to strengthen their accountability and built the trust of government agencies, donors and the public. Mechanisms of collective self-regulation of NGOs are diverse and probably depend on the specific environment of NGOs, e.g. political and civic culture, historic legacies, and other factors. In some countries, collective self-regulation mechanisms are enshrined in professional or ethical codes, collective responsibility charters, and performance standards, or exist in the form of enhanced arrangements for coalition work.

In order to identify the extent to which NGOs are aware of these mechanisms, whether they find them appropriate, and how they assess their present readiness for collective self-regulation, this study first tried to find some issues of collective identity for socially-oriented NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. Our basic assumption was that, for collective self-regulation, NGOs should have at least some degree of solidarity and collective identity.

The results of our analysis are quite interesting: when asked whether there is a common *identity* of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, the vast majority of respondents stated that there is weak solidarity both among Kyrgyz NGOs as a whole and even within sectoral or specialised NGO networks. In contrast, many organisations noted that identity is being formed, especially in light of the more repressive state policy towards NGOs in recent years. This promoted the formation of a common identity as a means of self-preservation by the sector. According to one expert, the fact that most NGOs identify themselves with civil society is remarkable, and may indicate the formation of a collective identity of NGOs. The ability of NGOs to respond to

common challenges, mobilising and acting with a consolidated position (for example, as in the case of the new NGO Law) demonstrates the capacity to form a common identity.

Coalition work intending to support the processes of common identity formation and general decision-making capacity development is already in progress in Kyrgyzstan, but it is not always effective and sometimes rather passive. This is partly due to the fact that NGOs are busy with their daily routine and coalition work is not a priority. In addition, our research has shown that problems result from the internal power relations between members of one or the other networks: some NGOs claim leadership by virtue of their experience or eminence, but this only creates hierarchies, inequality and distrust. Such circumstances hamper the development of coalition work. According to one NGO leader, attempts to create different NGO forums often lead to greater resistance to the idea. Another expert noted that similar consolidation attempts were not successful, and that experience has shown that NGOs prefer to join in alliances on important issues on a temporary basis and prefer informal networks that are mobilised when necessary, rather than formal coalitions. The leader of one larger NGO believed that major sectoral associations are absent because there is no vision or understanding of a common civil society identity that is shared by a majority of NGOs. Some experts also referred to the fragmentation of the NGO sector and the prematurity of unification processes.

In discussions about the *image* of NGOs, many respondents noted that it leaves much to be desired. One NGO leader noted that the image of NGOs is quite positive, but remains mostly local in nature; NGOs are well known only in the sectors they work in, be it geographical or thematic. But, there is an understanding that NGOs need to be more transparent as well as more pro-active in relations with the mass media and with one another in order to improve their public image. In our view, proactiveness is especially necessary in terms of creating a platform outlining the most important issues related to the scope of an NGO, and raising awareness of this. As noted by one expert, the work of Kyrgyz women's NGOs is often reactive – NGOs start responding to a problem only after it has reached extreme severity, although it would be possible to work out in advance a common platform on the key issues that determine the basic philosophy and the value of such organisations.

Some experts advised NGOs to reflect upon broad concepts of identity, such as positioning NGOs as agents of innovative or alternative ideas and providers of solutions for social development issues. Another aspect of image formation was associated by respondents with many NGOs' inability to work more actively with the media.

Many respondents from socially-oriented NGOs, which form the backbone of this study, noted that the image of NGOs is often negative in the eyes of society because the mass media tend to cover the activities of politicised NGOs, whilst ignoring NGOs working on social issues. The particular way in which mass media tend to cover NGOs is an important aspect of collective NGO image formation. One NGO leader noted that in television programmes on issues of social importance, NGOs are often invited as opponents to certain dominant positions (usually the position of the government). Thus, public opinion perceiving NGOs as being always in opposition is generated. Amongst NGOs, there is a growing appreciation for the need to work on their image. For a lasting positive image, it is important to do the daily work with honesty and integrity, as people's perceptions also depend on performance.

This study clarified the issue of NGOs' awareness of the *mechanisms of collective self-regulation*. There was also an attempt to assess the willingness of NGOs for self-regulation. At first, we assessed to what extent the study participants had been aware of the mechanisms of self-regulation by NGOs. With few exceptions, NGOs knew about the availability of NGO self-regulation mechanisms in other countries, although none possessed detailed knowledge of these. Some noted that they know about the attempts of the Association of Civil Society Support Centers (ACSSC), supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, to establish a system of voluntary certification of NGOs.

Since many study participants found it difficult to discuss specific NGO self-regulation mechanisms, we gave them some additional information. In particular, we described self-regulatory mechanisms such as the NGO Responsibility Charter, ethical and professional codes, and voluntary certification and standardisation.

Some NGOs believe that NGO self-regulation is an imported model and that there is no need to copy other countries. One NGO leader said: "we just need to follow the rules of ethics and morality. It all depends on each individual NGO. The fact that we are entering into networks and coalitions means taking some kind of responsibility, adherence to the norms and rules. Therefore, there is no need to think of something artificial". However, for the most part, NGO leaders and staff thought it necessary and timely for NGOs to start discussing issues of collective self-regulation. Opinions differed as to why it was necessary: some view collective self-regulation as a response to the challenges NGOs currently face, in particular the issue of weak NGO accountability to target groups, "grant eating", and a perceived lack of public benefit from NGO activities. Proponents of this view believe that introducing collective self-regulation would allow NGOs to refute some criticism, mobilise greater support from donors, and gain more trust from the public.

Other proponents of NGO self-regulation believe that the latter is also important for promoting the professional development of organisations. According to this perspective, the voluntary certification of NGOs would help to provide an incentive for self-analysis, self-assessment and capacity building. The opinion of some informants is also interesting. They think that in some areas, voluntary certification of NGOs is probably very useful, for example, in the environmental sector. Here, besides trust, good purposes and organisational capacity, more specific professional expertise is required. Furthermore, one NGO leader suggested developing standards for the provision of social services in order to reduce or eliminate corruption in the NGO sector. These should also include government agencies providing social services. The focus should be not only on self-regulation of NGOs but rather the establishment of independent mechanisms for professional accreditation in a particular sector. It was noted, however, that such a process could take years.

Another very important aspect of NGO self-regulation this emerged during the study was the potential problem arising from NGO specialisation. One expert argued that self-regulation of NGOs is generally only possible by sector, and considering that most NGOs in Kyrgyzstan lack a clear specialisation, the development of self-regulation mechanisms would be premature. Supporting this, the leader of an NGO Association also highlighted the importance of specialisation as a prerequisite for the implementation of certain performance standards. There are a number of challenges along the way of specialisation. Reduced

funding to NGOs in the last few years has led many to work on a variety of projects in order to survive. This does not allow them to build specialised capacity in a particular area. This is particularly true for rural NGOs, which are sometimes forced to deal with all the problems existing in their area.

NGO self-regulation problems correspond with problems of NGO self-organisation. Many leaders adhere to pre-conceived notions of hierarchy when mentally structuring their environment, but this is incompatible with both efficient self-organisation and collective self-regulation of NGOs.

The discussion on the possibility of introducing a system of voluntary certification for NGOs showed that NGO leaders are concerned about several key issues. The first revolves around questions such as: who will do the certification? Who will develop the certification standards? Are NGOs ready to accept and implement the recommendations of independent certification parties? Are there qualified people, able to conduct an independent certification? The second issue is connected to the fundamental question on the purpose of certification ("what is it for?"): and whether the certification process will be a basis for government agencies and donor organisations in making decisions on funding of certified NGOs? The third issue relates the possible influence of competition in the NGO sector to the formation of self-regulation mechanisms, and also to the danger of excessive adaptation by NGOs of corporate business culture with its bureaucratic schemes of service quality standards.

What will come tomorrow?

Political events, like those in April 2010, will likely postpone the discussion and search for the right solutions of NGO accountability, responsibility and legitimacy issues in Kyrgyzstan for some time. But these questions will inevitably arise again if Kyrgyzstan decides whether or not the country needs a democracy.

Criticising the Interim Government for its illegitimacy, and lack of accountability and transparency, NGOs should not forget that they face many similar problems of their own, related to people's confidence, performance and efficiency, and the impact they have on societal development. It is widely believed in the NGO sector that the power, influence and resources of NGOs are disproportionately small compared with those of the state, and that therefore the degree of responsibility maintained by the latter is incommensurate. Yet, despite such "justifications", NGOs need to realise that without strengthening the confidence of both their target groups and the wider community, and without improving their public image, they will not be able to play the role of agents for democratic development.

There are at least two options for the future of NGOs in light of the problems addressed – although, these options are dependent on whether the country will be able to maintain stability and end its political crisis within the next six months.

The first option is to keep the status quo of the sector – passive development. As before, NGOs would rely on themselves and occasionally resort to temporary alliances to lobby common issues. Issues of accountability and responsibility to target groups would be addressed only at the level of individual institutions or small specialised networks. These would aim at improving the control systems within the organisations themselves. There might

be attempts to strengthen relationships with external stakeholders through mass media and individual joint actions. But we would not see significant progress on NGOs' greater openness and financial transparency, and issues of accountability would continue to be addressed on the basis of donor priorities and the short-term interests of an organisation. Under this option, the relationship of NGOs with the government would not change. NGOs would continue to face problems because of criticism from donors, government agencies and the public. The image of NGOs among people would remain essentially unchanged. This option would exist, if we assumed that there was a certain reserve of time and resources in the NGO sector, which would allow NGOs to develop "downstream".

Another option would be possible if there was a consensus in the sector about NGOs being democratic institutions of civil society, intended to ensure public benefit and play the role of "checks and balances" against the tyranny of the state. In this case, there would be a growing understanding among NGOs of the necessity to improve their accountability and responsibility to target groups and wider community, to strengthen people's confidence and to be an example of good governance. Then, perhaps, the NGO sector would see attempts to discuss NGOs' liability, legitimacy, accountability and transparency issues, as well as attempts to improve coalition work and networking, and to develop mechanisms for collective self-regulation of NGOs. It would not be necessary to have complex mechanisms of self-regulation, copied from other countries. This may be the first steps signalling NGOs' goodwill to put themselves in a situation of greater liability to their colleagues and the public. Such steps may lead to better donor funding of NGOs, and in the long term even state support. Of course, with this option, it is most likely that the NGO sector would thin out, as some organisations that cannot cope with the numerous challenges they are presently facing would simply shut down. On the other hand, such developments could give rise to solidarity among NGOs and contribute to the generation of a common identity.

Main conclusions

- The vast majority of experts, NGO leaders and staff members agreed that issues of NGO accountability, responsibility and legitimacy to target groups require discussion and search for the right solutions to benefit the development of the NGO sector.
- Some NGOs still consider that accountability is only about financial resources. These NGOs are wary of improving accountability to target groups, thinking that it is caused by the tendency to place NGOs under strict control by the government agencies. In general though, most NGOs understand the issues of accountability to the target groups more comprehensively, as something which is relevant to the objectives and mission of the NGO, its values and principles of operation, methods of interaction with the target groups, and the impact of its activities on the target groups in the medium and long terms. There is an understanding that NGOs do not always think about the long-term impacts of their activities, preferring a functional approach to accountability, and showing the results of their ongoing activities within a project framework.
- There is a general recognition that accountability to donors prevails because of the financial dependence of NGOs on donors, but it was clear that NGO leaders are well aware of the need to balance accountability to donors and government with accountability to the target groups.

- One of the major issues is that the target groups themselves are not willing to demand that NGOs perform certain types of activities in line with their needs. Target groups tend to remain passive recipients of services provided by NGOs and are not ready to be an equal NGO partner.
- Most NGOs commonly talked about demand and quality of services on the one hand, and democratic procedures and management principles within an organisation as forms and criteria for an accountable NGO on the other.
- Most of the organisations that participated in the study believe that Kyrgyz NGOs need greater transparency. However, NGOs disagreed on the extent of transparency in relation to target groups. Some NGOs consider transparency around existing programmes and their results more important than "flashing" the financial resources of the organisation, explaining that "excessive" financial transparency in an authoritarian political regime is fraught with risks for NGOs.
- All of the organisations in this study considered themselves legitimate. The majority of the organisations consider legal status and compliance with existing legislation to be the important source of legitimacy. Overall, there was a wide range of opinions on NGO legitimacy. Some organisations identified sources of legitimacy such as trust of their target groups, the good reputation of the organisation and its leader, a positive public image for the professionalism and quality of services, and commitment to their mission.
- Some NGO leaders think that membership organisations theoretically have greater legitimacy, as they have the delegated authority of representation. However, it is noticeable that only some NGOs consider representation of their target groups as an important source of legitimacy. Many NGOs believe that NGOs do not have to represent particular groups; their mission is to promote ideas, alternative thinking and innovation. As questions like "who do NGOs represent?" periodically occur, many NGOs believe that these issues should be discussed. However, NGOs often think that the issue of representation is either artificially created by opponents wishing to diminish their role in society, or is a consequence of public statements made by some NGOs on behalf of very large groups of people who, in fact, did not give them such authority.
- Discussions of a common NGO identity showed weak solidarity among Kyrgyz NGOs as a whole and even within sectoral or specialised NGO networks. Nevertheless, many organisations noted that identity is being formed, especially in light of the more repressive state policy towards NGOs in recent years. This gave rise to the formation of a common identity by the NGO sector as a form of self-preservation. The ability of NGOs to respond to common challenges, mobilise and act with a coherent position also shows the capacity to form a common identity.
- Many experienced NGOs are trying to respond to the challenges posed by various stakeholders' requirements of greater NGO accountability. They are trying to improve the management structure, internal processes and more actively involve target groups in the project cycle. They also seek to advance their transparency by publishing reports and improving communication with external stakeholders and the public. But there is a

growing understanding of these measures being not enough. At least half the NGOs in the study think there is a need to implement NGO self-regulatory mechanisms, establish ethical standards, and standards for the organisation of social services.

- NGOs supporting the implementation of self-regulatory mechanisms believe that the core idea of self-regulation is active involvement of NGOs in the process of promoting democratic values and norms. Professionalism and ethical behaviour helps to develop a good public image and public trust.
- Although many NGOs noted the need to improve their accountability to target groups, it was also noted that the diversity of the NGO sector complicates establishing common standards. Socially oriented NGOs differ from human rights organisations; also, NGOs can vary in the scale of their activities or types of stakeholders (constituents, partners, beneficiaries, members, etc.). Some NGOs believe that self-regulation is an imported model and there is no need to copy other countries.
- One important aspect of NGO self-regulation concerns NGO specialisation: one expert argued that self-regulation of NGOs is only possible by sectors, yet considering that most NGOs in Kyrgyzstan cover multiple sectors (mostly due to a lack of resources) with little specialisation, the development of self-regulation mechanisms is premature.

Recommendations to NGOs

- NGOs need to think about their role in the development of society, and - based on that - address issues of accountability to key stakeholders. NGOs need to learn to put issues of accountability and overall performance into context. Therefore, approaches to accountability will depend on the specifics of an organisation, the scope of its activities, and the type and number of its stakeholders. What suits one organisation may not suit others.
- When implementing programmes, NGOs should start with an analysis of whose rights their programme will affect, and what the NGO commitments and responsibilities of other stakeholders are. NGOs need to outline answers to questions of "accountable for what?", "accountability to whom?" and "accountability in what form?".
- NGOs must choose forms of accountability in accordance with their source of legitimacy. If NGOs consider the quality of their services to be a source of legitimacy, it is necessary to address how to prove the quality of work and its impact on the target groups. If an NGO values the trust of people, then there is a need for other forms of accountability. If NGOs declare to represent their target groups, there should be a close relationship with these groups, including feedback and participation.
- The majority of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are organisations with a self-selected performance mandate, in other words, no one gave them their mandate or authorised them to work in a particular field of activity. Therefore, *legality* (legal compliance with the existing law) is not a sufficient basis to talk about legitimacy. Here, NGOs have to rely on *moral sources of legitimacy*. NGOs should understand that positioning themselves in the

broader public space inevitably leads to the need to address issues of representation, legitimacy, accountability and transparency in the extended context.

- Given that most NGOs in the country are not membership organisations, to strengthen their legitimacy and improve their public image it is important to think about how to engage with the mass media that form public opinion, and how to achieve the intellectual support of influential public figures.
- To improve the public image of NGOs, they should be more open and proactive in relations with the media. Specialised NGOs or NGO networks need to develop a proactive (as opposite to reactive) approach in order to be an effective actor in the field of decision-making. NGOs should be able to develop a common conceptual platform on the most important issues of their area of work that reflects the values and philosophy of organisation, rather than trying to respond to problems only when they are in the acute stage.
- To strengthen the image of NGOs in society, they should also think about their identity and guiding principles, for example positioning themselves as agents of innovative or alternative ideas and solutions on social development issues.
- Along with ongoing efforts to improve management systems, internal policies and procedures, the involvement of target groups in the project cycle, and communication with external stakeholders in general, it would be useful for NGOs to undertake more active discussions of self-regulation issues; starting this process by sector or areas of specialisation. It is not necessary to adopt only borrowed experiences from other countries or organisations; it is quite possible that NGO self-regulation mechanisms will be developed in the course of discussions. This may be the first steps of goodwill for NGOs ready for major responsibility to colleagues (sectoral) and to the public. These steps may lead to better funding of NGOs by donors, and, in the long term, by the state in the form of social order.