

COLLABORATION OF NGOs AND BUSINESS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The development of the non-governmental organizations in Kazakhstan has increased dramatically since the mid-1990s. One of the aspects of this development is a relationship between NGOs and the business sector. This issue becomes very important in the context of CSR.

The purpose of the paper is to present a picture of existing relations between NGOs and business organizations in Kazakhstan from the perspective of NGOs. This relationship has recently started to attract the attention of researchers and practitioners. There is little research on this issue in Kazakhstan.

The paper gives an overview of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan. The article presents relationship between NGOs and business organizations, forms, peculiarities of collaboration. NGOs in Kazakhstan experience an early stage of developing collaboration with business sector. There is a need to move from short-term activities to strategy of the development. The obstacles to this development can be found in legal regulations, absence of a long-term vision. It was found that there is a gradual shift towards a collaboration between NGOs and private sector. However, it is too early to evaluate the effect of this shift on sustainable development.

Keywords: Non-governmental organizations, Business, Collaboration, Kazakhstan

1. Introduction

Collaboration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and business have increased in number and sophistication over the last decade. Cross-sector partnerships address many complex social issues. These collaborations become more strategic and in some cases move beyond basic philanthropy (Bobenrieth and Stibbe, 2010).

Collaboration between NGOs and business organizations brings benefits to both sides. NGOs receive financial resources, access to networks; business organizations understand local conditions, relations with local communities, get higher reputation and credibility. A real collaboration implies contributing skills, resources and expertise, and sharing the risk. The nature of this collaboration is changing. Sometimes they include government agencies, international organizations and present multimember partnerships (Cowe, 2004).

The paper presents the current situation in the area of collaboration between business and the NGO sector. In order to understand this situation the following issues are considered: the current state of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan, characteristics of successful partnerships, benefits and motivations of collaboration, requirements and examples of effective collaboration, forms and peculiarities of collaboration in Kazakhstan.

An understanding of the nature of collaboration between NGOs and business organizations will help representatives of these two sectors to develop mutually beneficial relationships. To clarify the context of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan, some explanation is needed. NGOs play a crucial role in the development of a civil society. The major challenges faced by NGOs: sustainability, opportunities for renewal, results based agendas, new alliances and networks, understanding the nexus between civil society, the private sector and government (INTRAC, 2011). The role of NGOs is particular important in Kazakhstan. Since its independence, Kazakhstan has been undergoing significant political, economic, and social changes, amongst which is the growth of NGOs. The activities of NGOs in Kazakhstan are especially important as means of developing civil society in the region. They have been working in all areas of social life, such as education, health, human rights, environmental issues, and many others.

According to United Nations definition a non-governmental organization is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to Governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level. (<http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/brochure.htm>).

The concept of NGO varies among countries with different cultures. Gray and Bebbington (2006) describe NGOs as autonomous, non-profit-making, self-governing and campaigning organizations with a focus on the well-being of others. As they note, NGOs exhibit considerable heterogeneity in size, functions, views, standards, strategy and tactics (Gray, Bebbington, 2006). NGOs are private, not-for-profit organizations that aim to serve particular social interests by focusing advocacy and/or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals (Teegen et al., 2004) NGO is a broad term including a wide set of diverse organizations. NGOs can be private agencies that support international development, or local or religious groups organized nationally or regionally (Nalinakumari, MacLean, 2005). Salamon and Anheier (1999) identify the following five key characteristics of NGOs: NGOs are organized and as a result possess some degree of internal organizational structure and organizational boundaries; they are private and thus are institutionally separate from government; they are self-governing and able to control and manage their own affairs; NGOs are non-profit making; and finally NGOs involves some degree of voluntary participation in the conduct or management of the organization.

The objective of the paper is to examine issues related to relationship between NGOs and business in Kazakhstan. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents methodology. In section 3 the overview of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan is discussed. Section 4 discusses collaboration of NGOs and business. In section 5 relationship between the NGO and business sector in Kazakhstan is presented, and section 6 is the conclusion.

2. Methodology

This paper used qualitative research methodology. Information used in this study was collected from secondary sources. Data sources include government documents, reports, and policy documents published by international organizations on Kazakhstan, and published articles in academic journals.

3. Overview of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan

According to data from the Ministry of Justice, there were 36,815 registered non-governmental organizations in Kazakhstan. Of these, 8,134 are public associations, 4,831 are foundations, 1,288 are associations of legal entities, 1,331 are religious groups, and 7,965 are cooperatives, private institutions, non-commercial joint stock companies, and other organizations make up the remainder. (USAID, 2011).

Kazakhstan's NGO sector is diverse in terms of activity and geographic area. NGOs provide a diverse range of services, ranging from education and health care provision to rehabilitation work for the disabled. NGOs are especially active in education, child and youth policy, and culture. Many active NGOs also work on gender, legal rights, and social issues (Buxton, 2011).

In terms of geographical location, most NGOs operate in the southern part of the country and Almaty, followed by the eastern and northern parts of the country. A minimal number of NGOs is registered in western Kazakhstan. The number and type of NGOs registered in a specific geographic area is dependent on the size of the population and investment in that area. For example, the large number of international projects concentrated in Almaty influences the growing number of NGOs there (USAID 2011).

In Kazakhstan, it is estimated that approximately 42 percent of the NGOs offer services in the social sphere (education, public health, and culture), 24 percent protect the interests of socially vulnerable groups, while 34 percent concentrate on issues of human rights act, the environment, and gender policy (USAID 2010). More than two hundred thousand people are employed in the NGO sector, and roughly two million citizens enjoy the services of Kazakhstan's NGOs (Diachenko 2008). A survey of 271 NGOs in 2009 found that half of the NGOs consider the end users of their services as urban residents, while the remaining 50 percent include rural residents, local state bodies, local businesses, the national government, and international organizations (Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011).

Most of leaders and staff of NGOs are women. According to Starr (2011), voluntarism in Central Asia is dominated above all by a remarkable group of empowered and activist women. Many women's NGOs have been involved in key areas of providing women's well-being, including promoting women's economic development, helping to implement certain government programs, and supporting women victims of violence. Women's NGOs in Kazakhstan, led by Feminist League, the crisis center Podrugy, and others, are engaged in influencing government policy, and in developing reports for international agencies (Buxton, 2011). By joining NGOs, many individuals, especially women with leadership skills and a management background gained a self-realization and professional development (Abdusalyamova L., Warren H. 2007). Another characteristic of the NGO sector has been the dominance of organizations in urban areas, particularly Almaty. In the last few years, NGOs started to develop in the rural areas. However, effective rural NGOs are few (ADB 2007, Giffen 2005).

Development of self-help groups and community-based organizations is typical for some areas. Several NGO support organizations, especially in the north of the country, support community development activities and encourage the creation of community-based organizations and self-help groups. Examples of

these organizations are the network of Civil Society Support Centers (in nine different provincial locations), the Decenta Public Association, headquartered in Pavlodar, and the Almaty-based NGOs Central Asian Sustainable Development Information Network (CASDIN) and Institute for Development Cooperation (ADB 2007). The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) initiated a program of work in Central Asia entitled, “Strengthening NGOs to Support the Self-Help Movement”. This program supports a network of more than 20 NGOs working on poverty and gender issues in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan. Through this program, INTRAC provides capacity-building support, and works to prepare up a group of national and local trainers and experts in community development (Buxton, 2011). NGO participation in the development of social sector gradually becomes effective. Many NGOs work closely with their target groups, provide support, and engage people in self-help activities. Local NGOs have helped citizens to become more active and better informed about civil rights and opportunities (Abdusalyamova L., Warren H. 2007).

Cooperation between government councils and business entities is a good basis for the development of partnerships between the sectors. Especially good examples of these partnerships include the development that is seen with local city councils (maslikhats) and business in Enbekshi-Kazakhsky (with Philipp Morris Kazakhstan) and Ily rayon (with TengizChevroil). In 2010, about 6,000,000 tenge (\$41,000) was attracted through these councils for support of local resource centers, development of rural NGOs, and support of vulnerable groups (USAID 2010).

However, development of the sector has slowed down in some areas. The number of active NGOs is rather small. Newly emerging organizations do not receive appropriate training in areas such as strategic planning and fundraising. Some organizations are established to take advantage of specific funding opportunities and therefore tend to be of a short-term and grant-oriented character. A survey conducted by Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan confirmed that a significant number of NGOs have a very short lifespan. Of the more than 200 NGOs polled by Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan, 48.7 percent had been operating for less than five years, a quarter had been working for six to nine years, and only 21.8 percent were established at the end of the 1990s. Moreover, some organizations are dormant and exist only on paper. (Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan: 20 years of Development, 2011).

Only few NGOs have strong support from their constituents. One of the reasons of this situation is low level of public awareness about activities of NGOs, another reason is lack of skills of NGOs’ staff in identifying and addressing constituency needs. NGOs only partly connect their program areas with the needs and interests of the public. For example, according to recent research, over 50 percent of the public expects NGO activities in the areas of children and youth. At the same time less than 15 percent of NGOs in the country actually involved in children and youth issues (USAID 2010).

Development of NGO sector is presented by NGO sustainability index. The composite NGO sustainability index for 2011 was 4.1 indicating a medium level of development (USAID, 2011). This suggests that there is a great need for improvement in all the categories that constitute the index. In order to improve NGO scores in all relevant areas of development, management capacity in such areas as transparency and accountability, collaboration with government, financing, and human resources need to be enhanced.

4. Collaboration of NGOs and business

Historically, NGOs relations with corporations have been either confrontational or philanthropic. Many NGOs have had negative views towards practices of business organizations and avoided working with them. In the past decade, these relationships have started to change but there is a need for effectively engaging of both parties (Ross, 2008).

Development agency such as Development Finance International (DFI) explores three considerations in providing successful partnerships between NGOs and the private sector:

- (1) the who (choosing the right partner);
- (2) the why (the objectives that the parties to the partnership want to achieve); and
- (3) the how (the dynamics of the working relationship) (Borwankar & Velamuri, 2009).

According to research, successful partnerships have three key characteristics that include: 1) achieving mutual trust; 2) having clearly defined goals and objectives; and 3) well-articulated roles and responsibilities. In addition, each partnership needs a well-articulated partnership strategy including indicators to monitor progress of the partnership. (Ross, 2008).

For evaluating the stages of the partnership a collaboration continuum, proposed by Austin (2000) might be helpful. In this model the alliances may pass through three distinct stages: the philanthropic stage (where there are low engagement, narrow scope of activities performed together, the donor-recipient relationship) , the transactional stage (where there are moderate levels of engagement, investment of resources, resources are exchanged through specific activities), and the integrative stage (where there is a higher level of engagement, increased investment of resources and broadened scope of activities) (Austin, 2000).

NGOs and businesses have benefits from their collaboration. Benefits of NGOs include: 1) ability to plan and work at scale; 2) ability to design systems; 3) access to networks; 4) financial resources, 5) volunteers. For a company such collaboration can bring: 1) understanding about local context, conditions and relationships with local communities; 2) ability to pilot new innovations/interventions; 4) access to networks; 5) policy advocacy and mobilization skills (Ross, 2008).

The NGOs and the business sector have different perspectives and divergent motivations for considering cross-sector alliances. The business partner is motivated by increased legitimacy, positive reputation effects, increased social status, and recognition as well opportunities for learning in the field of CSR (Jamali and Keshishian, 2009). In some cases, business organizations work with NGOs to avoid potential conflicts rather than loss of company's image. On the other hand, collaboration helps to strengthen their position on the market (Reichel and Rudnicka, 2009). The NGO partner is motivated by increased competition for limited funding, escalating societal needs, hostile environmental forces, and serious sustainability concerns (Jamali and Keshishian, 2009). Successful collaboration will assist these two sectors to complement each other.

Corporations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) face increasing pressures for greater accountability. On the one hand, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has increased the demand for NGO–business partnerships. On the other hand, donors demand from NGOs efficient use of resources and promote corporate practices. Ideally, if both sides become more accountable for their actions their impact on society should improve over time. (Baur and Schmitz, 2012).

One of the most efficient ways to hold appropriate relationships between NGOs and business are corporate foundations which are the bridges between business and social sector. Corporate foundations might help to develop better financial management and clear procedures of collaboration what strengthen the trust and make the collaboration easier (Reichel and Rudnicka, 2009). Meaningful collaborations among business and NGOs have emerged as major new organizational forms to deliver social services. Despite

different organizational goals, missions NGOs and corporations can effectively collaborate for joint benefit (Teegen, Doh, Vachani, 2004).

Among the key requirements of effective collaboration researchers indicate resource dependency, commitment symmetry, common goal symmetry, intensive communication, alignment of cooperation learning capability, individual excellence, converging working cultures, importance, interdependence, investment, information, integration, institutionalization, and integrity (Jamali and Keshishian, 2009).

One of the good examples of collaboration between NGOs and business is collaborative relations of British multinational oil and gas company (BP) with local NGOs in Azerbaijan . For example, BP collaborated with the Open Society Institute (OSI) on the NGO Monitoring and Audit Programme during construction and early operations of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. OSI led a training programme on monitoring methods and standards and helped NGOs to implement the monitoring, covering issues relating to the environment, cultural heritage, human rights, and social impacts (Wilson 2010).

Multinational corporations involved in the extractive industries have moved to improve their record in corporate conduct by adopting a series of social and community development programs. Among other things, these programs consist of providing technical training, building schools, helping to upgrade local infrastructure, and providing local populations with health care facilities and medications.

Moreover, partnerships between governments, NGOs, and business also have been created in relation to extractive industries and human rights. For example, the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the Netherlands have joined a group of human rights organizations and extractive companies in establishing the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights” (USAID, 2006).

There are different ways in which the oil and gas industry, governments, and NGOs can work together in order to establish a thorough and widely accepted set of industry standards. For example, certain groups, such as the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (OGP) and the American Petroleum Institute (API), make decision to establish environmental management standards within the industry.

Existing programs, such as that of the OGP, should be broadened to include a growing number of stakeholders. As countries and companies become aware of the need to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental standards, it may be increasingly possible for multilateral institutions, national governmental aid agencies, and UN agencies to encourage stakeholders to commit themselves to these standards. Regardless of the precise form the agreements might take, there are general procedures and systems that appear to be important components of any comprehensive, best practice environmental management program (USAID, 2006).

5. Relationship between the NGO and business sector in Kazakhstan

In Central Asia the relationship between NGOs and private sector is a relatively new phenomenon and hence has received very little attention. The relationship between NGOs and the private sector in Kazakstan takes different forms:

- opposition;
- sponsorship;
- rendering services; and
- partnership/co-operation (Heap, 2000).

There are examples of companies rendering help to NGOs, including funding. For instance, a firm called ‘Tobacco’ collaborated with a branch of the Association of Business Women in Shymkent, Special Olympics Kazakstan and the Association of Mothers with Many Children in Almaty, while Chevron collaborated with the Association of Parents of Disabled Children. Frequently businesses finance a single event conducted by an NGO within the framework of its programmes, but sometimes businesses themselves apply to NGOs for help, suggesting implementation of joint projects (Heap, 2000).

There are also other means of interaction between NGOs and business. NGOs support business development and receive part of the income from services such as business-planning, training and consultation. The NGO training centre “Challenge” worked with three companies: Shell, Kazaktelecom and Tengizchevroil, to develop special training programmes upon request. For example, the programme on theoretical phonetics of the English language. In turn, many of the external relations staff of Tengizchevroil received their training at the ‘Challenge’ centre (Heap, 2000).

A few NGOs have their own businesses. Many basically render legal consultation, for example, associations for the protection of consumers’ rights receive part of their revenue from the services they offer (printing, training and consultations). Other organizations use the revenues from their businesses to cover overheads. Some NGOs start businesses simply in order to survive (Heap, 2000).

Most foreign companies have formulated their corporate philanthropic strategy, which includes making donations to events, giving grants for social projects and so on. This potentially could become one of the strategies for promoting NGO financial sustainability in Kazakhstan. There are some constraints, such as deficiencies in the legal environment (which offers no tax exemptions to encourage company donations) and a lack of transparency, as well as lack of awareness about fund expenses and places to contribute (Alymkulova, Seipulnik 2005, Heap, 2000).

A new Tax Code went into effect on January 1, 2009 and contains a very significant change contributing to NGO sustainability. This change provides a basis for valuation of donated goods and services. Prior law permitted such types of donations in principle but did not contain a method for determining value, which discouraged in-kind donations (USAID, 2010). This modification provides incentives for local businesses to make in-kind donations to NGOs.

Local philanthropy, including contributions from foundations such as Seymar and Kus Zholy, is decreasing as a result of the financial crisis. The major companies involved in the extractive industry allocate significant resources to the social and economic development of the mineral extracting regions both through social obligations contained in their contracts and additional charitable programs. Companies fund social infrastructure projects, award grants to civil society organizations (CSOs), or make direct charitable donations to needy individuals. While businesses are prepared to work with CSOs, CSOs must improve their professionalism in order to develop an effective relationship with the business sector (USAID, 2011).

There are many ways to invest in the community, including partnerships with community-based organizations, employee-volunteer programs, membership on non-profit boards and in-kind donations of goods and professional services. The primary means for conducting business philanthropic strategies are public-relations campaigns, liaisons and publications about project implementation. The most favorable conditions for corporate/business philanthropy are found in the West Kazakhstan region, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Astana, Karaganda and Almaty cities (Alymkulova, Seipulnik 2005).

Many large companies realize that it is essential not only to earn profits, but also to create a good image; reputation and profits are linked. It is very important for a company to strengthen the image as a corporate citizen of the country. For example, the goal of Tengizchevroil is to be a company that is respected by the entire population of Kazakhstan. Their strategy is to help NGOs, not to concentrate wholly on increasing their business profits.

Large companies have marketing and public relations departments whose specialists co-operate closely with NGO representatives. Usually the Directors or fund-raising specialists of NGOs are responsible for interaction with the private sector. For example, the Special Olympics Kazakstan had established a committee on fund-raising, which included representatives from companies with ongoing sponsorship (Coca-Cola, Mobil and Chevron) (Heap, 2000).

Different forms of collaboration exist between NGOs and corporations. The interesting example here would be the Petroleum Advisory Forum (PAF). It was established by foreign oil companies in Russia in the early 1990s. One of the main objectives of this group was to work on Russian tax legislation, which at that time was underdeveloped. Oil companies realized usefulness of collaboration or at least coordination of policies in some areas. But at the same time companies do not advertise their activities in sensitive areas (Gulbrandsen, Moe, 2005).

There are also two forums of particular importance to International Oil Companies (IOC) in Kazakhstan: the Kazakhstan Petroleum Association (KPA) and the Foreign Investors Council (FIC). But unfortunately NGOs and other stakeholders do not participate in these forums. At the same time there is a growing tendency to look for alliances and collaboration between NGOs and corporations with specific programs at the national level (Gulbrandsen, Moe, 2005).

USAID and Chevron are working together in the Central Asian Republics to improve oil field management and share best practices. Chevron supports local adoption of modern oil field waste management practices by allowing access to the Tengiz oil field and demonstrating management best practices. Those activities complement USAID/CAR's training of regulators, NGOs and local companies. Chevron is also working with USAID on health initiatives that benefit local communities. (USAID, 2006).

It has been found that the involvement of private associations and nonprofit organizations is extremely important for the success of any anti-corruption and transparency initiatives. Watchdog groups such as Transparency International or Kazakhstan Revenue Watch have an important role to play in Corporate Social Responsibility and Societal Governance monitoring and disseminating information, ensuring that larger development goals are obtained, influencing policy and training local civil society groups to understand the relevant issues (Frynas, 2010).

The corporations establish partnerships with UN agencies and NGOs. Firms such as BP Amoco in Angola, Chevron in Kazakhstan, and many others have used such development partnerships to increase their standing with local governments, improve their public image. NGOs are approaching these new relationships thoughtfully and cautiously. A number of complex and strategic "cross-sector alliances" have been created in recent years, such as between CARE and Starbucks and between ACCION International and Citibank, where complementarities of mission and values are identified and utilized to the benefit of both parties (Salamon, 2003).

The presence of major national and international oil companies has had a specific effect on the role of NGOs in the oil-producing regions of western Kazakhstan. One study found that the companies' role in the local communities had "decreased the demand for and appeal of environmental activism" in Kazakhstan. In fact, companies often have engaged the local population directly, thereby circumventing NGOs and lessening their roles. As a result, NGOs in the region have struggled to gain popular support in opposing the energy sector's development (Lee 2007).

6. Conclusion

Collaboration between NGOs and business organizations has received attention in recent years. NGOs and business organizations need to develop new approaches to collaboration. When forming partnership organizations need to identify their real strategic needs. It is also important to understand partners from other sector and their interest in order to use this information for developing the common strategy for collaboration. Some businesses do show interest in cooperating with professionally working NGOs. Business organizations and NGOs need to be more open and transparent.

There are short-term programs, activities initiated by international and business organizations with some involvement of NGOs in Kazakhstan. Sometimes attitude of NGOs to this collaboration is very cautious. NGOs in Kazakhstan are not included in important alliances, forums, which are forms of collaboration between NGOs and business. There is a slow tendency to look for alliances, collaboration at the national level.

NGOs in Kazakhstan experience an early stage of developing collaboration with business sector. There is a need to move from short-term activities to strategy of the development. The obstacles to this development can be found in legal regulations, absence of a long-term vision. It was found that there is a gradual shift towards a collaboration between NGOs and private sector. However, it is too early to evaluate the effect of this shift on sustainable development.

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