

DEVELOPMENT OF NGOs IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

Kazakhstan has experienced significant changes in economic, social, and political development since its independence in 1991. One of the changes is the growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The activities of NGOs in Kazakhstan are especially important as means of developing civil society in the country. In Kazakhstan the NGOs function in various areas including health care, education, human rights, environment, assistance to the disabled, and many others.

The article aims to explore understandings of important issues and tendencies in the development of NGOs in Kazakhstan. This qualitative study examines the history of NGOs, legal basis, features of NGOs development and concentrates on some challenges faced by NGOs in Kazakhstan. Despite some positive results in state - NGO relationships, there is a need to provide a real collaboration of NGOs with government. Growth of NGOs was highly supported by international organizations. Many of these organizations decreased funding programs. In these conditions diversifying sources of financing becomes very important.

Since there is relatively little information about NGOs' in Kazakhstan, the paper helps to understand this area of social inquiry.

Key words: Non-governmental organizations, Civil society, Development, Kazakhstan.

1. Introduction

NGOs play a crucial role in the development of a civil society. Globalization strengthened the position of NGOs. In 1970s more than 90 percent of humanitarian aid from the EU was financed by governments and none via NGOs. 30 years later only 6 percent of aid comes from government resources and 37 percent from NGO resources (Laboutkova, 2009). 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.

The definition of non-governmental organization came into use with the establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945. There was a need to give a consultative role for organizations which were not referred to government nor member states (Willets, 2002). 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 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 some challenges of NGO development in Kazakhstan. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a history of NGOs in Kazakhstan. In section 3 legal basis for NGO development is discussed. Section 4 discusses NGOs in Kazakhstan. In section 5 challenges of NGOs are presented, and section 6 is the conclusion.

2. History of NGOs in Kazakhstan

In the Soviet era there were a few large public institutions, such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Society, the Nature Protection Society, the Peace Fund, the Children's Fund and several others. These organizations were roots of modern NGOs. Creation of these public organizations was possible only with governments. They were financed from the state budget and through membership fees. This practice was typical for all former Soviet Union countries (Kazybekov, 2011).

As formal organized entities NGOs in Kazakhstan have a relatively recent history. NGOs' growth, especially in the early stages of the country's development, would not have been possible without the support of international organizations and programs (Diachenko, 2008). There was significant financial support from international funding agencies, mainly from the United States and Western Europe to facilitate this growth in the early stages.

The history of Kazakhstan's NGO sector can be divided into four stages of development, with the first stage starting from the late 1980's to 1993 (Nowicki, 2000). This was between around the end of the Soviet Union and the early period of Kazakhstan's independence. Because of a lack of appropriate legislation regulating public groups, traditional volunteer organizations began to develop a quasi-independent character. During this period, about 400 NGOs were created and these were mostly concerned with human rights issues (UNDP, 2002). Ecological groups were among the first groups developed in the country. One of the first organized ecological initiatives was the international anti-nuclear movement Nevada-Semipalatinsk, created in 1989. The movement's main achievement was the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site in 1990. Another important event during this stage was the creation of Central Asian Sustainable Development Information Network (CASDIN) organization. It published the Information Methodological Bulletin, which was distributed all over the Central Asia, being the main source of information on civil society development for many local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan: 20 years of Development, 2011). However, this period was symbolized by a lack of systematic approach in the development and management of NGO operations due to a lack of experience and skills (ADB, 2007).

The second stage was between 1994 and 1997 when the independent nonprofit sector expanded due to new legislation governing the activities of public associations (Diachenko, 2008). This period was marked by a rapid growth in the number of registered NGOs in the country, which numbered about 1,600 (Diachenko, 2008). This stage was characterized by a wave of international NGOs that helped newly established charitable sectors in former Soviet countries. International organizations provided grants to support new social initiatives, and arranged training for NGO leaders in the management and administration of the nonprofit sector. Among these international organizations were the following: USAID, UNDP, Soros Foundation, Hivos, Counterpart Consortium, TACIS, Eurasia Foundation, INTRAC, and many others. The most active NGOs at that time were Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights, Interlegal Foundation, Almaty Helsinki Committee, Feminist League, Green Salvation, CASDIN, EcoCenter, Association of Young Leaders, and many others (Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan: 20 years of Development, 2011).

The third stage began in 1998 and lasted till 2002 (Diachenko, 2008; www.carec.kz). A number of NGOs was established, such as the Kazakhstan NGOs Confederation, Environmental Forum for NGOs, Asian Society for Rights of Disabled persons "Zhan". They aimed at consolidating the NGO sector. At the same time this period witnessed a decline in the number of NGOs in the country. The decline was due to a number of reasons, ranging from political uncertainties, to financial difficulties in the country (Alymkulova &

Seipulnik, 2005). Contributions to nonprofits from the state budget declined because of a slowing economy. New restrictive registration procedures further complicated matters for the nonprofit sector, and there was a gradual withdrawal of international financial support which resulted in the closure of many weak NGOs in the country (www.cap.online.kz).

The NGO sector is currently in its fourth stage of development, beginning from 2003 (Diachenko, 2008). This stage is characterised by constructive cooperation between government bodies and the NGO sector. A number of Civil Forums have been held between NGOs and governmental units to discuss issues relevant for NGO development in the country. In 2005, the government passed the Law On the State Social Order which executes government orders by implementing NGO social programs in accordance with solving the country's urgent problems in social security; public health and the environment; civil law; science and education; and culture (Diachenko, 2008; Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011). In 2006 the Concept of Civil Society Development in Kazakhstan for 2006-2011 was adopted. The purpose of this concept was further improvement of the legislative, social, economic and organizational-methodical base for comprehensive development of civil society institutes. It planned to improve transparency of the forming and implementation of the state social order, continue the process of interacting between the state and NGOs, and strengthen the institutional and organizational basis of providing support to the NGO sector development. Since 2007, NGOs are exempt from paying taxes, and the regulation of tax privileges has improved (Adams and Garbutt, 2008; Diachenko, 2008). In 2009, the ban on state financing of public associations was removed by the Law on Public Associations, consistent with the removal of a similar provision from the constitution in 2007 (USAID, 2010). The government also removed some of the burdensome reporting requirements by eliminating supplemental forms that required detailed reporting on transactions and expenditures connected to foreign funds. Since 2009 NGOs receiving foreign funds need indicate only their total expenses in various categories (USAID, 2010; www.mvd.kz).

3. Legal Basis for NGO Development

Activities of the NGOs are regulated by the 1996 Law on Public Associations, and the 2001 Law on Noncommercial Organizations.

The Law on Public Associations of the Republic of Kazakhstan states the basics for activities of public associations, their rights and liabilities, their status, establishment, reorganization and termination. In compliance with the law "public associations are established to implement and protect political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms, to develop activities and individual initiatives of citizens, to meet their professional and amateur interests, to develop scientific, engineering and creative capabilities, to protect environment, to take part in charity, to promote educational and sport activities, to protect historical and cultural heritage, to carry on patriotic and humanitarian education, to promote and develop international cooperation and other activities not prohibited by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan"(The Law on Public Associations 1996, Article 5. Amended 05 15 2007). However, the law stipulates that "activities of unregistered public associations are prohibited" (The Law on Public Associations 1996, Article 5).

National legislation uses the term "non-commercial organization" rather than non-governmental organization. The Law on Non-Commercial Organizations in Kazakhstan was issued in January 16, 2001. According to it the following non-commercial legal entities are defined: institutions, public associations, joint stock companies, consumers' cooperatives, foundations, religious associations, associations of legal entities in the form of association or union (The Law on Non-Commercial Organizations 2001, Article 6).

In 2005, the government passed the Law On the State Social Order which executes government orders by implementing NGO social programs in accordance with solving the country's urgent problems in social security; public health and the environment; civil law; science and education; and culture (Diachenko, 2008; Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011).

NGOs are exempt from paying taxes, and the regulation of tax privileges has improved gradually. Since January 2007, funds received under state contracts are exempt from corporate income tax and value-added tax. In addition, NGO s providing services to specific social groups, such as invalids, are exempt from paying income tax on their economic activities (NGO Civil Society Brief- Kazakhstan.)

In 2009 five positive modifications in the laws and regulations for civil society in Kazakhstan were introduced. These improvements allow state financing of public associations, and provide strong incentives for local businesses to make in-kind donations to a broader range of organizations. In 2012, the Association of Charitable Organizations of Kazakhstan will initiate amendments to the Tax Code to encourage philanthropy by providing tax benefits for corporate and individual donors (USAID 2011).

4. NGOs in Kazakhstan

4.1. Characteristics of NGO sector

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).

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).

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).

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 Podrugi, 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.

4.2. State-NGO relationships

The efficiency of Kazakhstan's NGOs' activities is highly affected by government support (Diachenko, 2008; Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011). NGO initiatives are usually implemented with the support of competent state authorities. The low level of support from the government in the 1990s was the main reason that Kazakhstan's NGOs sought comprehensive aid, primarily financial, from foreign sources. This was because the government did not know how to respond to the roles of nonprofits since there was no history of volunteerism in the country. The dialogue between the government and NGOs resulted in the formation of a center for the support of NGOs in 2002 called the Info-Center of NGOs. The center provides government support to NGOs by providing informational, methodological, consultative, and organizational-technical assistance (Brudney and Nezhina, 2005). The adoption of the Conception of Government Support of NGOs in 2003 was a significant event in the development of cooperation between the government and NGOs. The Conception sets forth the main goals, assignments, principles, and forms of government support of NGOs (Diachenko, 2008).

A number of Civic Forums were held to foster cooperation between the government and NGOs. The first Civic Forum was held in 2003 with the aim of establishing a new model of partnership between the government, business, and the NGO sector. In 2005 the second Civic Forum was held in Astana with the goal of creating a civil alliance of NGOs, introducing a government social order system, and drawing up proposals for interaction between the NGOs and the business sector (Diachenko, 2008; <http://missions.itu.int>). In 2007, the third Civic Forum was organized and this was the first time ministers publicly declared their cooperation with NGOs (www.mvd.kz). This led the way for NGOs to start implementing state-financed projects in different areas. The fourth Civic Forum was an important event for NGOs because several sessions of the Forum were held in all regions of the country. Participants established working panels where NGOs could advance the issues of their target groups through dialogue with representatives of state ministries, hear ministers' reports, and develop solutions to issues of importance. Based on the decisions of the Civic Forums, Interaction Councils were established, which serve as consultative bodies for the local governments and the central government. NGO representatives are now members of the National Council under the President. They are also appointed to the Human Rights Commission, Expert Councils, and the Council for Sustainable Development (www.cap.online.kz). The fifth Civic Forum was held in Astana in 2011. It was organized on the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan and brought together 600 delegates from across the country, as well as foreign CSO specialists, to review the development of civil society in the country and identify the main priorities for future development (USAID, 2011).

A number of examples illustrate the effects of NGO-Government cooperation in Kazakhstan. A case in point is the role of the Diabetics Association of the Republic of Kazakhstan (DARK), which seeks to improve the quality of life for people with diabetes (Brudney and Nezhina, 2005). During the early years of transition, the government introduced health sector reforms which only covered the cost of treatment but did not cover the costs of medication. As a result, only 20 percent of the country's diabetics could afford insulin. Health activists responded by creating DARK to lobby the government to cover the cost of insulin. By 1996 DARK

was recognized by the government as a partner in improving government's health policy for diabetics. The President of DARK was appointed as civic observer on the insulin procurement commission. In November 2000, after public hearings in various parts of the country, the Prime Minister approved DARK's proposal for a comprehensive three-year Diabetes Program. By 2003, compulsory provision of insulin free of charge was made law. (Alymkulova and Seipulnik, 2005). Another example is how a coalition of more than fifty NGOs working for the rights of the disabled took part in writing the 2009 UN Human Development Report for Kazakhstan. The coalition successfully lobbied for Kazakhstan's ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Similarly, the Women's Rights Center in Almaty successfully advocated for the removal of obstacles to citizens' access to court hearings (www.carec.kz).

5. Challenges of NGOs

5.1. Transparency and Accountability

One of the challenges facing NGOs in Kazakhstan is the lack of public trust. (Nowicki, 2000, Makhmutova, Akhmetova, 2011). A starting point to enhance public trust is public disclosure of financial activities. In most Central Asian countries little attention has been paid to issues of financial transparency (Giffen, 2005). Kazakhstan's NGOs lack transparency and do not disclose their sources of income. NGOs need to understand stakeholders' expectations and respond effectively to them.

NGOs serve different stakeholders – clients, donors, target groups, and staff – and operate in environments that provide them with relative 'immunity from transparency' (Hayden, 2002). Researchers, meanwhile, have underlined the need for greater NGO accountability. Ebrahim (2003) shows empirically that most NGOs emphasize upward and external accountability to donors, whereas downward and internal accountability mechanisms remain comparatively underdeveloped and short-term. Transparency is a category related to the issue of NGO accountability. When considering mechanisms for providing accountability, the most obvious is to ensure that NGOs are transparent (Vaccaro, Madsen, 2009). Moreover, Cohen (2004) points to the need to improve the transparency of the relationships between NGOs and three important stakeholders, i.e. governments, financial supporters and the public (Vaccaro, Madsen, 2009).

NGOs in Kazakhstan rarely publish annual reports. Lack of transparency among NGOs remains a significant weakness. There is a need in a culture of transparency and accountability in the sector (USAID 2011). This is a huge, long-term challenge. However, NGOs have an understanding that their ability to attract constituents is directly related to their degree of openness and transparency.

5.2. Collaboration with government

Collaboration can be defined as the "process by which organizations with a stake in a problem seek a mutually determined solution [pursuing] objectives they could not achieve working alone" (Gazley, Brudney, 2007).

Despite some positive changes in the NGO-state relations, there are some deficiencies. A considerable amount of the government's social contracts are distributed through a relatively small number of NGOs and the procedures for state social funding are not transparent (Makhmutova, Akhmetova, 2011). According to local NGO activists (Ruffin, 2011), in Kazakhstan the government does not view NGOs as strong partners. In these conditions NGOs use their resources for adapting to the changes in the environment. According to experts' opinion, along with recognizing the NGO sector as a social institution, the state underestimates the

potential of NGOs. This strongly reduces the possibilities of NGOs development in Kazakhstan. All the interviewed experts state, that the NGO opinions are often taken into account only at the initial stage of decision making (when working out the agenda), but at the final stages of decision making the NGOs' opinions are usually neglected (Non-Governmental Organizations of Kazakhstan: 20 years of Development, 2011).

5.3. Financing

The main sources of funding for NGOs were grants from international donors. Many of these donors decreased funding programs in recent years (Makhmutova, Akhmetova, 2011). NGOs make attempts to diversify their sources of funding. Some NGOs have several sources of funding, including government agencies, international organizations, private businesses, other Kazakhstani NGOs, foreign companies, urban residents, educational institutions, Kazakhstani businesses and banks, religious groups, and NGOs from neighboring countries (USAID 2009).

According to the Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan (2009), NGOs should have financial independence from foreign donors, and the government looks likely to be a main provider of funding (Makhmutova, Akhmetova, 2011). State social contracts are currently the most significant source of funding for NGOs in Kazakhstan. Total funding for state social contracts in 2011 amounted to approximately 2 billion tenge (approximately \$13.5 million), compared to 1.9 billion tenge in 2010 (USAID 2011).

The mechanisms for state contracting are not effective. Social contracts tend to be short-term and long-term orientation becomes problematic. Moreover, little information is available about projects carried out under state social contracts. There are some cases of ineffective spending of money by NGOs that have received state social financing (USAID 2010). The increased number, scope of NGOs require more transparency and verification of NGOs' activities and performance.

5.4. Human Resources

Very often leaders of NGOs are enthusiastic and dynamic people, but they need appropriate skills and expertise to manage organizations (Cooper, 2011). The weak sustainability of human resources can be seen as the result of limited financial opportunities and resources, as well as short term project-oriented activities (Makhmutova, Akhmetova, 2011).

NGOs in Kazakhstan have underdeveloped organizational systems in the areas of human resources (USAID 2010). A major challenge is the lack of professional and skilled managers, and qualified staff and volunteers. A survey of the country's NGOs found that 25 percent indicated lack of qualified and professional staff as the key factor leading to poor development and inefficiency, while 31 percent view lack of a tradition of volunteerism as one of the causes of poor NGO development in the country. A weak human resources base partly explains the ineffectiveness of most NGOs in country. Only 14 percent of civil society organizations in Kazakhstan have sustainable human resources base, mostly due to lack of funding (Diachenko 2008).

Human resources management could be improved through formal training programs for key staff members. Training on various aspects of organizational development, strategic planning, proposal writing, assistance in organizing events and creating partnerships with other sectors need to be further developed. While international organizations have been providing training programs and technical assistance in such areas as planning and management, much of the training is based on Western standards, and in some cases is not relevant to local tradition and culture. The formation of NGO Institutes to provide training in managerial, goal setting, fund raising and implementation skills is highly desirable in the NGO sector (Peterson 2010).

6. Conclusion

Non-governmental organizations aim to establish public institutions capable to develop the civil society, to meet the social needs of population. They reflect the concerns of major social groups in terms of economic, social, and civil rights. This paper discussed some issues in the development of NGOs in Kazakhstan. During 20 years of independence certain positive results have been achieved in development of NGOs: establishing international contacts, improvement of state-NGO relationships, expanding intersectoral collaboration, diversification of NGO sector. NGOs in Kazakhstan moved on a new level of development, gradually make progress. Development of NGO sector requires increasing public awareness about the NGO sector, support of constituencies, collaboration with government, strong partnership with business sector, diversifying sources of funding, developed mechanism for volunteering.

According to Buxton (2012), “The creation of “social bloc”, that is, a broad social platform uniting NGOs, public sector workers, small businesses, and progressive intellectuals is a priority here. Indeed such a bloc would be a genuinely unifying factor of the kind the Central Asia region needs and deserves.” It is hoped that the issues discussed in the article contribute to the development of civil society.

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