



Development through Regional Cooperation Program Draft Evaluation Report

May 15, 2015

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DISCLAIMER

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARGO	Civil Society Development Association
CSO	civil society organization
DRC	Development through Regional Cooperation Program
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	non-governmental organization
ToC	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, the Kazakhstani nonprofit organization ARGO Civil Society Development Association won a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development in Central Asia (USAID/CAR) to implement the “Development through Regional Cooperation” (DRC) program in the countries of Central Asia. The Program was launched in October 2012 and will run for three years, until November 2015. The Program aims to build civil society capacity in Central Asia by establishing a space for dialogue in which civil society organizations (CSOs) can improve their skills, share information and best practices, and develop cooperation.

This evaluation was focused on one of the key DRC components: development of collaboration between NGOs and government. The primary intended users of this evaluation ARGO and USAID needed to decide if the DRC “*theory of change*” implemented in the area of NGO-Government collaboration could be used in future endeavours in the region and beyond.

The evaluation methodology was based on the Case Study approach. Four cases of successful NGO-government collaboration were purposefully selected in two countries—Kazakhstan and Tajikistan – for an in-depth exploration. In Kazakhstan, one case was related to the Ministry of International Affairs and a second to the regional government in Kyzyl-orda area. In Tajikistan, one case involved the national Ministry of Justice and a second to regional and local governments in the Kurgan-tube (Khatlon) area.

The evaluation team used document review and semi-structured individual and group interviews for data collection. In order to establish the closest rapport with the informants and to receive the highest quality data it was important to use the language in which informants were most comfortable. Hence, in two cases in which all of the informants were from capital cities and were 100% fluent in Russian, all of the interviews were conducted in Russian. In two cases in the regions of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, the local interviewers conducted most of the interviews in the Kazakh and Tajik languages respectively.

Cross-case analysis allowed to unpack the DRC Theory of Change and to make explicit the DRC approach to supporting NGO-government collaboration.

Evaluation started in December 2014 and completed in May 2015.

Overall, the evaluation revealed that DRC implemented an effective approach to helping NGOs successfully engage in collaboration with their respective governments. This approach could be considered one of the substantial results of the DRC program.

The DRC theory of change is based on the assumption that collaboration between NGOs and government entities includes three phases: preparation, implementation, and closure.

The DRC has no direct authority to make collaboration happen, but it can undertake some activities that make it more likely to happen and to increase its effectiveness.

The further collaboration develops, the less the DRC can influence it, which is why most DRC efforts are focused on the preparatory phase of collaboration.

In general, the DRC has better access to NGOs and more opportunities to influence them than government entities.

It is possible that for various reasons the DRC paid less attention to the closure phase of collaborative activities, and could have been more effective in intensifying the effects of collaborative activities.

Based on the theory of change, the DRC approach is:

- *Oriented towards continuous support.* DRC contributes to all three stages of NGO-government collaboration: preparation, implementation, and closure.
- *Sensitive to the stage of collaboration.* DRC activities shift from proactive assistance, to selective support, to intensification of the effects.
- *Comprehensive.* DRC addresses all of the essential components of NGO-government collaboration.
- *Relationship-driven.* DRC recognizes the value and importance of personal relationships.
- *Adaptive and realistic.* DRC adjusts its activities to fit the changing real-world circumstances.
- *Country specific and culturally sensitive.* DRC considers political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts.

The evaluation led to the following main recommendations:

Recommendation 1. DRC should discuss its Theory of Change and the main features of its approach for supporting NGO-government collaboration within the program team and with program participants. This discussion will both enrich the ToC description and help to verify it. A final version of this ToC and the DRC approach should be developed as a result of these discussions.

Recommendation 2. DRC can use the Theory of Change for planning purposes and as a framework for analysis and evaluation in its future endeavors.

Recommendation 3. DRC should pay special attention to its interventions during the closure phase of NGO-government collaboration. It is likely that there are additional opportunities that have not yet been used by the program and its partners.

Recommendation 4. DRC should use a case study approach in the future for evaluation purposes when appropriate.

Recommendation 5. DRC should consider publishing an article in Russian and in English to make its ToC and the approach based on the ToC available to practitioners and researchers in the region and beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Description of the Program Evaluated

In 2012, the Kazakhstani nonprofit organization ARGO Civil Society Development Association won a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development in Central Asia (USAID/CAR) to implement the “Development through Regional Cooperation” (DRC) program in the countries of Central Asia. The Program was launched in October 2012 and will run for three years, until November 2015.

The Program aims to build civil society capacity in Central Asia by establishing a space for dialogue in which civil society organizations (CSOs) can improve their skills, share information and best practices, and develop cooperation.

The GOAL of the DRC program is to increase the capacity of CSOs to represent the voices of beneficiaries and constituents through communication and collaboration that effectively engages their respective governments in dialogue on all aspects of national and regional debate and policy making.

The DRC Program Objectives are:

- Strengthening the institutional capacity of civil society organizations in Central Asia
- Networking and exchange of experience and comparative studies on issues of common interest at the regional level
- Creation of the “Interactive Community” website (<http://cso-central.asia>) for CSOs in Central Asia. The website should become an important tool for information sharing and transfer of knowledge, organizing databases and materials of use to public organizations.

DRC activities include:

- Regional training seminars and internships to enhance the capacity of key project partners and community organizations in Central Asia
- Annual international conference “Regional Development: The View from Within” and semi-annual meetings with project partners
- Regional studies to identify thematic areas for cooperation and networking
- Launch of the “Interactive Community” website (<http://cso-central.asia>) for civil society organizations in the region
- Creation of a database of existing and new social organizations, as well as databases of leaders, trainers, researchers, and donors
- Assessment of the needs of organizations and initiative groups working in the fields of disability, gender, youth, etc.
- Technical support through consulting, training, and internships
- Financial support through grants

1.2. Purpose of the Evaluation and Evaluation Questions

This evaluation had to answer the following *key question*:

- *To what extent did the DRC program succeed in helping CSOs effectively engage in collaboration with their respective governments?*

ARGO and USAID (*the primary intended users of this evaluation*) needed to have this question answered in order to decide if the DRC “*theory of change*” implemented in the area of NGO-Government collaboration could be used in future endeavours in the region and beyond (*the primary intended use of this evaluation*).

The *evaluation questions* were:

1. Who was involved in collaboration?
2. Who initiated the dialogue?
3. How did the collaboration unfold? What is its current status? What are its prospects?
4. What factors affected collaboration in positive and/or negative ways?
5. What CSO activities were most/least effective for the development of collaboration with government? What problems did the CSOs face and how did they address them?
6. Did CSO capacity development take place in the cases under evaluation? If so, what kind of capacity developed and why? How did CSO capacity development affect the CSO-government collaboration?
7. What was ARGO/DRC role in the development of CSO-Government collaboration?
8. Are there any commonalities in how CSO-government collaboration developed in the cases being evaluated? If so, what are they? Are there any differences? How could commonalities and differences be explained?
9. What do the cases being evaluated have in common in terms of the ARGO/DRC contribution to the development of CSO-government collaboration?
10. What was the DRC “*theory of change*” in these cases? What were its strengths and weaknesses? Could it be improved and how?

1.3. Nature of this evaluation and rationale for making methods decisions

The nature of this evaluation: This evaluation is aimed at discovering complex interrelationships in order to understand how the DRC program contributed to the development of CSO-government collaboration. Therefore, this inquiry is oriented towards a deeper understanding of the *phenomenon of interest*.

A few cases: Exploration of NGO-government collaboration is possible only in cases where it developed successfully. Otherwise, there will be nothing relevant to explore. Thus, careful selection of relevant (“*information rich*”) cases is an important part of this evaluation—a sampling strategy called *purposeful sampling* in research literature.

Evaluation questions: The evaluation questions are not theory-derived or theory testing; they are exploratory. Answers to the evaluation questions may help discover something new, not verify a pre-existing model or hypothesis.

Inductive approach: The DRC program was focused on developing CSO networks and building CSO capacity in the region. The original program theory was aimed at this outcome and there was no theory for developing CSO-government collaboration. Of course, such collaboration has successfully developed in some cases, but with no explicit “*theory*” behind it. Of necessity, the evaluation must first “*reconstruct*” the theory of change that emerged in the course of the program, and only then analyze and discuss it. Such an approach to research and evaluation is called *inductive*: it starts with collection of empirical data and theories are formulated towards the end of the study. This inductive evaluation has to be open to whatever emerges in the course of data collection and has to build on *inductive analysis*.

Studying life as it is: The only way to collect information on the evaluation topic is to work in the field and to study individuals and organizations in their natural settings. This has to be a

naturalistic inquiry occurring without opportunities to manipulate or control variables in the settings under study.

Sources of information available for evaluation: Data that can answer the evaluation questions will be *mostly descriptive*. The key informants are individuals working for CSOs, government entities, and the ARGO/DRC Program. Most of the information that will be gathered has to be drawn from their memories and experiences. For the most part, the documentation available for this evaluation (the program and project plans and reports, publications, and audio- and video-materials) is also narrative.

Evaluators' style: The final product of this evaluation should be constructive and forward-looking. It is important for evaluators to emphasize the learning and non-judgmental nature of their mission in order to develop collaborative relationships with the informants. Thus evaluators necessarily take an “*active learning*” approach rather than an “expert judgment” approach.

The evaluation, therefore, had to be a *naturalistic* field study:

- Oriented towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest
- Based on a few cases
- Driven by exploratory research questions
- Built on inductive analysis of mostly narrative data, drawn from individuals' memories and documents
- Conducted by evaluators involved as active learners

These characteristics are fully in line with the *Case Study methodology* described in Annex 1.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Sources of information

The information gathered to address the evaluation questions was mostly descriptive and derived from semi-structured interviews. Therefore, most of the data was based on the opinions, recollections, and experiences of people. Key sources of information included the ARGO and DRC leadership and professional staff, representatives from government entities and NGOs, and clients and beneficiaries of the activities. Some documents—project descriptions, reports, publications, and conference presentations—were reviewed. During the course of this evaluation the evaluation team (ET) remained open to any relevant new information and used rigorous inductive analysis to come to conclusions and recommendations.

1.4.2. Sampling strategy and rationale for selecting cases

The evaluators used a *purposeful sampling strategy* to identify information-rich cases—the sources from which they could learn the most about NGO-government collaboration in the DRC program.

The key criteria for selecting the cases were (a) the amount and quality of information, and (b) their diversity in terms of geographic regions, levels of government entities involved in collaboration (central government and regional/local governments), activities implemented, and the changes that occurred.

The four cases represented two countries—Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan, one case was related to the Ministry of International Affairs and a second to the regional government in

Kyzyl-orda area. In Tajikistan, one case involved the national Ministry of Justice and a second to regional and local governments in the Kurgan-tube (Khatlon) area.

Activities implemented included development of policies at the national and regional levels, providing support to vulnerable groups of population, facilitation of NGO-government dialogue, and capacity building.

1.4.3. Data Collection Methods

*Document Review*¹

The Evaluation Team reviewed cases-related documents such as the DRC program description, projects plans and reports, and conference programs and presentations. The Evaluation Team also explored online publications (including forums and social networks) and media publications concerning the chosen cases.

Semi-structured in-depth individual and group interviews

The Evaluation Team used semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect information from individuals. As the respondents' experiences were heterogeneous, the team used a mixed approach in developing the interview instrument based on a combination of interview guides and informal conversation approaches. Most interviews were with individuals. In some cases the evaluators conducted interviews with small groups of 3–7 people. Sometimes small group interviews were followed by individual interviews with selected group members to collect additional information in a setting more comfortable for the informants.

The interview guide approach requires that interview topics and issues be specified in advance, while the interviewer can decide on the sequence and wording of questions in the course of the interview. The strength of this approach is that the interview guide increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection more systematic. The weakness of this approach is that important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted.

When the informal conversation interview approach is used, questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of the conversation. There are no predetermined question topics or wording. The strength of this approach is its ability to increase the salience and relevance of questions asked during an interview and those that arise from observations. The questions can be matched to individuals and circumstances. The weaknesses of this approach are that it is less comprehensive and systematic: different information is collected from different people resulting in organizational and analytical challenges. Mixing these two approaches, however, allowed us to minimize the weaknesses and benefit from the strengths. In most cases the length of each semi-structured interview was about 1–1.5 hours.

1.4.4. Triangulation

Triangulation refers to double or triple checking results using different methods, data sources and/or experts. To increase the accuracy and credibility of the evaluation findings, the Evaluation Team used two types of triangulation:

- Methodological triangulation— data was collected using *two methods*
- Data source triangulation—data was collected from a *variety of sources*

¹ The list of documents studied is included as Annex 2.

1.4.5. Language issues

In order to establish the closest rapport with the informants and to receive the highest quality data it was important to use the language in which our informants were most comfortable. Hence, in two cases in which all of the informants were from capital cities and were 100% fluent in Russian, all of the interviews were conducted in Russian. In two cases in the regions of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, the local interviewers conducted most of the interviews in the Kazakh and Tajik languages respectively. The same protocols were used in all cases and the team leader instructed the local interviewers. Interview notes were translated into Russian and discussed with the team leader via Skype.

1.4.6. Data analysis

Four distinct processes were involved in making sense out of the evaluation findings.²

1. *Description and analysis*: Describing and analyzing findings involves organizing the raw data into a form that reveal basic patterns.
2. *Interpretation*: What do the results mean? What is the significance of the findings? Why did the findings turn out this way? What are possible explanations of the results? Interpretations go beyond the data to add context, determine meaning, and tease out substantive significance based on deduction or inference.
3. *Judgment*: Values are added to analysis and interpretations. Determining merit or worth means resolving to what extent and in what ways the results are positive or negative. What is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, in the outcomes?
4. *Recommendations*: The final step adds action to analysis, interpretation, and judgment. What should be done? What are the action implications of the findings? Only recommendations that follow from and are grounded in the data ought to be formulated.

1.4.7. Protection of human subjects

It is important to *ensure that evaluation participants are protected*. The evaluation team made arrangements for all of the evaluation activities with the heads of participating entities and explained the purpose and tasks of the study to them and to all interviewees; obtained verbal permissions from organizations and individuals to collect and use the information gathered; and negotiated informal rules of the joint work. When asked, evaluators always allowed people to see the interview questions in advance. They also discussed drafts of the case study descriptions with the key informants to avoid factual mistakes and to consider ethical issues.

1.4.8. Challenges and limitations

Qualitative data allows a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of peoples' experiences with the program. Collecting such in-depth and detailed data is time consuming, however, and it was necessary for the evaluators to restrict the number of people to be interviewed.³ Moreover, in relation to the sampling strategy, the entire population being studied was relatively small and diverse, and the evaluation team was not able to collect data from all of the DRC regions due to the time constraints. This is the context behind the logic of the sampling strategy. While using

² Based on Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (p. 307)

³ The Evaluation Team ended up conducting 39 interviews with 37 people (see Annex 3).

purposeful sampling does not allow generalization, it does allow *extrapolation*,⁴ which is sufficient for the purposes of this evaluation. The DRC intervention model and its “theory of change” were based on the analysis of the four cases. The theory of change was tested on several additional cases with the DRC leaders; it proved to be relevant and to adequately reflect the DRC approach.

Another challenge of the qualitative methodology is that an evaluator is an instrument of research and inevitably brings his/her perceptions and values to the study. To minimize the possible distortion of the findings, the evaluation included numerous “feedback loops” confirming the accuracy of the findings with the informants that involved all the key informants and the DRC leadership.

1.4.9. Collaborative approach to evaluation

This evaluation was a truly collaborative effort. ARGO leaders and professional staff as well as representatives of several NGOs were actively involved in the evaluation process in two capacities: as informants and as partners who helped to develop rich descriptions of the four cases and interpret them. In order to make their participation most effective, Alexey Kuzmin conducted an introductory workshop on the case study method in Almaty in the very beginning of the evaluation process. After the workshop local interviewers were instructed individually on how to collect data.

⁴ Extrapolation here is understood to be an inference about the future (or about some hypothetical situation) based on known facts and observations.

2. EVALUATION FINDINGS

2.1. Case 1. ARGO's cooperation and potential partnership with the Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2.1.1. Participants in the cooperative efforts

ARGO (Civil Society Development Association) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan participated in the cooperative efforts. From ARGO's side, Executive Director Jamila Asanova and DRC Director Kaisha Atakhanova played an active role in collaboration. Ambassador-at-Large Usen Suleimen played an active role on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2.1.2. Initiator of collaborative efforts

ARGO initiated the collaborative efforts.

In the framework of preparation for the 6th Civic Forum, which took place in November 2013, ARGO sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with which the association has had long-held ties.

ARGO's idea was to invite guest representatives to the Civic Forum from the Central Asian Republics where the *Development through Regional Cooperation*⁵ (DRC) program had been implemented. Such invitations were logical in the context of the program, as an exchange of best practices between Central Asian Republics in the field of civil society development is one of the key objectives of the program. However, it is worth noting that the idea to invite guests from neighbouring Central Asian Republics was not included in the original plans for the Civic Forum. The idea occurred to ARGO's leadership during preparation leading up to the forum.

The Ministry of Culture and Sport recommended that ARGO refer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the MFA was responsible for coordinating invitations for guests from abroad to the Civic Forum. The letter from ARGO to the Ministry of Culture and Sport was transferred to the MFA.

2.1.3. Development of collaborative efforts

Collaboration between ARGO and the MFA began with the spring 2013 letter from ARGO addressed to the MFA (see above). The letter extended an invitation to MFA representatives, as well as international donors and NGOs, to take part in a *roundtable* within the framework of the Civic Forum. Upon analysing ARGO's offer and consulting with ARGO representatives, the MFA suggesting using a *discussion platform* instead of a roundtable format, analogous to other ministries. This was a first in the history of Civic Forums held in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The MFA discussion platform preparation included the participation of:

- The MFA, represented by Ambassador-at-Large Usen Suleimen and MFA Advisor Dana Khusainova
- ARGO, represented by Executive Director Jamila Asanova and DRC Director Kaisha Atakhanova

⁵ Development through Regional Cooperation (DRC)

- Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan, represented by Mikhail Tyunin, also a member of the Civic Alliance Advisory Council⁶

The collaboration between ARGO and the MFA developed within the framework of planning and preparation for the meeting established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Erlan Idrissov, with NGO representatives from foreign and international organizations at the discussion platform held during the 6th Civic Forum in November 2013.

The event within the framework of the Civic Forum was held successfully.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Idrissov gave an address at the event. During his speech, he noted that “from the moment of gaining independence, democracy remains an important direction of Kazakhstan’s internal work to build a strong foundation for economic and political growth. This principle was confirmed in December of 2012 when the head of state introduced the republic and world to the ‘Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy’.” In this strategy, modernization of the political system is considered an integral part of the progressive development of Kazakhstan, strengthening the foundations of stability, security, and economic growth. In this vein, the Minister called for national and international NGOs, as well as western partners, to work together in a constructive and transparent way on questions of state building within the framework of Kazakhstan’s “2050 Strategy”.⁷

Speakers at the event included Yevgeniy Zhovtis, Chairman of the Board, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law⁸; Vice President of the International Center for Non-For-Profit Law (ICNL) for Eurasia, Natalia Bourjaily; and ARGO Executive Director, Jamila Asanova.

A working session on collaboration between international and foreign NGOs was held within the framework of the Civic Forum. Usen Suleimen, Jamila Asanova, and Mikhail Tyunin acted as moderators for the session. State officials, NGO and donor representatives, and journalists all took part in the working session. The discussions were not easy: Questions were raised about the participation of foreign organizations in supporting “color revolutions” and the experience of Russia introducing a special status for some NGOs as “foreign agents.”

A noteworthy result of the session, however, was the recommendation to form a council, through which foreign organizations could communicate their plans. Foreign organizations’ efforts could be coordinated with the assistance of such a council. Kazakhstan’s MFA suggested that instead of creating a new council, the existing advisory board “Dialogue Platform on Human Dimension” under the MFA could be used for the purpose of this coordination.

At the culmination of the Civic Form, the MFA official included ARGO representatives Jamila Asanova and Kaisha Atakhanova as members of the advisory consulting body.

The advisory consulting body was founded under the MFA with the goal of organizing a dialogue among government bodies and nongovernmental organizations on questions of democratic development, rule of law, ensuring human rights and freedoms, and participation of society members in the law-making process. Inclusion of ARGO in the advisory body was a constructive outcome in several respects:

- (a) it gave ARGO a definite status in cooperation with the MFA;

⁶ Mikhail Tyunin is the Executive Director of the corporate foundation “Informational Initiative.” He is a member of the Coordinating Council of “Civic Alliance”—a national association of Kazakhstani NGOs.

⁷ <http://m.zakon.kz/4586548-glava-mid-rk-e.idrisov-provel-vstrechu.html>

⁸ Yevgeniy is also co-moderator of the MFA’s advisory consulting body.

(b) it extended the advisory board's agenda to include, in particular, issues of cooperation with international and foreign donors; and

(c) formalized ARGO's relationship with Kazakhstan's MFA as a professional resource in the sphere of developing official aid and formulating the Kazakhstan Agency for International Aid (KazAid).

In November 2014, Jamila Asanova and Kaisha Atakhanova gave a general presentation on ARGO's activities and the DRC program in particular at the meeting of the advisory consulting body.

An important result of this cooperation between ARGO and the MFA was Mr. Suleimen's acceptance of the invitation to join the Council for Regional Cooperation under the DRC Program. In addition, Mr. Suleimen actively participates in DRC program events, including conferences. While the participation of ministers at NGO events is not uncommon in Kazakhstan, the participation of a high-level state official, such as Mr. Suleimen, in the active NGO council, is a unique occurrence in Kazakhstan. This underscores, once again, the seriousness of the collaborative relationship between Kazakhstan's MFA and ARGO.

Mr. Suleiman notes ARGO's professionalism and experience, and the regional scale of the its activities. He believes that within the framework of developing KazAid, the MFA of the Republic of Kazakhstan has a direct reason to utilize ARGO's resources instead of "reinventing the wheel."

The possibility of entering into an agreement between the MFA and ARGO to provide services within the framework of developing KazAid is currently being considered. The contract would provide for conducting evaluative research in the Central Asian Republics and potentially in other regions as well.

2.1.4. Factors that contributed to or hindered the development of cooperation

Factors that allowed for collaboration included:

A Well-Established Reputation. ARGO's and DRC's reputation was established over the many years that the Ministry of Culture and Sport was responsible for collaboration between government and NGOs in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Ministry representatives were already well acquainted with ARGO and its leadership. In addition, the ministry was aware that ARGO had actively participated in preparing and holding previous Civic Forums. Because the DRC program was also well known and had an excellent reputation, ministry colleagues took part in the DRC Summer School in 2013. Consequently, ARGO's and DRC's established reputation allowed ARGO's request to hold an international discussion platform within the framework of the Civic Forum to be forwarded to and positively received at the MFA.

A Method of Interaction Between NGOs and the MFA of Republic of Kazakhstan. At the time ARGO sent its inquiry, the MFA was already cooperating with NGOs within the framework of the advisory consulting body, and cooperation with ARGO was able to develop within an existing framework.

A Concrete Subject for Collaboration. Collaboration developed developed around a concrete issue—preparation for the Civic Forum. A practical focus around a concrete and substantive issue for collaboration existed from the start.

MFA Needs. The MFA required professional resources in regards to work on KazAid. ARGO's experience and the DRC Program were just what MFA needed. The idea for KazAid had been announced as far back as October 2011. Consultations were already underway at that time

between the government of Kazakhstan, the UN, national partners, and donors.⁹ At the same time, ARGO is a unique partner in that it is a Kazakhstani organization working by international standards.

The adoption of legislative acts. Prospects for ARGO's cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are very favourable, since the concept for official development assistance in the Republic of Kazakhstan ~~in the sphere~~ was approved by the President in April 2013.¹⁰ Subsequently, the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "on official development assistance" (a law referred to as the "Law on KazAid," [analogous to USAID¹¹]) was passed at the end of 2014. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has noted "the need for systematic steps in the promotion of the KazAid project, given that this area is new for Kazakhstan."¹²

The evaluation did not identify factors directly hindering the prospects for development. Nevertheless, the presence of forces in the country that hinder the development of international cooperation and relate negatively to NGOs that work on international grants, do constitute a potential threat. This threat has not turned into a real problem in ARGO's cooperation with the MFA. It is worth noting, however, that the present constructive and balanced approach to cooperation with international organizations, foreign donors, and NGOs reflects the position of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and a policy the President has pursued for many years. This is a very important factor that contributes, among others, to the development of cooperation between ARGO and the MFA of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2.1.5. Actions from the NGO side and development of cooperation

The following actions on the part of ARGO were important in developing cooperation:

- ARGO was very serious about preparing for the Discussion Platform and carrying out the Civic Forum event. Its serious approach recommended ARGO as a trustworthy partner.
- ARGO maintained constant contact with the MFA of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Effective communication, including face-to-face meetings, allowed issues to be addressed in a timely manner.
- ARGO made it possible for MFA representatives to participate in DRC program work, which allowed the MFA to (a) gain a comprehensive understanding of the program, and (b) position itself as an active player in the field of international development and confirm its status.
- ARGO invited MFA representatives to join the Council for Regional Cooperation under the DRC program.

Problems in relationship to cooperation with Kazakhstan's MFA did not arise.

2.1.6. NGO capacity development and cooperation with the Government

ARGO's high potential, which the association already had when collaboration began, allowed for the development of cooperation. ARGO's capacity building likely occurred during the development of activity involving both parties, but was not vital for the development of cooperation between ARGO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

⁹ <http://www.undp.kz/articles/1/474.jsp>

¹⁰ <http://journal.zakon.kz/4552658-ukazom-prezidenta-utverzhdena.html>

¹¹ United States Agency for International Development

¹² <http://www.undp.kz/articles/1/474.jsp>

2.2. Case 2. Development of cooperation between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice, Republic of Tajikistan

2.2.1. Participants in the cooperative efforts

The NGO “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan (RT) participated in cooperative efforts. ICNL’s¹³ office in Tajikistan and ARGO also participated in the development of this cooperation.

The following individuals made important contributions from their respective organizations:

- Dilbar Khalilova, Director, NGO “FIDOKOR”
- Rano Karimova, Head of State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties, Ministry of Justice, RT
- Umed Kalandarov, Director, ICNL Tajikistan
- Kaisha Atakhanova, DRC Program Director, ARGO

2.2.2. Initiator of the collaborative efforts

The first step in the development of cooperation including conference at the national level in the “FIDOKOR” project, supported by the DRC Program.

Originally, these events were focused primarily on NGOs in the Khatlon region, where “FIDOKOR” has worked successfully for a significant period of time. It was assumed that the events would be attended by representatives of different government bodies, including the Ministry of Justice. “FIDOKOR” did not have a more concrete plan at the time. However, these events were turning point, not only for joint activity between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, but also in the development of dialogue between NGOs in the Republic of Tajikistan (primarily in the Khatlon region) and local government bodies.

As such, “FIDOKOR” initiated collaboration.

“FIDOKOR” thought of this meeting. It was 100% “FIDOKOR”’s initiative. Until this, not one public organization was able to hold such events, where, for example, a first vice minister would be in attendance.

(from an interview with event participant)

2.2.3. Development of collaborative efforts

Inclusion of a conference in “FIDOKOR”’s Plan within the DRC Program

“FIDOKOR” suggested including a conference as a component of its project with the DRC program. The program approved the idea, and the conference was planned for the beginning of December 2013. More in-depth discussions about the event between “FIDOKOR” and DRC had begun three to four months earlier, in August and September of 2013. In accordance with DRC policies and procedures, such an event concept should be approved one to two months prior to the event date—no later than the end of October 2013 in this case. While this work was underway, an important event occurred outside of the “FIDOKOR” project framework—a representative of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan was invited to participate in the Kazakhstan Civic Forum.

¹³ International Center for Not-For-Profit Law

Representative of the Ministry of Justice, RT Participation in the Kazakhstan Civic Forum

At the beginning of 2013, ARGO took the initiative to invite representatives of government agencies and civil society organizations from Central Asian countries to the 6th Civic Forum in Kazakhstan.¹⁴ The idea behind this invitation was to offer an opportunity to representatives of countries where the DRC program was being implemented to learn from Kazakhstan's experience in the sphere of organizing a dialogue between NGOs and high-level government agencies. Republican-level ministers usually organize the discussion platforms at the Civil Forum and high-level government representatives take part directly in the Civic Forum work. ARGO/DRC's initiative to invite guests from neighboring countries to the Civic Forum was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

When it became clear that the forum in Astana would be a high-level event, "FIDOKOR" was sent an official letter. "FIDOKOR"'s Director Dilbar Khalilova suggested inviting a representative from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, responsible for work with NGOs, to the Civic Forum in Kazakhstan. As such, Ms. Rano Karimova, Head of State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties, attended the Civic Forum in Astana in mid-November 2013 on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, RT. "FIDIKOR" representatives also came as guests to the Civic Forum. During the Forum, ARGO organized a meeting between Ms. Karimova and the Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Prior to her appointment in Tajikistan's Ministry of Justice, Ms. Karimova served as Director of the Committee for Women and Family Affairs in the Khatlon Regional Mayor's Office, and then chairperson of the Khatlon region's Muminabad area, as well as deputy of two parliament convocations for the Republic of Tajikistan. She was very knowledgeable about the NGO sector and the role nongovernmental organizations play in the country.

Through her previous work, Ms. Karimova was particularly well acquainted with "FIDOKOR"'s activities and leadership. Unfortunately, when we were gathering information for this evaluation, Ms. Karimova was ill and could not meet with us. Everyone with whom we had the chance to speak, however, pointed out the important role Ms. Karimova played in developing dialogue between the NGO and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Rano Karimova had very positive impressions of her participation in Kazakhstan's Civic Forum. Subsequently, she told many people that it would be valuable to hold such an event with a similar format and level of participation in Tajikistan. We can consider first steps toward such an event as the DRC program December 2013 conference, which was actively supported by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan.

It is necessary to note here another very important factor: The position of Ministry of Justice senior officials has contributed to the development of long-term cooperation with NGOs. Khakim Saidovich Mirsaev, Deputy Minister of Justice, RT, noted in discussions with us that the Ministry is in need of assistance from NGOs. Mr. Mirsaev has had experience in the NGO sector: He led an NGO in the Khatlon region and worked for a time as a trainer for "FIDOKOR"'s projects. As such, Mr. Mirsaev is well acquainted with strong NGOs and third sector experts. Soon after his appointment to the post of Deputy Minister he began to involve NGOs in work with the Ministry of Justice, and took steps to open the doors of the Ministry to NGOs. He expressed this open attitude: "Don't be afraid of coming to visit us. The Ministry of Justice is your organization." The Ministry began actively engaging NGOs in its work in the first

¹⁴ See the history of cooperative development between ARGO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Kazakhstan (Case #1)

quarter of 2013. At that time, the Ministry was in critical need of information about the NGO sector and the idea to hold a conference with “FIDOKOR” was received very positively.

Planning and preparations for the conference in Dushanbe

During the preparation stage for the conference the Ministry of Justice suggested holding this event in the ministry building itself—an offer unprecedented in the history of Tajikistan. Not a single ministry at the republican level has ever held an event of similar scale with participation of NGOs at the ministry’s own premises. For the vast majority of NGOs invited to the conference, this was the first time they had been in direct dialogue with representatives of a republican-level ministry.

The conference agenda was prepared by “FIDOKOR” in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and ARGO/DRC.

The conference theme was “Sustainable NGOs as a factor for development of civil society in the Republic of Tajikistan.” “FIDOKOR” and DRC did not agree on this theme quickly and there was a long discussion about their disagreements. It was important to make the theme sufficiently broad for a national level conference, without losing the ability to focus on particular issues of importance to the conference participants. Additionally, it was necessary to understand that participating NGOs represented the Khatlon region—the focus of the DRC program.

The ARGO representatives’ experience was invaluable in preparing the conference agenda and framework, as ARGO has had experience holding multiple events on a similar scale.

The general framework of the conference looked as follows:

- Presentation of NGO experience: “Problems and strategy for sustainable development of NGOs considering regional demands. Khatlon region case study” (six presentations).
- Division of conference participants into three working groups for discussion and elaboration of recommendations on the following issues:
 - a) Legal foundations for activities of public organizations in the Republic of Tajikistan
 - b) Organizational development and workflow in public organizations
 - b) Social partnership and social procurement. Perspectives of regional NGOs. Khatlon oblast case study.

Prior to the conference a decision was made that the conference participants should develop and discuss recommendations on how to improve the legal environment for NGOs.

Several days prior to the start of the conference, three representatives of DRC (including the program director) came to Dushanbe to assist with NGOs’ presentations, provide organizational and technical help, and provide public relations and communications for the conference.

NGO representatives from the Khatlon Oblast had very limited experience in public speaking. This was the first time many had spoken at such a high level and serious attention was given to the content of their presentations, the design of the slides,¹⁵ and their public speaking skills. The need to conduct this kind of training became apparent during preparation for the conference. The ARGO representatives had experience holding trainings on communications skills, which helped them to hold effective trainings using video feedback.

¹⁵ Slides had to be prepared in Russian and Tajik

DRC program experts, together with representatives of “FIDOKOR” and ICNL, prepared draft recommendations in light of the conference results.

A day prior to the conference, Kaisha Atakhanova, Director of DRC and Rano Karimova, the representative of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, met to discuss preparation for the conference. Ms. Karimova introduced Ms. Atakhanova to her department colleagues.

Conference “Rehearsal”—Round Table at the Ministry of Justice

When conference preparation was already well underway, “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan held a roundtable on the theme “The contributions of NGOs in the development of civil society in the Republic of Tajikistan.”¹⁶ This meeting¹⁷ took place on October 24, 2013 at “FIDOKOR”’s initiative and did not formally relate to the DRC program. This was “FIDOKOR”’s own contribution to the development of dialogue with the Ministry of Justice.

Approximately 20 participants from active NGOs in Tajikistan (not just the Khatlon region) presented the results of their work in several arenas:

- supporting individuals with disabilities
- organizing jobs for vulnerable women and providing them with microcredit
- leadership training for girls
- capacity training for NGO employees and other initiatives

A meeting between NGO leaders and ministry representatives at a roundtable had been held for the first time in a decade at the Ministry of Justice’s initiative and within the Ministry’s walls. In some respects, this roundtable meeting can be considered a rehearsal for the conference and an indication that dialogue between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice was actively developing.

Conference in Dushanbe (December 6, 2013)

Over 40 people took part in the conference. Everything went according to plan, with one exception: the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Mengliev, was unable to attend the event due to urgent matters. However, Deputy Minister of Justice Mirsaev was present at the conference from the beginning to the end. He spoke at both the opening and closing sessions of the event. In addition, representatives from USAID Tajikistan and a member of Tajikistan’s Parliament gave remarks at the opening session.

The NGO representatives’ addresses at the conference were outstanding and reflected their serious level of preparation.

Representatives of the RT Ministry of Justice¹⁸ and NGO representatives jointly moderated the small group work sessions. R. Karimova (Ministry of Justice) and U. Kalandarov (ICNL) led the group that discussed the legal framework of the work of public organizations in the Republic of Tajikistan.

The outcome of the small group work sessions was presented at the final plenary session, led by Dilbar Khalilova, Director of “FIDOKOR.”

¹⁶ <http://cso-central.asia/fidokor-provel-kruglyj-stol-v-ministerstve-yusticii/>

¹⁷ Participants in the roundtable included: Kh. S. Mirsaev, Deputy Director, Ministry of Justice, RT; R. B. Karimova, Head of State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties, Ministry of Justice, RT; N. Sh. Saidov, Executive Secretary, Public Council, Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; M.S. Shokirova, Head of Department, Committee for Women and Family Issues, Government of Tajikistan

¹⁸ The head and colleagues from the State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties Department

In his closing remarks, the Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, Kh. Mirsaev, thanked participants and noted that he was very impressed with the level of the NGOs, their work, and the quality of the presentations. Parliament Member and Chairperson of the Committee on Legislation and Human Rights, M. Vatanov, also noted with pleasure how NGOs have matured in Tajikistan, and the changing nature of collaboration between NGOs and government.

The conference was organized at the highest level.

The conference itself was organized as if we came as guests to the Ministry! The Ministry took charge of all organizational moments. They treated the event as if it were their own conference.

(from an interview with a conference participant)

Continuation and development of dialogue in the Khatlon region

Following the conference, the Ministry of Justice adopted a resolution that was sent to all departments of justice in the Khatlon region. A working group led by R. Karimova visited the Khatlon Oblast, and met with the head of the regional administration. Other participants in the working group included G.R. Rabieva (Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan), N. Sh. Saidov (Public Council of the Republic of Tajikistan), S. Karimov (Chairman of the National Association of NGOs in Tajikistan), and U. Kalandarov (ICNL). Mr. Kalandarov noted that the December conference in the framework of the DRC program and subsequent work with representatives of the Ministry of Justice in the regions greatly assisted the development of cooperation between his organization and the Ministry of Justice. After this meeting, a letter with recommendations for working with NGOs was sent to all 25 districts of the region.

The NGOs noted significant improvement in relations on the part of the *hukumats* (local government). Prior to the December conference, NGOs always informed *hukumats* of their activities, but generally, representatives of local government did not attend. After the conference, thanks to the active position of the Ministry of Justice and relevant guidance on interaction with NGOs, *hukumats* (mayor's offices) became interested.

Prior to the conference we only invited our beneficiaries to our events, and now we are inviting the deputy head of the regional administration.

*After the large conference a small conference with the head of the regional administration was held. That allowed for the possibility, that officials at the level of deputy chairman of the *hukumat* started coming and participating. They were given an order and it changed relations!*

(from an interview with leaders of Khatlon region NGOs)

The main results of the December conference, according to NGO representatives, have been changing attitudes toward NGOs and an openness on the part of local governments to dialogue with NGOs.

Another effect has a psychological aspect to it. NGO representatives—with help from the Ministry of Justice—have overcome internal barriers and realize that they can address both local Departments of Justice, as well as the republican-level Ministry. Earlier they considered this either impossible or very risky and fraught with unpleasant consequences.

We didn't know, that you could just go to the Ministry of Justice and seek advice, or inquire about something. And that this is possible with other ministries as well...

(from an interview with an NGO director in Khatlon oblast)

One year later: continuing dialogue and cooperation

At the time of this evaluation—exactly one year after the conference in Dushanbe—events took place illustrating that the dialogue between NGOs and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan is ongoing.

On December 4, 2014, a public hearing¹⁹ was held at the Ministry of Justice on amendments to the draft law on the Republic of Tajikistan Law “On Public Associations.” All together over 50 people took part in the hearings, including representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Institute for the Commissioner for Human Rights, and civil society organizations of Tajikistan.

The Minister of Justice, Rustam Shohmurod, opened the meeting. The Minister told the audience that the need for amendments related primarily to the fact that Tajikistan has received a number of recommendations from the group for the development of financial measures to combat money laundering (Financial Action Task Force—FATF), which are aimed at combating money laundering to finance terrorism. This involves not only government agencies, but also other institutions, including public organizations.

During the discussion, a number of recommendations regarding the draft legislation were presented to participants along with several other proposed changes for improving the current law “On Public Associations.”

Nargis Zokirova, Director of the NGO “Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law” said, “The majority of the participants voted against the draft law, because they believe that today at the state level there are already mechanisms in which the relevant government agencies can monitor and control the activities of public organizations.”

Other participants held the opinion that if the new amendments are incorporated in the Law “On Public Associations,” the procedure for tracking should be exclusively notification-based, not authorization-based. That said, the law must be precisely and clearly written as required by the international standards contained in the relevant UN documents adopted and ratified by Tajikistan.

Umed Kalandarov, Director of ICNL in Tajikistan, noted:

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) highly appreciates the positive practices employed by the Ministry of Justice—for example, holding an open dialogue with civil society, an example which was the conference organized with civil society on December 6th last year. Other examples include the unprecedented practice giving the opportunity for civil society organizations to consult the draft Law on Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan «On public associations» and to organize a public hearing of the bill prior to its adoption. I believe that the discussion of the project was very positive. Participants gave very good and constructive recommendations for improvement of this bill, and they were also well received from the side of the Ministry of Justice.

It seems clear, in essence, “FIDOKOR”’s initiative in the framework of the DRC program was the first step towards the development of a broader dialogue between NGOs in Tajikistan and the Ministry of Justice.

Perspectives for development of cooperation

According to figures provided to us by ICNL, 79 new public organizations were registered in Tajikistan during 2014. This is a very large figure and a good sign. There were no serious problems with registration with any of these organizations, thanks to support from the Ministry

¹⁹ <http://www.bhr.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/588/>

of Justice. This progress is especially noticeable, in contrast to the decline that occurred because of serious pressure on NGOs by public authorities from 2011 to 2013. In particular, one NGO active in the Sogd region (AMPARO) was liquidated during that period due to a court decision.

A year after the conference, dialogue continues at different levels. More participants are becoming involved in dialogue with the active support of the Ministry of Justice. Taking this all into account, it is possible to say with confidence that prospects are favorable. Many of our interviewees said that such a practice would be good to extend to other structures at the republican level, so that NGOs could communicate directly with representatives of relevant ministries. One version of such cooperation could be a Civic Forum, analogous to the one in Kazakhstan, with various ministries organizing discussion platforms together with NGOs.

We are ready to hold a national Civic Forum—we have matured enough for this.

(from an interview with an NGO director)

“FIDOKOR” is widely respected in Tajikistan and has the capacity to become one of the main organizers of such a forum.

Cooperation between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry is developing. At the time of this report’s preparation, a decision had already been made to prepare a handbook of the most active NGOs in the republic, based on yearly reports submitted for 2014. Colleagues from RT’s Ministry of Justice Department of State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties have taken responsibility for preliminary work. “FIDOKOR” is responsible for the translation into Russian, and the design and printing of the manual.²⁰

2.2.4. Factors that contributed to or hindered the development of cooperation

Factors that contributed to the development of cooperation:

- The need from the Ministry of Justice to develop cooperation. When “FIDOKOR” addressed the Ministry of Justice, work was already taking place at the Ministry to involve NGOs in dialogue.
- Interested and motivated people in key positions at the Ministry (Deputy Minister Kh. Mirsaev and Department Director R. Karimova). Support on the part of the Ministry of Justice of RT.
- R. Karimova’s personal contributions and active position
- “FIDOKOR” and its leader Dilbar Khalilova’s good reputation
- The long-term personal acquaintance of senior officials in the Ministry of Justice with “FIDOKOR”’s leader. Personal communication is very significant in Tajikistan’s culture. One of our interviewees explained, “If you do not know the person and none of his/her friends can recommend you, then your business will not go anywhere.”
- The participation of R. Karimova in the Civic Forum in Kazakhstan, and the emergence of a *prototype* of collaboration between ministries and NGOs. Preparation for participation and the subsequent joint participation in the Civic Forum of a high-level representative from the Ministry of Justice of RT (R. Karimova) and representatives of the public organization “FIDOKOR” had a significant positive impact on the preparation process for the conference in Tajikistan held in September.
- Serious preparation on the part of NGOs for the conference

²⁰ “FIDOKOR” plans to use DRC and “Regional Initiative Cooperation” funds for this follow up work.

- The participation of the Kazakhstani organization ARGO and the international DRC program also had a positive influence on the development of cooperation, giving increased stature to the collaborative activities. These positive effects aside, the majority of those interviewed noted that this cooperation would also have developed without the participation of ARGO and DRC.

Factors that would have impeded the development of cooperation were not found in this case.

2.2.5. Actions by NGOs and development of cooperation

From the point of view of cooperation, the following actions by “FIDOKOR” were important:

- Sustaining constant personal contact with the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, information exchange and timely feedback on issues as they arose.
- Inclusion of ICNL in Tajikistan as one of the leading experts in the field of legal regulations for NGOs’ activities and subsequently a wider range of NGOs.
- Active support of events of the Ministry of Justice in the Khatlon region as result of the conference. Meetings that were held in regional and local areas were very important for both the mutual development of activities between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice and the NGOs operating in the region.
- Preparation of draft recommendations from the conference. Though not fully accepted by the Ministry of Justice, they were taken into consideration during elaboration of internal recommendations by the Ministry.
- The long term strategic interest in cooperation of “FIDOKOR” was fully in the best interest of the Ministry of Justice. In this context, the round table held at the Ministry prior to the conference and further meetings of the Ministry representatives with NGOs were absolutely natural.

No serious issues were found that would impede cooperation between “FIDOKOR” and the Ministry of Justice of RT.

2.2.6. NGO capacity development and cooperation with the Government

The task of developing “FIDOKOR”’s capacity was not a component in the framework of cooperation.

The fact that the organization already had a high capacity level when collaboration began was an important success factor. It is difficult to speak about any significant capacity development on the part of “FIDOKOR” during the collaboration. It is possible that ARGO helped “FIDOKOR” to improve its capacity to planning event involving republican-level ministries.

For the NGO leaders, participation in the cooperative efforts led to capacity building in preparing PowerPoint slides and presentations, and improving public speaking skills. Their quality presentations also had an influence on the effectiveness of the conference.

2.2.7. ARGO/DRC’s role in the development of this cooperation

Independently of one another, the ARGO leadership and the director of “FIDOKOR” emphasized the high importance of the partnership relations between the two organizations. ARGO, represented by the DRC program, never related to “FIDOKOR” “from the top down.”

ARGO never did anything to impose on us; on the contrary, they helped us to develop and implement the idea offered by the “FIDOKOR” project group

(from an interview with “FIDOKOR”’s director)

We are not a “regional office.” We are equal partners.

(from an interview with the DRC program director)

ARGO made a very important contribution to the development of cooperation by inviting a representative of the Ministry of Justice of the RT, R. Karimova, to the Civic Forum in Kazakhstan, and preparing a program of meetings for her in Astana that were tailored to her interests.

ARGO/DRC representatives made a significant contribution in the practical preparation for the conference in Dushanbe, arriving several days before it began and actively working together on it with the “FIDOKOR” team.

2.3. Case 3. Development of Cooperation Between the Public Association “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region” and Zhalagash Region Mayor’s Office (Akimat), Kyzlorda Oblast, Republic of Kazakhstan

Data collection to prepare a case description was conducted by a group of specialists from the NGO “Bereke” including: Roza Abdullaeva, Aliya Rustambekova and Gulsim Andabaeva.

Nearly all interviews were conducted in the Kazakh language. Bereke specialists translated the interview results into Russian. Alexey Kuzmin prepared the case description with the participation of the Bereke specialists listed above.

2.3.1. Participants of the cooperative efforts

The “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region,” the mayor’s office of Zhalagash region and relevant government agencies within its administration, and the village mayor’s offices within Zhalagash region participated in the cooperative efforts. The public organization “Support of Initiatives” from Kyzlorda enabled the development of cooperative efforts through the “Development Through Regional Cooperation” (DRC) program.

Important practical contributions to these cooperative efforts were made by:

- Mr. Sadyk Alievich Aliev, Chairman, “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region”
- Mr. Yerlan Kashibekovich Omirserikov, Zhalagash region mayor’s office (during the project’s implementation period, Mr. Omirserikov served as deputy mayor of the Zhalagash region for economic and budgetary issues)

2.3.2. Initiator of the collaborative efforts

Through the DRC program framework, the “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region” (Organization of Veterans or OV) became the project initiator. However, this initiative took place in the context of well-established and very positive interactions with the mayor’s office, dating from long before the DRC program.

The project initiator, Organization of Veterans Chairman Mr. Sadyk Alievich Aliev, indicates that the current initiative had at least four causes, listed below (not in any particular order of importance):

- The desire of the Organization of Veterans to provide real help to people in difficult life

situations

- The desire for the Organization of Veterans to find new extra-budgetary sources of financing for its activities
- Experience assisting needy persons in the framework of state social orders
- Experience with interactions between NGOs and authorities to develop local self governance in the Nurinsky region of Karaganda oblast, with which Sadyk Aliyevich became familiar during his internship in the DRC program

2.3.3. Development of the collaborative efforts

The Situation When the DRC Program Opened

As a rule in Kazakhstan, *veterans' unions* are public organizations registered as branches of the republican organization “Organization of Veterans of the Republic of Kazakhstan” in regional and district centers. In most cases, these branches are not separate legal entities and conduct their work within the framework of the Regional Council of Veterans’ activities. Typically, in these circumstances, branches have very limited opportunities for self-planning and fundraising.

The situation with the OV of Zhalagash region was atypical. Through Mr. Aliev’s efforts, this organization of veterans was registered as a public organization, the “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash region” and had new opportunities even though it remained within the structure of the regional Veterans’ Union. For example, under Kazakhstan’s law on commissioning of state social orders, the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region was commissioned to carry out work by the Department of Employment and Social Programs, located in the regional mayor’s office.

Cooperation between the Veterans’ Union with the mayor’s office has taken place since 2009. In 2010, I was elected as Chairman of the regional council of veterans, and at the first meeting with the regional mayor’s office I requested that he allocate finances from the framework of state social orders, which could be used by the NGO for work with socially vulnerable populations in the district. This included labor and war veterans, senior citizens, people with disabilities, the unemployed, the poor, and others. In such a way, we began working with state social orders.

(from an interview with S.A. Aliev)

The development of interaction between the mayor’s office and the Organization of Veterans was largely due to the fact that the former deputy mayor of Zhalagash Region, S.A. Aliev, became the head of the Association of Veterans. He is a professional manager and knows the situation in the region well, including all the burning issues. He also possesses a thorough understanding of how the mayor’s office works. The last factor is very rare, if not entirely unique, for an NGO. In addition, many of the regional mayor’s office employees not only worked with Mr. Aliev while he served as deputy mayor, but were also (in their own words) his students. They continue to have great respect for him.

For a long time, the Organization of Veterans had been one of only a few stable NGOs working in the region. Starting last year, the Organization of Veterans has assisted in the formation and activation of two other regional NGOs—the Organization of Disabled Veterans and Veterans of Afghanistan. Thus, when the DRC program began, the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region was one of the most active NGOs in the region, having already worked with the regional mayor’s office in the framework of state social orders. The authority of its leader strengthened the Organization of Veterans’ position in relation to the mayor’s office.

How the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region Became a Part of the DRC Program

DRC program implementation in Zhalagash region started with data collection about NGOs working in the region. This research was conducted by the public organization “Support of Initiatives” from Kyzlorda city, with the assistance of the Office of Internal Policy of the regional mayor’s office. “Support of Initiatives” had been selected by ARGO as the DRC program partner for the Kyzlorda Region.

At the direction of the Office of Internal Policy, district Departments of Internal Policy gathered representatives of NGOs working in the regions, with whom the DRC program could work further. Representatives of “Support of Initiatives” conducted surveys and focus groups with these NGO representatives to assess the needs and requirements of NGOs in the regions. For reasons described above, it was logical for the Zhalagash region Office of Internal Policy to invite the chairman of the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region, Mr. Aliev, to the meeting with “Support of Initiatives.” In this way the DRC program became aware of the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region, and supplied OV with information about program possibilities.

The Emergence of the Project Idea

“Support of Initiatives” invited the Organization of Veterans to identify needs within the DRC program framework, using the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method. The Organization of Veterans agreed, and “Support of Initiatives” conducted the needs identification with the help of “Organization of “Veterans’ employees and volunteers. The results of this work revealed a need for assistance to needy families in the region and this need became the justification for a grant application to the DRC program. The target group for a future project was thus defined through the needs identification process.

Within the DRC program framework Mr. Aliev region participated in a study tour the Nurinsky district of Karaganda oblast, where he became acquainted with the model of local self-governance that was being used successfully in this region.

The mayor of Nurinsky district, who had worked previously as secretary of the regional executive committee in the city of Karaganda, was a keen supporter of NGOs activities in the region and a promoter of local self-governance. During his tenure as mayor, NGOs began to receive financing from funds budgeted by a state social order. An increase from year to year in state social order funding was positively reflected in the improved quality of services being offered. During the internship, participants were presented with successful practices of interaction, between local government and civil society organizations such as Councils of Women, Veteran’s Councils, and Youth Councils, that worked toward the goal of community development.

Mr. Aliev liked the model of local self-governance and decided to use it to implement a project to help low-income families in the Zhalagash region. He suggested forming a working group under the guidance of the deputy mayor’s office, which would include representatives of different departments of the mayor’s office and state bodies that were involved in offering assistance to low-income families. In addition, representatives of rural district’s mayor’s offices and the Organization of Veterans in rural districts would be invited.

The project concept required close collaboration. Using their own volunteer networks, Organizations of Veterans identified families in urgent need of assistance and their most pressing needs. This assessment would then be presented at a round table conference with invited representatives from the mayor’s office and state agencies responsible for working with the community. Together, methods to solve the community problems would be identified. The Organization of Veterans also planned to provide general consultations, whereby the problems of low-income families could be studied in more detail, and where those families would receive

specific advice. The project would also provide a small amount of financial assistance (10000 Kazakh Tenge) to the most needy families.

The DRC program supported the project application and the subsequent initiative that involved close interaction between the NGO and government structures.

Project implementation

The Organization of Veterans conducted independent research in 14 village areas of Zhalagash region, studying 170 low-income families and their needs.

Work was conducted in the following way: approximately 1,500 people live in each village, and that's about 300 homes. It's impossible to visit each of the 300 homes, but the local village mayors know the situation well, as do our veterans living in the villages. Utilizing information provided by them, we went to 15–30 homes in each village. These included the disabled, low income, and homes with many children. They usually write a statement addressed to the village mayor about their needs and difficulties, but this doesn't usually bring about results. When our team conducted surveys with them, the families spoke openly about their situation.

(from an interview with S.A. Aliev)

The list of families was supplied to the mayor's office. Next, meetings in a roundtable format were organized in four territorial clusters. Working group members, members of the target population, and representatives of the Organization of Veterans participated in all of the meetings. The roundtables were chaired by the deputy mayor, and examined each individual case and the associated problems. The deputy mayors gave instructions to the relevant government agencies needed to assist in solving these problems. Participation by all people invited to the meetings was guaranteed.

The mayor says it - and all will attend. The mayor doesn't say anything, and nobody will come.

(from an interview with a project participant)

As a result of this work, the most needy received different forms of assistance, including:

- assistance in registering as unemployed
- assistance in registering via a public services portal for planned hospitalization
- material assistance (eight people received KZT10000 from the Veterans Union—from the project budget)
- coal for heating homes (three tons of coal were allocated for 12 families, with the help of local businessmen)
- the purchase of equipment and materials to create small businesses (funds allocated by the Department of Employment and social programs)
- learning the basics of conducting business (28 people took part in a training conducted by “DAMU” Fund)

While the opportunities for the Organization of Veterans to provide direct services were very limited, they did a remarkable amount of work to organize help for the families in need. Two examples are provided in the quotes below.

“There are investors in the region who invest in the cultivation and production of rice on farms, located in the villages. On behalf of the public association, I wrote letters to the heads of these farms. I noted that after our monitoring research, we identified people living within these villages in need of material support. I requested that such help be provided. They allocated coal to all those in need, and continue to support these impoverished people.”

(from an interview with S.A. Aliev)

According to survey research, 31 people expressed the desire to go into business. We contacted the Fund "DAMU" in Kyzlorda, and their representatives came and conducted a two-day training. 28 people participated in the training. Financing was fully provided by DAMU.

(from an interview with S.A. Aliev)

The beneficiaries with whom we were able to speak expressed their gratitude to the Organization of Veterans and to S.A. Aliev for this assistance. People directly associated the assistance received with the NGO and believe that they can turn to the NGO again for assistance.

"As far as I know, the Veteran's Union always helps everyone. I have one wish now, to find permanent employment. I would like to request assistance from Mr. Sadyk Aliev in finding employment.

(from an interview with project beneficiary)

The opinion of the leaders of mayors' offices on joint action with the Organization of Veterans

The former deputy mayor of Zhalagash Region for economic and budgetary issues, E.K. Omirserikov, oversaw the current project. Mr. Omirserikov considers himself a student of Mr. Aliev. To a great measure, this determined their similar views on many of the question at hand. Mr. Omirserikov rated the Organization of Veterans' work on this project very highly. However, he also emphasized that in the current situation, the cooperation of the NGO with government structures was important, and that the NGO could not have achieved such results independently.

"In any case, solving the problems raised by the NGO is a functional responsibility of government agencies. So when it is stated that an NGO solved this or that problem, it is not entirely correct to state that they solved these problems independently. Yes, they conducted research and gave concrete recommendations on how to help each individual. And we, within our capabilities, then solve these problems."

(from an interview with the former deputy mayor of the region)

Mr. Omirserikov noticed the objectivity of the results received by the NGO, which underscores the independence of NGOs.

"I believe this was good quality work. We could not have obtained the information that the NGO supplied to us from government structures. The NGO described the real situation to us."

(from an interview with the former deputy mayor of the region)

Mr. Omirserikov believes that interaction between NGOs and state authorities is very useful and promising. He is certain that its effectiveness depends upon holding NGOs accountable to a high standard of professionalism and leadership. He believes that the pledge and guarantee of success in the case of cooperation with the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash region was due to Mr. Aliev's own professionalism. Another person given such a task might not have succeeded with it.

Village mayors confirmed that the research results conducted by the Organization of Veterans were objective. They also noted that the research had identified several problems of which even they had been unaware. They also noted the positive way that work was conducted within the framework of the project. Their citizens' problems were solved efficiently; sometimes on the spot. All of the village mayors we interviewed had a very high opinion of S.A. Aliev's

professional and personal qualities.

At the very beginning, [when] Sadyk Aliev came to us with the offer to work together, we were open to his offer. We already had well-established ties, and even more, we all greatly respect our elders. In our village we also have veteran elders. They are able to solve some problems that even the mayor's office is unable to solve.

(from an interview with a village mayor)

It is worth noting the reference to “well established ties” with the Organization of Veterans when Mr. Aliev approached the mayors. The village mayors would like to continue their cooperation with the Organization of Veterans at the conclusion of the project, without regard for the availability of outside financing.

The current mayor of Zhalagash region was appointed fairly recently and was not present in the region during project implementation. However, he is very positive about the Organization of Veterans, and characterizes interaction with the organization as “well established.” He has expressed confidence that cooperation with the Organization of Veterans will continue.

The project has finished, but cooperation continues

Cooperation between the Organization of Veterans and the mayor continued after the completion of the project within the framework of the DRC program. For example, the Organization of Veterans administered a project to change conventional light bulbs to energy-saving bulbs.

The mayor's office has decided to increase the NGO's annual financing for state social orders, which allowed the NGO to expand the scope of its plans.

The Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region is currently implementing an advocacy project through funds allocated by ARGO in the DRC program framework. The project goal is to improve the quality of medical and health services provided to veterans in the regions. The project plans to conduct a survey among veterans on questions regarding social and medical services.

Three meetings will be held with the participation of the Deputy Mayor of the region, representatives from the regional Health Department, the Department of Employment and Social Programs, village mayors, Zhalagash region Organization of Veterans, as well as veterans themselves. Problems identified regarding veterans' social and medical care will be discussed at a district level round table. Solutions will be identified within the competencies of the regional Health Department, Department of Employment and Social Programs, and the regional mayor's offices.

To address problems on a regional scale, the Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region will partner with the Regional Council of Veterans. A roundtable will take place with invited representatives from the oblast Health Department and the Department of Employment and Social Programs of the Kyzlorda Oblast. The results of research surveys and meetings will be presented at the roundtable for further joint solution of problems at the regional level.

The organization plans to sign memoranda of understanding with the regional Health Department and the regional Department of Employment and Social Programs in order to implement decision-making and maintain control.

2.3.4. Factors that contributed to or hindered the development of cooperation

Factors that contributed to the development of cooperation:

- The NGO leader's experience, professionalism, reputation, authority, connections, knowledge of authorities, and ability to work well with them

- The Organization of Veteran's initiative and its openness to new ideas and perspectives
- A network of volunteers among veterans living in the villages
- The history of collaboration between the NGO and the mayor's office from long before the DRC program
- The Zhalagash region mayor's office was open to new initiatives on the part of the NGO
- Financing received within the framework of the DRC program

No factors were identified that would have impeded the development of cooperation.

2.3.5. Actions by the NGO and development of cooperation

The following actions were important to developing cooperation:

- The Organization of Veterans took the correct position, i.e., focusing on the needs of the mayor's office and its actual capabilities
- The working group turned out to be a very successful form of collaboration that both representatives of the mayor's office and the NGO took part in
- The NGO succeeded in providing new data to the mayor's office. S.A. Aliev characterized the situation well in his remarks below:

The largest impact on further development of cooperation was the fact that our organization conducted monitoring of low income families. The research was independent and portrayed an objective picture of life in the regions. The regional mayor even invited his colleagues and showcased our work as an example. This helped to develop trust and respect from the side of authorities, and now they attend almost all of our events.

(from an interview with S.A. Aliev)

No serious problems were identified that would have impeded the development of cooperation.

2.3.6. NGO capacity development and cooperation with the Government

Within the framework of this case the NGO's capacity did grow:

- The NGO worked out a method to identify low-income families and assess their needs
- NGO representatives became acquainted with the experience of other regions in Kazakhstan, and with Tajikistan's experiences
- The NGO gained new experience in writing a project proposal and in project management
- The NGO strengthened its authority in the region
- Within the DRC program, representatives of the NGO received training in strategic planning, which enabled them to write a strategic plan for the near future with assistance provided by consultants through the DRC program
- The organization's employees improved their skills in project proposal writing, which allowed them to win grants from DRC and UNDP

Regarding the influence of the NGO's capacity building on collaboration with local government, it is necessary to emphasize the effect of the study tour that Mr. Aliev took to the Nurinsky District in the Karaganda Oblast. The information he received during the trip allowed the Organization of Veterans to propose new models of collaboration to the mayor's office.

Collaboration became more systematic within the framework of this model. This new approach allowed the NGO to go from carrying out single events within the framework of state social orders to more comprehensive solutions for current social problems, by working with government agencies and utilizing tools of local self-governance.

2.3.7. ARGO/DRC's role in the development of cooperation

Collaboration existed prior to the DRC program and continues within the DRC program. DRC contributed to the further development of this collaboration through the grant to the Organization of Veterans that allowed the NGO, in cooperation with the mayor's office, to provide assistance to very needy individuals. This grant widened the sphere of joint activity between the NGO and mayor's office and brought it to a higher level.

2.4. Case 4. Development of Cooperation between the NGO "Cultural and Educational Center for Girls TOMIRIS" and Government Agencies at Different Levels in the Republic of Tajikistan.

2.4.1. Participants of the cooperative efforts

The public organization "Cultural and Educational Center for Girls Tomiris" ("Tomiris") and a number of district-, regional-, and national-level government agencies participated in collaborative efforts. These included the Khatlon Regional Mayor's Office (Hukumat), the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Committee for Youth, Sport and Tourism under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Important practical contributions to cooperative efforts were made by:

- Rano Djumaeva, Director, "Cultural and Educational Center for Girls Tomiris"
- Zoirzoda Marifat Umar, Head, Department of Woman and Family Affairs, Khatlon Regional Mayor's Office (from March 1st, the department was restructured into the Bureau of Women and Family Affairs under the Executive Body of the Local State Authority, Khatlon Region)

Collaborative efforts were made possible by Dilbar Khalilova, Director of the international NGO "Fidikor" and Rustam Bakhridinov, Country Director, DRC program in Tajikistan, "Fidikor."

2.4.2. Initiator of collaborative efforts

"Tomiris" initiated cooperative efforts in all cases.

2.4.3. Development of collaborative efforts

In this case the development of cooperation between "Tomiris" and various government agencies took place simultaneously with the developing capacity of the organization and its head, Rano Djumaeva. The development of collaboration between "Tomiris" and government agencies can be understood most accurately as the result of the development of the organization and its leader. This was the main process, and the development of external interaction occurred as needed while "Tomiris" carried out its work. The organization's work is extremely varied and it includes various collaborations with different government agencies. It is difficult to single out just one of these interactions.

The Growth of a Leader

Several years ago Rano Djumaeva began working at “Fidikor” as Outreach Coordinator for the HIV/AIDS Prevention Project, through the framework of the USAID Dialogue on HIV and Tuberculosis Project. “Fidikor” Director Dilbar Khalilova recalls that at that time Rano was a very quiet and inconspicuous young woman whose voice was rarely heard at meetings and events. Nevertheless, the “Fidikor” leadership sensed Rano’s potential and decided to actively support her professional growth. They sent her to various seminars, training events, conferences, and working meetings. According to Dilbar Khalilova, Rano rapidly progressed into a very capable leader.

At “Fidokor” we had many young women serve as volunteers. Rano began to actively work with them, demonstrating excellent leadership skills. She organized discussions with them, and encouraged them to participate in various activities. It struck me then, that it was time to let Rano work independently. After some discussion, we decided to establish a youth organization that we registered and named “Tomiris.”

(from an interview with Dilbar Khalilova)

Dilbar Khalilova to this day is chairperson of the board of “Tomiris,” which was registered in 2011. In this capacity she continues to support Rano Djumaeva and her organization. In particular, Dilbar recommended “Tomiris” as the Khatlon regional partner with the well-known Dushanbe organization “Women-Voters,” which is led by Rano Okhunova. Ms. Okhunova introduced Ms. Djumaeva to the concept of girls’ clubs where girls can regularly meet and discuss important issues such as opposition to domestic violence, women’s employment, opportunities for girls’ development, volunteer activities, opportunities for education, and so forth. While experts on these topics and women leaders are invited to the meetings, the girls themselves plan joint activities, develop projects, and exchange best practices. The organization of such clubs became one of Tomiris’s most successful activities.

When the DRC Program began, “Tomiris” had just started its activities and successfully carried out two small projects. Rano Djumaeva took full advantage of the DRC program in terms of her own development potential. She took part in a large number of activities, including:

- A program on organizational development, including leadership training, network building, working with government, and PR, fundraising, and organizational branding
- The Summer school for NGO representatives who were participants in the DRC program
- An NGO School in Tajikistan
- Exchange visits
- The DRC conference program in 2013

A very important result of Rano Djumaeva’s participation in the DRC program was establishing contacts with a large number of experts from all over the Central Asian countries. New opportunities became available through this networking. For example, meeting with Anna Kudiyarova from the Kazakhstan Association of Analytical Psychologists has developed into a long-term partnership.

Simultaneously with her intensive training, Rano Djumaeva and her colleagues from “Tomiris” continued their active search for resources, and implemented several projects. These included a project sponsored by the US Embassy (work with girls), a project sponsored by Norwegian Helsinki Committee (forums for girls), and a project supported by alumni of education programs of the US Government and UNICEF.

In 2013 “Tomiris” received a grant from the DRC Program to develop a network of noncommercial organizations in Tajikistan. The “Tomiris” project was aimed at strengthening

the potential of the network to work with vulnerable children. This project was successfully implemented in 2013–14.

When the present evaluation was carried out, Rano Djumaeva was already recognized as a young leader, well known not only in Tajikistan but also throughout Central Asia. Rano is an active member of the country and regional movement of *youth parliamentarism*, a board member of the Association of Youth Organizations of Tajikistan, a board member of the coalition “Transparency for Development,” and a member of the Tajikistan Association of Volunteers.

Collaboration with Government Agencies

Throughout the process of implementing its activities, it was necessary for “Tomiris” to interact with government agencies on different levels.

Mamachon Mukhiddinov, chairperson of the mahalla (neighborhood) committee, Vakhdat city, Korgan Tobe. Mr. Mukhiddinov became acquainted with Rano Djumaeva before she began working at “Fidikor.” He likes the fact that “Tomiris” works with girls. He believes that this area of activity is highly relevant and greatly values Rano Djumaeva’s work.

“Rano knows that I support her in all of her endeavors.”

from an interview with Mamachon Mukhiddinov

In December 2013 “Tomiris” held the first forum for volunteers in the Khatlon region. The theme of the forum was “My contribution to the development of my society.” Approximately 60 young people from all over the region attended the event. Representatives from the Committee for Women and Family Affairs; the Committee for Youth, Sport and Tourism; and the Regional Department of Education were involved in the Forum. The Forum went very well and one of its results was the establishment of a working relationship with the Committee for Women and Family Affairs.

Zoizoda Marifat Umar, Chairperson Boldzhuvanskii District, Republic of Tajikistan, was until recently Director, Department of Woman and Family Affairs, Khatlon region. (From March 1, 2015 the department was restructured into the Bureau of Women and Family Affairs under the Executive Body of the Local State Authority, Khatlon Region). Ms. Umar spoke very highly of Rano and her organization, and in particular, about the initiative to organize girls’ clubs. Ms. Umar would like to continue cooperation with Rano Djumaeva and her organization, and hopes to create a club for girls in the region, which she now heads.

Actually, I would like to single out Rano for praise: she is a very active young woman, and was able to rally a group of female volunteers around her who will be good and competent leaders.

(From an interview with Zoizoda Marifat Umar)

Anzurat Ashurova is the head of the education department for Kurgan Tobe city’s local state government. She became acquainted with Rano Djumaeva while still head of the Department for Women’s and Family Affairs for Kurgan Tobe city. They became acquainted during one of Tomiris’s events, which touched upon questions on the role and status of women, prevention of domestic violence, and women’s leadership. During this event Ms. Ashurova learned about the work related to clubs for girls that “Tomiris” had initiated. From that time, the Kurgan Tobe Department for Women and Family Affairs has supported “Tomoris” events to the best of their ability.

“Tomiris” is known in our community. They do well in terms of promotional activities - booklets, information on television, radio and press. Rano is very active and often visits my office for advice and consultations. She also offers different ideas for programming implementation. She is actively knocking on all doors as she works to attract many different people for the implementation of her projects. It is important that in their activities they are trying to influence women and girls’ minds. They try to change their minds, understanding, and assessment of situations. They are trying to activate them.

(From an interview with Anzurat Ashurova)

As part of the project to strengthen the capacity of the nation-wide NGO network to work with vulnerable children, “Tomiris” prepared and held a conference in Dushanbe on “Protecting the Rights of Vulnerable Children: Challenges and Opportunities.” 34 people took part, including nine representatives of national-level government agencies: the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Labor and Employment, the Committee for Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Committee for Youth, Sport and Tourism under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

This was a very interesting and informative conference. We openly and thoroughly analyzed the situation, looked at coordinating efforts and planning joint activities between public organizations and corresponding government agencies. This was a unique opportunity for everyone to communicate directly and to plan joint activities.

(From an interview with Rano Djumaeva)

2.4.4. Factors that contributed to or hindered the development of cooperation

Factors that contributed to the development of cooperation:

- Constant support by “Fidikor.” When “Tomiris” was founded, “Fidikor” had a very good reputation and established connections, both in the Khatlon region, as well as at the level of the central state government. In particular, support from “Fidikor” was an important factor in preparing for and carrying out a conference in Dushanbe under the DRC program framework. This support was also seen in individual consultations, which aided Rano Djumaeva in properly developing contacts with government officials.

We trained them in all procedures for how to approach the government. For example, how to write a letter, when and what to write, how and when to call, how to make requests, and how to share their experiences and information about their work. These were very practical recommendations and examples. We drew their attention to how to work with house committees and chairpersons of the neighborhood (mahalla) committees. We finished by offering information on how to work with ministries and also regional level mayor’s offices.

(From an interview with Rustam Bakhridinov)

- The choice of a relevant area of activity: Work with girls is supported at all levels in the Republic of Tajikistan
- A good choice of methods in working with girls
- Professional legal assistance from ICNL

Factors that hindered the development of cooperation included the following:

- Negative relations of certain individual heads of government agencies to NGOs that receive foreign funding
- Parents prohibiting their daughters from taking part in various activities outside of their home neighborhoods

2.4.5. Actions by the NGO and development of cooperation

From the point of view of developing cooperation, the following actions were important:

- Competent development of strategy for working with the mayor's office (hukumat): clear determination of key departments and key people involved, clear determination of goals and objectives of cooperation ("Fidikor" also helped in these areas)
- Realistic and well formulated requests were communicated to the mayor's office (hukumat): expert and moral support, material support (a building), and food for event participants
- The involvement of government representatives in carrying out the event in a comfortable manner

The main difficulty "Tomiris" experienced in contact with local level government authorities was the reserved attitude of school administrators and district mayor's offices (hukumats) toward NGOs that receive funding from abroad. This problem was solved, principally through support from the regional mayor's office, with which "Tomiris" had established good relations.

One more problem was tied to the largely negative image of NGOs in the eyes of district authorities whose attitude would be: "Other than conversations, you probably can't wait for any real help from them [NGOs]."

In several cases "Tomiris" experienced opposition from the parents of girls who were taking part in the clubs. In Rano Djumaeva's words, some conservative parents believed that "there is no such need and no reason to distract [girls] from their studies or their household duties."

2.4.6. NGO capacity development and cooperation with the Government

In this case, the NGO's capacity development was the most important factor in developing diverse and multi-level contacts with the government. The NGO's organizational capacity development included both improved efficiency of its core management functions and specific competencies related to its interaction with government. This capacity development occurred as a result of trainings, individual consultations (mentoring), and self-assessment.

There is an important point to note related to the NGO's sustainability. "Tomiris" has several employees, who could, if necessary, head the organization. Rano Djumaeva plays a very important role in "Tomiris," but "Tomiris" is not a one-person organization.

2.4.7. ARGO/DRC's role in the development of cooperation

ARGO/DRC participated indirectly in developing collaboration between "Tomiris" and government agencies by:

- Creating professional development opportunities for the organization's leader and employees
- Developing contacts between "Tomiris" representatives and other NGOs in the region
- Providing a grant for the development of a network of NGOs in Tajikistan

One important factor involved was that the positive image of the DRC program in Tajikistan boosted the credibility of the NGOs involved in the program. The majority of the government and NGO representatives we surveyed spoke of their positive attitude to the DRC program and towards ARGO.

“Tomiris” works very well with departments in the city and regional mayor’s offices. I believe that the atmosphere in our interaction has changed - from that of distrust, to a willingness to cooperate. This is largely due to “Fidokor”’s contribution, and the DRC project in general.

(From an interview with Mohiniso Shonazarova)

2.5. Cross-Case Analysis: Unpacking the DRC Theory of Change

2.5.1. The generic framework for NGO-government collaboration under the DRC program

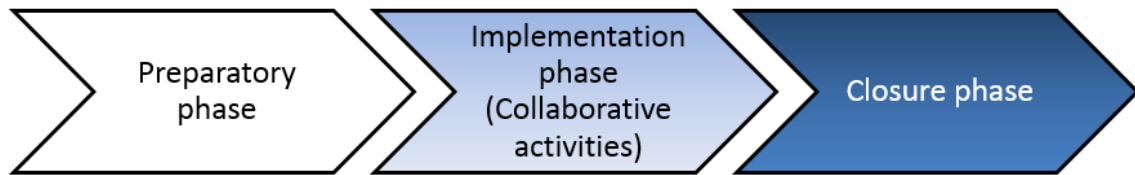
The core of NGO-Government collaboration in all four cases was the implementation of joint activities:

- ARGO worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a meeting established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Erlan Idrissov. The meeting included NGO representatives from international organizations from neighboring countries and overseas at the discussion platform held during the 6th Civic Forum in November 2013.
- “Fidokor” worked with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan to organize the conference “Sustainable NGOs as a factor for development of civil society in the Republic of Tajikistan.”
- “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region” worked with the Region’s Mayor’s Office to implement a project to identify the low-income families, assess their most urgent needs, and provide assistance.
- The “Tomiris” Center implemented several activities with various government entities including a national conference on children’s disability issues.

All four cases included a preparatory phase that helped to establish a foundation for collaborative effort and conditions for productive joint activities. None of the joint activities could have started without some preparatory work.

All four cases included a closure phase, when the NGO-government activities were complete. The partners formally closed their joint projects and undertook actions to make sure that their projects’ results would be used. An essential part of the closure phase was some form of expansion or continuation of collaborative efforts. At the very least, representatives of both NGOs and government entities demonstrated their intention to maintain their working relationships.

Hence, a generic framework for NGO-government collaboration (figure 1) in all four cases includes *preparatory, implementation (collaborative activities) and closure phases*. This framework reflects a project life cycle, which is not surprising as each of the collaborative efforts under analysis exhibits the characteristics of a “project”—a planned set of interrelated tasks to be executed over a fixed period and within certain cost and other limitations to achieve a pre-defined goal.

Figure 1. Generic framework for NGO-government collaboration

2.5.2. Preparatory phase.

Analysis of the data collected allowed us to identify three key components of the preparatory phase for both parties: they needed to (a) become motivated, (b) get prepared, and (c) have resources for joint activities. We will discuss each of these components in detail below.

Motivation

In all four cases collaboration was initiated by NGOs. What stimulated the desire and energy in these NGOs to establish relationships with the government entities?

- ARGO needed to invite guest representatives to the Civic Forum from **other** Central Asian Republics. It was redirected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), as the MFA was responsible for coordinating invitations for guests from abroad to the Civic Forum.
- “Fidokor” activities were aimed at supporting NGO development in the Khatlon region. It planned conferences that should logically be attended by representatives of different government bodies, including the Ministry of Justice.
- The “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region” was driven by the desire to provide real help to people in difficult life situations.
- “Tomiris” implemented a number of activities that naturally involved representatives of government entities at the local, regional, and national levels—depending on the nature and scale of the activities. While establishing their clubs for girls, for instance, “Tomiris” was dealing with the local and regional governments. When it came to protecting the rights of children with disabilities, “Tomiris” contacted government entities at the national level.

We can reasonably conclude that the NGOs’ motivation emerged mainly from their need for a certain level of government involvement to insure the successful implementation of their activities. In addition, contacts with government bodies helped the NGOs either to raise funds for their activities (Cases 3 and 4) or to make better use of their existing funding and better meet their donor’s expectations (Cases 1 and 2).

In all four cases the governments responded to the NGOs’ initiatives. Why? What stimulated the desire and energy in these government bodies to establish relationships with the NGOs?

- In all the cases government representatives pointed out that the NGOs’ initiatives were aligned with their own plans. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kazakhstan was going to set up a discussion platform at the Civic Forum (Case 1). The Ministry of Justice (MJ) in Tajikistan was actively looking for ways to expand its interactions with NGOs (Case 2). The Zhalagash regional government recognized that solving the problems raised by the NGO was a functional responsibility of the government agencies (Case 3). A somewhat similar situation arose when the head of the Department for Women and Family Affairs

for Korgan Tobe city learned about the clubs for girls: They were highly relevant for the department (Case 4).

- The NGO initiatives were relatively innovative from the perspective of the government entities. In addition to being highly relevant for the governments' agendas, the government representatives valued the innovative nature of the NGO initiatives. The MFA in Kazakhstan was preparing for their first Civic Forum (Case 1). The MJ in Tajikistan was pioneering in developing direct dialogue with NGOs (Case 2). The administration of the Zhalagash region in Kazakhstan had never done a systematic needs assessment among low-income families (Case 3). The Clubs for Girls in the Khatlon region of Tajikistan were a relatively new approach for the local government (Case 4).
- The positive attitudes of the countries' top leaders towards NGOs in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan created a certain incentive for the government entities. The presidents of both countries made it clear that government entities can and should develop dialogue and collaboration with NGOs.
- The positive attitude of government entities' leaders towards collaboration with NGOs was ultimately essential. While there is a positive context for developing relationships with NGOs in both countries, collaboration is still not obligatory for most government entities. This is especially true in remote and rural areas with only a few active NGOs or no NGOs at all. Hence, the attitude of government leaders is crucial in each particular case. In all four cases being analyzed, there were government officials who took NGOs seriously and were very instrumental in developing collaboration with them.

Preparedness

There was a general consensus among all of the NGO representatives that an NGO has no chance of developing a dialogue with the government without pre-existing personal connections with government officials or a recommendation from a person(s) who the government representatives can trust. It is very likely that this is a common cultural feature of Central Asian countries: interpersonal relationships and informal personal references are crucial for doing any business in Central Asia. Interestingly, recommendation may come from any trustworthy individual regardless of which sector the individual belongs to. For instance, "Tomiris" (Case 4) was initially introduced to the Khatlon region government by the leaders of "Fidokor." The Ministry of Justice was positive about dealing with "Fidokor" (Case 2) because the newly appointed Deputy Minister used to work in the NGO sector and already knew "Fidokor." ARGO (Case 1) was recommended as a reliable partner to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by several people representing various governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The only case in which the leader of the NGO did not need any references was Case 3: The NGO leader had worked in a top position for the local government and most current government officials already knew him.

All of the NGOs also agreed on the importance of specific competencies related to dealing with government including language, communication channels, rules, and rituals. Three out of four NGOs already had such competencies. "Tomiris"—a less experienced NGO—developed these competencies under the guidance and mentorship of "Fidokor" leaders.

Less experienced NGO representatives whom we interviewed talked about the internal psychological barriers they had experienced before dealing with the government. It had been quite a stretch for them to even enter a government building, let alone make presentations in front of government officials.

All of the NGOs mentioned the importance of having a vision of how they could collaborate with the government entity. Creation of this vision was the core factor that had affected their level of preparedness to deal with the government. All of the NGOs felt ready to contact government entities only after they had a solid proposal. Good will, positive attitude, and previous experience had not been enough to start dialogue. Even in Case 3, in which the NGO leader had been a government official, the NGO had contacted the government only after its leader became acquainted with a model of NGO-government collaboration and considered that model relevant to their circumstances.

The preparedness of a government entity for dialogue and collaboration with an NGO depended on its initial level of trust (the personal connection or recommendation mentioned above) and a decision made by the leader of the entity or at a higher level regarding contacts with NGOs.

Resources

Both parties (NGOs and government bodies) had to have some resources to contribute to the joint activities; resources may thus be considered the third “dimension” of their preparedness.

NGOs contributed the following resources:

- *Expertise.* In all four cases NGO representatives were qualified by the government people as *experts* in certain areas. In Case 1, ARGO leaders were even formally included on an expert committee created by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Justice (Case 2) uses “Fidokor” leaders and representatives of some other NGOs as experts on a regular basis.
- *Creative potential.* In all four cases government officials spoke highly of the innovative approaches used by the NGOs.
- *Volunteers.* In Cases 3 and 4 volunteers recruited by NGOs were an important human resource for the joint efforts with governments.
- *Networks of NGOs.* In all four cases NGOs’ connections were an important asset. NGOs used their networks inside their respective countries and internationally to gain access to information, experts, and decision makers. Government entities were also able to effectively use NGO networks for their own purposes. For instance, representatives of the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan used ARGO to network with their counterparts in Kazakhstan.
- *Values.* Government people appreciated the basic principles that NGOs followed in their work. More experienced organizations such as ARGO or “Fidokor” had been well known for demonstrating their values in their work for many years. The respective government bodies knew *how* those NGOs work and *what* they value.
- *Reputation and status of NGOs.* It was important for government entities to be participating in an international program (DRC) and to be dealing with nationally and internationally recognized organizations.
- *Financial resources.* In all four cases NGOs had grants that were used to support collaborative activities with the government bodies. Non-budgetary funds were an important additional resource for the NGO-government collaboration.

Government bodies contributed the following resources:

- *Expertise.* NGO representatives recognized that government employees had unique knowledge, experience, and skills complementary to their own expertise.

- *Creative potential.* There were several instances in which government representatives proposed creative solutions that helped implement joint activities in an effective manner. The Ministry of Justice in Tajikistan, for example, organized follow up activities after the conference in Dushanbe that helped develop the NGO-government collaboration in the Khatlon region.
- *Space, equipment, and professional staff.* In all four cases these government resources were useful for collaborative activities as an in-kind contribution. For example, in Case 2 the Ministry of Justice hosted an NGO-government conference and used its facilities, equipment, and professional staff to make it happen.
- *'Administrative clout.'* In all four cases NGO interviewees noted that a clear "signal" from the government made it possible to implement their project: "When Akim invites people, they come."
- *Funding.* In three cases (1, 2 and 3) governments had funds available for collaborative activities with NGOs.

2.5.3. Implementation phase

In this section we identify and discuss common features of the NGO-government collaborative activities that took place in the cases being analyzed.

In all four cases there was a particular subject of mutual interest that called for collaboration; the partners were oriented towards specific, meaningful results; and they shared clear, realistic goals:

- ARGO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were focused on preparation for the Civil Forum.
- "Fidokor" and the Ministry of Justice were focused on planning and conducting a joint conference.
- The "Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region" and the Zhalagash Region Mayor's Office were identifying low-income families, assessing their needs, and organizing assistance.
- "Tomiris" and its government counterparts were organizing clubs for girls, recruiting volunteers, and organizing a conference.

The partners' roles were carefully and clearly defined with consideration for their status, characteristics, and preferences. In the cases 1, 2 and 3 government entities could be considered the "lead partners": they had control over the process and took responsibility for the outcomes. This leadership posture was not domination. Though the government entities were clearly larger organizations and the stakes for them were higher than for the NGOs, they treated their NGO partners with respect. It was important to affirm the status of government entities by following certain protocols and rules. NGOs that participated in the joint activities were aware of this and very sensitive to what was and was not appropriate for the representatives of the government. For instance, in some cases it was important to have government representatives as chairpersons or moderators, while in the other cases they were more comfortable with the role of guest speakers. The NGOs were responsive and flexible: they were assertive and professional in following their values, but did not confront their government counterparts and never drifted towards any *actual* power struggle or even behavior that could be *interpreted* as a power struggle. Both parties skilfully practiced the art of diplomacy.

Effective communications were a common feature of all the partnerships. NGOs and government bodies had contact persons who maintained the ongoing dialogue. They had several communication channels (landline phones, cell phones, e-mail, and face-to-face meetings) and

made themselves available to their counterparts if and when needed. High-level government officials such as Rano Karimova (Head of State Registration of Public Organizations and Political Parties of the Ministry of Justice in Tajikistan) or Usen Suleimen (Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) were involved in collaborative activities with NGOs. Due to their tight business schedules they could not guarantee their availability for their NGO partners. In such cases there were backup options for communication. As a result the partners had regular information exchange and the communication in all four cases was flawless.

It is important to mention the increasing personalization of interactions between the organizations in the course of their collaborative activities. In all four cases particular people served as the preferred “interfaces” between the two entities. While the development of these personal relationships enriched the collaboration between the organizations, this very process might have created a problem: the relationships between the organizations could have become rigidly dependent on only certain people. If the contact person on any side were away for some reason, it might have put the relationship between the organizations at risk. This danger actually arose while we were working on this report. Rano Karimova, who made the major contribution to the development of collaboration between the Ministry of Justice and “Fidokor” received a new appointment. Fortunately, Mrs. Karimova introduced her successor to “Fidokor” and both the “Fidokor” leadership and Mrs. Karimova helped the new person take over the communication role and establish successful connections.

This same example is a good illustration of another important feature: the adaptability of all four collaborative projects. While all of the collaborative activities took place in a real-world environment that was never 100% predictable, all of the partners succeeded in meeting the emerging challenges.

2.5.4. Closure phase

In this section we explore the final phase of NGO-government collaboration.

Social effect

All collaborative efforts in our four cases resulted in some positive social effects that were in line with the collaborating partners’ respective goals:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ARGO had a very successful discussion platform at the Civic Forum that fostered dialogue between international donors and the Government of Kazakhstan (Case 1).
- The Ministry of Justice and “Fidokor” had an outstanding conference in Dushanbe that resulted in the betterment of the legal environment for NGOs in Tajikistan (Case 2).
- Zhalagash Region Mayor’s Office and “Organization of Veterans of Zhalagash Region” identified low-income families, assessed their needs, and provided targeted assistance to them, which resulted in improving their living conditions—at least, temporarily (Case 3).
- “Tomiris,” in collaboration with several government entities in the Khatlon region of Tajikistan, established clubs for girls that empowered participants and increased the number of activists and leaders among the girls (Case 4).

The actual scale of social change depended on the nature of the collaborative activities and the level of the government entities involved. In Cases 1 and 2, social change occurred at the national level, as republican ministries were involved, while in the Cases 3 and 4, social change occurred at the local/regional levels since local and regional authorities were participating.

It is also important to note that in two of the cases collaborative activities led to system change (Case 2) or created the conditions for system change (Case 1), while in the two other cases the effect was limited to very specific and limited target groups.

Relationships

Another obvious and important result in all four cases under analysis was the development of relationships among representatives of the NGOs and the respective government entities. There is massive empirical evidence that confirms the development of mutual trust, mutual respect, and personal appreciation. When people get to know each other better, they also better understand each other's interests and therefore can take them into consideration, which is important in terms of future collaboration.

Additional effects

For the NGOs, additional effects included: improved reputation and higher visibility; better image; new opportunities for collaboration with the government and new forms of collaborative activities; and new contacts and references.

For the government entities, additional effects include: improved reputation; new ideas and knowledge; new contacts; and the availability of new external experts (NGO staff).

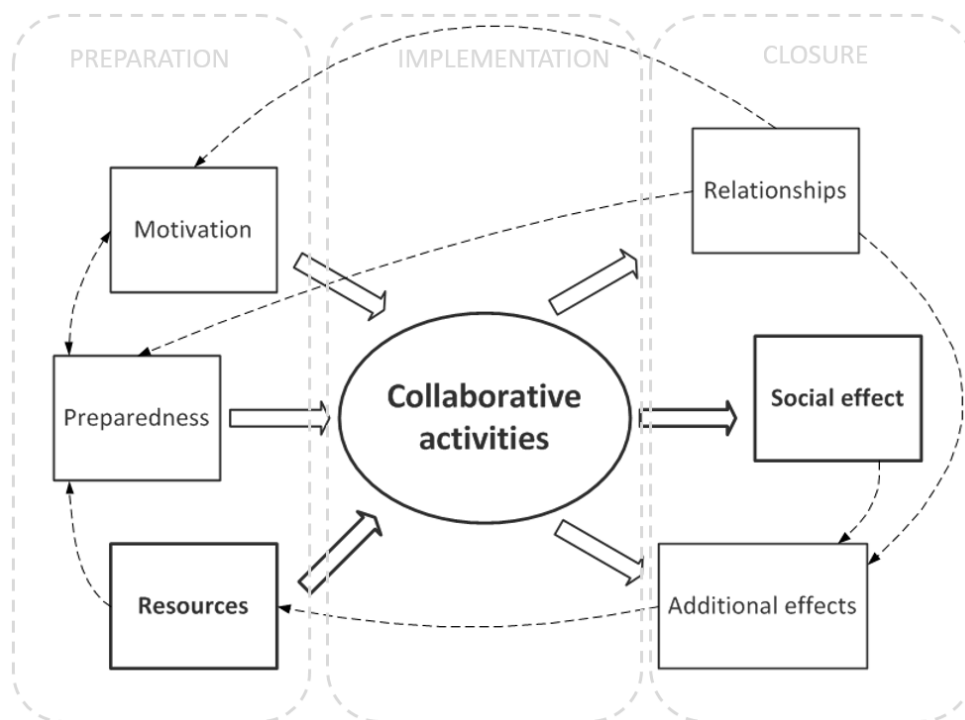
The following examples illustrate these additional effects and the causal links that we discovered in the course of this evaluation:

- ARGO leaders (Case 1) were invited to sit on the advisory board of the MFA, which substantially enhances their image and opens new opportunities to work with the MFA and other government entities. A representative of the MFA was invited and accepted the invitation to sit on the DRC Board. In fact, by this means ARGO and MFA institutionalized their collaboration. MFA considers ARGO as a potential partner in creating the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KAZAID).
- “Fidokor” (Case 2) became one of the key players in preparing for the first Civic Forum in Tajikistan. (We learned this while work on this report was in progress). The Ministry of Justice is regularly using “Fidokor” and other NGO representatives as external experts.
- Zhalagash Region Mayor’s Office (Case 3) is going to fund the Organization of Veterans’ activities from the regional budget.
- There were several cases in which government officials received new appointments and moved to the new locations or to new government entities. If they have had good relationships with NGOs and their joint efforts were productive, they tend to maintain this partnership even in their new capacity. “Tomiris” (Case 4) will most likely be invited to implement its projects in the new region to which its government contact moved due to her new appointments.

2.5.5. Model of NGO-government collaboration

A model of NGO-government collaboration based on this cross-case analysis is shown in Figure 2. It includes the three stages of collaboration: preparation, implementation, and closure. The preparation and implementation stages include the components discussed above: motivation, preparedness, resources, relationships, social effects, and additional effects.

The model also includes additional causal links (dotted lines). Motivation and preparedness are inter-related: higher motivation contributes to greater preparedness, and greater preparedness contributes to higher motivation. The availability of resources contributes to greater preparedness. Additional effects in many cases resulted not only from the collaborative activities, but also from the improved relationships between the parties and from the social effects produced by the joint efforts. In addition, improved relationships can contribute to a stronger motivation for future joint efforts and can increase preparedness of the parties for joint activities. Additional effects in some cases also open access to new resources.

Figure 2. Model of NGO-government collaboration

Resources, collaborative activities, and social effect are marked in bold as they represent the “standard” program logic: input – activities – output. Interestingly, we did not start with that, but noticed it only when we created the model that visually represented our findings.

2.5.6. DRC interventions aimed at development of NGO-government collaboration

It goes without saying that development of NGO-government collaboration is a complex process that to some extent can be influenced by third parties, but cannot result from a third party’s activities. The key actors in this process are the NGOs and government entities. Hence, at its best, the DRC intervention could help develop NGO-government collaboration, but could not make it happen. Such a stance can be characterized as a “consultative” position: indirect impact without direct authority.

In this section we shall look at what DRC did to support NGO-government collaboration in the four cases being analysed.

During the preparation stage, the DRC contributed to motivating partners, increasing their preparedness for collaboration, and helping the NGOs develop their resources. DRC had better access to NGOs and more opportunities to influence them than government entities.

Motivating partners

When we started this evaluation, there was not much DRC could do in this area. As noted above, the motivation of the NGOs to collaborate with government entities originated from the NGO’s need to achieve certain goals that could not be achieved (or were unlikely to be achieved) without such collaboration. In these circumstances all DRC could do was to provide (a) information on the forms and potential of NGO-government collaboration, and (b) moral support to program participants who had included such collaboration in their work plans. While our work on this report was in progress, DRC announced a grant competition with an emphasis on NGO-

government collaboration—a competition that was potentially a very powerful motivator for both parties.

Increased preparedness

DRC implemented several activities aimed at increasing NGO's preparedness for collaboration with government:

- Using fellowships, study tours, conferences, training, and publications, DRC purposefully created opportunities for generating new ideas and helped NGOs to find “prototypes” of social innovations. Case 3 illustrates how this worked. The chair of the Organization of Veterans went on a study tour to another region of Kazakhstan (Karaganda) where he learned about a model that he modified and used upon returning home.
- DRC provided individual consultations, mentoring, and training on how to deal with government entities.
- DRC provided recommendations and allowed NGOs to use the DRC/ARGO brand identity to confirm their reliability as government partners.

For the government entities DRC guaranteed the quality of the NGOs as potential partners that had been carefully preselected.

Special events, such as conferences and training programs where government and NGO representatives could meet and get to better know each other, were another important activity that helped increase the preparedness of both parties.

Developing NGO resources

In addition to funding, DRC made considerable contributions to the NGOs’:

- Capacity development through training, fellowships, and consultations
- Networking that helped gain access to people, information, and funds
- Reputation by virtue of being a participant in an international program

During the implementation stage, while the NGOs were working with their government counterparts towards common goals, DRC implemented the following activities:

- Consultations and setting quality standards. When NGOs from the Khatlon Region were preparing the joint conference with the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan (Case 2), DRC professional staff spent several days with them to help them cope with stress and to prepare high quality presentations.
- Participation of DRC leaders and professional staff in key events
- Assistance in problem solving

DRC was always responsive to the needs of the participating NGOs and government entities. DRC leaders and staff reacted to the emerging needs in a timely and professional manner. In particular, they were flexible in approving modifications of the participants’ implementation plans, if and when changes were needed.

During the closure stage, DRC:

- Disseminated information on the social effects resulting from the collaborative activities of NGOs and government entities

- Purposefully disseminated information on the champions on both sides to build their reputation
- Organized joint events to celebrate successes and create opportunities for further relationship building

Figure 3 provides an overall picture of the DRC interventions aimed at supporting NGO-government collaboration.

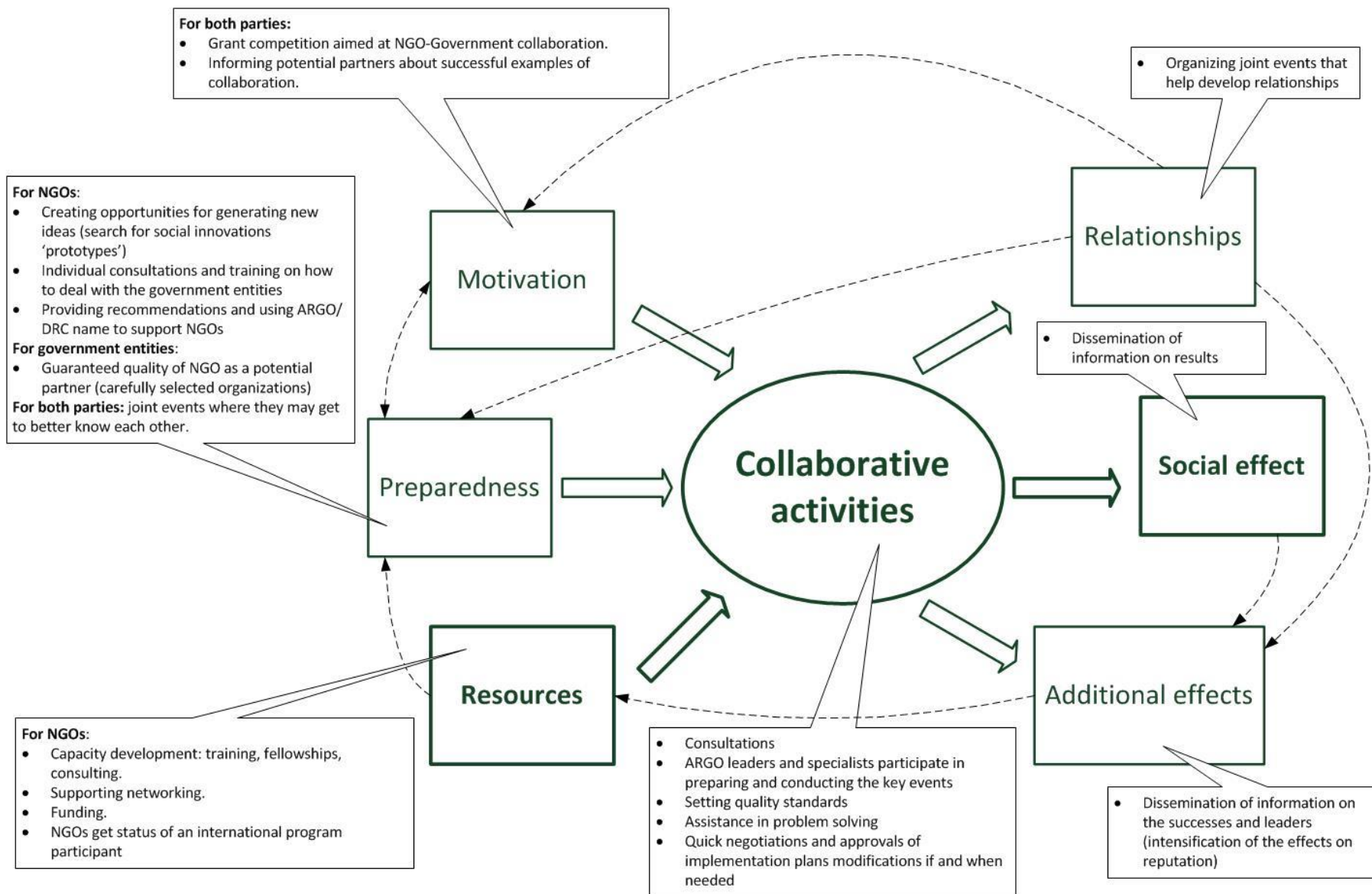
It is clear that DRC implemented a greater number and variety of activities during the preparation stage when there were more opportunities to motivate partners, increase their preparedness, and build NGO resources for collaboration.

During the implementation stage, DRC stepped back, monitored the process, and carefully helped, if and when needed.

During the final closure stage, DRC interventions were rather limited and for the most part had a form of information dissemination. Interestingly, these interventions naturally led DRC into the next cycle of NGO-government collaboration: information could motivate new partners and build their preparedness.

Such an intervention strategy made perfect sense: DRC made its major contribution when there was a greater chance of making a difference.

Figure 3. DRC interventions aimed at supporting NGO-Government collaboration



2.5.7. DRC Theory of Change

In this section we will describe and discuss the DRC “Theory of Change.” In this context “a theory of change” means “a clear expression of the apparent relationships between actions and hoped-for results. It provides an explanation of the reasons why certain strategies are being used and how and in what sequence those strategies will achieve the desired change.”²¹

The DRC Theory of Change (ToC) was based on the assumption that collaboration between NGO and government entity includes three phases: preparation, implementation, and closure. DRC has no direct authority to make collaboration happen, but it can undertake some activities that make it more likely to happen and to increase its effectiveness. The further collaboration develops, the less DRC can influence it; this is why most DRC efforts were focused on the preparatory phase of collaboration. In general, DRC had better access to NGOs and more opportunities to influence them than government entities, which was considered in the DRC ToC.

Successful NGO-government collaboration can take place when the *potential partners are prepared* for it (see Figure 4) :

- Both parties wish to collaborate—they have complementary motivations.
- Both parties are equipped for collaboration—they have relevant skills and attitudes. Building personal trust is an important part of the preparatory stage.
- Both parties have resources for collaboration—they have sufficient tangible and intangible resources.

The DRC strategy during the preparatory stage is *proactive*. The program implements various activities aimed at motivating partners, increasing their preparedness to collaboration, and developing NGO resources. Those activities include information dissemination, networking, training, consulting and mentoring, fellowships, and funding.

Successful NGO-government collaboration can take place **only when** the *parties implement joint activities in a professional and effective manner*. The quality of implementation depends largely on the professional competence of the partners.

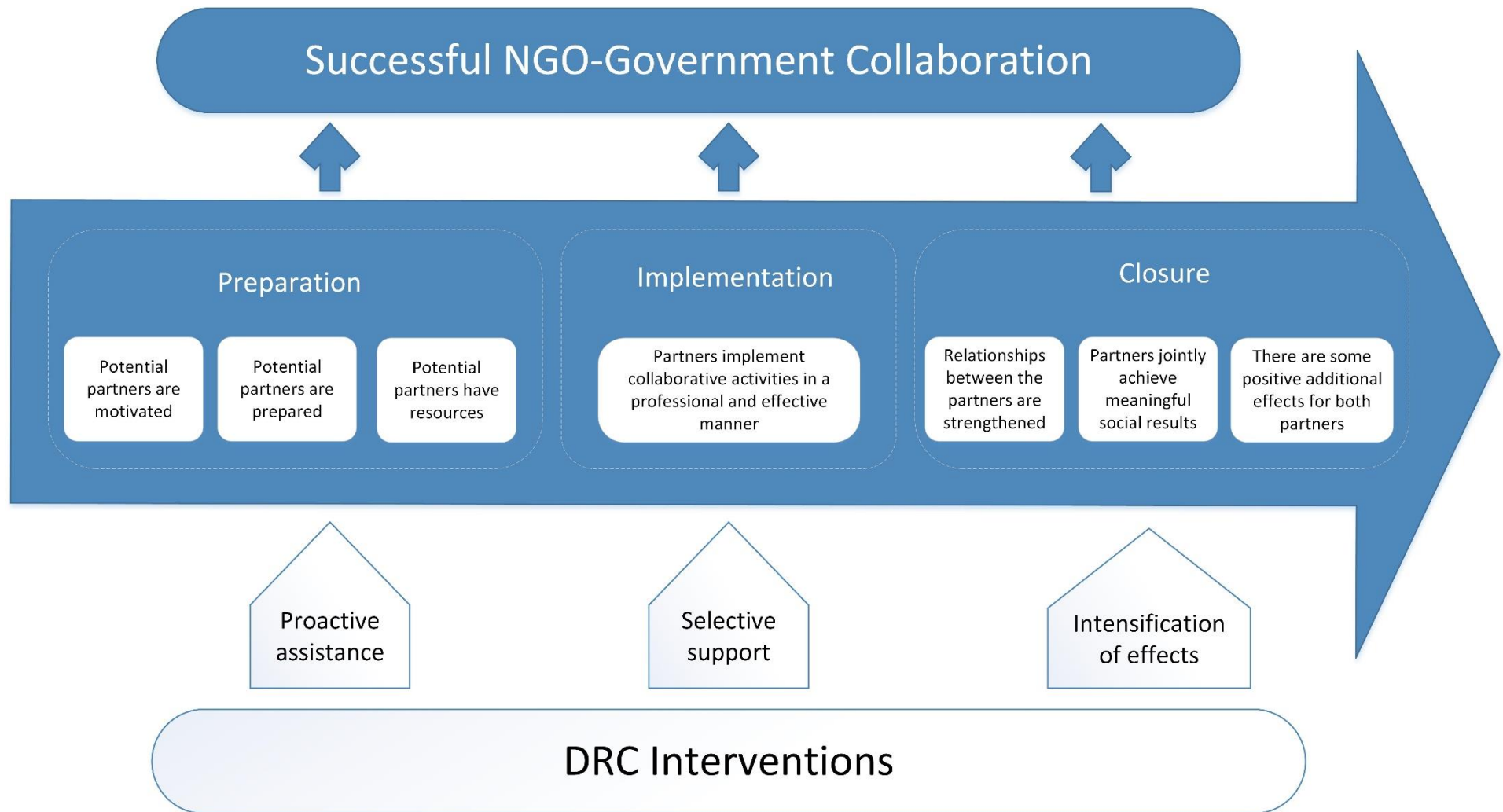
The DRC strategy during the implementation stage can be described as *selective support*. The program monitors the progress of joint activities, and intervenes if and when it is needed, in a very sensitive, respectful, and careful manner. Interventions could take the form of consultations, facilitation, or participation in some key events. DRC is flexible and open to modifying the partners’ implementation plans if necessary.

NGO-government collaboration can be considered successful if:

- It produces meaningful social results
- The relationship between the parties develops and improves
- There are ~~some~~ additional positive effects for both parties, primarily related to their reputation and access to resources

²¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2003). Introduction to Theory of Change.

Figure 4. DRC Theory of Change



The DRC strategy during the closure stage is aimed at *intensification of the effects*. Since the sample was rather small—we studied only four cases—there was limited evidence related to the DRC interventions at the closure stage. Clearly, DRC had only limited opportunities to make a substantial contribution during this stage. Lack of empirical data related to DRC interventions during the closure stage could also be interpreted as lack of attention to this phase of collaborative activities on the part of the program. The latter hypothesis requires further discussion.

All of the DRC interventions considered national and cultural contexts. DRC consults with local partners on the best strategies and actively involves them in implementation of program activities. This evaluation is itself an example of this consultative-participative approach: Local professionals conducted part of the field study in the Kazakh and Tajik languages.

3. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Main conclusions.

The four cases selected for this study were information rich and provided enough empirical evidence to develop a DRC Theory of Change (ToC) inductively from a body of data without preconceived theories or hypotheses.

The Theory of Change presented in this report fits the four cases very well and, according to the DRC leadership and professional staff, is relevant to the DRC approach to development of NGO-government collaboration in general.

This Theory of Change is based on the assumption that collaboration between NGOs and government entities includes three phases: preparation, implementation, and closure. The DRC has no direct authority to make collaboration happen, but it can undertake some activities that make it more likely to happen and to increase its effectiveness. The further collaboration develops, the less the DRC can influence it, which is why most DRC efforts are focused on the preparatory phase of collaboration. In general, the DRC has better access to NGOs and more opportunities to influence them than government entities.

It is possible that for various reasons the DRC paid less attention to the closure phase of collaborative activities, and could have been more effective in intensifying the effects of collaborative activities.

Preliminary discussions of the DRC Theory of Change with several DRC representatives demonstrated its heuristic potential — it resonated with their world view and stimulated creative thinking and interesting discussion.

Based on this Theory of Change, the DRC approach is:

- *Oriented towards continuous support.* DRC contributes to all three stages of NGO-government collaboration: preparation, implementation, and closure.
- *Sensitive to the stage of collaboration.* DRC activities shift from proactive assistance, to selective support, to intensification of the effects.
- *Comprehensive.* DRC addresses all of the essential components of NGO-government collaboration.
- *Relationship-driven.* DRC recognizes the value and importance of personal relationships.
- *Adaptive and realistic.* DRC adjusts its activities to fit the changing real-world circumstances.
- *Country specific and culturally sensitive.* DRC considers political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts.

The overall conclusion:

DRC implemented an effective approach to helping NGOs successfully engage in collaboration with their respective governments. This approach could be considered one of the substantial results of the DRC program.

3.2. Main recommendations.

Recommendation 1.

DRC should discuss its Theory of Change and the main features of its approach for supporting NGO-government collaboration within the program team and with program participants. This discussion will both enrich the ToC description and help to verify it. A final version of this ToC and the DRC approach should be developed as a result of these discussions.

Recommendation 2.

DRC can use the Theory of Change for planning purposes and as a framework for analysis and evaluation in its future endeavors.

Recommendation 3.

DRC should pay special attention to its interventions during the closure phase of NGO-government collaboration. It is likely that there are additional opportunities that have not yet been used by the program and its partners.

Recommendation 4.

DRC should use a case study approach in the future for evaluation purposes when appropriate.

Recommendation 5.

DRC should consider publishing an article in Russian and in English to make its ToC and the approach based on the ToC available to practitioners and researchers in the region and beyond.

Annex 1. Case study method: literature review

In this Annex the literature on case studies is explored to clearly define the method, identify its key characteristics, and reveal its strengths and limitations.

1. Definition

Robert Stake (1995) points out the unique features of a case. "The case is a special something to be studied, a student, a classroom, a committee, a program, perhaps, but not a problem, a relationship, or a theme. The case to be studied probably has problems and relationships, and the report of the case is likely to have a theme, but the case is an entity. The case, in some ways, has a unique life. It is a something that we do not sufficiently understand and want to—therefore, we do a case study" (Stake, 1995, p. p.133).

Stake argues that the case need not be a person or enterprise. "It can be whatever 'bounded system' is of interest. An institution, a program, a responsibility, a collection or a population can be the case. This is not to trivialize the notion of "case" but to note the generality of the case study method in preparation for noting its distinctiveness" (Stake, 2000, p. p.23).

Stake (1995, 2000) also provides a clear distinction and gives great prominence to what is and what is not "the case." He suggests keeping the boundaries in focus. "What is happening and deemed important within those boundaries (the emic) is considered vital and usually determines what the study is about, as contrasted with other kinds of studies where hypotheses or issues previously targeted by the investigators (the etic) usually determine the content of the study" (Stake, 2000, p. p.23).

Gillham (2000) defines a case as "a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw" (p.1).

Yin (2012) defines case study research as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a "case"), set within its real-life context - especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (R. K. Yin, 2012, p. 4).

Yin emphasizes three features in the profile of the case study:

"First, the method depends on the use of—and ability to integrate in converging fashion (some would say "triangulate")—information from multiple sources of evidence. The evidence may include direct observations, interviews, documents, archival files, and actual artifacts. The facts and conclusions for the case study will be built around the consistency of data from these sources, and these facts and conclusions may be expressed in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Second, the method implicitly assumes a richness of data because a case study is intended to examine a phenomenon in its real-life context.

Third and last, the case study method includes research that contains single case studies as well as multiple-case studies. The process of generalizing the results of either type of case study depends on the development, testing, and replication of theoretical propositions (analytic generalization)—rather than any notions based on the selection of numeric samples and extrapolating to a population (statistical generalization)." (R. Yin, 2000, p. p.185).

Michael Bassey defines an educational case study as "an empirical enquiry which is conducted within a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity), into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or program, or institution, or system, mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons, in order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers, or of theoreticians who are working to these ends, and such that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able:

- a) To explore significant features of the case,
- b) To create plausible interpretations of what is found,
- c) To test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations,
- d) To construct a worthwhile argument or story,
- e) To relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature,
- f) To convey convincingly to an audience this argument or story, and
- g) To provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments." (Bassegy, 2002, p. p.109).

Hammersley and Gomm (2000) compare the case study method with the experimental approach and the survey. They note that "The case study is investigation of a relatively small number of cases (sometimes just one). Information is gathered and analyzed about a large number of features of each case. It's a study of naturally occurring cases; or, in "action research" form, study of cases created by the actions of the researcher but where the primary concern is not controlling variables to measure their effects. Quantification of data is not a priority. Indeed, qualitative data may be treated as superior. The main concern may be with understanding the case studied in itself, with no interest in theoretical inference or empirical generalization. However, there may also be attempts at one or other, or both, of these. Alternatively, the wider relevance of the findings may be conceptualized in terms of the provision of vicarious experience, as a basis for "naturalistic generalization" or "transferability." (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000, p. p.4).

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) propose a list the "key elements of case study" that includes:

- "Case Study as Research Genre
- Bounded unit – a person, a group, an institution or organization
- Located within personal, professional, local and national communities
- Involves interactions, communications, relationships and practices between the case and the wider world and vice versa
- Focus on collecting rich data – capturing the complexity of case
- Data may be collected over extended periods with repeated collections or may be collected during an intensive but short period of time
- Requires spending time within the world of those being researched
- Uses a variety of data collection tools (interviews, observations, reflective journals and others) and different perspectives (child, teacher, parent, researcher) to provide depth
- Employs two or more forms of data collection tool and/or two or more perspectives. This helps to triangulate the data and reinforces the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn." (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 11)

Farquhar emphasizes that the case study method represents inductive approach to research (Farquhar, 2012, p. 24): the researcher starts with data collection, then develops patterns and hypothesis and only then builds a theory. This is opposite to the deductive approach when theory is developed first and then tested.

2. When the case study approach is most appropriate

Yin suggests that at least three situations create relevant opportunities for applying that case study method as a research method (R. K. Yin, 2012, pp. 4-5):

- 1) When the research addresses either a descriptive question (*What is happening or has happened?*) of an explanatory question (*How or why did something happen?*).
- 2) When it is needed to study a phenomenon within its real-life settings.
- 3) While conducting evaluations.

3. Variations of case study research

There can be variation in the specific form that case study research takes.

According to Hammersley and Gomm (2000), it could vary:

- "In the number of cases studied, and the role of comparison;
- In how detailed the case studies are;
- In the size of the case(s) dealt with;
- In the extent to which researchers document the context of the case, in terms of the wider society and/or historically;
- In the extent to which they restrict themselves to description and explanation, or engage in evaluation and prescription." (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000, pp. p.3-4).

This last characteristic is represented in Bassey's work as three different end-points for research:

- "Story-telling and picture-drawing case study,
- Evaluative case study, and
- Theory-seeking/theory-testing case study linked to fuzzy general predictions. (Bassey, 2002, p. p.112).

Stake (1994) introduces the concepts of the "intrinsic" and "instrumental" interests of the researcher. The "intrinsic" case study is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case. "It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest.

"In what we may call instrumental case study, particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else" (p.236).

Yin (1994) discovers a dichotomy between holistic and embedded case studies. "The same case study may involve more than one unit of analysis. This occurs when, within a single case, attention also is given to a subunit or subunits. For instance, even though a case study might be about a single public program, the analysis might include outcomes from individual projects within the program (and possibly even some quantitative analyses of large numbers of projects). In an organizational study, the embedded units also might be 'process' units—such as meetings, roles, or locations. In either situation, these embedded units can be selected through sampling or cluster techniques" (p. 42).

4. Case selection

There is a consensus on the importance of case selection; understanding critical phenomena may depend on choosing the case well.

Since the case study method is qualitative, the rationale for selecting cases (the sampling strategy) should be purposeful (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2001). In the most general terms, the purpose of a case study is better understanding of a phenomenon. It is logical then to select the

case, or cases, from which the researcher can learn most (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2001; Stake, 1995; R. Yin, 2000). Stake stresses that even for collective case studies selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance.

5. How to conduct a case study

The stages in conducting case study research include (Stake, 1995):

1. Identifying the research purpose,
2. Asking research questions and drawing up ethical guidelines,
3. Designing research,
4. Collecting and storing data,
5. Analyzing and interpreting data,
6. Writing the case report, and
7. Finishing and publishing.

Yin (1994) points out that for case studies, five components of a research design are especially important:

1. A study's questions,
2. Its propositions, if any,
3. Its unit(s) of analysis,
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions, and
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 20).

Gillham (2000) argues that the researchers should be conscious of the uniqueness of the case and should not completely rely on the literature while designing the study. He suggests that the researcher needs to explore literature in parallel with getting to know his or her case in context. From the beginning there needs to be the kind of interaction that is understood as a form of dialogue. Gillham's recommendations as the first steps:

- Reading the (probably) relevant literature,
- Getting to know the case or cases in their setting,
- Deciding, in a not too focused fashion, what the broad aims are, and
- Making a start on getting the research questions into shape.

To insure high quality case study research Yin (1994) advises researchers to:

- Use multiple sources of evidence,
- Establish a chain of evidence,
- Have key informants review the case study report,
- Do pattern matching,
- Do explanation building,
- Do time series analysis,

- Use replication logic in multiple case studies,
- Use a case study protocol, and
- Develop a case study database.

Stake (1994) stresses the “pervasive uniqueness” of the case since the end result of case study research regularly presents something unique. According to Stake, the uniqueness of the case extends to:

- The nature of the case,
- Its historical background,
- The physical setting,
- Other contexts, including economic, political, legal, and aesthetic,
- Other cases through which this case is recognized, and
- Those informants through whom the case can be known.

There is a consensus on the need of triangulation in case study research to substantiate interpretation of data or to clarify its different meanings. Most publications suggest four types of triangulation initially proposed by Denzin (1978):

- Data source triangulation,
- Investigator triangulation,
- Theory triangulation, and
- Methodological triangulation.

Progressive focusing (Gillham, 2000; Patton, 2001; Stake, 1995) is an essential characteristic of the case study approach. Research questions emerge and may change radically as the researcher gets to know the context at first hand. Case study research can be based on various forms of evidence (Gillham, 2000):

- Documents (letters, policy statements, regulations, guidelines) provide a formal framework to which the researcher may have to relate the informal reality.
- Records that go back in time may provide a useful longitudinal fix on the present situation. Records may be stored on computer files.
- Interviews.
- “Detached” observation.
- Participant observation.
- Physical artifacts.

A researcher in a qualitative inquiry is a tool (Patton, 2001; Stake, 1995) and operates as an active learner. Stake (1995) shows that options for case researcher roles include teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and interpreter. Stake (1995) suggests four approaches to case study analysis:

- *Direct interpretation*, especially in the early stages of research, helps draw possible meanings from single instances.
- *Categorical aggregation* seeks a collection of instances from the data that suggest emerging issue-relevant meanings.
- *Patterns* help researchers find correspondence among disparate categories.

- *Naturalistic generalizations* reflect the learning from a single case and can be applied to a population of cases.

6. Writing case reports

Reports should include a detailed (“thick”) description of the case that allows one to understand the phenomenon studied and to make interpretations about meanings and significance. (Creswell, 2014; Denzin, 1984; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2001; Stake, 1995; R. Yin, 1994). Descriptions highlight the major players, sites, most important events, and activities.

Basse (1999) suggests the narrative, descriptive and fictional report styles:

The narrative style of report writing tells more of the story of how the research was conducted. It gives the reader an idea of the stages through which the research developed and what decisions were made, but, in consequence, has the disadvantage of being long.

The descriptive style of report writing draws a picture in words of something tangible: a classroom, a school, a system. As a form of case study reporting, it is based on careful probing and thoughtful analysis.

Fictional names for real people and places (not to be confused with a fictitious report) are often used in case study reports to give anonymity to sources while retaining a human touch.

Stake (1995) recommends using quotations that make a report easier to read and create a sense of story.

7. Criteria for judging the quality of case study research

Yin suggests the following criteria “common to all social science methods” (Yin, 1994, p.33):

- Construct validity—establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.
- Internal validity (for explanatory or causal studies only, and not for descriptive or exploratory studies)—establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.
- External validity—establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.
- Reliability—demonstrating that the operations of a study, such as the data collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results.

To judge the quality of research one has to make a clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. According to Stake (1995, p.37) the three major differences are:

1. "The distinction between understanding and explanation as the purpose of inquiry.
2. The distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher.
3. A distinction between knowledge constructed and knowledge discovered."

Validity in quantitative research depends on sufficiently careful construction to ensure that an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The instrument must be administered in an appropriately standardized manner according to prescribed procedures. The focus is on the measuring instrument, i.e., the test items, survey questions, or other measurement tools.

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork, including an ability to set aside distractions in the researcher's personal life.

The subjectivity vs. objectivity issue has long been debated among qualitative researchers. As a result the terms subjectivity and objectivity have become "ideological ammunition in the methodological paradigms debate." (Patton, 2001, p. p. 50) Patton suggests a pragmatic solution: to avoid using either word, use instead language such as trustworthiness and authenticity. He asserts that "any credible research strategy requires that the investigator adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon under study... The neutral investigator enters the research arena with no ax to grind, no theory to prove (to test but not to prove), and no predetermined results to support. Rather, the investigator's commitment is to understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence with regard to any conclusions offered" (p. 51).

Qualitative study as opposed to quantitative study is oriented towards deeper understanding and particularization but not generalization. In a qualitative study, a researcher extrapolates but does not generalize (Patton, 2001), though the qualitative findings may influence grand generalizations.

Replication in qualitative research (see Yin's fourth criteria) is not possible in the way it is in quantitative studies. Even the same researcher can't repeat the same case study research under similar conditions since the case, the environment, and the researcher (the tool) are extremely dynamic. The concept of "mental replication" (Patton, 1996) is used in qualitative research. This means that the research methodology should be described in enough detail to provide readers with the opportunity to follow the logic of the research and to replicate the methodology mentally.

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Annex 2. List of persons interviewed

Case 1.

1. Asanova Jamila, Executive Director, ARGO, Almaty
2. Atakhanova Kaisha, Director, DRC Program, ARGO, Almaty
3. Suleimen Usen, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Case 2.

List of individuals, with whom interviews were conducted in Dushanbe and Almaty:

4. Asanova Jamila, Executive Director, ARGO, Almaty
5. Atakhanova Kaisha, Director, DRC Program, ARGO, Almaty
6. Bakhriddinov Rustam, Deputy Director, NGO "Fidokor", Dushanbe-Khatlon
7. Kalandarov Umed, Director of ICNL in Tajikistan, Dushanbe
8. Rabieva Galiya, Deputy, Lower House of Parliament, Dushanbe, Tajikistan
9. Mirsaev Khakim, Deputy Minister of Justice, Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe
10. Sadonshoev Vadim, Project Specialist, USAID, Dushanbe
11. Khalilova Dilbar, Director, NGO "Fidokor", Dushanbe

List of participants in group interview, Dushanbe

12. Akhunova Rano, NGO 'Women-Voters', Dushanbe
13. Djumaeva Rano, NGO 'Cultural-Educational Center Tomiris', Kurgan-Tobe, Khatlon Region
14. Temirov Khasan, NGO 'Rushdi Dekhot', Dushanbe
15. Umarova Sharofat, Director, NGO 'Mekhrangez,' Bokhtarskii, Khatlon Region
16. Sharipova Mushkiniso - Director, Public Charity 'Parvozi Parastu,' Kurgan-Tobe, Khatlon Region
17. Shobudinova Rukhshona, Director, NGO 'Mekhrangez' Bokhtarskii, Khatlon Region
18. Shomudinov Boir, NGO 'Subkhi Tankdurusti,' Baldzhuvanskii, Khatlon Region

Case 3.

19. Akshabaev Erkinbai - project beneficiary, Akkum village
20. Aliev Sadyk Alievich - Chairman of the Veteran's Union, Zhalagash region, Kyzlorda oblast
21. Bakhtiyarova Zhanarkhan - project beneficiary, Zhalagash village
22. Dyusebaev Talgat Tursynovich - mayor of Zhalagash district
23. Zholtayev Nurtai - Mayor, Bukarbai batyr village
24. Kuttymbetova Elmira Mergenbaevna - head of the district department of employment and social programs, Zhalagash region
25. Omirserikov Erlan Kashibekovich - former deputy mayor of Zhalagash region for economic and budgetary issues
26. Opabekov Nurlan - Mayor, Alamesek village

27. Orazbaeva Ainur, project beneficiary, Aksu village
28. Telbaev Galymzhan, Mayor, Aksu village
29. Tolegenov Temirbek - Akkum village mayor
30. Tulepova Madina - chairperson "Support of Initiatives," Zhanat Saparzhanova, grant manager, 'Support of Initiatives'

Case 4.

31. Anzurat Ashurova, Head, City Department of Education, Kurgan Tobe city
32. Dilbar Khalilova, Director, International NGO "Fidikor"
33. Khaisha Atakhanova, DRC Program Director, ARGO
34. Mamachon Mukhiddinov, Chairperson, Mahalla (Neighborhood) Committee, Vakhdat, Kurgan Tobe city
35. Zoirzoda Marifat Umar, until recently Head of the Department for Women and Family Affairs, Khatlon Region (currently - Chairperson, Boldzhuvanskii region, Khatlon, Republic of Tajikistan)
36. Mokhiniso Shonazarova, Director, NGO 'Akhtari bakht'
37. Parvina Rasulova, Girl's Club Member and Volunteer, Kurgan Tobe city
38. Rano Djumayeva, Director, Public Organization "Cultural and Educational Center for Girls TOMIRIS"
39. Rustam Bakhriddinov, Country Director, DRC Tajikistan, "Fidikor"