



BIR BAGYTТА

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Collaborative Governance Program

The Collaborative Governance Program (CGP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), is a five-year project that works to foster effective collaboration between civil society and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to deliver social services to citizens, resulting in a more responsible and accountable government, as well as a more credible, sustainable civil society. CGP supports government efforts to increase civil society participation in service delivery through social procurement mechanisms. Simultaneously, CGP works to strengthen civil society's ability to shape public policy, enhance government transparency and outreach to citizens, and more actively engage citizens in advocacy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Partnership for Change Grants:
Request for Applications will be announced in February

Public Policy Support Grants:
Request for Applications will be announced in February

Social Procurement: What it Means and Why it Matters

Social procurement is a mechanism by which the government contracts with civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver social services in communities, to conduct research in support of decision-making, or to provide other valuable services and expertise to improve the lives of citizens. Social procurement is a key element in developing partnerships between CSOs and government to improve the quality of social services; it recognises and values the expertise of CSOs while at the same time enhancing their income and sustainability.

The current social protection system in the Kyrgyz Republic is strained trying to keep up with demand. New and more effective mechanisms for implementing social policy and service delivery are needed to ensure both the quality of social services for citizens and effective use of public financial and material resources. Historically, the government addressed social problems by establishing public funded entities (including human resources, facilities, public operational financing, etc.). Adopted in 2008, the Law on State Social Procurement (Law on SP) creates a legal basis for the government to contract with nonprofit civil society organizations to provide social services to the population through grants allocated from public funds.



*Minister Bazarbaev greets
USAID Officer Ann Hopper (left),
EWMI Chief of Party Lisa Hammond, and
ICNL Legal Expert Mahomed Gulzade*

Within the social procurement mechanism, the government continues to define the most pressing social needs; it then selects CSO partners through a fair and open competitive process, and allocates funds to local CSOs. In the ideal scenario, local CSOs are better informed about local nuances, more uniquely competent in discrete service areas, and better able to stretch funding by garnering additional donor and private support.

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* «Bir Bagytta» is a Kyrgyz expression that means «moving in one direction»

Social Procurement: What it Means and Why it Matters

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Years of experience with state social procurement (SSP) systems in other countries demonstrates its value in modernizing social service, including in the Kyrgyz Republic. However, to date, the Law on SP has been under-utilized. Five years since the enactment of the Law on SP, its application is stunted. Insufficient state funds are allocated through the SP mechanism, only the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has really utilized the law or mechanism, and there remains a lack of transparency within the SP system, including deficiencies in the bidding and selection processes. Efforts are underway to revise the Law on SP while also promoting its more widespread use.

As part of USAID's Collaborative Governance Program (CGP) implemented by East West Management Institute (EWMI) and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), substantive review and reform of the Law on SP is in progress. In September, six representatives of various state bodies were accompanied on a study tour to examine the SP system in Bulgaria. In October, CGP hosted a best-practices conference entitled *Social Procurement: International and Kyrgyzstan Experience*, bringing together experts from Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic, and over 70 participants from the *Jogorku Kenesh* (Parliament), the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the President's Apparatus, local governments, and leaders of civil society organizations and international organizations. In November, ICNL prepared an analysis of the current Kyrgyz legislation, informative comparative analyses of SP laws in Bulgaria, Netherlands, Estonia, Azerbaijan, and the United States, with recommendations to improve the Kyrgyz law in line with best practices. A working group of key experts has been formed under the Ministry of Social Development to collaborate on improving the Law on SP as well as other legal normative acts and regulations that address SP system gaps in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Meanwhile, it is vital that other ministries as well as local governments begin to examine and engage social procurement mechanisms – to provide quality social services to vulnerable groups and youth, as well as to support cutting-edge research, advance specialized education, enliven arts and culture, provide for community safety or disaster response, implement comprehensive job training and worker development, or fund a myriad of other broad or narrow but vital programs. Social procurement does not wholesale substitute for government services; done well, it promotes strategic use of resources and creates flexibility and adaptability around dynamic needs, expanding the pool of expertise and action and thereby enhancing both access and quality. Moreover, in an environment of limited resources, it is not a luxury to be afforded; it is a resource conservation tool that helps leverage donor and private support to do more with less public money. The benefits are real and plenty; the time to realize them is now.

Finger on the Pulse of the Kyrgyz Nonprofit Sector

If civil society organizations (CSOs) are to be value-added partners to government and vital voices for citizens, the sector must be competent, capable, adaptable, and resourced. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in its annual Sustainability Index, gauges the relative health of the nonprofit sector country-by-country worldwide. The Kyrgyz Republic falls somewhere in the middle range, with a score of 4.0 on overall CSO sustainability using a ranking spectrum from 1 to 7, where 1 is the most favorable rank.¹

Knowing these broad assessment results, but also looking to add nuance on which to build a strategy to improve the relative organizational well-being and advocacy capability of CSOs, East West Management's Collaborative Governance Program (CGP) undertook an Organizational and Advocacy Assessment of 60 diverse CSOs throughout the Kyrgyz Republic – small and large, new and mature, each with the common thread of active engagement in advocacy.



EWMI CGP grantees enjoying quarterly workshops

Results show that, **organizationally**, CSOs struggle most with elements of service provision, financial viability and public image. Many continue to be led by mercurial and over-worked founders, while high turnover of staff at other levels hampers organizational progress. At the same time, CSOs are, surprisingly, above the global curve when it comes to having office space and equipment.

In terms of capacity in **advocacy**, a comparison of CSOs suggests that strengths may be tied to regions – with CSOs in Naryn, Jalalabad, and Osh being at a later stage of development than those in Batken or other more rural areas. Across the board, critical thinking and strategic planning related to advocacy efforts – building an advocacy platform that is differentiated for various stakeholders – are problematic for a high percentage of CSOs. Work with media is also in its infancy for many. Instead, advocacy campaigns too often repeat the same impotent pattern of stakeholder workshops and roundtable discussions.

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¹ Scores in individual categories include: Legal Environment (3.8), Organizational Capacity (4.3), Financial Viability (5.3), Advocacy (3.1), Service Provision (4.0), Infrastructure (3.7), and Public Image (4.0).

Finger on the Pulse of the Kyrgyz Nonprofit Sector

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And while, as in most countries, CSOs in Bishkek or any capital city are typically more advanced than CSOs in rural areas, there is sometimes an accompanying snobbery that serves to further disenfranchise rural CSOs.

There are always exceptions to general findings; nonetheless trends identified through assessment inform both priorities and programming. In this case, results have led to a reaffirmation of CGP's commitment to devote resources to rural areas, to focus its capacity building and balance its grants to proactively include and feature regions outside of Bishkek, and to avoid formulaic training in favor of learning modes that stimulate critical thinking and offer practicum.

To that end, through its partner Association for Civil Society Support Centers, CGP offers advocacy-engaged CSOs throughout the country 3-day workshops on advocacy strategies and techniques, to promote more targeted strategic cause-and-effect analysis and stimulate design of advocacy campaigns that respond to variables and contingencies. CGP also ensures that all trainers and materials are suitable for both Russian- and Kyrgyz-speaking participants so that benefits of technical assistance accrue equally to various ethnic or national groups. To date, 70 people from 46 CSOs have participated in workshops conducted in Bishkek, Issyk-Kul, and Naryn, but covering all regions of the country.

As part of its core support for CSO grantees, CGP also provides specialized and routine hands-on assistance, navigating its partners through advocacy hurdles or organizational pitfalls. CGP conducts quarterly joint meetings, bringing together grantee management and line staff to learn more about monitoring and reporting techniques or receive tips on financial management. CGP-sponsored CSO peer-to-peer mentoring and regional Learning Circles afford grantees opportunities to learn from each other and problem-solve in unison. CGP grantees are also coupled with a mentor, Kyrgyz or international, to provide online or on-site mentoring on a myriad of topics from formulating an advocacy campaign through media, to designing a web-based advocacy tool, to strategies for diversifying funding streams.

CGP's holistic portfolio of assistance helps accelerate the pace of CSO development and build the strength and credibility of the CSO community – part of a vital reawakening that matters to CSOs themselves, to citizens, and to government. Healthy, viable and sustainable CSOs bring benefits to community, are apt partners for government, and are the first line of defense when the most vulnerable in society have been left behind.

Building the Next Generation of Professional Civil Society Leaders

In the last two decades there has been a massive upsurge of organized private, voluntary activity in virtually every corner of the globe. Long-held assumptions about the nonprofit sector as being made up of a small and unprofessional organizations funded primarily by philanthropy, and serving only to fill gaps left by government, turn out to be fundamentally wrong.

Today, the global civil society sector is widely recognized as a major economic force in its own right, employing some 95 million full-time equivalent (FTE) workers worldwide (of which about 60 million are paid employees and about 35 million are FTE unpaid volunteers). Data shows that in many countries, nonprofits employ more than 10% of the working population, placing it among the largest industries in terms of employment in those economies. Moreover, research evidences the crucial role the sector plays as a collaborator with and facilitator of government in the provision of public goods and services. Indeed, the countries boasting the largest and strongest civil society sectors are those in which government and nonprofit organizations partner – rather than compete – to deliver services. Making this partnership work requires joint will, coupled with a supportive policy and legal environment. Also critically needed is a sophisticated workforce that can manage the complex funding and operational management these organizational partnerships require.



Professor Lester Salamon and members of ACSSC

Though the rise of civil society organizations has been uneven worldwide, a national study carried out by the Kyrgyz National Statistical Committee, in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University (United States) and the United Nations Volunteers Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic, found that the civil society sector represents approximately 2.3% of gross domestic product and employs 3% of the country's workforce (including the value of volunteers), putting it on par with many other countries around the world. The research further indicates that Kyrgyz civil society organizations that are not foreign funded derive 85 percent of their income from fees for services; these entrepreneurial instincts help foster self-sustainability.

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Building the Next Generation of Professional Civil Society Leaders

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The material size of the civil society sector, coupled with its tremendous growth potential, will increasingly demand simultaneous growth in the development of professional staffs and managers. Thus, it is imperative to create opportunities for Kyrgyz university students to pursue a course of study that will prepare them for managing nonprofit organizations and navigating government partnerships in an increasingly sophisticated and complex environment.

To this end, a Consortium of 16 Kyrgyz universities, spearheaded by Kyrgyz National University as the organizing hub, has been established under a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate and share resources to improve existing nonprofit management (NPM) courses, establish new career-track courses, and enhance academic capabilities and resources for NPM studies. As part of the Collaborative Governance Program (CGP), the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies (JHU/CCSS) is supporting this effort by sharing insights it has gleaned from its ongoing studies of the nonprofit sector around the world, its previous experience developing curricula in nonprofit management, and its experience training emerging nonprofit leaders in Eastern Europe. Ongoing collaboration with civil society leaders – including the current trend of co-teaching a class – will also be critical to ensure that new courses meet real-world needs.

In December, 27 representatives from 16 public and private universities gathered to participate in the first in a series of professional workshops facilitated by JHU/CCSS staff. Over a period of five days, noted JHU professor Lester Salamon and two other experts actively engaged faculty and students in discussions about global trends and innovation in NPM and NPM studies, and the favorable shift in perception about the economic and social value of the nonprofit sector.

In conjunction with the conference, Kyrgyz National University launched its Nonprofit Resource Center, a physical and virtual library devoted to NPM and supported by USAID through CGP. Over 80 representatives from the Ministry of Education, international organizations, universities, CSOs and media were on site to help cut the ribbon. The JHU team also offered various lectures on NPM to a total of 55 CSOs, 19 faculty members, and 139 students from Osh and Bishkek.

Rooted in ideas stemming from the December conference, the JHU team worked with Kyrgyz academic peers to collaborate on precise themes, topics, materials and methods to successfully develop relevant courses for the Kyrgyz context. Multiple approaches will be utilized, including traditional lectures, but also featuring interactive and learning-by-doing techniques, research and group activities, and other ways to stimulate critical thinking and a learning environment for students.



MoU signed to launch the Consortium of Universities on nonprofit management in Kyrgyz Republic

An initial *Introduction to the Nonprofit Sector and Nonprofit Management* course should be ready for the classroom at a number of Kyrgyz universities by the fall of 2014. Universities in the Consortium will then have the option to develop additional courses on specific topics – such as nonprofit law, financial management, or advocacy – to be offered in subsequent semesters. Within four years, core courses in nonprofit management should be offered as a minor track at Kyrgyz National University and ideally in at least two other locations throughout the country.

Universities in the Kyrgyz Republic are embarking on a modernized path in the field of nonprofit management. Their plan is ambitious, but the confluence of motivated faculty, supportive rectors, and a vibrant and receptive NGO community bode well for their anticipated success.

East West Management Institute - Kyrgyz Republic

Address: 4 Koenkozova Street, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic 720017; Email: info-cgp@ewmi-kg.org;

Phone: +996 (0) 312-314-799