



Praxis Paper 19

Leadership in Transition - Developing Civil Society Leaders in Kyrgyzstan

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Leadership in Transition: Developing Civil Society Leaders in Kyrgyzstan

Charles Buxton and Kazbek Abraliev

Key words: leadership, civil society, Kyrgyzstan

Executive Summary

The Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan is in a state of transition in which civil society could play a historical role. Political changes over the past 15 years – including the March 2005 Tulip Revolution, which overthrew the country's first president, Askar Akayev – have done little to instil popular faith in leaders. Kyrgyz civil society organisations could inspire society and offer a more ethical, open and democratic form of leadership. But what elements of traditional and Soviet-style, top-down leadership can they build on? What are current perspectives on the notions of leadership? What can be learnt from the experience of those now managing civil society organisations? What are the critical challenges they face today? What resources exist for training leaders in new forms of management?

These questions were addressed in joint research undertaken by INTRAC and Centre Interbilim – a local NGO. The investigation considered traditional and modern leadership models in a range of national and local, large and small civil society organisations in Kyrgyzstan. Improved learning, the researchers hoped, would enable Centre Interbilim and INTRAC to design a training programme to prepare leaders committed to democratic principles and a participatory approach.

Among our key findings were the following.

- Kyrgyz civil society has strong leaders, many of whom have considerable management skills, but tradition still strongly influences the way they manage and the methods they use to seek public support.
- Women have made substantial gains and many now occupy significant roles in civil society, but barriers threaten to undermine progress towards gender equality.
- Traditional forms of seniority are preventing younger people from rising to significant positions of leadership in civil society organisations, as was hoped for earlier in the post-Soviet transition.
- The majority of NGO leaders actively promote the role of the sector and see it as their responsibility to remain independent of politics to enable them to propose new policy agendas in many fields neutrally.

- While many civil society leaders have democratic values, they need support to develop and promote participatory practices of leadership/management.
- Kyrgyzstan's vibrant civil society is active in many areas, but collective experience has not been gathered and reflected upon. There have been hardly any attempts to analyse the results of leadership programmes and to collate them in order to help learn from best practice.

Research findings highlight the need for future leadership development to place greater emphasis on comprehensive programmes and coaching, mentoring and action learning. We need to learn from the experience of schemes provided by civil society organisations and international agencies, and an NGO management masters' programme at the President's Management Academy in the national capital, Bishkek. We urge agencies working on leadership to examine their results, pool experience and jointly exchange ideas in order to train better leaders.

Glossary

CBO	community-based organisation
CIB	Centre Interbilim (NGO, Kyrgyzstan)
CS	civil society
CSO	civil society organisation
GDP	gross domestic product
HR	human resources
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
MBA	Master of Business
MPA	Master of Public Administration
NGO	non-governmental organisation

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And a special acknowledgement to our respondents without whom there would be no study, and to CS leaders in Kyrgyzstan who are tackling so many challenges and who have made so many advances in their own organisations and for wider society.

1. Introduction

The fall-out from the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan reveals the crisis in leadership facing the country today. Fifteen years of independence have done little to restore people's faith and trust in their leaders. At this critical moment in history, civil society organisations (CSOs) need to inspire society and model a more ethical, open and democratic form of leadership. But how can this take place? What heritage of leadership can be built on? What are the current perspectives and experiences of leadership? What are the critical challenges facing civil society (CS) leaders today? What resources exist for developing leaders?

To explore these questions, INTRAC extended work on NGO leadership explored through its Praxis Programme. Building on earlier studies of leadership in Africa,¹ research in Central Asia provides a useful comparison of experience from the transition countries of the former Soviet Union. In this Praxis Paper we seek to assess the effectiveness of CS leaders at a time when NGOs and other types of public or non-profit organisation are assuming ever-increasing roles, even competing with the public or private sectors to deliver services. In Section 1 we explore the need to develop better leadership in Kyrgyzstan, then describe the aims and methodology of the research and background to the approaches to leadership used. In Section 2 we examine the context of leadership in Kyrgyzstan and in Section 3 we present research findings. Section 4 gives an overview of current leadership development initiatives and approaches, while Section 5 provides recommendations for future leadership development. Section 6 summarises the findings of the study.

1.1 Why Better Leadership is Needed

Kyrgyzstan is a new country, a former Soviet republic which achieved independence only in 1991. Its first leaders failed to discharge their responsibility to establish new national structures and governance systems. Kyrgyzstan was ill-prepared for independence and was buffeted by the 40 per cent decline in GDP that followed the abrupt collapse of economic relationships with other Soviet republics and subsidies from Moscow. In the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan's first president, Askar Akayev, an academic and the most liberal of Central Asia's five new leaders, succeeded for a while in promoting the country as an 'island of democracy'. However, economic and social collapse, privatisation and a widening gap between the mass of the poor and the new elite took their toll. Many former high officials (*nomenklatura*) used their Soviet-era contacts and resources to prosper under market conditions. There were few state programmes to prepare and support a new generation to take the lead in nation-building. The country lacked leaders and intellectuals able to lift Kyrgyzstan out of its profound political, economic and social turmoil. In its final years, the Akayev regime

¹ See Praxis Paper 6, *Realities of Change: Understanding How African NGO Leaders Develop* by Rick James with Julius Oladipo, Moses Isooba, Betsy Mboizi and Ida Kusiima (www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper6.html) and Praxis Paper 10, *NGO Leadership Development: A Review of the Literature* by John Hailey (www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper10.html).

became increasingly nepotistic as it attempted to cling on to power. Cronyism, chronic poverty and inability to resolve disputes within the elite hastened its downfall.

After the Tulip Revolution, a media-led post-mortem on flawed leadership argued the need for a new human resources policy. The new administration had to decide how to deal with the generation of civil servants and leaders of social institutions who had risen to prominence in the post-Soviet era. There was a widespread popular desire for change – for elected government, CS and business leaders able to represent people's interests in a way the elite had failed to do.

The early 1990s had seen the emergence of a multitude of new NGOs, many of them advocating for human rights and democracy and inspired by the rapid process of reform. The number of NGOs grew faster in Kyrgyzstan than in any other country of the region. Most were engaged in providing social services but others ventured into the sensitive areas of human rights, conflict prevention or gender equality. However, this process stalled throughout the region in 2005 as the socio-economic failures of the transition period came home to roost.

The post-1991 generation of CS leaders has emerged from the ranks of education, health and science professionals during a period in which government has been downsizing, state budgets have been cut, civil servants' salaries have fallen and opportunities for staff training and development have declined. Civil society is very new and its leaders have much in common with government officials; indeed, many are linked by either kinship or long-standing friendships. Civil society leaders in Kyrgyzstan are mostly committed to partnership. They recognise the need to develop internal structures, form external alliances and address the reality that the public place little trust in civil society.

A lack of democracy and elected leaders is particularly apparent at the regional (*oblast*) and district (*rayon*) levels of government in Central Asia. The situation is slightly better in Kyrgyzstan than in other Central Asian countries because of earlier moves towards local government decentralisation. Local government leaders would themselves prefer to be elected rather than centrally-appointed. As one of our informants put it – their non-elected status means they are "hanging by a thread which can be broken by a single careless movement".

The INTRAC–Centre Interbilim leadership development programme was set up to have a national impact and to use the new ideas and resources of civil society to strengthen social partnership and cross-sectoral working. It sought to build on popular desire for new democratic leaders able to put Kyrgyzstan on the road to socio-economic development.

1.2 Research Aims and Methodology

A leadership study was undertaken in 2006 by staff from INTRAC's Central Asia Programme based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. This formed part of a new programme with long-time partner NGO Centre Interbilim, aimed at developing a new generation of CS leaders in Kyrgyzstan. The study aimed to:

- provide a needs analysis for the leadership development programme: this began in mid-2006 with 25 participants from NGOs, community groups, youth organisations, political parties, government and business
- gather a wider range of information on issues facing CS leaders in order to ground the programme in a wider arena of theory and global experience.

The research methodology had three components: 1) a literature review; 2) a set of face-to-face interviews and focus groups with CS leaders and activists and 3) a short survey of leadership development provision for civil society in Kyrgyzstan. A full account of the methodology is given in Appendix 1.

Inevitably, this short, practice-oriented piece of research has shortcomings. The ten questions developed from a brainstorming session could not all be addressed as they involve unresolved debates about the nature of post-communist societies in Central Asia and the extent to which there has been a return to pre-Soviet tradition and culture. More study is needed around the competencies required in leaders or managers, and how they can be better identified and developed. While the study could not fully analyse such complex questions, it was able to collect basic information about what provision is available in Kyrgyzstan today for leadership training. This enabled the team to draw a limited number of conclusions and make recommendations about how leadership could be supported and strengthened, both through the Centre Interbilim–INTRAC programme and by other institutions and players.

1.3 Conceptual Approaches to Leadership

The study has drawn on a wide range of conceptual and methodological approaches to leadership.

Leaders' individual characteristics. One of the most common approaches is the study of individual traits or qualities of leaders – the so-called 'great man' theory of leadership. This approach focuses on individuals, the characteristics that distinguish them from other people, and how they achieve influence and power over others. The qualities identified might cover a wide range – from personal charisma to technical abilities or an established social position demanding respect from their followers. In the Kyrgyzstan study, it proved valuable to consider how leaders view themselves and are viewed by others. The attention to individual characteristics helped the research team to identify influential aspects of tradition and culture. This model also helped to

draw out and make clearer three important distinctions or contrasts which will appear several times in this paper:

- between the leader in society and the leader in an organisation
- between the two linked terms 'leader' and 'manager' in an organisation
- between a 'top-down' and a 'bottom-up' approach to political, organisational or management issues.

Situational approach. A second school of leadership studies is often called 'situational'. This approach arose historically from the difficulty that researchers in different countries experienced in defining a list of leadership qualities that would fit all leaders. As a response, they considered external variables determining the qualities necessary for a leader to be successful.

These generally include the political and economic environment, the nature of the organisation, the people with whom the leader has to interact, the tasks to be carried out and the needs of the moment. This school of thinking focuses less on leaders as individuals and more on leadership as a function – a role that is usually necessary and that demands the appearance of a person with the right skills and attitude. This approach was helpful in enabling a focus on the external environment, particularly traditional values and ways of working with people in Central Asia, their relation to the post-1991 transitional context and the current post-2005 revolution dilemmas.

The situational approach pays attention to the different functions of leadership and enables a more detailed and practical analysis of what leaders actually do and what their priorities are. In this study, a simple model has been used to distinguish the main functions and priorities of leaders. This is the three-circle model of 'action-centred leadership' proposed by the British expert and writer on leadership John Adair.² The model is used to demonstrate how effective leaders must balance the needs of 1) the task, 2) the team and 3) the individuals in the team. The three-circle model is shown in Figure 1.

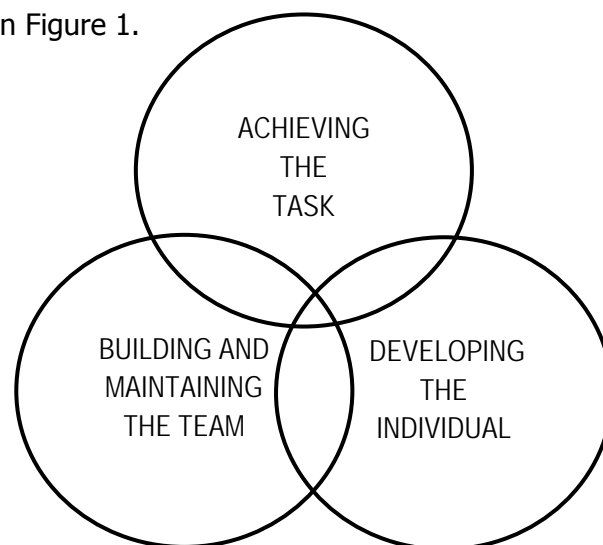


Figure 1: The three-circle model of a leader's functions

² See *Action-Centred Leadership*, John Adair, 1973, McGraw-Hill; *Effective Leadership*, John Adair, 1993, Pan Books.

Other writers on leadership have preferred to make an even simpler distinction between 'task-oriented' and 'people-oriented' leaders. However, the advantage of the three-circle model is that it distinguishes between the needs of the team as a collective, and the needs of individuals.³ This model was used to analyse the results of individual and group interviews by pointing out critical functions and choices facing leaders. It is particularly appropriate for leaders of smaller CSOs/NGOs. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere, are often action-oriented and have dynamic male and female leaders.

Transformational leadership. A third, more recent approach to leadership studies in the West looks at the difference between 'transactional' and 'transformational' leadership. The transactional leader influences others by appealing to their self-interest, offering rewards or a set of exchanges/transactions that will enable all parties to achieve their own goals. By contrast, the transformational (or charismatic) leader inspires followers to do more than originally expected, to go beyond immediate self-interest or organisational structures to achieve higher-order outcomes.⁴ This approach grew out of attempts by leaders to counter the increasing bureaucratisation of business and public sector organisations in highly regulated advanced industrialised societies. While this model may not relate easily to civil society in a more chaotic situation, it has proved useful in drawing attention to the way in which CS leaders post-1991 have created vision and meaning for their own organisations and the sector as a whole.

Leadership from below and the views of followers. Finally, the study paid significant attention to the writers who have emphasised leadership not just as a function of the person at the top, but something to be shared at all levels of the organisation. The focus groups gathered the perspectives of NGO team members, community activists and young people aspiring to be new leaders. These people could be described as 'followers', except that very many of them are not in any sense passive or content to take orders. On the contrary, they show that it is possible to be a follower while playing an actively critical role. They remind us that today's team and group members include many of tomorrow's leaders.

2. The Context of Leadership in Kyrgyzstan

Central Asia has had conquering leaders such as Timur (Tamerlaine) and scholar leaders such as his successor, the astrologer Ulugbek. The Mongols, Tatars and various *khans* (traditional leaders) of the steppes resisted Russian expansion for centuries. The Kyrgyz, a nomadic people who migrated from Siberia southwards to present-day Kyrgyzstan in the middle ages, have a national epic poem named after a leader called Manas, who is said to have enjoyed military victories over China. In the 19th century, when Kyrgyzstan was ruled by the emirs of Bukhara and Kokand, it was

³ The needs identified in the three-circle model of leadership can usefully be linked with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

⁴ See Mark Fenton-O'Creery in *Leadership in the New Organisation*, Open University Business School 2004.

a renowned woman leader, Kurmanjan Datka, who negotiated the agreement that brought Tsarist Russian colonisers into what is now Kyrgyzstan. Both Manas and Kurmanjan Datka are revered for uniting the Kyrgyz at critical moments in their history. The national leaders of the Soviet period (a whole generation of whom fell victim to Stalin's purges in the 1930s) played an equally dramatic role during the rapid modernisation of the early and mid-20th century. Post-independence, new leaders and new issues have emerged amidst debate about authoritarian versus democratic leadership and the influence of the private/business sector and civil society.

2.1 The Impact of Traditional Concepts of Leadership⁵

The phenomenon of leadership in Kyrgyzstan can be divided into three historical stages: pre-revolutionary, Soviet and post-Soviet. In early times the Kyrgyz people did not have a single or uniform system of government. On the contrary, a decentralised system was characteristic, whereby authority was dispersed among tribes that lived independently of each other in a nomadic way of life, uniting with other tribes only when vital to ensure collective security or survival. The strongest influence on social relations in the Kyrgyz nomadic community was a set of national traditions that regulated all main activities of its members⁶. Indeed, some Kyrgyz experts view these nomadic communities as a traditional institution of civil society⁷.

During the pre-revolutionary period prior to 1917, tribal and clan leaders like the *bai* and *manap* (Kyrgyz terms denoting rich and powerful leaders) came from the literate elite, many of whom had received an education in Russia. During the Soviet era, the social status of individuals (from the working class, peasantry or intelligentsia) and their membership in the Communist Party influenced the formation of leadership. There was considerable political, cultural and economic dependence on central authority in Moscow. At community and family levels, however, many traditions and habits remained intact. The Soviet authorities attempted to replace tribalism and regionalism with class struggle and to introduce an ideology of modernism into Kyrgyz society but were not able fully to destroy remnants of the past. Tribalism has been given a new lease of life since independence. Personal power has been reinforced by manipulation of regional identity, but at a cost in the search for a unifying national ideology.

In present-day Kyrgyzstan, it is possible to observe a combination of traditional and democratic leadership elements. Traditional forms of participation such as *kurultais* (public meetings) and courts of *aksakals* (elders) remain intact. The *kurultai* is a well

⁵ This section draws on two recent academic dissertations by Kyrgyz political scientists: 1) Political leadership: the process of image formation in contemporary conditions (from the example of Kyrgyzstan), by Kazak Kyzy Nurgul, Bishkek, for PhD in Political Science, Kyrgyz National University named after J. Balasagyn, 2004; 2) Philosophical explication of leadership, by Aalieva Shirin Karybekovna, for PhD in Philosophy, Institute of Philosophy and Law of the National Academy of Science, Bishkek, 2004.

⁶ For more details see "Kyrgyz Crossword" by Bakyt Beshimov at <http://ipp.kg/en/analysis/356-22-12-2006>

⁷ See also Nurbek Omuraliev, in *Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Perspectives*, Centre Interbilim, Bishkek, 2003.

known means of collective management among the Kyrgyz tribes. Used to reconcile disputes over grazing on ploughed land or theft of livestock, its decision is binding. The *aksakal* courts have arbitration functions found in modern legal systems. Their judgements are bolstered by traditional respect for *aksakals* – older people (usually men) admired for their wisdom, creativity and acumen. In this democratic and decentralised system it was possible for women to be acknowledged as outstanding leaders.

Post-independence, political analysts have studied modes of leadership by going back to the roots of Kyrgyz society. They have noted that the harsh conditions in which the nomadic Kyrgyz lived required both wisdom and practical sense from their leader. Unlike many other peoples, the Kyrgyz did not traditionally recognise an automatic transfer of power by right of succession. Therefore the Soviet practice of top-down appointment of leaders, often for extended periods of time, was a historical aberration that seriously restricted the choice of leaders. This form of unresponsive leadership was bolstered by aspects of the phenomenon of the *vozhd* or chieftain. For many, disagreement with a chieftain meant being cast out. In order to avoid rejection and remain within the community, people were forced to resort to subterfuge.

2.2 Family and Clan Factors Affecting Leadership

International and local researchers both note the influence of family and clan on leadership. As the living standards of the Kyrgyz people worsened in the 1990s, family and clan contacts became an important instrument of vertical mobility and social stratification. In the absence of a clear national ideology, they became a means of identification and self-identification. Today they continue to play an important role in personnel appointments, recruitment of political leaders and state decision-making.

Tribalism (*tribalism*) is controversial in present-day Kyrgyzstan. Many local experts regard it as an exclusively negative phenomenon, while others dispute its relevance or dangers. Commentators note how those who are committed to national revival hark back to notions of *jurtchuluk* (community), the traditional lynchpin of the *uruuchuluk* (tribal system) that maintained the identity and unity of the Kyrgyz people.⁸ The political manifestations of modern tribalism are seen in the way politicians and civil servants are recruited and make decisions. There are leaders who have started to emerge on merit, but clientelism, identity with those regarded as 'one of us' and patronage connections to influential leaders remains key pathways to positions of power.⁹ The social aspect of tribalism influences everyday life particularly in rural areas and amongst older people.

On his election in summer 2005 the new President, Kurmanbek Bakiev, promised an end to nepotistic appointments and pledged to ensure a balance between the north

⁸ See work by local researchers D. Junushaliev and V. Ploskikh, for more information contact icap@intrac.kg

and the south of the country in civil service recruitment. This seemed to be evidence of a political pact between Bakiev, a southerner, and his Prime Minister, Feliks Kulov, a northerner. However, a year later it was clear that the country is still riven by traditional allegiances.¹⁰ Newspaper articles started to argue that there is nothing inherently wrong in clan and regional loyalties – for they are expressions of national identity – and that the key problem is individual irresponsibility. However, CSOs and business organisations generally argue the opposite – that traditional allegiances are a major hindrance to the emergence of capable leaders with new ideas. As debate rages, it is clear that traditional factors still have a considerable influence on leaders in Kyrgyzstan.

2.3 The Rise of Civil Society

Many community-level elements of traditional, pre-Soviet nomadic Kyrgyz society still survive in the form of neighbourhood associations, savings groups and other traditions of mutual help.¹¹ The Soviet period contributed to the development of CSOs. From the late 1920s, numerous distinct public associations appeared, reflecting the new regime's modernisation strategy and one-party political system. Scientific, cultural, humanitarian, trade union, sports, social and political organisations emerged, many reaching down to street or village level. The largest – such as the pan-USSR Pioneer and Komsomol organisations for children and youth, and agencies promoting environmental protection, peace and national liberation movements across the globe – sank without trace with the end of the Soviet Union. Some Soviet-era CSOs have survived – including trade unions, pensioners' and disabled people's associations – but, in general, they have struggled to adapt to the new conditions.

While today there are over 10,000 registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan,¹² only about 500 are able to offer quality services to their target groups. Many NGOs exist only in name. There is a marked urban concentration. Many of the strongest and most active NGOs are based in Bishkek and Osh, the country's two biggest cities – with about 30 per cent of all NGOs being located in the capital. Women are strongly represented in civil society. As one of our respondents noted: "The civil sector in Kyrgyzstan has a female face". Civil society actors explain this by noting that women are more active at community level, and more committed to addressing vital social problems. They also note that the poor remuneration available in NGOs makes the non-commercial sector unattractive to men.

By 2002, Kyrgyz civil society was generally acknowledged to be the most advanced in post-Soviet Central Asia. The media, too, was the most open in the region, although

⁹ Such issues were highlighted in a series of articles in the magazine *AKIpress* in Kyrgyzstan in the period immediately preceding President Akayev's overthrow in 2004–05, in which the authors argued that tribalism and regionalism hinder the recruitment of the best, most capable and morally upright persons into the elite.

¹⁰ In January 2007, the Bakiev–Kulov "tandem" broke down, increasing dangers of a north–south split.

¹¹ As described in more detail in *The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia*, Janice Giffen and Lucy Earle with Charles Buxton, INTRAC, 2005.

¹² Figures from USAID's Transition Index and the recent survey and analysis "NGOs of Kyrgyzstan: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow", carried out in 2006 by Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, the Association of Civil Society Support Centres and Allavida.

not without its problems and restrictions. However, in early 2002 a tragic event occurred which was to have far-reaching consequences. During protests over the arrest of a local leader in the Aksy district of the southern oblast of Jalalabad, five demonstrators were shot dead by police. This sparked nationwide protests and polarised civil society into pro- and anti-government camps. This process was speeded up by disagreements over a proposed new constitution. Many NGOs became vocal opponents of President Akayev.

2.4 Increasing Complexity of Civil Society Leadership

Since 1995 INTRAC's work on strengthening civil society in Kyrgyzstan has produced an abundance of reports on the organisational development of NGOs, including the role of leaders. Many NGOs survive only a short time and others exist only on paper, while successful NGOs usually have an active, effective leader. This individual is very often a founder member of the organisation. Her/his vision remains crucial to its development. Many leaders have strong personal relationships with the international donors or government agencies upon which the NGO depends. In some cases, other founding members or key professional staff of the NGO may have moved on, leaving the leader with a much less experienced set of colleagues. This means even greater responsibility falls on the leader, especially as few NGOs possess effective boards of governance capable of sharing this burden.

INTRAC's work on organisational development in Central Asia shows that leaders of NGOs in the mature phase of development employ around 20–30 people. They manage important external relationships and wield influence well beyond the boundaries of their NGO. Some manage regional branches or clusters of associated NGOs. Thus, for example, two district-level NGOs in the leadership survey not only have the task of managing their own staff and projects, but also supervise micro-credit agencies with 50–60 self-help groups united into village-level federations.

There are many NGOs that are effectively family businesses – where a wife is the director, the husband an accountant, a daughter the programme coordinator and so on. "Such organisations seem not to know about conflict of interests...", notes a commentator on civil society.¹³ In many organisations it is only the leader who has the chance to grow professionally. In the crisis conditions of the 1990s, when many NGOs were set up, having family and relatives assist the founders of such associations may have been justifiable. However, INTRAC's research shows that as NGO activists become more knowledgeable and developed as leaders, so their commitment to wider participation, openness and public accountability grows. Increasingly, they begin to think about new leaders, appointed or promoted on the basis of merit, who can help build the organisation.

¹³ "NGOs Today. A View from the provinces" by Valery Uleyev, in *NGOs of Kyrgyzstan: Grass Root Democracy*, Centre Interbilim, Bishkek, 2002, p. 38.

Relations with donors are another critical factor for NGO leaders. There is much evidence of the mentoring role of donors in the maturing of leaders and the institutional development of NGOs. However, many donors prefer to finance individual projects rather than continuous activities, causing difficulties for leaders concerned about the sustainable development of their organisations. Some leaders of NGOs have tried to solve the problem of financial sustainability by launching income-generation activities. However, this risks diverting the NGO away from its core mission. Shortage of funds can often be a symptom of wider organisational problems – inability to position an agency among other organisations, absence of a positive image and undeveloped communications and alliances.¹⁴ Donors are more likely to support sustainable NGOs with a good image. It is difficult for newly established or more fragile NGOs to compete.

The material collected by Centre Interbilim in its bulletins and three books about civil society in Kyrgyzstan¹⁵ shows clearly the importance of building relations between NGOs, government and business structures. As part of local government decentralisation, the past few years have seen the creation of new liaison mechanisms between government agencies and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, particularly at the district and village levels. These mechanisms include government sponsorship, training of government staff by NGOs, public budget hearings and planning sessions and the creation of public councils in government agencies.

Table 1 Characteristics of leaders	
General characteristics	Our own strengths and weaknesses as CS leaders
<p><i>Leadership qualities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to take responsibility, make and carry out decisions • Enthusiasm • Ability to inspire trust, create and work in a team • Altruism and patriotism • Honesty • Charisma • Ability to lead others • Communication skills 	<p><i>My strengths as a leader</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational abilities and efficiency • Sense of purpose • Communication skills • Ability to assess and analyse a situation
<p><i>CS leaders' weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to work with others and compromise • Dominating and use of command style 	<p><i>My weaknesses as a leader</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor time management • Little experience of management • Not sufficiently diplomatic

¹⁴ "The Third Sector in Kyrgyzstan – What is it? It's a new reality which depends on you" by Antonina Li, in *NGOs of Kyrgyzstan: Grass Root Democracy*, Centre Interbilim, Bishkek, 2002, p. 17.

¹⁵ For example see references above, also Bibliography (Appendix 2).

Interaction between local self-government leaders and heads of public and community organisations works more smoothly than at the national level, where advocacy-focused CSOs have often clashed with the state.¹⁶

3. Findings on Leadership

3.1 Leaders' Perspectives on Leadership

Civil society leaders in Kyrgyzstan come from all walks of life. Civil society has both experienced and inexperienced leaders. Due to the rapid changes in society, some organisations are new and unstable and staff and supporters are inexperienced.

The high rate of staff turnover – as individual leaders pass through CBOs or NGOs before moving into business, government or international organisations – makes it hard for individual CSOs to forge a sense of purpose, maintain standards and achieve wider recognition. Our study interviewed people with varying social and educational backgrounds and different approaches to leadership.

3.1.1 Leaders' Characteristics

One of the first questions posed in the survey was: "How do you understand the term 'leader'? What are the characteristics and qualities of a good leader?" Respondents readily gave their views, and several gave further information about their own strengths and weaknesses. The results from interviews and questionnaires are summarised in Table 1 (with most frequent answers at the top). Three important points emerged.

Leaders achieve leadership positions through their initiative, desire and ability to take responsibility. They are motivated by a need to express themselves, desire for a more interesting life and ambitions to exert positive influence and achieve something valued by others.

- There were mixed ratings for CS leaders in Kyrgyzstan. Younger respondents readily named leaders who they admire, while some established NGO leaders commented more critically on the shortage of universally recognised leaders of civil society. The effect of political conflicts was implied by one respondent who noted that "some individuals who could be effective leaders prefer to remain in the shadow and do their own thing, because they are disillusioned with work on the wider stage".
- Differences of opinion emerged in response to the question of whether leaders are primarily born or made. Younger informants emphasised such qualities as honesty, altruism and charisma, reflecting the idealism of the young and their hopes for the future of Kyrgyzstan. By contrast, more experienced NGO leaders put more emphasis on their management abilities and see this aspect as being

¹⁶ "Ten years of development. What do we have?" by Emil Sultanbaev, in *Informational–Analytical Bulletin Interbilim*, 11(29), 2004, p. 11.

just as important as charismatic leadership. Hence the rather modest and practical assessment they make of their own strengths in the right-hand column of Table 1.

During the interviews, leaders mentioned skills they possess or have acquired while in a leadership position. These were:

- ability to create and work in a team
- skills in delegation of responsibilities within the team
- successful application for projects and managing them once approved; good relations with donors
- experience of working with local and central government
- experience on boards of directors and consultative committees
- ability to work with a variety of stakeholders
- skills in community mobilisation
- experience of organising large-scale events
- experience of conducting training workshops and facilitation
- skills in modelling and creating different internal systems for their organisation
- skills in strategic planning and management
- experience of volunteering and working with volunteer
- skills in financial management and accountancy

All these skills are used by respondents in discharging their leadership functions and responsibilities. Before becoming a leader or manager, the respondents had gained a variety of professional experience and skills. There are revealing differences between those interviewed in the urban and rural samples. In rural areas, many had been employed as agricultural managers, book-keepers or teachers. Urban leaders have more academic experience, more skills in analysis and preparing publications and experience of participating in management committees. Many have developed public relations skills and some have had experience of working with coalitions and in strategy development. Rural leaders mentioned skills in community mobilisation, experience of running water or poverty-related projects, collaborating with local government and organising major campaigns or events at local level. They noted a weakness in public relations and work with the media with the result that journalists receive distorted information. They feel they need to improve documentation of their organisation's work, gain knowledge of tax and finance issues and improve organisational and management skills.

One of the most useful skills obtained by leaders is the ability to run effective training sessions for the team, or to chair team meetings efficiently. This helps boost their status and influence in the organisation. A leader who can both train others and listen to feedback from them is in a position to learn from the team, assess him/herself more objectively and try to change or improve.

3.1.2 Leadership Roles

The interviews probed the different needs identified in the three-circle model. The questions asked by the research team were open-ended: "Tell us about any problems you experienced in becoming a leader? What are your main responsibilities and priorities as a leader on a day-by-day basis? Can you describe your relationship with team members? What professional or people-management qualities are necessary in a leader?"

In analysing the interviews, it was possible to distinguish between task-oriented and people-oriented leaders. A number of respondents clearly have considerable expertise in setting and achieving targets, both for themselves and for their teams. Some had a particular leaning towards Western-style management focused on achieving shared objectives. Others emphasised how the team had grown and the priorities they faced in setting up new departments or projects, delegating tasks and managing people. It was more difficult to see whether they had the time to focus on support of individuals – but this element came out much more clearly when we interviewed team members.

Table 2 gives a sample of short quotes from the interviews, which illustrate the functions of leaders with regard to task, team and individuals.

Task functions	Team functions	Individual support functions
"As a leader my responsibility is to ensure goals are achieved"	"Before I had problems as a leader, there was no team. Now it's easier – there is a team"	"In our centre we have lunches – informal occasions which help to bring staff together and say whatever they like"
"I can judge my successes in positive results – amount of resources brought in, the creation of a strategic plan and so on"	"I like organising and mobilising people – probably that's something fundamental in my character"	"Friendly relations are really important – especially in rural areas... Sometimes I try to help with their family and personal problems... My office is open from morning to evening and anyone can come in"
"I thrive on administrative and organisational work"	"Every week I conduct the staff meeting myself. I also attend the monthly meetings with the leaders of self-help groups"	"A leader has to be a psychologist when selecting new staff"
"Now we are working with a government agency – first three, now nine projects. Our priority is to complete the projects"	"Our organisation has a policy of delegating responsibilities, as long as the person knows the work... Once a year we have individual appraisals"	"I organise a self-assessment with staff twice a year"
"My priorities? Reducing poverty, unemployment"	"In general, priority is given to projects... For example, our NGO took on a project leader for only eight months, and so it's very difficult to hold the team together"	"We already have three to four people ready to be NGO leaders. They've been trained, they can create a plan of work independently, meet with government officials"
"What priorities? Consolidation of the sector... We should have one aim and refuse to let people divide us"		

Respondents referred to both formal and informal ways of supporting their staff. This function begins when new staff are selected to fill a vacancy. Usually a personal interview is held, sometimes NGOs use psychological or knowledge tests. Once at work, the new member of staff will be assessed both informally and formally, both regarding carrying out his/her duties and for training needs or promotion. Leaders in Kyrgyzstan pay special attention to informal approaches such as psychological support or helping the member of staff or his family if out-of-office problems arise. All this increases the confidence that staff have in the leader, boosts team work and helps to build the new generation of leaders. But as one respondent noted, leaders cannot give unlimited support to colleagues. If they do not draw the line, subordinates can become too dependent.

As one respondent noted – a leader is a team player. This is why leadership involves team management – the creation of a team composed of various individuals, the organisation of regular meetings, delegation of roles or responsibilities, monitoring of team members' work and listening to feedback. If leaders want to hold on to staff, they must give appropriate financial motivation. This is difficult when the team or organisation is built around short-term projects or funding.

For many leaders, the task or desired result is at project level. For others, it is results or influence at the national level – or a combination of both. Leaders will have more chance of achieving their vision if it is expressed in a strategic plan within management frameworks. Carrying out tasks inevitably means liaison with a variety of external stakeholders – including government, the media and donors. Leaders who strive hard for results must not forget their teams and the individuals in them.

3.1.3 Leadership Styles

Much of the new leadership and management thinking in the ex-Soviet Union is commercially driven and influenced by Western business leaders. Focusing on meeting the needs of the new expanding private sector, it aspires to democratic practice but remains rooted – according to most respondents – in authoritarian modes of leadership.

There are interesting comments by NGO leaders who are conscious of using more than one style, or are trying to move in the direction of a more democratic approach.

"Sometimes I use a directive, not facilitating approach. Why? Because I am forcing my colleagues to look ahead – one step, ten steps ahead... I often change my style of leadership – even before lunch and after lunch." (NGO leader, district level)

"In the beginning it was difficult for me to curb my ambition. Probably, this is a problem for young leaders as a whole – I did not have enough wisdom or assurance. In the past I found it difficult to listen to my colleagues or to the team. I gave my opinion and expected that others would follow, most likely it was more like orders."

Now I try to use a democratic style of leadership. I can back off even if I don't like the decision being proposed – in the past I couldn't have done that. I realise that this can be more effective.” (Young NGO manager, national level)

“It's impossible to develop democracy if you yourself are using undemocratic methods of management. We tend to see democracy not as a value but as a means to an end. In this sense, many civil society leaders, not only me, have a problem in that they continue to use a command style. Lots of organisations suffer from this – because the success of the organisation is limited to the success of its leader. If the leader leaves, activity ceases and that's very bad.” (Senior NGO leader, national level)

“You shouldn't thump your chest and shout that you're a leader. A leader shouldn't be high and mighty with the people. I try to put myself lower than everyone.” (Community organisation leader, local level)

The first three quotations above are from NGO leaders with differing levels of experience, while the fourth is from the leader of a rural water users' association. Overall, it was clear from the interviews that the facilitating or democratic style is an aspiration for many respondents, but that they do not feel fully confident in using it to relate to people or to achieve goals.

3.1.4 Access to Leadership for Women and Younger Leaders

Many CSO leaders in Kyrgyzstan are women. Their role in leading NGOs, in communities and in small businesses is acknowledged. But many women, especially in rural areas and in the more traditional southern Kyrgyzstan, still face pressure from their families which make it difficult for them to take on the often onerous responsibilities of leadership. They may be able to balance these responsibilities with family duties at the local level, but when they are promoted – and have to work late and travel far for meetings – this can prove impossible. In their professional lives in a country whose parliament has no female members, women leaders are well aware of the glass ceiling. While men strive for top positions in society, women often owe their social status to their husband's wealth or successful career. Women have played a pivotal role in launching civil society, reinforcing democracy and defending Soviet-era social progress. They have also taken the lead in small businesses and sustain many of those households that do not have family connections to government. Yet men still occupy all the key positions in society.

Young people also come up against barriers to advancement. Young leaders show interest in becoming recognised leaders and are generally very ready to listen to their elders. One of the basic features of Kyrgyz culture is the obedience and respect given to elderly people. Subordination is especially strong at the family level in rural areas (especially with girls) and in the public service. Young people find it difficult to overcome traditional attitudes. Respondents noted that their confidence in their own leadership ability and achievements grew when other colleagues (especially older managers) talked about their work and confirmed that they were doing well. This helped them to become more responsible.

Unfortunately, many young people involved in NGO or community work are criticised by their family or friends for not pursuing a more financially rewarding career. Their abilities are often overlooked – particularly when they are confined to one-off projects distant from the always busy senior managers of their NGO. Managers often fail to fully consider the training and development needs of junior staff.

3.2 Emerging Issues

Leader vs manager. Almost all respondents viewed the leader (*lider*) quite differently from the manager (*rukovoditel*). The latter is seen negatively and is associated with bureaucracy, command and control and dictatorial management. The leader, by contrast, is seen positively, as a person able to work with people, informally or formally.

Internal vs external roles. Civil society leaders are faced with the dilemma whether to focus on their own organisation and its projects and programmes or to devote more time to wider progressive issues. Managers of busy organisations are beginning to distance themselves from day-to-day issues:

"These days I don't get involved in day-to-day management as much as I used to. The organisation can work two to three months without me, because each person has their own tasks... Now I'm more involved in global issues – developing external relations, working out strategic plans and directions for the organisation." (Rural NGO leader, district level)

These global issues require good, regular external networking. The importance of engaging with government in a volatile political situation remains acute for many CS leaders, especially those with an advocacy/human rights focus. While most respondents are against NGO leaders directly engaging in politics, they want them to defend civil society and lobby for its interests. They acknowledged the difficulties that almost all NGO leaders face, whatever their own political sympathies. As the leader of a national NGO commented:

"Even after the Tulip Revolution, the attitude of government to NGOs didn't change. They regard us as dilettantes and loudmouths. They blame us for the destabilisation of the country. So it's really difficult working with government – but it's possible and necessary." (Senior NGO leader, national level)

Transformational leadership. Several of the interviews provided varied and interesting examples of the characteristics referred to in texts on transformational leadership – charisma, inspiration to others, a readiness to understand individuals and help them move forward.

Very often the leader has to have considerable powers of promotion or self-promotion. For example, one local NGO leader in the survey was able to use his own

experience of participating in the clean-up operation at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in 1989. A women's leader stated that a leader is often an egoist who finds it "very difficult to work in a team". So it was not as an organisational manager that her story stood out. But she demonstrated how she was a "person who can bring together active women, pass on knowledge to them and help the development of our country. I have an instinct for freedom, altruism, independence." A large part of her work has been to define the role of the women's movement and women's leadership in the transitional period. Through a variety of forums, committees and campaigns, she has changed and developed.

The literature on transformational leadership sometimes refers to leaders as "creators of meaning" – those who come up with new ideas, define a new need or service, create sense or structure where before there was only a vacuum or chaos and who establish a new feeling of collectivity or solidarity. In the first example given above, a defining personal experience and symbol of self-sacrifice from the late Soviet period is made into a "meaning" for the present, mobilising volunteers and activists for a set of new community tasks. In the second case, there is the determination to work through the individual and collective crises facing women in the transition period, a readiness to engage in dialogue "on all fronts" to achieve a new understanding of the movement. Both examples (and there were many others, even within our limited sample) show the catalytic and creative force of CSO leaders in a decade when not only new organisations came into being, but civil society as a sector and its relations with other sectors were being re-forged.

3.3 Leadership – The View of the 'Followers'

The researchers were particularly interested in the experience and perspective of new or younger leaders. This is important because it is the new generation of leaders who will have to carry forward the changes initiated in the transition. Many leaders begin as volunteers, local activists, team members or junior managers in an organisation.

INTRAC's Central Asia Programme throws light on many factors affecting the emergence of local leaders and how they relate to community members and outside agencies. Research studies carried out in Talas and Osh oblasts focused attention on such issues as the influence of traditional local leaders such as *aksakals* (village elders), and also on the teams they gather around them with mechanisms such as *ashar* (voluntary collective labour). The resulting case studies were discussed at a regional conference on Community Development in Rural Areas of Central Asia in 2004. Using concrete examples from their own experience, conference participants defined the basic characteristics of a good leader: high thoughts, strong moral principles, vital organisational and professional skills. The participants were in no doubt that true leaders do exist at community level, although there are all too few of them.

Selection of leaders "from below". According to participants in the focus group for local community activists, the need for a leader is felt when a group begins to think more seriously about its own needs and how to advance its interests and achieve its aims. Before choosing a leader, members of the team will try to assess the leader's abilities to further their collective aims. How the leader is chosen depends on the stage of development of the team, group or organisation. Respondents were quite clear that leadership must be an aspiration or potential in the individual him/herself. It is important to ask how much a person wants to be a leader and what personal or professional qualities they bring to the task.

The role of leaders is crucial – they act as founders, bringing people together and creating a team. It is often a result of this that the group chooses a person as their leader. This kind of leader will usually have a vision shared by other members of the group. Often leaders are elected by vote at meetings, by members of their team or group. Such selection processes can engender trust.

There are also groups that come into being during a crisis. As a participant in the leadership programme said: "Leaders can emerge in emergency situations when people experience a herd instinct and don't know which way to go. It is at such moments that a leader can feel he is needed and move ahead. And in these spontaneous moments leaders are chosen."

Leadership Qualities Valued by Followers. Community members particularly appreciate in a leader qualities they do not feel they possess themselves. Respondents particularly mentioned:

- a well developed (rounded) character
- ability to conduct themselves confidently in social situations
- ability to speak in public, to express ideas clearly and convince others
- objectivity and fairness in relation to all members of the team
- ability to listen to and take into account the opinion of other people
- personal simplicity and ease of communication with other group members.

Leaders who have come from the same locality and share a common background can gain the group's confidence more readily. Significantly, such leaders are expected to be more successful than other members of the group. Good relations with other, more experienced and successful leaders in the community is another important factor at the early stages. People's trust in an established leader provides a new leader with a temporary boost while the leader builds up his or her own "social capital".

In order to increase the respect and trust of group members, an open, democratic and participatory approach is essential. Respondents felt that leaders should think and act in a way that builds the trust and respect of the people around them. In turn, this will reflect the degree of influence the leader has in the group. With new group members, or when facing new issues, the leader should explain the situation and

inform people clearly about the aims of the organisation or the project. When taking decisions, a leader should first consult others and bring them into the process.

Practical abilities and benefits are crucial. The ability to write projects and bring in grants, and later to carry out activities successfully, helps a leader to win trust and respect. And this benefits the organisation.

Problems faced by newer leaders and their support needs. The main obstacle for leaders at local level is lack of information, knowledge and skills. For women leaders, another obstacle is the attitude of their husband and families. Older female relatives often reinforce traditional hierarchies and support women's traditional household roles. Without support from their husband and family, it is very hard for women to become leaders.

The economic factor. People expect community or political leaders to be people of substance. As the leader of a women's NGO said, "There is a presupposition that a leader should have their own bread and butter, but women don't have an independent material base with which to bring in people behind them." And she defended this position to some extent, explaining: "Leaders have to be independent, not afraid to say anything or worry that someone will take away their piece of bread."

Overcoming barriers to promotion. How can women and youth leaders be better supported in gaining access to leadership? What is the best reaction or strategy for women or young people faced with restrictions in promotion or their professional career?

During the focus group discussions, the team heard several useful ideas on how experienced leaders can support less-experienced leaders. An established leader can share his or her external contacts, bring people together, offer them a chance to get to know each other and find ways to encourage them to work together and exchange experience. Informants stressed how important it is for experienced leaders to check and evaluate the work of younger peers and give them feedback.

As the issue of barriers to promotion had emerged quite strongly during the research, the team decided to ask participants in the first leadership programme what they thought about two key questions. During the second training module, two short discussion groups produced the following answers¹⁷:

1. Is it possible for women to use traditional notions to strengthen the popular perceptions of women leaders and the access of women to leadership positions?

Participants noted that Kyrgyz traditions emphasise women's responsibility in the extended family. Respect and honour are given to women, and girls are expected to undertake higher education despite early or arranged marriages. There are

¹⁷ These focus groups each had about eight participants, male and female.

several well known examples of strong women leaders in Kyrgyz history. Therefore women can work within the Kyrgyz culture and tradition and improve themselves without challenging it.

2. *In which sector – civil society, government or business – is it most possible for young people to get on?*

The group noted advantages of work in NGOs – self-realisation, democratic environment, the opportunity for learning and career growth. Against this, they saw as a disadvantage the insecurity of working for an NGO. Government service offered career growth, making contacts, working alongside experienced officials/professionals but the downside was poor salaries, less freedom and fewer training opportunities. Alongside the risk and competition of the private sector, there were good pay, practical tasks, provision of training and scope to gain influence in society.

3.4 Analysis of Perspectives on Leadership

3.4.1 Comparing the Views of Leaders and Followers

Interesting differences in emphasis emerged in the perspectives of leaders and followers and between the various respondents in the research study.

Leadership characteristics: As noted in Section 3.1.1, it was notable how the younger respondents from the leadership programme put more stress on the moral qualities of leaders – honesty, altruism, etc. This may reflect some of the idealism of the younger generation and their hopes for the future of Kyrgyzstan. In contrast, NGO team members, community activists and grassroots leaders gave much more emphasis to social skills and know-how. As for NGO leaders themselves, the responses showed how important management abilities are for the team and organisation. Most NGO leaders now see this aspect as being just as important as being a “true” or charismatic leader.

Leadership roles/styles. The analysis of leadership roles using the three-circle model (attention to task, team and individuals) showed that respondents varied as to which aspect of the leader’s responsibility they found easiest, or considered most important. These individual variations should not be underestimated. Thus the survey featured task-oriented, Western-style NGO managers; more traditional leaders with a Soviet-style emphasis on collective working and managers with a sensitive and supportive orientation to individuals in the organisation. All this supports the position, outlined by John Adair, that self-awareness on the part of the leader is crucial: knowing one’s own natural approach or tendencies is key to attaining the balance that is all-important for the leader.¹⁸

If the responses of established leaders are compared with the responses of followers, an unsurprising difference emerges. Followers tended to stress the importance of the

¹⁸ *Effective Leadership*, John Adair, 1993, Pan Books.

leader listening to team members and allowing them to participate in decision-making. While several NGO leaders agonised about how to adopt the democratic style, followers saw this as less problematic. The focus groups demonstrated how teams, at least in theory, were ready to participate actively in a form of “distributed” or bottom-up leadership.

Influence of culture and tradition. The research showed an urban–rural divide. NGO leaders in the capital Bishkek and provincial centres were likely to refer less to traditional values and practices. Community leaders were closer to tradition than NGO leaders. Particularly insightful were the observations of leaders able to analyse the impacts of culture and history.

While NGO leaders placed more emphasis on the leader’s individual qualities, qualifications and achievements, the focus group for community activists placed stronger emphasis on the position of leaders in society – their status, economic power and influence over others. Gender was raised from the very start of the leadership study. Community activists – most of them women – expressed the clearest concern about gender barriers, even though for the most part they accepted tradition and were ready to find a way round its constraints.

Prospects for promotion. Youth are impatient about overcoming barriers and the more ambitious among them are prepared to move from one sector to another in the search for interesting and rewarding work. They are keen to contribute more within civil society, but first-generation post-1991 CS leaders are still in charge. Many young leaders are given only limited chances to take responsibility or show their abilities.

However, change is afoot. First, there are individual instances of successful, independent, outspoken female CS leaders. Second, informants noted many cases in which experienced leaders and managers are helping to support newer leaders. One senior NGO leader said he is quite pleased when young staff move on into higher positions in another organisation, or even into government service. “We can boast of the many young people who have passed through our organisation and have gone on to work in government, business and other NGOs, and not only in Kyrgyzstan, when they go to work in other sectors, they still cooperate with NGOs...”

3.4.2 Analysis from an International Perspective

How do the findings of the leadership study compare with leadership thinking in other countries, and in particular with the body of research and commentary offered for NGOs and CSOs in the Praxis Programme? Some short ideas are outlined below.

Conceptual models. In presenting the analysis of leadership based on leaders’ qualities, leadership functions and situational styles, this paper has followed previous Praxis papers and INTRAC associates.

The use of the three-circle model of action-oriented leadership was new but successful – both in the research itself and in the first modules of the leadership development programme. The three factors (circles) are relevant to NGOs in Central Asia and the issue of how to balance them illustrates and exposes many present-day management dilemmas. This model was contrasted with an earlier, simpler dichotomy between task-oriented and people-oriented managers. It makes an interesting comparison with a new model proposed by John Hailey in the closing section of Praxis Paper 10, which poses the question as to how leaders can cope with a rapidly changing society and the breakdown of traditional values.

In the increasingly interdependent modern world, leaders have to work across organisations and cultures and are accountable to increasingly varied and demanding stakeholders. So, what type of leader are we trying to develop in the NGO/non-profit sector? Praxis Paper 10 suggests four possible types – paternalistic, activist, managerialist and catalytic. All these types were seen in the Kyrgyzstan study. Interestingly, Hailey analyses the types of manager/leader in a similar way – contrasting those leaders whose focus of interest is external relations/activity with those who concentrate on internal issues within the organisation; also contrasting high- or low-performance of tasks.

In researching NGO leaders in Kyrgyzstan, INTRAC's literature review uncovered a range of Russian language material. Much of it is derived from Western sources and/or is business-oriented. Material on NGO leadership is largely translated from US sources. The ongoing work of INTRAC and other agencies to re-evaluate and re-cast management theory for the business and public sector, so that it reflects the different values and nature of civil society, is very much needed in the former Soviet Union. This adaptation of modern thinking on organisations and people's work in organisations is a necessary part of civil society's identification of its own role and responsibility. Hopefully, in time, the literature on leadership available in Russian and other local languages will be adapted to reflect the cultural, intellectual and management traditions of the region. INTRAC is playing a valuable role in this process.

The Praxis series has introduced experience from development NGOs and civil society across the globe. Interesting comparisons could be made between Central Asian leadership styles and those elsewhere, but that is beyond the range of this paper. What we can do simply is point to one or two areas in which the findings of the Kyrgyzstan study seem to echo the results of other studies.

For example, the analysis of leaders' qualities in Kyrgyzstan can be placed alongside the study made of leaders of a group of large NGOs in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh).¹⁹ Like the South Asian leaders, Kyrgyzstan's CS leaders have played a

¹⁹ Smillie, I. and Hailey, J. (2001) *Managing for Change: Leadership, Strategy and Management in Asian NGOs*, London, Earthscan.

key role in the development of their organisations and have a highly personalised and distinctive style that can be termed both managerial and value-driven.²⁰

Reading the South Asian study, we learn for example that NGO leaders or “development leaders” have some common characteristics: 1) a clear vision and firm personal set of values; 2) a willingness to learn and experiment; 3) a curiosity and ability to scan the environment; 4) strong communication and interpersonal skills and 5) the ability to balance competing demands. All these characteristics were referred to during the Kyrgyzstan interviews.

When we come to look at traditional leadership types, Praxis Paper 6, written from leadership experiences in Africa, describes what it calls the model of “neo-patrimonial political leadership”. Its essential aspects are:

- personalisation of power and the ruler’s patronage
- treatment of public office as a means to personal or communal gain (rather than the broader public good)
- geographical extension of power via networks of clients.

This description of post-independence power modes, in both government and civil society, as “corrupting” is echoed in fears expressed by NGO leaders in Central Asia about growing tribalism and presidential authoritarianism. But there is one serious proviso: the issue of communal gain and of communal/traditional allegiances, philanthropy and civil society is very important and has not been much studied. INTRAC’s ‘The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia’ project has raised this question and analysed communal or other non-Western types of civil society such as Islamic charity. This could be taken further. The role and responsibility of the leader *vis-à-vis* his or her family, clan and region needs to be studied in more depth and not simply written off as a form of corruption.

This point is made very clearly in relation to African society in Praxis Paper 6. Rick James’s study of NGO leaders in three countries in East and Southern Africa focuses on the personal/moral dimension of leadership. He focuses on the domestic demands on leaders who are expected to provide for an extended family and to use the privileges of their office or job for the benefit of the family, and the special challenges facing women leaders. He writes about how women leaders operating in a male-dominated environment face a no-win situation. If they fail to perform well, they are dismissed as “just a woman”, while if they excel they are judged to be “like a man”. As a consequence, many women leaders in Africa need constant reassurance that they are doing well. This is probably not the same in the former Soviet Union due to the higher level of education and professionalisation over a longer period of time. Women in Africa are expected to be motherly, and to display higher moral standards than men – not to cheat, lie, or trample on other people in pursuit of their own

²⁰ Hailey, J. *NGO Leadership: A Review of the Literature*, Praxis Paper No.10.

interests. Reading this section of Praxis Paper 6, one could be reading reports on women in political leadership in Kyrgyzstan written in recent years – the parallels are so close.

Finally, a historical contrast suggests itself. The studies of NGO and development leaders in South Asia and East/Southern Africa cover countries that achieved independence from British/European colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s. At this time, many newly independent countries looked to the USSR and adopted a state-led development model, with all that this means for civil society and leadership. Whereas the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union region came into being with the collapse of the state-led model and the promotion of the free market/business model. This is surely also a factor in the evolution of leadership types in the region.

When one looks at attitudes to working relationships and participation, again a similarity is found with the African study, where leaders apparently “espouse collective decision-making and participatory management, yet have clear hierarchies and accept strong leadership”. This would be the ideal of many NGO leaders in Kyrgyzstan, and makes one think of the Komsomol school of leadership, which many NGO activists of the Soviet era went through.

4. Overview of Leadership Development in Kyrgyzstan

In this section we look briefly at leadership development initiatives and programmes in Kyrgyzstan, starting with INTRAC’s experience of work with CS leaders, and then presenting the results of a mini-survey of providers carried out in early autumn 2006.

4.1 Working with Civil Society Leaders and their Organisations

Like many other NGO support organisations, INTRAC’s work for capacity building and organisational development in civil society often focuses on leaders. Without the input of the leadership, it is difficult to address such vital organisational attributes as vision and mission, strategic planning, management structure and external relations. Generally speaking, however, such programmes have been categorised as “organisational development”, rather than “leadership development”, and have looked more widely at the contributions and roles of other staff and external stakeholders.

Provision of organisational development in Kyrgyzstan has taken two main forms: training workshops for NGO staff (usually including participants from more than one agency) and one-to-one advice to NGOs. Facilitators are both local and expatriate. INTRAC has provided organisational development workshops all over Central Asia. To deal with the complexity of issues affecting leaders, INTRAC has gradually moved towards individual accompaniment for senior NGO managers and the development of

peer-learning methodologies.²¹ INTRAC's experience can be compared with that of Counterpart Consortium²², a major regional provider of NGO training and organisational development advice from the mid-1990s. Evaluation has shown that it is often easier for advisors to identify problems than to solve them. Information and new approaches provided in training workshops need to be tailored by skilled leaders to the specific circumstances of their agency if they are to be beneficial.

The methodology promoted by INTRAC in Central Asia uses an "onion" diagram to illustrate different elements making up an organisation. The outer layers are made up by financial and physical resources, with systems and structures in the middle layers, and mission and values at the centre. This approach indicates that inspiration, ideology and trust are for leaders and their organisations. It is apparent that one-to-one advice and peer-learning approaches can help elucidate complex issues, but there has been little evaluation of the results. It is clear that training programmes can only provide a limited amount of support to senior managers. Perhaps the main benefit for experienced NGO leaders has been in other areas, such as provision of study and exchange visits inside and outside the region. Another key area is training for boards of directors (an important potential source of advice and support to NGO leaders) – but this lies outside the scope of the present study.

4.2 Leadership Development Provision in Kyrgyzstan

As part of the leadership study, INTRAC undertook a short preliminary survey during autumn 2006 into leadership provision in Kyrgyzstan (see Appendix 4 for details). The findings are given in brief below.

Leadership development providers: The number of NGOs and international organisations offering elements of leadership development is steadily increasing. This includes organisations working in many different areas – including gender, youth, HIV/AIDS, disability and human rights. They include higher education institutions, NGO support organisations and research centres. They mostly link the issue of leadership to their own thematic focus and see improved leadership as a tool with which to better achieve their goals. For them, leadership development is usually just one element in a wider capacity-building or management training programme. Some organisations, however, have established stand-alone leadership programmes – such as Centre Interbilim.

Methodology: Most organisations surveyed provide short courses, one-off training and projects on leadership. The commonest forms of provision are training workshops, meetings and round tables, information support, advice sessions and exchange of experience. Dedicated leadership training programmes are longer – usually up to a

²¹ For example, "triad" discussions (groups of three talking to each other confidentially) and action learning sets (larger groups with a similar agenda).

²² Counterpart Consortium (now Counterpart International) set up and developed a regional network of CS support centres in Central Asia with USAID funding. From 2000, Counterpart added to its regional off-the-shelf NGO training programme the services of local "OD advisors" based in the provincial centres, who set out to give ongoing support to "focus NGOs".

year and/or modular in structure, with a practical component. Longer duration programmes have only become available in the past few years. The sole provider of formal higher education qualifications in the area of NGO management is the master's programme recently set up in the Management Academy of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Target groups: Leadership programmes are increasingly focused on youth and women – in acknowledgement of their potential role in the growth of the country. Almost 80 per cent of the survey respondents are working with youth leaders – even if their overall aims are not particularly focused on the problems of young people. There is a clear trend towards broadening the target audience for leadership programmes to include local and central government officials drawn from various tiers of the civil service.

Selection requirements for leadership programmes: Almost all providers choose participants by written application and on a competitive basis. Some organisations also ask for references or recommendations from other leaders. The effectiveness of a programme depends on the method of selection and many programmes need to improve the way they select trainees.

Analysis of results: The organisations surveyed were all able to provide programme details and descriptive reports and some can produce media articles providing further information about their work. However, the survey shows that there have been no across-the-board studies on leadership development and no specialised research into the results of these programmes in Kyrgyzstan.

4.3 Does Current Provision Address the Needs of Civil Society?

The study of leadership in civil society clearly indicated that leadership programmes are a long way from meeting the needs of civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

Praxis Paper 10 on NGO leadership compares experience in different countries and assesses the factors that contribute to successful training programmes. These include the past experience of participants, their learning styles and degrees of motivation and also the place given to learning in the organisation where they work. "Programmes are perceived to be more successful if they allow participants to incorporate their own experience, integrate an element of personal discovery, allow time for personal reflection and expose participants to new ideas or developing trends."²³ Participation of staff should not be seen by the employer as a one-off event but as part of a wider, long-term career development strategy. There should be space for participants to realise career ambitions, rather than simply meet the organisation's aims for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

²³ Praxis Paper 10, *NGO Leadership Development: A Review of the Literature* by John Hailey, www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper10.html. Page 26.

Leadership development programmes need to focus both on values of individuals and on the internal and external relationships within which they work. Programmes should be linked to an overall human resource development policy and a strategy of organisational learning. If these are in place, it will be much easier to give support to participants and to obtain their feedback. The information received will help managers and trainers to assess the effectiveness of programmes and make improvements.

Praxis Paper 6²⁴ provides useful guidelines from the point of view of leaders who want to change but who are constrained by aspects of their lives and working environments. The paper highlights two main changes that participants in leadership development programmes have achieved – greater self-confidence and a more participatory leadership style. Looking at the process of change, the study presented an analysis showing driving and constraining forces on four levels. Leaders wishing to make changes (improvements) in their style or performance will experience driving/assisting forces as well as constraining/opposing forces within: 1) the external environment' 2) the organisation; 3) themselves as leaders and 4) themselves as individuals. Leadership development programmes should address all these elements if they wish to be successful.

5. Recommendations for Future Leadership Development

If they are to succeed, leadership programmes require well designed resource-management systems. In Kyrgyzstan, as elsewhere in Central Asia, human resources (HR) management in civil society is at a low level. There is no lack of goodwill or even of relevant experience. The main problem is that small organisations have been thrown into chaos by the pace and extent of changes induced by the market economy. Leadership development must be linked to HR development in all agencies, especially smaller ones.

The approaches advocated by Western writers such as John Adair and by INTRAC emphasise the individual. Central Asian NGOs need to value individuals, to systematically get the best out of staff member at all levels of the organisation and to help today's team members and followers to be tomorrow's leaders.

A number of implications for leadership development flow logically from the study and the survey of providers.

24 Praxis Paper 6, *Realities of Change: Understanding How African NGO Leaders Develop* by Rick James with Julius Oladipo, Moses Isooba, Betsy Mboizi and Ida Kusiima (www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper6.html) p. 26.

Focus/target groups

- All leadership programmes need to pay special attention to recruitment of participants. Some participants in short-term or project-based leadership initiatives may have limited allegiance to the project or organisation that sponsored them. Such 'accidental' participants may have slipped through unsatisfactory selection procedures.
- Youth programmes should address the needs of individuals, especially those who may still be deciding which career path to choose. For such participants, the link to the supporting/employing organisation may not be strong or long-lived.
- Programmes supporting community leaders or leaders of well established CSOs must forge deeper links with the participants' employers.
- Women's leadership programmes need to continue to address barriers to gender equality in public life and in business. NGOs must provide strong support to Kyrgyzstan's vibrant women's movement.
- Mixed-sector courses such as the first INTRAC–Centre Interbilim programme need to choose participants with great care. Programmes of this kind allow a very valuable exchange of ideas and experience, but it is vital to check whether the expectations and needs of all participants are met.
- The recent opening of a new management programme at the President's Management Academy, specially aimed at NGO leaders, is a welcome and important step forward. This programme offers the qualification of Master of Public Administration with NGO Management. The Academy has already invited a leading CS association²⁵ to contribute ideas and support to the NGO management programme. This programme could play a very important coordinating role for leadership initiatives around the country.

Programme objectives, design and content

- Project-based leadership programmes should consider how far their narrower aims may hold them back from achieving greater success or effectiveness.
- Programmes should try to address psychological aspects as well as technical and professional needs.
- Programmes should address the specific character and needs of contemporary Kyrgyz culture and society. They should reduce their current reliance on imported or imitative approaches and try to address the many questions this paper has raised about the role of tradition, family, clan and gender in present-day Kyrgyzstan.
- Programmes should continue to focus on democratic or participatory leadership styles and approaches.
- Programmes cannot be serious, long-term and holistic unless they have adequate funding. INTRAC has argued consistently for donors to commit to core or long-term funding, including budgets for capacity building and training of the next generation of NGO leaders.

²⁵ The Association of Civil Society Support Centres, with NGO resource centres in all provinces of the country.

Methodology and process

- Programmes need to develop different approaches and methodologies of leadership development and to tailor them to staff at different stages in their careers. The sources of expertise must be carefully chosen to meet the various needs of participants.
- Trainers and facilitators within extended leadership programmes need to adopt student-centred approaches and to support individual learning and application of knowledge. Peer-learning methods could bring students together and help develop reflective, action-oriented thinking.
- In the wider field of HR development, coaching and mentoring demand more attention. Respondents in the survey referred to kinds of mentoring that occurred in both pre-Soviet and Soviet periods, such as assistance from established leaders or the Komsomol youth organisation. This type of support was clearly important. There is a need to gather information about mentoring initiatives that continue today and how to boost them – in particular, by recognising and building the skills of committed mentors. The development of short training modules on coaching and mentoring would be particularly useful for work with young people and youth organisations.

6. Conclusions

The findings of the study are as follows.

- The literature review and interviews conducted for the research study confirmed the wide influence and impact of CSO leaders in Kyrgyzstan today. Several respondents were leaders of NGOs whose considerable managerial abilities have helped their organisations to grow. These leaders have, in many cases, also helped to create around them a constellation of thematic, geographic and political alliances to take forward the causes and issues in which they are involved.
- Traditional models of leadership are still strong, especially in rural areas, and leaders in all sectors need to know how to work with them. Leadership studies and programmes in Kyrgyzstan have paid insufficient attention to the influence of culture and context and more research is needed.
- Women's leadership in civil society is acknowledged, but barriers still exist such as women's responsibilities in the home and family and unwillingness of some husbands to allow their wives to pursue demanding careers. CSO leadership needs to be supported and actively used to promote women's leadership and gender equality throughout Kyrgyz society.
- Young people are keen to contribute more within civil society. However, the first generation of post-1991 CS leaders remain in office. Only with difficulty are young leaders getting a chance to take responsibility or show their abilities fully.
- Young CS leaders frequently move to international organisations, the civil service or business. They are driven to do so both by the fact they will earn more and by the belief that they will be able to work more efficiently and be more likely to achieve career goals.

- The vast majority of NGO leaders recognise and consciously promote the special character, aims and contribution of civil society. It was surprising how few respondents in the study were keen for NGOs to engage directly in politics, despite the major social mobilisation during and after Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution in March 2005. This can probably be explained by the widespread lack of trust in political parties and leaders. Managing the boundaries between NGO activism, policy advocacy and politics remains a major challenge for NGO leaders and civil society.
- Many CSO leaders have sincerely-held democratic values and have studied modern management methods. However, leadership development programmes would be of great value in assisting young and middle managers/leaders to develop a more participatory practice of leadership. They need to be helped to build on the widespread commitment to team work and to ensure community and beneficiary interests are advanced by efficiently-run agencies that are committed to well-understood, long-term goals.

Appendix 1: Research Methodology

The research project was undertaken by the Bishkek-based INTRAC Central Asia team and was led by Charles Buxton with the assistance of Kazbek Abraliev. The study had three main stages.

A literature review began with brainstorming on leadership issues in Kyrgyzstan, which led to generation of ten key questions about leadership in Kyrgyzstan to be investigated in a literature review. This brought together a wide range of local materials on leadership (in English and Russian), drawing in particular on bulletins, reports and longer studies by Centre Interbilim and INTRAC. Centre Interbilim's three collections of articles by CS leaders²⁶ were particularly valuable, as was INTRAC's work on organisational development of CSOs/NGOs in Central Asia from the mid-1990s and the more recent book *The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia*.²⁷ The researchers also studied materials published by UNDP, Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, the International Crisis Group, the *AKIpress* journal, and the Institute of War and Peace Reporting. They also looked at local newspapers, magazines and internet sites and material from other local and international NGOs. Valuable material was found in the National Library and the Bishkek resource centre, Information for Development (see Appendix 2). The literature review was written up as a short report answering each of the ten key questions and providing a short bibliography for each.

Ten key questions from the literature review

1. What aspects of pre-Soviet and Soviet leadership practice influence today's leaders in Kyrgyzstan?
2. How are national civil society leaders responding to the extra demands put on them by the political situation in Kyrgyzstan?
3. How are women tackling the obstacles that exist in gaining leadership and management positions?
4. What is the impact of family, clan and regional factors on civil society and political leaders and to what extent are leaders able to express the interests of wider society?
5. What is the role of leadership in the organisational development of CSOs and what main challenges do their managers face?
6. What models or experience exist in Kyrgyzstan of effective organisational management?
7. How far do leaders see the need to create partnerships to achieve their aims or those of their organisations?
8. What strategies do CS leaders use to gain the trust of their organisations and of society in general?
9. How do CS leaders emerge at local level? Who chooses them, and how?
10. What motivates young people in Kyrgyzstan to become leaders? How should they be helped?

²⁶ *Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Perspectives*, Centre Interbilim, Bishkek, 2003; *Civil Society and NGOs of Kyrgyzstan: Insight*, Centre Interbilim Bishkek, 2005.

²⁷ Earle L., Giffen, J. and Buxton, C., *The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia*, INTRAC, 2005.

Interviews and focus groups. In the second stage, INTRAC carried out a short, qualitative study to reveal how leaders are seen, how they see themselves and the challenges they face. At this stage the research was deliberately sharpened to focus on CS leaders, especially younger ones. It ensured coverage of both urban and rural areas and organisations of different sizes and types. Several district- and village-level government leaders were interviewed, but the survey did not attempt to examine national political leadership.

An interview questionnaire was designed (see Appendix 2). Fifteen semi-structured interviews were undertaken in three locations – the capital Bishkek, the southern Osh oblast and the adjoining northern oblasts of Issyk-Kul and Naryn. Interviews were from 45 to 90 minutes in length, conducted in Russian, Kyrgyz or Uzbek. Each interview was carried out by two members of the INTRAC Central Asia team using a tape recorder, later used to create a full typed transcript.

Three focus groups (one in each main location) looked at the same issues from the point of view of “followers”, rank-and-file community group leaders, youth activists and the team members of a large rural-based NGO. Focus group meetings were of approximately the same length and were also recorded.

A printed questionnaire with a very similar structure and themes was issued to participants of the INTRAC–Centre Interbilim leadership programme. Like the interviews with local government leaders, this was used as a means of throwing further light on the main information received from CSO leaders. Later, the same participants took part in a short focus group discussion on emerging themes.

Leadership development survey. The third stage of the research looked at how CS leaders are trained, supported and developed in Kyrgyzstan. In a short preliminary survey, 14 organisations responded to a questionnaire and/or gave a telephone interview. A list is provided in Appendix 3 and full details of the organisations and programmes are available from INTRAC’s Bishkek office.

The sample at interview stage was limited but fairly representative,²⁸ as can be seen from Table 3.

²⁸ The individuals interviewed were a mixture of people well known to INTRAC, not so well known, or unknown and recommended by programme partners.

Table 3 Leadership development survey	
1. Semi-structured interviews	
Total respondents	15
Gender breakdown	Female, ten; male, five
Age breakdown	Below age 35, six; age 35–50, seven; over 50, two
Type of organisation	13 NGOs (including two women’s NGOs, three NGO support centres, two self-help group support NGOs, one water users’ association, one youth organisation, one think-tank NGO, two village NGOs, one INGO local project) and two local government representatives
Location	South (Osh oblast) – five respondents, North (Issyk-Kul and Naryn oblasts) – five respondents, Bishkek – five respondents. Urban–rural breakdown: eight city and seven village
Position of respondents in organisations	Eleven NGO leaders, two local government officials, one middle manager, one voluntary coordinator
2. Focus groups	
Total respondents:	27 persons (including 11 CBO leaders, eight NGO staff and eight youth activists)
3. Questionnaires	
Total respondents:	Ten participants of Centre Interbilim leadership training programme

The interviews and focus groups provided a rich and interesting set of stories, comments and analyses of individual ambition and careers, the development of organisations and interaction with colleagues and the external environment.

The leadership development questionnaire was circulated by email. The list was compiled from press reports and information collected during the literature review and Internet searches. About 20 organisations were sent the questionnaire and 14 replied. The main problem encountered was that many organisations did not have websites, plus the absence of a comprehensive database of NGOs active in Kyrgyzstan and their projects.

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Appendix 3: Interview questionnaire

1. Respondent details
2. Organisation details
3. Can you tell us how you became leader/manager of your organisation? Who chose you and how?
4. How do you understand the term 'leader'? What is a leader?
5. Do you consider yourself a leader? If yes, in what sense? If no, why not?
6. In your opinion, do other people/colleagues at work think of you as a leader? Why/why not?
7. What challenges have you faced in becoming a leader? Where did the main problems arise? How did you deal with the problems?
8. Why is it important for you to be a leader? What does leadership give you? What was your motivation in establishing yourself as a leader?
9. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader?
10. What gaps in knowledge, ability or skills do you feel hold you back from being a more effective leader?
11. What priorities and responsibilities are most important to you in your everyday work as a leader?
12. Is there a system for leadership development in your organisation? How are lower, middle and senior managers appointed?
13. What relations exist between managers and other team members in your organisation?
14. What external organisations are closest partners to your organisation?
15. How closely do you collaborate with government agencies and departments? With business organisations? With political parties? What are the key issues you collaborate on, and for what ends?
16. In your opinion, what are the main personal and professional qualities an NGO leader should possess? How important is it to be able to manage people and resources?
17. What are the main social problems that leaders should address in Kyrgyzstan today?
18. In what spheres of activity do women leaders and youth leaders have the greatest impact and recognition?
19. How far should NGO leaders take part in politics and political life in Kyrgyzstan?
20. What suggestions can you make regarding leadership development and improving the effectiveness of new and young civil society leaders?

Appendix 4: Leadership Development Programmes in Kyrgyzstan

Centre Interbilim

Name of programme	School of Leadership
Aim	To create a new generation of leaders with democratic values
Methodology	Three-module training programme, meetings with leaders, internship in local and foreign organisations, supported by grants
Target group	Youth, NGOs, representatives of state and business structures of Kyrgyzstan

Women's Organisation Alga, CSSC Kant

Name of programme	School of Effective Leadership
Aim	To develop leadership among rural youth
Methodology	Training on peer-learning model, winter and summer schools
Target group	Rural youth community of eastern zone of Chuy oblast

Centre of Civil Initiatives Leader

Name of programme	Transparent programme on leadership development
Aim	To develop leadership through capacity building of NGO, CBO, youth and women's groups, development democracy and leadership schools, women's political leadership programmes
Methodology	Needs assessment, information, training, campaigns, evaluation
Target group	Heads of NGOs, CBOs, initiative groups, women and youth

Agency of Social Technologies

Name of programme	Development of women's leadership
Aim	To increase social activity and develop self-organisation skills
Methodology	Research, training, consultations and other activities
Target group	Women, entrepreneurs, youth, local government employees

IPP – Institute of Public Policy

Name of programme	Education programme
Aim	To increase civil activity of young people, capacity building of young civil servants and public activists in discussion of issues of state policy
Methodology	Training and meetings
Target group	Students and young public servants

Public Foundation for the Study of Religious Extremism and Terrorism (SRET)

Name of programme	School of political leadership
Aim	To develop creative and leadership potential
Methodology	Meetings, seminars, regular classes on communication skills, leadership skills, government structures, NGOs and political parties
Target group	Students and women in the city and oblast of Osh

Youth Voluntary Organisation Leadership

Name of programme	School of Leadership and Democracy
Aim	To identify potential young leaders and offer them opportunity for self-fulfilment in public-political life
Methodology	Training series on various topics, radio and TV programmes, projects and campaigns
Target group	Youth aged between 13 and 25 from Karakol town and Issyk Kul oblast

Public Youth Union Golden Goal

Name of programme	Centre of Civil Education and Legal Enlightenment
Aim	To increase civil participation among students and youth in public life through leadership training, basic human rights courses and democratic discussion skills
Methodology	Creation of two democratic leadership clubs, training, information, resource centres
Target group	Students and young people aged between 18 and 25, youth organisations in Osh and Jalalabat oblast

Hannes Zeidel Foundation Coordination Office in the Kyrgyz Republic

Name of programme	Strengthening of Local Self Government, State Governance and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan (in cooperation with the Academy of Management under President of KR)
Aim	To raise consciousness, human resources and development of institutions
Methodology	Long-term master's programme on management for officers of local self-government, state administration and NGOs, and short-term course on professional improvement for municipal and public servants in cooperation with the President's Management Academy
Target group	Staff of local self government and state administration bodies and NGOs

National Democratic Institute of International Affairs (NDI)

Name of programme	NDI Programme on Young Political Leaders
Aim	Assistance to young political leaders in acquiring skills in public speaking, working in political parties and pre-election campaigning. Engagement of youth decision-making on crucial political issues in KR
Methodology	Training series and solving practical tasks in applying acquired knowledge and skills
Target group	Young activists of political parties and NGOs (aged 18-35)

UNDP Programme to Support the Kyrgyz Government Response to HIV/AIDS

Name of programme	Programme of Leadership development – Leadership for Results: Kyrgyzstan without AIDS
Aim	To reveal potential of individual participants and organisations for struggle against HIV/AIDS
Methodology	Seminar series and practical work on “initiative breakthrough” between seminars
Target group	A group of people interested in HIV work, selected with stringent criteria

Freedom House, Project Support of Activists Defending Human Rights

Name of programme	Programme for Young NGO Activists in the Area of Human Rights
Aim	Capacity building of young activists to participate in human rights activities and advocacy initiatives in their communities. Training group of young activists to human rights standards, monitoring skills, advocacy skills and mechanisms of participation in decision-making
Methodology	Conducting two-day seminars in all regions, winter regional school on human rights issues
Target group	Young NGO activists aged 18–27 engaged in human rights activities and public interest

Centre of Help to Women

Name of programme	Gender School
Aim	To promote gender equality in KR through development of women’s leadership
Methodology	Interactive training
Target group	Women (CS activists and local community activists)

National Independent Association of Handicapped Women

Name of programme	Participation of Women with Disabilities in Political and Public Life
Aim	Raise public status of women with disabilities
Methodology	Conducting seminars, training and round tables
Target group	Women and young disabled women

Leadership in Transition: Developing Civil Society Leaders in Kyrgyzstan

By Charles Buxton and Kazbek Abraliev

The Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan is in a state of transition in which civil society could play a historical role. Political changes over the past 15 years have done little to instil popular faith in leaders. Kyrgyz civil society organisations could inspire society and offer a more ethical, open and democratic form of leadership. But what elements of traditional or Soviet-style, top-down leadership can they build on? What are the current perspectives on the notions of leadership? What can be learnt from the experience of those now managing civil society organisations? What are the critical challenges they face today? What resources exist for training leaders in new forms of management?

These questions were addressed in a research study undertaken by INTRAC for a training programme organised with Centre Interbilim – a local NGO. Among the key findings were that:

- Kyrgyz civil society has strong and influential leaders, but tradition still strongly influences the way they manage and the methods they use to seek public support.
- Women have made substantial gains, and many now occupy significant roles in civil society; however barriers threaten to undermine progress towards gender equality.
- Traditional forms of seniority are preventing younger people from rising to significant positions of leadership in civil society organisations.
- The majority of NGO leaders wish to remain independent of politics in order to be better able to propose new policy agendas in many fields neutrally.
- While many civil society leaders have democratic values, they need support to develop and promote participatory practices of leadership/management.

The paper recommends that future leadership development place more emphasis on comprehensive or holistic programmes, and on informal kinds of support – such as coaching, mentoring and action learning.

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