



Centralasien-gruppen



# PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

*How Partners Envision the Future*



---

# Index

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
On Theory of Change	3
The CSO context in Central Asia	4
<b>Broad factors underpinning the problems</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Areas of intervention and the reasoning behind them</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Organisational Portraits</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Moving forward</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Thank you</b>	<b>20</b>
Bibliography	21

---



# *Introduction*

As an organisation, reflecting on the change you wish to make, why and how is an important stepping stone to better understand how to improve and develop your work. Such an active reflection can be facilitated by using methods such as Theory of Change.

This report sets out to cover how 11 different CSOs (civil society organisations) in Central Asia work with Theory of Change. A number of workshops were conducted with eight of the 11 organisations to better understand how Theory of Change can be a helpful tool for each organisation when carrying out their work. The remaining three explained how they work with Theory of Change.

The organisations portrayed in this publication have been encouraged to map their work using the Theory of Change, as it is a tool to map the desired outcomes of an intervention as well as encourage an CSO to critically reflect on the current problem they seek to resolve, how it was identified, how the intervention was designed, implemented as well as monitored and evaluated.



# On Theory of Change

A Theory of Change includes the following elements:

- 1 the context of the intervention – the social, political and environmental conditions as well as the identification of other actors
- 2 the long-term change that the intervention seeks to achieve
- 3 the processes necessary to the achievement of the desired change
- 4 the critical assumptions relating to how the change might happen (and potential challenges to them)

A Theory of Change supports the organisations in setting out the changes they wish to make and to better understand any potential progress or the lack thereof. Such an understanding ensures necessary changes can be made throughout a project. A Theory of Change can also be used as an important internal and external evaluation tool to reflect on the possible impact an intervention has had (O'Flynn, 2010: 5).

The organisational data has been collected via study visits to the region in three of the cases (El-Too, ISDS and Little Earth), whilst data for the remaining eight have been collected via methodology workshops carried out online with the organisations based in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and in-person with the organisations based Kyrgyzstan.

# The CSO context in Central Asia

To understand the work of the organisations portrayed, and understand the approach they take and the challenges they face, it is key to understand in which context they operate.

There are a wide range of CSOs operating in Central Asia and it is of strong importance that these CSOs continue to operate, providing positive societal change to some of the regional challenges, in particular as CSOs in Central Asian countries are often subject to state control. The rate of state control varies, with Turkmenistan limiting all civil society activity, to Kyrgyzstan being more accepting of the operating of CSOs; although the latter is declining.

The underlying justification by governments to limit civil society is linked to authoritarian perceptions of containing the status quo of political stability, and CSOs outside of state control are often viewed as a threat to authoritarian rule. Neighbouring hegemonies China and Russia, both under authoritarian regimes, share this perception and support the Central Asian regimes in containing their civil society space and limiting the vast majority, if not all, CSO operation under government control (Ziegler, 2016: 550-3). Central Asian countries are affected by Russian influence in economic, cultural and geographical terms. The economies of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rely heavily of Russian remittances, and Russian media outlets are perceived as credible by larger proportions of the Central Asian population (2016: 557). China is also influencing the region by investing large sums of money into infrastructure projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the construction of a new government building in Tajikistan (Yau, 2020).

A common strategy used by authoritarian governments in Central Asia is to limit CSOs' access to foreign funding (Ziegler, 2016: 554). For example, an CSO in Uzbekistan is only allowed to accept \$400 per year in foreign funding, or else it will be investigated by the authorities. Other methods used to restrict CSOs in Central Asia consist of state-controlled media outlets dominating the media scene, as well as the adoption of laws which could easily be put to use against CSOs disliked by the state in a Central Asian country (2016: 556).

Kyrgyzstan is the Central Asian country with the highest proportions of CSOs, ranging from grant consumers, i.e. organisations applying for funding without seeking to achieve positive societal change, to CSOs contributing to social change both via humanitarian and advocacy work (Bayalieva-Jailobaeva, 2018:285). Changes to the way foreign donors such as USAID and DFID operate in terms of funding has in the past decade impacted on Central Asian CSOs, mainly in Kyrgyzstan, by reducing their chances of having funding approved. Fierce competition and a donor focus on advocacy work rather than capacity building are some of the factors affecting CSOs (Bayalieva-Jailobaeva, 2018: 289). Although CSOs are encouraged to diversify their income sources, this requires capacity to do so, something CSOs often lack (Bayalieva-Jailobaeva 2018:291-2).

International donors often make use of so-called buzzwords in their development discourse. Research demonstrates how local communities struggle to comprehend the meaning of such buzzwords, which in extension impacts on their involvement in and ownership of the project (Tessur & Crack, 2020:38-9).



Thus, funding opportunities, national legislation and donor compliance pose external issues to the CSO sector in Central Asia. However, CSOs in the region are reportedly affected by both external and internal factors. Among internal factors issues such as donor dependence, poor organisational structure, lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework and insufficient staff management strategies affect the performance of an CSO. An CSO needs to invest considerable time and effort in applying for funding, monitor and evaluate their work to ensure they adhere to the set mission and vision of the organisation and ensure they have mechanisms in place to ensure organisational sustainability. The latter includes routines for organisational management, such as finance, human resources and projects. High turnover of staff is a common problem in the CSO sector, often due to

high levels of stress. Frequent staff changes is not merely about improving staff welfare, but can also affect the CSO's ability to make use of learning points gathered by staff throughout different events. Hence, it is key for an CSO to have routines in place for how to store knowledge and experience gained by the organisation from running different projects, programmes or events. Such knowledge serves as a tool to facilitate organisational improvement, as well as streamlines the process for introducing new staff, the public and donors to the organisation and its achievements.

Despite the CSO sector being under pressure, the existence of the aforementioned sector is a vital tool for strengthening civil society, ensuring protection of human rights and promoting sustainable changes in areas such as climate and gender.

# Broad factors underpinning the problems

The following section is based on the data gathered from the workshops and aims to map out the factors directly or indirectly contributing to the problems the organisations seek to solve.

A commonality in all the organisations' problem analysis are overarching social, economic, and political, legal and policy issues; whether the organisations work on issues related to gender equality and gender-based violence, or youth-related issues. These issues correlate to the three overlapping spheres of any society: communities, government and the market - existing on different levels, ranging from state to community and family level.

## Social

Both problems related to gender inequality and youth are based in social hierarchies found in all the countries of the region. Sexism and ageism are the result of patriarchal gender norms, paternalism, religious and traditional views, where women and young people are not taken seriously.

NeMolchi and Qalb Nuri finds that traditional gender norms and roles, results in the normalisation of violence against women. Qalb Nuri focuses on the problem of gender norms, and the low self-esteem of men, as a source of toxic masculinity. NeMolchi sees media's reporting, (or lack thereof), to perpetuate violence against women.

Similarly, UMEDVOR sees traditional culture as a source of a normalised mentality that ignores young people. Because of hierarchical structures and traditional norms, awareness of their human rights and responsibilities among communities, including women and young people, are low. Qalb

Nuri and Ghamkhori sees this as a cause of gender discrimination and gender-based violence in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In Kyrgyzstan, negative social norms against girls and women cause the fact that cases of domestic violence are increasing nowadays. Girls and women are silent about it though which also makes it hard to investigate the cases of domestic violence. Once again, the reasons for this difficulty varies, such as fear of society/public stigmatisation, as society often normalises violence and self-stigmatisation when it comes to the cases of sexual violence. In many cases girls and women do not realise that they are victims of violence. Discussions about violence, especially sexual form of violence is strongly tabooed due to the cultural context. Girls and women think there is no way to get out of the place where violence is happening. They do not have information about crisis centers, shelters for women and girls' rights organisations. It can be connected to the fact that women and girls don't access information because the information is spread in Russian which is not a widely-spoken language in remote areas.



## Government

### *(Legal, policy and funding)*

Moreover, state policies and enforcement of laws are weak, or where government spending neglects the rights and development of women and young people. For example, with regards to gender-related problems, NeMolchi and Qalb Nuri finds that state policy in Uzbekistan is geared towards keeping families together, and reconciling abusers with the victim - women.

Closely related and overlapping to social roots of the problem, is the view that local duty bearers overlook laws and the rights of victims. Community leaders, civil servants and local law enforcement across the region, consider acts of violence within the family as a family matter, and something that should be solved within the family.

UMEDVOR and Qalb Nuri highlight the lack of government funding as the reason for lack of and misused youth centres and programs (UMEDVOR), and work not taking place in centres for women and the abusing men (Qalb Nuri). Moreover, duty bearers (including universities and higher education) do not engage and commit resources for young people's development and engagement in social and economic life (UMEDVOR). Furthermore, one of the commonalities among organisations in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are that, because they are under surveillance and their activities are controlled, they most of the time do their projects in line with the government, making projects or organisations like NeMolchi look rebellious in its content.

In Kyrgyzstan, cases of domestic violence rose during the pandemic and the government was slow with taking actions despite the lobbying work of CSOs, but in the end some action plans were released by CSOs and spread in different social networks, but as the numbers show, women and girls in regions did not receive the information since remote areas are not as developed in terms of digitalisation. Women and girls from ethnic minority groups did not access any information due to the fact that information once again was not spread in the available language and/or they are more affected by negative gender norms. There is also a lack of trust towards the police since there are mostly male police representatives that have traditional views that include distrust towards the victims of violence.

## Economic

Lack of economic opportunities, both for women and young people, creates dependencies and demands participation in either local economic activities or migration.

Large number of family members and lack of accommodation (Ghamkhori), along with unemployment, low income and lack of state financial support (NeMolchi and Qalb Nuri) - sometimes coupled with substance abuse (Qalb Nuri and Ghamkhori) - are underpinning domestic and gender-based violence. Qalb Nuri and NeMolchi establish that because of the financial dependencies among women to their husbands or their families, women and girls are forced to stay in unhealthy environments, where they run the risk of being continuously harmed. This pattern is visible in the context of Kyrgyzstan as well, as women and girls do not report cases of domestic violence is that are basically dependent on their families financially. They do not have education nor money, which makes them feel anxious about their future.

Because of lack of economic opportunities, (internal and external) migration is widespread, and culturally normalised in society and within families. From UMEDVOR's perspective, families with migrant parents have little supervision and control over youth; and this leads to social and health issues, as well as reproduction of migration patterns over generations.

# Areas of intervention and the reasoning behind them

Regardless of the focus of each organisation, such as climate, youth, disabled people or gender-based violence, the portrayed organisations perceive improvement of their core areas to happen via

- Awareness raising
- Capacity building of target group
- Reaching out to or cooperating with decision-making bodies
- Networking with other organisations

The socio-economic and cultural contexts explain the focus areas of the above-mentioned interventions. The contexts give rise to the knowledge deficit the organisations seek to alleviate by their interventions, such as awareness raising. For example, there is a general lack of knowledge of the human rights held by their target groups combined with a knowledge deficit by the local public on why commonly held views on the treatment of women, disabled people or LGBTQ activists are harmful and how their improvement could be beneficial for society at large.

In the case of the environmental organisations, the lack of knowledge by the local communities of the harm current practices have on the climate represents an important aspect of the climate change issue.





Paired with increased knowledge of the target group on their rights, and the local community on the benefit a changed attitude towards these groups has, there are also more practical interventions that the organisations undertake. For example, UMEDVOR sees the importance of establishing physical spaces to facilitate local engagement in civil society. A range of other organisations, such as NeMolchi, runs online support platforms and Qalb Nuri provides practical support for individuals who have been in touch with the local social centre. Nazyk Kyz also provides in-person support for their target groups. As such, receiving support from each other and the organisation is considered a useful method to decrease stigma and increase confidence.

The three climate organisations focus on the encouragement of adopting climate friendly practices in the local communities in which they operate. Another core part of their work is to gather evidence of the consequences of climate change, which is often why they form in larger networks and can more easily reach key stakeholders such as decision-makers.

capacity of their target groups to expand and/or claim their rights. In many cases the increased capacity is thought to increase the prospects of target groups and local communities to influence improved legislative measures in their area of focus.

Collaboration with other organisations, decision-makers and international organisations contribute to the success and sustainable impact of the abovementioned interventions. For example, ISDS is a part of a larger network of organisations working in the area of climate change, which is beneficial for lobbying purposes to decision-makers but also increases the scale of what the network is able to achieve in terms of interventions.



**Forming networks may be more time-consuming for organisations which work on issues such as gender-based violence, LGBTQ rights and improved rights of people with disabilities, as these are more stigmatised issues deeply rooted in local conservative views. Environmental issues on the other hand, is not necessarily perceived as equally sensitive but rather non-prioritised and abstract.**



This understanding of the problem ties into how the organisations identify their interventions to be helpful in terms of resolving the issue. For example, in terms of what the portrayed organisations wish to achieve, a common focus is that of increased



# Organisational Portraits

The following section features the organisations who took part in the workshops, as well as the three environmental organisations Little Earth, ISDS and EI-Too.

**Little Earth** is an organisation from Tajikistan which has been working in the field of environmental protection for many years. The organisation has focused on mobilising local communities and introducing resource-saving technologies and practices to them, with the overall aim to reduce energy poverty and unsustainable usage of natural resources.

The projects implemented by the organisation are an excellent tool for mobilising local communities and introducing new resource-saving technologies and practices, as well as improving the quality of environmental education. In the framework of projects, Little Earth tries to cooperate with existing community groups or rural organisations on the ground. Moreover, in the framework of projects, they try to involve local experts and craftsmen, as well as to purchase, where possible, local materials. Through projects, Little Earth motivates local communities to make their own contribution to the implementation of the plans, so that they have a sense of ownership. The use of local capacity and knowledge, as well as the attraction of local resources, is another example of mobilising community support and taking into account their characteristics and needs, which, in general, determines the overall sustainability of the project.

Little Earth tries, whenever possible, to hold more preliminary meetings and consultations, both with representatives of local authorities and directly with village activists and project beneficiaries. This allows them to collect information about target communities, identify local activists, the highest priority needs of villagers, and hear the views of various stakeholders on possible solutions to existing problems.

After the implementation of the projects Little Earth tries, whenever possible, to visit the communities in order to meet with the beneficiaries, observe the use of equipment, as well as provide the necessary consulting or technical assistance. The organisation tries to keep in touch with the beneficiaries of the project and after its completion.

Realising that the resources and timeframe of projects are often very limited, Little Earth tries to draw the attention of other public organisations and international donors to the existing problems in high mountain communities. This is done in order to, where possible, expand coverage of the population and attract additional funds and investments in villages. Even if the organisation is not part of new projects, Little Earth always provides assistance to new players by providing the vital information and, if necessary, advice.



**ISDS** is an organisation operating in Kyrgyzstan and focusing on environmental protection and developing approaches and ways on climate change issues and its global challenges.

ISDS is a member of a national network on promotion of biocultural diversity in Kyrgyzstan (Nasyat Heritage) that advances the rights of local communities to sustainably govern natural territories and resources and work to empower local community members to strengthen their role in the decision-making processes on local, regional and national levels. 'Nasyat-Heritage' network includes more than 60 CSOs and CBOs, as well as custodians of traditional knowledge from 20 rural

municipalities, including over 80 villages in Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Chui, Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces.

ISDS is a member of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI) dedicated to working together to realise societies in harmony with nature. This international effort promotes activities consistent with existing fundamental principles including the Ecosystem Approach. ISDS has been a member of the Mountain Partnership Global Steering Group representing the Eurasia/Central Asia region since 2017 dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world.





.....

**Nazyk Kyz** are based in Kyrgyzstan and aim to promote and protect the rights of disabled women and girls.

Their core areas of work are feminism, gender equality as well as the provision of legal and psychological support. The situation for disabled women and girls in the country is difficult. There is a high level of pressure towards women and girls with disabilities. In most cases, parents do not trust them and try to limit them. For example, women and girls do not get any opportunities to have privacy. Parents limit them physically, emotionally and financially. Children get monthly allowances from the government but they don't get their money since parents keep them and in many cases do not spend their money for their needs. Nasyk Kyz's target groups don't accept their disabilities. They feel vulnerable because society makes them feel that way, dependent and desperate. They are depressive as well. Educational institutions as universities, colleges discriminate against them openly. Just for instance, some time ago administrations of local universities were lobbying that would make people with disabilities study separately, not with general students. There is also a lack of people with disabilities at political level. Even if there are some, they are all men. They don't challenge the politics; they don't question the problems women with disabilities have to live with. For this reason, Nasyk Kyz are planning, together with its partner organisations, to educate women with disabilities and make them visible at political level through capacity-building activities. Nazyk Kyz believes the level of violence towards women and girls with disabilities could be decreased through the following interventions:

- Strengthening the position of girls and women;
- Capacity-building;
- Networking;
- Monitoring;
- Advocating and lobbying.

The long term vision of the interventions is to create a society where the rights and interests of women and girls with disabilities are respected and protected. There are challenges to Nazyk Kyz's implementation of the aforementioned interventions, such as lack of financial resources which limits them to organise their thematic events such as camps, for example and/or support their target in crisis situations as COVID-19. Increased chances of networking and capacity building have been identified as beneficial to the organisation, enabling them to carry out their desired interventions. For Nazyk Kyz, it is also challenging to do outreach activities since there are no conditions provided for people with disabilities. Therefore, once or twice a year they try to arrange thematic camps that are supported within the projects and which consider the conditions for disabled girls and women. Nazyk Kyz tries to build partnerships with local, national and international organisations to arrange outreach activities as associations and networks.

.....

**Chynar** is a new organisation which seeks to support people with disabilities in Osh by offering training and employment opportunities.

They are currently working together with two other partners, the local organisations Nazyk Kyz and Ravenstvo. The purpose of supporting people with disabilities is to reduce violence, particularly domestic violence, towards the target group. Chynar is currently facing capacity issues, which hinders their ability to conduct interventions which would result in reduced violence rates.

.....

***RHAK is an organisation which works to improve sexual and reproductive health of young people.***

This includes conducting information interventions around HIV/AIDS, safe abortion and family planning. They target both young men and women. Sexual and reproductive health is very stigmatised in the local area, as conservative views are common. RHAK cooperates with local organisations and decision makers, in an attempt to showcase the harm negative and conservative stereotypes have on young people's reproductive health. Furthermore, RHAK mentioned the difficulties working with some other stakeholders such as local authorities and parents. When it comes to the

discussions that challenge negative social norms; women's rights, reproductive and sexual rights, democratisation, a high level of resistance still remains. For example, RHAK once offered a handbook about sexual education for school students and the organisation did not receive any support from the government. The Ministry of Education refused to include the material to the school program. The Jalal-Abad office of the organisation mentioned that it is difficult to engage schools and universities to their outreach activities due to the administration restrictions. Accordingly, they usually have to ask for permissions from the local government.

.....

***Rainbow is an organisation working to support youth and women with HIV.***

The aim of their interventions is to educate, support and promote the rights of people living with HIV. Strengthened rights will help young people and women living with HIV to become more confident and involved in the local society. The target group is affected by self-stigmatisation of living with HIV, but also stigma and discrimination towards them as people living with HIV. Rainbow works with several partner organisations in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, such as AIDS service organisations in Osh and CSOs such as Positive Dialogue, Ulybka and Novi Ritm. Due to limitations associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the engagement of the target group and the quality of services provided have reduced. To address these challenges, the organisation is developing activities that increase interest in telecommuting. At the same time, the organisation's target groups - teens and their parents lack information literacy, access to the Internet and devices which makes it hard for them to get involved in online sessions.

***Positive Dialogue works to provide legal support to the LGBTQ community, as well as promoting equality in health care and justice, the acknowledgement of rights and initiation of court cases.***

Positive Dialogue collaborates with various partner organisations and governmental agencies in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, such as Soros Foundation, Amnesty International and the Ombudsman. Positive Dialogue seeks to reduce gender-based violence, discrimination and arbitrary court decisions in cases linked to women using self-defence. The society does not have an understanding of the problem of women and violence against women. Majority does not want to support their work and/or women whom the organisation works with because of the stereotypes and norms that mostly affect girls and women. Just for instance, if a woman experiences violence, it is easy for society to blame a woman - a victim rather than a man - an abuser. Together with other stakeholders, Positive Dialogue works to find common solutions to the issues they face. For example, they collaborate with other organisations to provide psychological assistance for legal support. There are organisations and young people who support organisation's work, come to monitor trials, and cover information in their networks. Positive Dialogue faces certain hindrances in carrying out their activities, as funding is limited, which affects their human resources as well as project resources.

**Qalb Nuri** works mainly to provide legal services to vulnerable groups of the population, social and legal services to women who have suffered from domestic violence, in the field of achieving gender inequality, preventing gender violence, strengthening the institution of the family, upbringing and shaping a comprehensively harmoniously developed personality of the future generation, raising -political activity of women.

Qalb Nuri works on providing assistance to those who applied to the center for social and legal support of women and their families. They also work on changing the attitude of society towards the problem of domestic violence, patriarchal attitudes, raising the status and social and political activity of women. Their aim is that women know where to seek help, are able to get assistance and support when experiencing gender-based violence and thereby become confident enough to oppose it. Amendments to legislation would encourage increased reporting, which would reduce the stigma around gender-based violence, in extension resulting in a more gender-equal society.

Qalb Nuri faces several difficulties, such as a reluctance of government agencies to cooperate, due to their limited resources to act beyond their stated core functions. Furthermore, lack of constant funding affects the quality of the work of employees. This is clearly evident during project times when a large number of volunteers are required. The attraction of volunteers is carried out by conducting training in schools, colleges, universities, makhallas, etc.

**UMEDVOR** works on the promotion and strengthening of civil society by involving youth, women and vulnerable groups in society. UMEDVOR identified low civic engagement, high migration and unemployment and sense of belonging of youth in Khorog as problematic areas the organisation seeks to improve, in particular as there are no spaces and opportunities for youth development in the area.

The organisation is implementing various projects, such as raising awareness in local communities about the problems of civil society, solving problems in the field of economy and ecology and democracy as well as providing material, physical and psychological support for vulnerable groups of society (including vulnerable girls and women). They also work with schoolchildren to raise their awareness of the value of civil society and volunteering, conduct debate tournaments and educational camps.

They actively seek to cooperate with international and local organisations as well as the state to implement their projects.

UMEDVOR believes that strengthening the confidence and ability of young people to engage in their local society will encourage duty-bearers to have a dialogue with young people about their issues and concerns. By providing a physical space for young people to become engaged and gain new knowledge around their role and the role of others in civil society, UMEDVOR believes the current vicious circle of low civic engagement and high migration rates can be broken.

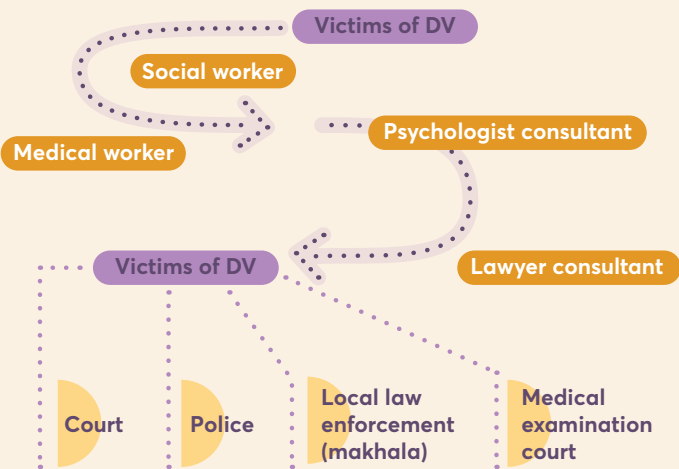


*Ghamkhori strives to improve the quality and economic standard of living of vulnerable segments of the population in Khatlon Region since 1999.*

To achieve their goals, Ghamkhori operates in several thematic areas such as community mobilisation, domestic violence, migration, children with disabilities, education, gender, health, agriculture. They aim to contribute to the formation of a healthy society through training and capacity building activities; providing access to information, supporting and cooperating with public institutions in the field of agriculture, education, health, protection of the rights and interests of citizens, they believe that it can only be achieved through a holistic approach and cooperation.

Ghamkhori has a special focus on tackling domestic violence. Their general goal is to reduce the level of domestic violence through services for overcoming domestic violence and assistance (rehabilitation, reintegration, integration, in social life) to persons who have experienced domestic violence in the Khatlon region, as well as increasing the awareness of the population, interact with actors on domestic violence issues.

Ghamkhori established the only Crisis Center for the victims of domestic violence in the Khatlon region that functions as portrayed.



Furthermore, Tajikistan is one of the most remittance-dependent nations in the world, with as many as 1.5 million (of Tajikistan's roughly 8 million citizens) migrant laborers working in Russia and making 28% of the country's GDP. The acute shortage of domestic jobs makes emigration a primary option for many young people in Tajikistan to seek employment. In most of the cases, the emigration citizens lack certain labour skills and awareness, hence face a lot of challenges both in the hosting country, that is mostly affiliated with Russia, and back in the home country upon return.

In order to help integrate and reintegrate migrants Ghamkhori runs a project that aims to help through providing up to date information on legislative changes to Russia's migration policies for leaving migrants and potential future migrants to ensure that migrants have realistic understanding of their possibilities and chances, before making the expensive and potentially risky journey. As for re-integrating the returned migrants Ghamkhori assists in starting small businesses and farming lots through capacity building training.

***"In 20 years of our existence, we have developed a lot. We extensively collaborate with local institutions, duty bearers and law enforcement. Based on Ghamkhori's work many publications were made. Even in the government contact us and consider our expertise when they pass legislations related to our thematic work. We became experts in what we do and most of the time we serve as a reference point."***

– shared Bahodur Toshmatov the director of the Ghamkhori.

Ghamkhori is a big organisation that employs 43 people including pedagogues, medical professionals, psychologists, social workers, agronomists and legal experts. Moreover, they have 13 constant volunteers, albeit they rotate. Despite their long existence, the financial aspect has always been a challenge to maintain. Also, Bahodur shares that there's always a room to improve, hence, capacity building activities and exchange of best practices are vital for the organisation.



.....

*Nemolchi is an initiative working to reduce gender-based violence in a context marked by normalisation of violence, low self-esteem of women and governmental distrust.*

They work to increase women's confidence, increased intolerance towards gender based violence, legal support for women to report abuse. In tandem with those areas of focus, Nemolchi also seeks to improve legal and policy frameworks, decrease stigma and increase ability for women's societal participation.

Nemolchi believes that strengthening women's confidence and raising awareness about gender-based violence will reduce the prevalence thereof.

However, they also see the need for a dialogue with duty-bearers to ensure enforced legislation on gender-based violence. Something that is rather challenging for Nemolchi, as they work in a context which renders them unable to register due to CSO regulations in Uzbekistan, and thereby struggle to receive grants. Registering the initiative as an CSO would increase the control over the work undertaken. Furthermore, the initiative finds it difficult to reach out to key stakeholders, such as decision-makers, as they are reluctant to cooperate with Nemolchi.

However, there are other like-minded activists in the field and increased dialogue between such actors can increase the prospects of a dialogue between them and decision-makers.

.....

*Public Foundation "El-Too" was established in 2001 and has 19 years of experience in promoting and developing community-based ecotourism, raising awareness of local population in sustainable use of natural resources, introduction of energy-efficient technologies, and sustainable livelihood in Issyk-Kul region, Kyrgyzstan.*

The foundation voluntarily unites three community initiative groups, 50 members and cooperates with 15 schools to mobilise schoolchildren for environment protection and ecology actions on the south of Issyk-Kul Lake. The main context of work of El-Too is based on developing and capacity building of community-based initiatives that are aimed at developing ecotourism, ecology conservation activities and developing new sources of income for local households based on ecotourism.

At the moment, El-Too has initiated three community based organisations "Manjyly", "Ak-Bulun ECO", "Aidyn-Kol". The first organisation promotes ecological tourism, whereas the latter two are engaged in establishing micro reserves in the wetlands areas for protections of waterfowl and development of nature, eco- and expedition tourism. El-Too works with civil servants both at the national and local level in their projects.

However, the organisation emphasises the importance of municipalities and local civil actors and cooperates on a regular basis. As part of the current project "Birds of Issyk-Kul - promoting joint efforts to conserve wetlands and waterfowl", the project team is actively cooperating with the State Agency On Environment Protection, Issyk-Kul biosphere reserve, and other local state agency to promote the role of local municipalities in conservation of wetlands and waterfowl.

The long term change the organisation's interventions seek to achieve are the conservation of nature, natural resources, rational and effective use of natural resources, as well as development of ecological tourism on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul lake. The main strategy of the organisation for the coming years is to conserve the biodiversity, natural landscape of the southern shore of Issyk-Kul lake that will be an attractive point for ecological tourism, raising awareness of local population on ecology conservation, introduction of eco-friendly and sustainable technologies in their economical activities (energy efficient sources of energy, permaculture, drip irrigation, etc.). All these efforts are to be based on the self-initiatives of the local communities supported by the team of El-Too. Ecotourism will serve as an alternative income for the local population, with a focus on women.



.....

The processes necessary for the achievement of the desired change as identified by El-Too:

- Regular and targeted information campaign on nature conservation
- Social mobilisation of local population, capacity building of community unions
- Developing ecological tourism and finding alternative sources of income for local population (with a focus on women) based on tourism
- Education of local population (including youth, schoolchildren and women) to rational use of natural resources and increasing ecological awareness among local population
- Assistance to ensure sustainable development of mountainous villages
- Identifying negative factors impacting nature, conducting research and developing measures for the improvement of situation
- Introducing eco-friendly and sustainable technologies in their economical activities (energy efficient sources of energy, permaculture, drip irrigation, etc.

From El-Too's previous work, they can say that nature conservation activities are more effective when combined with economic activities that bring additional income to the local population. In this sense, ecological tourism turned out to be a successful case, as there are more stakeholders interested in nature conservation to attract visitors. Bokonbaev, the capital city of Ton district, the part of the southern shore, is a successful case. The team plans to spread this practice into other areas of the southern shore where no tourism has developed. Over the last 2 years, the organisation is actively promoting the establishment of micro reserves in the wetlands areas. However, this case is more challenging as it intervenes with the main economic interests of the local population that use those areas for cattle-breeding. The challenges the organisation has faced so far is the conflict of interests over land use. At the moment, the organisation has conducted research on ecological perception and awareness of the local population and is elaborating a series of informational campaigns and aiming at developing ornithological tours to compensate the economical income for locals.



# Challenges

The organisations report difficulties in reaching out to decision makers, either due to an unwillingness to acknowledge issues such as gender-based violence on a governmental level, as in the case of NeMolchi in Uzbekistan, or due to lack of human and financial resources, as in the case of Qalb Nuri in Kyrgyzstan.

The organisations portrayed operate in different contexts where the degree of liberty to what an CSO can do in its country of registration differs heavily.

One of the core issues reported by a majority of organisations is lack of funding, often caused by reduced ability to apply for funding due to inexistence of domestic funding resources or strong competition for international funding sources. A fragile link in the chain of change is the (dis)continuation of funding and the (in)ability to cooperate with other organisations and decision-makers, which may be related to the capacity of the organisation itself. For an CSO to be able to attract funding, raise awareness, build the capacity of its target group and interact with decision-makers, the staff and organisational structure require significant investment. Approved grants seldom include overhead costs, which hampers the ability of an CSO to allocate funds to internal capacity building. Consequences thereof often include high turnover of staff, inability to train new staff due to time constraints as well as shortage of funding to hire new employees and ensure a sustained impact of an intervention. Such an argument is in no way advocating the professionalisation of CSOs, but still acknowledges the need for organisational

capacity building to build strong grassroots networks capable of ensuring sustainable interventions. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, lack of resources to build internal capacity poses a challenge to organisations, which affects their ability to carry out their work. Such a capacity deficit can manifest itself in the following areas:

- 1 lack of support towards local civil society organisations in terms of knowledge. Many local CSOs are not aware of how the laws work. In some cases they work with the lawyers or other organisations who are competent but in many cases, grassroots organisations do not know whom to ask for support;
- 2 local CSOs want to work with local communities but they lack in terms of finance as well. They do not know how to write project applications and they lack experience, knowledge and guidance. Several organisations mentioned that they do not have enough resources to hire someone to write project proposals and/or teach them how to do so. Some comments from the workshops:

***We need more of such workshops as method development tools since we understand the problem, we want to solve them but we don't know how and where to get resources to achieve that...***

***It would be amazing to have such workshops for all the members of our organisations, we need to strengthen our capacities in order to challenge the norms we try to eliminate. Our target is in need of support and we would like to help them but we don't know how to do it...For this reason, these workshops have been useful for us and we again understand that we need to learn more in order to apply the knowledge in our work...***

# Moving forward

## Networking

Further recommendations for the portrayed organisations and other CSOs working in a similar context is that of linking how enhanced capacity of your organisation benefits the sustainability prospects of your interventions, in particular when applying for funding. The need of enhanced capacity could also be met by increased networking with similar organisations, as experiences, knowledge and challenges can be shared amongst the organisations. Building a network can also increase the influence your organisations and other like minded actors have on decision-makers and their incentive to amend legislation or policies which are contributing to the persistence of your problem.

## Internal capacity building

For an organisation to be able to allocate a significant proportion of its resources into external interventions, building the internal capacity is important. To have organisational routines on how to train staff, volunteer, deliver external work and reflect on the work carried out allows for a greater proportion of the resources to be used to deliver external work and focus on the sustainability impact of the interventions. An example of an organisational routine is the creation of documents referring to how a task should be carried out, what was learnt from previous tasks carried out or how a new volunteer should be trained.

## Extended awareness raising

Ensure the incorporation of an element such as train-the-trainer to ensure enhanced sustainability prospects of an intervention. This can be done by equipping the target groups with tools of how to pass your new knowledge on to others in your local community.



# Thank you

*We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the organisations who showed interest and willingness to participate and collaborate in this endeavor. Without their valuable contributions this publication wouldn't be possible to complete. Especially, we would like to thank specific people who put massive efforts to allocate time, gather their team to participate and commit to the workshops despite their hectic schedules in the middle of the global pandemic.*

## Uzbekistan

NeMolchi

**Irina Matvienko** (Founder Nemolchi.Us)

**Nigora** (Editor of Nemolchi.Us – Uzbek version)

Qalb Nuri

**Damira Tuhtasinova** (Director)

**Bahrom Madrahimov** (Assistant)

## Tajikistan

UMEDVOR

**Mohiolam Zamirova** (Project Manager)

**UMEDVOR Team**

Ghamkhori

**Bahodur Toshmatov** (Director)

**Suhal Karamova**

Special thanks to **Mekhrubon Pulodi**, our former summer resident from Tajikistan, who assisted in finding organisations in Tajikistan and liaised us.

**Lola Matmusaeva**, CAG board member, for contributing to finding organisations and providing contacts and sharing her previous experience contacting and working with CSOs in CA.

**Dilfusa Zakirova**, Deputy Country Director ACTED Uzbekistan, for recommending organisations that fit our objectives.

## Kyrgyzstan

Osh

**Aigul Mitalipova**, Director of the Public Foundation "Chynar", Nyshan Salanova and Umud Udyrysova, volunteers

**Muhayo Abduraupova**, Director of the Public Foundation "Positive Dialogue" and Mira Madmarova, lawyer

**Gulnar Sakiryaeva**, Coordinator of the Public Union "RHAK" Jalal-Abad office and Beksultann Amanov, volunteer

**Fatima Koshokova**, Director of Rainbow, Bermet Ermatova and Aikerim Mukhtarova, volunteers

**Madina Salaydinova**, Cholpon Badysheva, Cholpon Kozhosheva, Mairambek Musaev, representatives of our partner organization "Novi Ritm" in Osh who helped arrange workshops in the area.

Bishkek

**Ukei Muratalieva**, Director of the Public Union "Nazyk Kyz"



# Bibliography

- Al Onkka, Aurora Consulting., 2020. Hubert-Material - Hubert Project. [online] Hubertproject.org. Available at: <https://hubertproject.org/hubert-material/426/>
- Bayaliev-Jailobaeva, K. (2018) New Donor Strategies: Implications for CSOs in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. *Voluntas* 29, 284–295.
- Brown, David, Ibrahim, Alnoor, Batliwala, Srilatha (2011) 'Governing International Advocacy CSOs' in *World Development* Volume: 40, issue 6, page(s) 1098–1108.
- DIY Learn (2016) Theory of Change, Copyright © The Open University and Nesta, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>
- Development Impact and You. 2011. Theory Of Change. [online] Available at: <https://diytoolkit.org/tools/theory-of-change/>
- Development Impact and You. 2012. People & Connections Map. [online] Available at: <https://diytoolkit.org/tools/people-connections-map/>
- Ellerman, D., 2003. Should Development Agencies Have Official Views? Part Of Development Methods And Approaches: Critical Reflections : Selected Essays From Development In Practice. Oxford: Oxfam, pp.26-43.
- El-Too (2020) Discussion with Nurai Syrgak
- Greaterbostontoolkit.org. 2008. Chapter 14, Power Mapping Power Mapping Charting Strategic Relationships. [online] Available at: <http://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/PowerMapping.pdf>
- Goold, L (2006) 'Working with barriers to organisational learning' in BOND Briefing Paper, BOND, London.
- Habersbrunner, K., 2016. CLEEN Training Module: Stakeholder Mapping. [online] CLEEN. Available at: <http://cleenet.org/index.php/en/online-courses/24-online-courses/module-1/90-stakeholder-mapping>
- ISDS (2020) Discussion with ISDS
- Jagandananda., Brown D. (2010) Civil Society Legitimacy and Accountability: Issues and Challenges. In *CSO Management* edited by Alan Fowler and Malunga Chiku, Earthscan from Routledge.
- Kellett, A., 2017. Theory Of Change For Organisations. [online] London, UK: Bond. Available at: [https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/organisational\\_theory\\_of\\_change\\_bond\\_10.pdf](https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/organisational_theory_of_change_bond_10.pdf)



.....

Lewis, David (2007) 'The Management of Non-Governmental Development Organisations' in Routledge, 2nd edition.

Little Earth (2020) Discussion with Timur Idrisov

Lubell, E., 2011. Building Community Schools: A Guide For Action. [online] Theoryofchange.org. Available at: [https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco\\_library/pdf/NCCS\\_BuildingCommunitySchools.pdf](https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/NCCS_BuildingCommunitySchools.pdf)

Marshall J., Soares D (2014) 'The Flow of Management Practices: An Analysis of CSO Monitoring and Evaluation Dynamics' in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, volume 43, number 6, page(s) 1033-1051.

MDF Training and Consultancy, 2005. Web address: <http://www.toolkitsportdevelopment.org/html/re...>

O'Flynn M (2010) Impact Assessment: Understanding and Assessing our Contributions to Change. INTRAC M&E Paper 7, INTRAC, Oxford.

Tesseur, W., & Crack, A. (2020). 'These are all outside words': Translating development discourse in CSOs' projects in Kyrgyzstan and Malawi. Journal for Translation Studies in Africa, (1), 25-42.

Theory of Change Community. n.d. Toc Examples | Theory Of Change Community. [online] Available at: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/library/toc-examples/>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (June 2004). Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning. Baltimore, MD: Reisman, J., and Gienapp, A., Langley, K., Stachowiak, S.. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change/>

United Nations (n.d.) 'We can end poverty: millennium development goals and beyond 2015', United Nations [Online]. Available at: [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml)

Yau, Niva (2020) 'Chinese Authoritarian Technologies', Presentation at Central Asia Days 6 December 2020.

Ziegler Charles E. (2016) Great powers, civil society and authoritarian diffusion in Central Asia, Central Asian Survey, 35:4, 549-569.



**Office in Sweden**

Centralasiengrupperna  
Djöknegatan 23  
211 35 Malmö

**Office in Central Asia**

Abdykadyrova 3a  
723500  
Osh, Kyrgyzstan

**Bank account:**

9670 04 899 05

**Swish:**

1233698479

**Registration number:**

802467-0195

**Phone:**

+46 73 646 7661

**Email:**

info@centralasien.org

**Home page:**

www.centralasien.org

