

COOPERATION WITH NGOs

REPORT ON CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOS OF KAZAKHSTAN



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Executive Summary

UNICEF Kazakhstan works collaboratively with a diverse range of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These relationships are important for increasing the effectiveness and scope of UNICEF's programmes and therefore having a greater positive impact in children's lives. They also enable both UNICEF and NGOs/CSOs to benefit from deeper understanding of emerging trends, lessons learned, and opportunities for improved practice. Consultations were initiated with NGOs in 2013 with the aim of seeking their views on how UNICEF and NGOs could more effectively work together on shared goals focused on the rights of children and women, and as part of UNICEF's 2012-2013 Mid-Term Review of the Country Programme of Cooperation (2010-2015).

The consultation process ran from May to August 2013 and was designed based on two key questions:

- 1) What are NGOs/CSOs expectations about information sharing and cooperation with UNICEF?
- 2) How do they think UNICEF's work in the country could be strengthened?

The consultations used two approaches: an online survey of 127 NGOs/CSOs and in-depth interviews with ten NGO leaders working on a number of key issue areas from various sections and regions of the country.

Although the high level of returned responses (127) to the surveys indicates a good level of interest in UNICEF as an international institution operating in Kazakhstan, the consultation process appeared to show that NGOs have a low level of awareness of UNICEF programs and activities in the country. The surveys and interviews indicated that although many NGOs feel that they are relatively unaware of UNICEF Kazakhstan's work, they are enthusiastic about the potential for increasing communication (via listservs and emails) and opportunities for working in partnership. Although responses varied as to whether NGOs felt that they could work with UNICEF as equal partners, capacity building emerged as a major area NGOs identified for support from UNICEF, especially NGOs with less experience. This high need for capacity building can be explained by the overall situation in the country where, compared to ten years ago, NGOs have less and less open opportunities to learn new skills and exchange practically applicable information due to the decrease in international donors and the corresponding decline in such opportunities for emerging NGOs.

Generally, NGOs welcomed the initiation of such consultations. The questions asked seemed to be very important to them and led to in-depth and fruitful discussions and insights. NGOs in the regions mostly feel isolated and ignored by "big organizations", but the consultations were viewed as valuable in recognising their contribution to and knowledge about their areas of work. Every interviewed NGO expressed the wish for more regular interviews and consultations of this nature.

This report will briefly look at the objectives and methodology of the consultations, before moving on to the major findings and conclusions from the surveys and the in-depth interviews. The results of the consultations will be used to inform considerations about the potential for enhancing cooperation between UNICEF and NGOs/CSOs and will inform UNICEF's strategic planning during the Mid-Term Review Process.

Objectives and methodology

Objectives of the Consultations

The consultations with NGOs/CSOs aimed to:

- Identify their views on the ways that UNICEF and NGOs might effectively and efficiently cooperate on projects working with and for children, youth and women.
- Understand NGOs/CSOs opinions on the potential strengthening of UNICEF's programmes in Kazakhstan.

Methodology

An online survey of Kazakhstani NGOs was designed and delivered through invitation letters and announcements distributed via listservs and databases. For more in-depth consultations that were able to explore areas of interest and survey responses in more detail, UNICEF's consultant conducted phone interviews with NGO representatives. During the month long period of conducting the online survey 127 NGO responses were received. Ten NGO representatives from various regions (Kostanay, Pavlodar, Kyzylorda, Mangystau, Atyrau, East Kazakhstan, South Kazakhstan, Almaty and Astana) took part in the interviews. Among the respondents there were representatives of NGO resource centres, a research organization and NGOs working with youth, children and women in rural and urban areas.

Findings and Conclusions of surveys

Below are the key findings and conclusions from the surveys conducted with 127 NGOs/CSOs.

Areas of focus and target groups for NGOs/CSOs

Most of the NGOs that responded said that they focus on areas such as education and health through providing either services and consultations or educational activities and trainings. Almost all NGOs included children and youth, as well as women, in their target groups. About 20 respondents identified themselves as NGOs with some specialization in research and/or working on the institutional development of NGOs.

Table 1: Areas for UNICEF to provide NGO support

Areas for UNICEF to support	Areas of NGOs specialization					TOTAL
	Social protection	Research	Human rights and legal support	Educational (trainings and seminars)	Reproductive health	
Capacity building	75.0%	77.4%	83.3%	72.3%	81.8%	73.1%
Organizational/ institutional development	55.8%	61.3%	52.8%	55.4%	68.2%	56.5%
Fundraising skills development	50.0%	51.6%	52.8%	51.8%	72.7%	50.9%
Enhance research skills and capacity	63.5%	77.4%	77.8%	53.0%	54.5%	51.9%

Areas for UNICEF to provide NGO support

Despite the fact that little more than half of respondents knew about UNICEF before the survey, about 90% of NGOs see potential for UNICEF to play a big role in the work of NGOs promoting and solving issues of protecting children and women. They suggested this can be done through enhancing capacity building of NGOs and providing technical support in institutional and organizational development (see Table 1). NGOs would also like to see UNICEF helping them to conduct research by building the necessary skills and capacity. This seems to show that NGOs still feel that a big donor organization can play a major role in their development and in growing their capacity. There are rare cases where NGOs consider themselves to be well-established organizations with enough capacity to operate independently and to be an equal partner to an international organization.

Awareness about UNICEF activities in Kazakhstan

As it was mentioned above, about half of the respondents reported knowing in some way about UNICEF. Approximately 26% of NGOs know very little about the organization, 35% said they had good knowledge of the organization but have no experience of working with UNICEF and, only 20% of NGOs stated that they have participated in UNICEF activities. One of the respondents said “we know what UNICEF is about globally but we have no idea what exactly UNICEF is doing in Kazakhstan”.

Out of 127 respondent organizations only 20 organizations mentioned that they partnered with UNICEF and those organisations reported that their experience was positive. A small number of organizations (11 NGOs) identified themselves as having a good level of awareness of how UNICEF works and a high number of respondents (about 78%) said they were willing to learn more about UNICEF's activities and approach. This suggests that there is a lack of programmatic information available for NGOs about UNICEF. There is no clear understanding of the methods and approaches UNICEF works with and how local NGOs can be part of the programs or play a partnership role.

Information dissemination about UNICEF in Kazakhstan

Lack of awareness about UNICEF activities can be explained largely by the small number of NGOs receiving information about UNICEF. Table 2 below shows the low level of awareness about the existing UNICEF webpage and social media pages. One hundred (100) NGOs out of 127 stated that they would like to receive information about UNICEF activities on a monthly basis. The most popular resource of information for them is email list-servs, rather than social media or websites. This is because the majority of NGOs still do not have good quality internet access and/or lack experience using social media and websites as a source of information. Therefore, one recommendation is to share information about UNICEF's activities and programs with NGOs by emailing a monthly newsletter to them.

Table 2: NGO awareness and knowledge of UNICEF website and social media presence

Do you know about UNICEF website and social media pages?	Areas of NGOs' specialization					
	Social protection	Research	Human rights and legal support	Educational (trainings and seminars)	Reproductive health	TOTAL
Yes	32.7%	33.3%	37.1%	41.5%	30.4%	37.4%
No	57.7%	60.0%	48.6%	45.1%	60.9%	50.5%
Don't know what to answer	9.6%	6.7%	14.3%	13.4%	8.7%	12.1%
Don't want to answer	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

NGO partnership with UNICEF in Kazakhstan

Approximately 78% of NGOs are highly interested in working together with UNICEF on promoting children’s and women’s rights and joining efforts in advocacy, where they see UNICEF’s role as representing their interests at a higher government level. Local organizations would also like to participate in research activities and share knowledge and practices in working on shared areas of focus (see Table 3 below). NGOs expressed willingness to cooperate on areas of UNICEF activities such as social protection of children and women, development of social policy for children, and creating partnerships for projects focusing on child and youth issues. They felt that UNICEF research projects are very important for NGOs work and as such they placed high value on these projects. This can be explained by the lack of up-to-date and objective information on the situation for children and youth available in Kazakhstan. NGOs are very keen to receive such information and some of them expressed readiness to cooperate in research processes. Joint research projects would help NGOs gradually build on their research skills and produce their own quality materials that can be used by all parties including government and communities.

Table 3. NGO Partnership with UNICEF in Kazakhstan

Areas for partnership	Areas of NGOs specialization					Total
	Social protection	Research	Human rights and legal support	Educational (trainings and seminars)	Reproductive health	
Exchange information on women and children issues in country	58.0%	60.0%	55.6%	55.6%	63.6%	53.8%
Conducting research	68.0%	93.3%	83.3%	60.5%	77.3%	58.8%
Mutual lobby and advocating issues related women and children rights on all levels	84.0%	86.7%	88.9%	81.5%	86.4%	78.2%

Focus for research

Some NGOs recommended the following topics for joint research with UNICEF: “Analysis of effectiveness of social policies and programs in Kazakhstan targeting children and youth”; “Monitoring of state programs focused on children and women’s issues”, “problems of non-adult mothers in receiving medical and social services and the possibility to continue education” and “Needs of children living with HIV”.

Major findings and conclusions of in-depth interviews

Between July and August 2013 10 NGOs were interviewed from different regions and sectors of the country. The 10 NGOs selected included: two (2) research organizations, four (4) youth organizations, three (3) gender equality NGOs, and one (1) community development organisation. All interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded on paper with permission of respondents.

These were an opportunity to explore in more depth key questions underpinning the consultations, as well as to go into more detail on any especially interesting responses from the survey. The interview process asked a set of open questions that aimed to help understand the challenges NGOs face, their level of understanding of terms such as “partnership” and “capacity building”, and how they envisage improvement of communication with UNICEF. The main findings and conclusions are set out below.

Challenges faced by NGOs and areas for improvement

In order to understand what types of challenges NGOs experience and how they could potentially be supported to address these, the interviews asked what issues and problems NGOs were working on. Responses revealed that the majority of NGOs focus on projects that target youth from vulnerable groups (orphans, unemployed, village youth and children from underprivileged families). Almost all NGOs work on either changing risk behaviour (rehabilitation) or improving services provided to children and youth (research, monitoring, participating in state programs). These two spheres of work require two different sets of skills and knowledge: (a) designing experiential learning or training programs and specific knowledge or skills on work with children; (b) program capacity (project/program management, monitoring and evaluation, research and analytical skills, specific knowledge of the subject). Taking into consideration the areas of work they highlighted, the respondents presented a list of challenges and possible solutions:

Challenges	Solutions (potential areas for external help)
Lack of new knowledge and information from external resources. Many NGOs feel that they have been working in the same field for a long time (5-10 years) with the same information and structure. This creates a feeling of stagnation and difficulty in moving forward.	Provide a platform (conferences, workshops or on-line database) where NGOs with the same areas of specialization would be able to coordinate, exchange information and learn new instruments. Invite other organizations with the same specialization to partner, assess, and educate/train on up-to-date technologies. It is important to engage field NGOs from rural areas to be part of such events and/or to join partnership projects.
Lack of cooperation or resistance from local state agencies to change and accept alternative efficient approaches of working with children and youth.	Coordinate efforts made to resolve issues among field NGOs, national NGOs and leading organizations working in the same area. Identify and remove obstacles by having joint actions at all levels.

	<p>Inform relevant actors about changes on a national level down to field level, both state and public organizations.</p> <p>Engage in joint efforts to develop programs targeting changes within the system by addressing the problems from all levels.</p>
<p>Lack of reliable data on the situation of children and youth in Kazakhstan. NGOs tried to initiate small scale research and needs assessments of children and youth in their fields. However, this data is not fully reliable and requires a great deal of effort and resources. The outcome is that the process is incomplete and/or results in low quality data.</p>	<p>Provide training and share tools and instruments for qualitative and quantitative research with NGOs and partners.</p> <p>Initiate research projects with engagement of local NGOs interested and working in the area of research focus.</p> <p>Publish and disseminate available (completed) research results or reports among NGOs and state organisations.</p>
<p>NGOs lack the opportunities and capacity for sustainable development. State social procurement is not transparent and has many constraints, such as kick back (bribe) and inconsistency of supporting projects. NGOs feel that they do not have enough instruments and knowledge on how fundraising activities could be efficient to be able to raise funds independently. There are no institutional grants available for newly established NGOs, making them more vulnerable than those organizations established 5-10 years earlier when there were more funding and capacity building opportunities.</p>	<p>Ensure systematic monitoring of state social procurement programs supporting children and youth development.</p> <p>Organise trainings on fundraising skills and developing a fundraising strategy. Also support trainings on project design and management, and training on monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs focusing on children's and youth issues.</p> <p>Share new instruments and approaches on NGO development.</p>

NGO understanding of the concepts “Partnership” and “Capacity Building”

To examine more deeply the potential for strengthened partnerships and collaborative relationships between UNICEF and NGOs/CSOs, the interviews examined what the latter understand by “partnership” and “capacity building”. The term “partnership” was described differently by different respondents. NGOs that have a strong professional background and a longer history of operation at the field defined this term as a form of cooperation directed towards solving common issues or achieving shared goals. This understanding also involves exchange and sharing of resources (human, information, facilities) and complementing each other’s actions. For instance they expressed an interest in participating in research projects, exchanging available data on youth, children and women and jointly developing an advocacy project to protect women’s and children’s interests in Kazakhstan. Leaders of these NGOs sound very clear about their roles in a potential partnership and stated that they have resources and information to share. They appear to understand their strengths and are ready to play an equal role in a partnership.

On the other hand, NGOs with less capacity and experience, and with a small range of completed projects, have a different vision of partnership. Leaders of such NGOs positioned themselves as an object that needs help to grow and flourish. These organizations highlighted such aspects of partnership as giving grants and resources and providing support in developing the capacity of NGO staff members. They see themselves as passive implementers rather than as an equal party ready to bring their own input. In other words, based on their current understanding these NGOs prefer to take the role of receivers in a partnership. Out of 10 NGOs only four (4) of them positioned themselves as an equal partner in implementation. The rest of the NGOs largely gave definitions that were close to the ‘receiver’ position. These findings need to be considered in context, recalling that a number of the NGOs taking part in interviews are relatively new and at this stage have limited experience of partnership with large organisations, and at the same time they often struggle to access materials and information that they can use to build their capacity and support organisational development.

The respondents were also asked what they understood by the term “capacity building” and, as with “partnership”, they offered two different explanations. The majority of NGOs (seven of the ten) explained this term as the aspect of skills and capacity that are necessary for implementation of program or project work. They gave examples of “capacity building” such as research capacity, designing projects or programs in specific areas like working with orphans, needs assessment instruments, and the capacity to implement a project or program professionally. At the same time, there were a few NGOs with less experience with donor relationships who understood the term “capacity building” as a subject related to new computer technologies or facilities (e.g. laptops and photo copy machines).

NGOs vision on communication improvement strategy

NGOs named several challenges and suggested solutions to achieve better communication with UNICEF:

- a) One of the NGO leaders commented that “UNICEF has no touch point with NGOs” and respondents felt that UNICEF has an image of a closed organization with unclear actions, programs and projects which presents a barrier to communication. There are also no clear criteria for NGOs to know how and who is eligible to participate in UNICEF programs and activities. One recommendation from respondents was to review programs and initiate open dialog with leading NGOs located not only in Almaty and Astana but also in other oblasts and cities. NGOs suggested finding common points of interest and cooperation through dialogue, and that UNICEF design programs with a clear role for cooperation with NGOs as partners and/or implementers.
- b) Another challenge identified by NGOs was that there is no information available about UNICEF activities in the country. There is a general belief that UNICEF must be engaged in many interesting and useful things at a governmental level of work, but NGOs in the various regions are not aware of them. Such information would

be very useful and appreciated because it would be used in NGO work with local officials and state agencies. Respondents would like to receive information on UNICEF actions in Kazakhstan through regular listservs or electronic bulletins. These bulletins could be distributed directly through a number of NGO resource centres located in each oblast and other alternative listservs developed by other donors like the BOTA or SOROS Foundations.

- c) NGOs/CSOs felt that UNICEF's website is not user friendly and its pages on social media sites are not informative enough. There is a lack of information of practical interest to NGOs. Respondents recommended that UNICEF post more information on research done in the area of children and youth issues in Kazakhstan. NGO leaders also highlighted that they would welcome information on the progress of UNICEF's advocacy work at a governmental level.

- d) Finally respondents stated that there is limited accessibility to UNICEF activities. All NGOs mentioned that they would like to see more open events where they would have the opportunity to attend and participate in government-donor-NGO dialogue around common interests and goals. They also recommended that UNICEF publish annual reports on progresses and challenges on children and youth situation in Kazakhstan.

Annex.

Questionnaire for online survey

Link for survey in Kazakh: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZT3XPPD>

Link for survey in Russian: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GPCLGJJ>

1. **Name of your organization** _____
2. **Approximate date when your organization was registered or started to work** _____
3. **Please select primary focus areas of your organization's work (please select 4-5 directions that are the highest priority for your organization):**
 - a. Health
 - b. Education
 - c. Culture
 - d. Environment
 - e. Social protection
 - f. Research
 - g. Charity and assistance to the poor
 - h. Human rights and legal counselling
 - i. Training

- j. Social rehabilitation and re-socialization
- k. Rehabilitation of people with disability
- l. Social services and counselling
- m. Media work
- n. Family planning and reproductive health
- o. Institutional development of NGO
- p. Support to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, and professional unions and associations
- q. Social entrepreneurship
- r. Other, please specify _____

4. Select your target groups, please identify those prioritized by your organizations (please select only those of highest priority for your organisation):

- a. Mainly rural people
- b. Mainly urban people
- c. Both rural and urban people
- d. People with special needs
- e. Women and children in general
- f. Adolescents and youth in general
- g. Especially vulnerable adolescents and youth in general
- h. Women and children from low income families
- i. Vulnerable youth

- j. People living with HIV or affected by HIV/AIDS
- k. Elderly people
- l. Minorities (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.)
- m. Other vulnerable groups, please specify _____

5. Do you know about UNICEF and have you had experience of collaboration with UNICEF?

- a. No, we do not know about UNICEF in Kazakhstan
- b. Yes, we know but very little
- c. Yes, we know a lot about UNICEF in Kazakhstan but we are not collaborating
- d. Yes, we know about UNICEF in Kazakhstan and participated in their activities
- e. Yes, we know about UNICEF in Kazakhstan and have collaborated with them
- f. Do not know
- g. I do not want to answer to this question
- h. If other, please specify _____

If d) and/or e) selected:

6. How do you assess your experience of cooperation with UNICEF?

- a. Positive and useful
- b. In general it was a good experience but could be better
- c. Negative
- d. Cannot answer
- e. Do not want to answer

f. If other, please specify _____

If c) selected:

7. Could you provide your opinion about why the experience was negative? _____

8. Do you know about UNICEF's approaches in Kazakhstan and would you like to learn more?

a. No, we do not know about UNICEF's approaches in Kazakhstan

b. Yes, we are aware about UNICEF's approaches in Kazakhstan

c. We would like to know more about UNICEF's approaches in Kazakhstan

d. Do not know

e. Do not want to answer

f. If other, please specify _____

If c) selected:

9. What exactly would you like to learn about UNICEF's approaches in Kazakhstan? _____

10. Which areas of UNICEF's work in Kazakhstan are close to your organization's focus?

a. Social protection of children / Child protection

b. Juvenile justice

c. Support to children with special needs

d. Prevention of violence against children

e. Social policy for children

f. Early childhood care and development

g. HIV prevention and services for women and children living with HIV

- h. Mother and child nutrition (including anaemia and breastfeeding)
- i. Partnership for children
- j. Raising awareness on state of women and children
- k. If other, please specify _____

11. In your opinion, can UNICEF support NGOs in Kazakhstan in promoting the issues of women and children?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Do not know
- d. Do not want to answer

12. What kinds of collaboration with UNICEF or new approaches to promote the issues of women and children would be interesting for your organization?

- a. Information exchange about the situation on women and children in the country
- b. Research
 - i. If possible, identify the topic or area of the research _____
- c. Joint advocacy of women's and children's issues at various level
- d. Other, please specify _____

If a) selected:

13. How can UNICEF support NGOs in promoting issues related to women and children? _____

14. What type of support does your organization need in promoting women's and children's rights?

- a. Capacity development
- b. Institutional development
- c. Training on fundraising
- d. Support in conducting research
- e. Other, please specify _____

15. Do you receive enough information about UNICEF activities in Kazakhstan?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Do not know
- d. Do not want to answer
- e. Other, please specify _____

16. Do you want to receive information about UNICEF in Kazakhstan on a regular basis, including results of research, programmes, etc.? If so, how often would you like to get it?

- a. No
- b. Yes, monthly
- c. Yes, annually
- d. Do not know
- e. Do not want to answer
- f. Other, please specify _____

17. What is the most convenient source of information about UNICEF in Kazakhstan for you?

- a. Website
- b. Social media
- c. Printed publications (brochures, annual reports, bulletin)
- d. Information dissemination via emails
- e. Other, please specify

18. Do you know about UNICEF's website in Kazakhstan and its pages on Social Media?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Do not know
- d. Do not want to answer

If a) selected:

19. Do you have any recommendations for UNICEF's website and its pages on Social Media _____

20. Would you agree to participate in an individual interview to continue discussions on UNICEF and NGOs collaboration?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If you have another opinion, please write here _____

If a) selected

Please kindly provide your full contact information and preferred mode of the interview (via skype or phone)

21. Here you can write your opinion and recommendations which may improve UNICEF's work in Kazakhstan _____

Questionnaire for structured interview with NGOs

1. What has to be done to improve the situation of women and children in Kazakhstan?
2. What and how is your NGO ready to contribute on women's and children's issues in Kazakhstan?
3. What skills and capacity in particular does your NGO need to enhance to achieve your stated goals?
4. What are the challenges NGOs (based on own example) are facing in achieving their stated goals and objectives?
5. What has your NGO done to overcome those challenges?
6. What would your NGO recommend to improve information exchange between UNICEF and NGOs in Kazakhstan?
7. What do you understand by the term "Capacity Development"? What does it mean for you or your organization
8. How do you understand "Partnership with UNICEF"?

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