



# Examination of the Financial Sustainability of NGOs' Education Programmes: Kazakhstani Case Study

*Natalya Hanley*

## INTRODUCTION

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Central Asian nations like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan were compelled to become independent. It led to confusion in the political system, economic decline, and social changes. While each country chose its own path and reconsidered the opportunities to promote national development, the changes reinforced and uncovered pre-existing social issues that had been hidden for many years. The issues included corruption, a huge economic gap between rich and poor, inter-ethnic conflict, gender inequality, and political disagreement (Tabaeva et al., 2021). In this context, the newly formed civil society aimed to address the absence of social services once provided by the Soviet state, protect and develop civil liberties, and tackle rising poverty and income inequality levels.

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N. Hanley (✉)  
University of Oxford, Oxford, UK  
e-mail: [natalya.hanley.kan@gmail.com](mailto:natalya.hanley.kan@gmail.com)

In contrast to Western civil societies with a rich development history working independently and in partnership with the government, the history of the non-government organisation (NGO) sector in each Central Asian country has little more than thirty years of existence (Odihr & Poland, 2000). The development of civil society in Central Asian countries exhibits resemblance due to shared traditional practices and institutions in the region, alongside common legislative, economic, and administrative structures inherited from the Soviet period (Giffen et al., 2005). However, NGOs' activities and challenges differed and reflected each country's context and political development. For example, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan became embroiled in a civil war that affected almost every family in the country. Civil Society organisations have played a crucial role in the healing process where the war's legacy shapes NGOs' agenda, with much of their attention focused on dealing with displaced populations and the trauma of broken homes (Sasykbaeva et al., 2003). While in Uzbekistan, civil society has not yet become a significant force due to highly restrictive legislation under a strong authoritarian regime. As a result, many international NGOs that operated in the country between the 1990s and early 2000s were closed and expelled (ICNL, 2022). In 2005, many local NGOs went through re-registration, which resulted in a notable decrease in their number (ICNL, 2022). Despite the small number of NGOs in the country, their work was still recognised as necessary (Giffen et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, among the various significant challenges faced by NGOs across all Central Asian countries, one is common—the sustainability and financial support for their activities. At the beginning of the 1990s, international donors funded various activities in the sector. However, they later reduced spending and reallocated funding to different regions like Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Sustainability became one of the main issues for local NGOs to survive and maintain their activities (Alymkulova & Seipulnik, 2005). This chapter aims to look through the lens of interconnected forms of injustice and financial issues. It intends to deepen the understanding of the work of NGOs within the education sector in the Kazakhstani context.

The main research question is as follows: To what extent does financial sustainability shape and impact NGO education programmes in Kazakhstan? Two overarching themes are addressed through the questions: (1) To what extent does the development of regulations, policies, and

laws contribute towards economic (in)justice?; (2) In what ways do NGOs face financial challenges and address economic issues?

The study presents empirical findings explaining the different types of distribution injustice NGOs face and how this might impact social cohesion within local society.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NGOS IN KAZAKHSTAN: BACKGROUND

The non-governmental sector was established in the time referred to as *perestroika* when the prototype of the first NGOs emerged in society (Diachenko, 2007; Saktaganova & Ospanova, 2013). The authors agreed that the development of the NGO sector was directly linked to the political, social, and economic changes when the republic moved towards obtaining independence and took its first steps towards future democratic reforms (Zhovtis, 2021). Unlike the Soviet societies and unions, which were connected to the Communist party, shared the same system of values, and followed specific tasks (Giffen et al., 2005), the first-established NGOs were independent. It was the first time in many years that people could openly voice their thoughts and unite under a common cause. Many of them not only addressed issues related to human rights protection, freedom of speech, and corruption (Zhovtis, 2021) but also social issues like the environment (Nevada Semey, an anti-nuclear movement focused on the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site in 1990) or health (Diabetic Association) (ADB, 2007; Kabdiyeva, 2013). In response to a growing focus on rediscovering national culture and identity in Kazakhstan and increased national consciousness, some organisations such as Adilet, Memorial, and Zheltoksan focused on history and education (Giffen et al., 2005).

The number of Kazakhstani NGOs and their areas of impact grew over time. It started with approximately 400 non-governmental organisations in the middle of the 1980s, and the number increased fourfold by 1997 (Pierobon, 2016). Responding to the sector's rapid development, the first national legislation on Public Associations was introduced in 1996 (latest amendment of 2022) (*Law on Public Associations*, 1996), identifying their general characteristics, outlining their rights, liabilities, establishment, reorganisation, and termination of public association. It highlighted that non-registered work of the organisations is forbidden (Kabdiyeva & Dixon, 2014). In 2001, the official term for non-profit

and non-governmental organisations in Kazakhstan was defined as non-commercial organisations (NCOs) (*Law on Non-Commercial Organisations*, 2001). While the critical document, the Concept on State Support for NGOs, which created the conditions for the sustainable development of the NGO sector, was adopted in 2003. To increase transparency in the formation and implementation of the state social order, facilitate the interaction between the government and NGOs, and reinforce the institutional and organisational basis for supporting the development of the civil society organisations (CSO) sector, which includes NGOs, the Kazakh government adopted the Concept of Civil Society Development in Kazakhstan for 2006–2011. Finally, the Ministry of Information and Public Development in Kazakhstan amended the regulation on the CSO database on 21 September 2022, simplifying the reporting process for CSOs. However, new provisions also require CSOs to provide information about charitable donations or sponsorship received, causing concern among CSOs who claim that the new provision was implemented without conducting a risk assessment of the CSO sector (ICNL, 2023).

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The role of civil societies in education is widely discussed in the literature from different perspectives, including their critical role in education policy agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation (Tarozi, 2020), the contribution of education to social change (Bourn, 2022), and to post-war or post-conflict peacebuilding and social cohesion (Novelli et al., 2014). A limited amount of literature covers the role of Kazakhstani NGOs as one of the many civil society actors and their contribution to providing a small number of education programmes, focusing on leadership, gender equality, and youth development (Abdusalyamova & Warren, 2007; Giffen et al., 2005). Moreover, there is very little research on the role of NGOs within conflict-affected contexts, where the conflict is considered from the perspective of “positive peace” (Galtung, 1976). Galtung highlighted a significant differentiation between two types of peace: “negative peace”, which refers to the absence of violence, and “positive peace”, which involves implementing societal changes to address injustices that may trigger violence (Novelli & Smith, 2022).

To analyse the economic issues underpinning education sector NGOs within a conflict-affected context, a 4Rs framework (Redistribution, Recognition, Representation, and Reconciliation) was chosen in this study

(Fraser, 2005; Novelli et al., 2015). The first 3Rs are built on the work of Nancy Fraser (2005), which helps to analyse and understand the different dimensions of the “drivers of conflict”. She has proposed the concept of social justice as “parity of participation” (Fraser, 2005, p. 73), which can only be achieved by addressing three interconnected forms of injustice. The first type of injustice relates to the socio-economic domain and the necessity of redistributing material resources, goods, or services to rectify it. The second type of injustice focuses on cultural domination, misrecognition, and disrespect towards marginalised social groups. Addressing this type of injustice requires recognising and affirming the differences between these groups. The third form of injustice focuses on (mis)representation of specific individuals and groups from decision-making processes, institutions, and membership, addressing political marginalisation and exclusion (Fraser, 2005). Novelli et al. (2015) have further explored these three forms of injustice within the post-conflict context and expanded the framework by adding the Reconciliation domain, emphasising that a process of reconciliation that addresses historical and present tensions, grievances, and injustices is needed to achieve social justice. The fourth R—Reconciliation—helps us explore the “legacies of conflict” in relation to education, which, together with the “drivers of conflict”, can tackle the issues and bring changes within economic, social, and political areas (Novelli et al., 2015).

The approach presented above uses dimensions of redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation inter-connectedly, considering the particularity of political and economic conditions and the dynamics of conflict in each country, in our case—Kazakhstan. Although discussion of sustainability issues, focusing on the redistribution of resources and opportunities within the education sector NGOs, can be separated for analytical purposes, the cultural domains of recognition, political representation, and opportunities for the process of reconciliation should be considered together. For example, the unequal redistribution of funding and poor recognition of cultural diversity among NGO communities might lead to the misrepresentation of certain groups of individuals (possibly from ethnic minorities and marginalised groups) in the decision-making process at all levels of society. While the process of reconciliation, which focuses on the emerging economic issues within a conflict-affected context, might be solved by developing and applying the related economic policies to reduce financial inequality or, as in this paper, will lead to uncovering other issues like the reproduction of unequal access to education and disparity.

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilises a mixed research approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2020) to obtain a comprehensive and diverse perspective on the main research question. Multiple data collection methods were used to understand the work of Kazakhstani NGOs in the education sector. The study was planned as a pilot with a small sample of survey and deep case study examination. A broad overview of various NGOs allows for an understanding of the education areas within the sector, the agents, and actors involved, and the programmes aimed at addressing crises and conflicts such as inequality and injustice. The official government database<sup>1</sup> and documents provided by the Ministry of Information and Public Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022)<sup>2</sup> were analysed to understand the broader picture of NGOs working in the country, the area of their work and what issues they target. The NGOs were invited to participate in an online survey and share their perspectives on various topics relevant to the larger study. The survey consisted of structured and open questions. It covered a range of topics, including questions relevant to this chapter about funding and financial issues. In total, 59 NGOs from different areas of development fully completed a short online survey. Only 38 provided various education programmes, including training, workshops, and courses. The purpose of a small non-probability sample was not to generalise the study findings but to gather broad information by reaching out to a significant number of NGOs working in Kazakhstan which was not possible through qualitative methods. It also allowed the study to produce a snapshot of the analysis of the major challenges within the sustainability issues.

While the quantitative method provided an overview of the NGO activities, the qualitative method aimed to gain an “insight” into understanding the NGO experience in providing a certain type of education, including factors (political, economic, and social triggers) that influenced their choice, mission, motivations, outcomes, and their role and contribution within a peacebuilding context. The research purposely

<sup>1</sup> All the official information about the work of NGOs in Kazakhstan was taken from <https://infonpo.gov.kz/web/guest/otkrytyj-reestr>.

<sup>2</sup> The research organisation requested statistics about the number of NGOs working in Kazakhstan and the categories of their activities from the Ministry of Information and Public Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan in October 2022.

selected three Kazakhstani NGOs from different regions of Kazakhstan (Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent) to represent different financial operating systems and for the diversity of educational work they provide. All three organisations have a history of working in Kazakhstan (from 10 to 30 years). They developed and implemented their unique education programmes, focusing on different education sectors (non-formal/informal) and areas of education (civil society, volunteerism, and English courses). The understanding of the NGOs' experiences in providing specific types of education and ongoing funding issues was gained through semi-structured interviews with NGOs' leaders, independent experts, and focused groups of educators. Additionally, a document analysis of the educational programmes (curricula, learning plans, and lessons) and the organisation's website, social media, and other sources helped to understand their purpose, motivation, and mission.

The study was conducted in July 2022 with ethical approval from the University of Ulster. All participants provided informed consent, with measures in place to protect their confidentiality. Each person was given a pseudonym which does not reflect their race, age, or gender. The organisations are anonymised and only referred to as A, B, and C.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF NGOS IN KAZAKHSTAN

This part is divided into two sections. The first section provides an analysis and discussion of the development of economic regulation policies and laws underpinning the work of Kazakh NGOs. The second presents various forms of financial support and their associated challenges. Brief examples of how financial situations impact education programmes are discussed.

### *The Development of Regulatory Policies and Laws*

At the beginning of the 1990s, due to dramatic economic changes in Kazakhstan, international funds became the primary financial source for established or newly formed NGOs in Kazakhstan (Kabdiyeva & Dixon, 2014). Due to "large-scale financial support of NGO activity by international funds through a grant system" (Saktaganova & Ospanova, 2013: p. 1278), organisations had the opportunity to develop and deliver free programmes to support their initiatives as organisations and address local issues. The areas included human rights and the environment

(Saktaganova & Ospanova, 2013). They also contributed to capacity development training for NGO leaders to improve their skills and knowledge in managing and administering the sector (Pierobon, 2016). Even though international funds did not focus on education programmes as such (Marat, head of NGO-C), the educational element existed as one of the “side products”, of the tasks within the project (Lea, an independent expert in international law).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the relationship between civil society and the government in Kazakhstan changed, and, for the first time, state grants for non-profit organisations were made available. Governments in the Central Asian region, specifically Uzbekistan (Giffen et al., 2005), linked events like the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia (2003) and the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine” (2004), where civil society played an important role, to the work of international funds. According to Lea, the same events also impacted the attitude of the Kazakh government towards international funds. The Kazakh government’s primary motivation for providing funds to support civil society organisations was to compete with international donors (Makhmutova & Akhmetova, 2011) by limiting the influence of international funds and expanding the control over the work of local NGOs in Kazakhstan.

Only after the colour revolutions of 2003, 2004 and 2005, respectively, in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the state began to build barriers to foreign funding. Then, in the mid-2000s, a new law on non-governmental organisations was passed that regulated funding. At that time, partial public funding was already gradually being introduced. More funding for NGOs from the state was introduced in 2015. (Lea, independent expert)

Lea referred to the fact that in 2005, a legal framework for the state to finance civil society organisations was adopted in the Law on State Social Contracts. Initially, the Ministry of Communications and Information was the primary ministry providing government funding to NGOs. Other ministries, such as Education and Science, Health, and Ecology, have gradually started financing NGOs and supporting projects in their respective sectors. For instance, in 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science allocated social contracting funds worth 266 million tenges (equivalent to \$2 million) and the Ministry of Health had social contracts worth 40 million tenges (equivalent to \$308,000) (Kabdiyeva & Dixon, 2014).



While state funding for civil society organisations (SCOs) has significantly increased since the early 2000s, with about \$8.8 million available for social projects in 2022, the government has gradually increased its control over CSOs' funding (ICNL, 2023). For example, in 2015, in addition to their activities and key managers, CSOs were required to submit annual reports that included a list of their funders. A year later, the Tax Code for NGOs introduced new reporting requirements that NGOs must notify the tax authorities and provide information on the receipt and expenditure of foreign funds/assets. Additionally, publications produced with support from foreign funds must be labelled as such, and non-compliance with these requirements may lead to severe administrative penalties. In late 2020–early 2021, the Law on Payments, for the first time, was enforced against human rights organisations when thirteen organisations were penalised for misreporting funds received from abroad and their expenditure (FLD, 2021; ICNL, 2023). Front Line Defenders (FLD) (2021) explained that penalties were issued for inconsistencies in the financial data presented in NGOs' tax declaration forms. However, these disparities were attributable to various factors, such as fluctuations in exchange rates, the return of unutilised funds to donors, and a single instance of erroneously duplicating a donation from a single donor. In 2022, civil society organisations, including human rights groups, were actively discussing the proposed amendments and additions to the Constitutional Laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Asautay, 2022). With parliamentary elections scheduled for 2021 and presidential elections for 2022, one of the proposed amendments was related to preventing foreign interference in the preparation and conduct of elections (*The Introduction of Amendments and Additions to Constitutional Laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Implementation the Questions Addressing by the Head of State on 16th March 2022*, 2022). This amendment raised concerns that CSOs receiving funds from international sources may be disqualified by the Central Election Commission from serving as independent observers during the elections (Matveeva, 2022).

### *Challenges with NGOs' Financial Structures*

The survey responses show that NGOs in Kazakhstan have different sources of funding to support their projects. The top three are funding from international grants, including INGO and small grants from

embassies, business and social enterprises, and Kazakh sources, including the state (see Fig. 12.1).

It is important to notice that ten NGOs have hybrid sources of funding when two or three different types of support are used to run their projects. Examples include funding from international and state sources or social enterprises and donations.

Out of the 57 NGOs surveyed, 38 organisations provide different educational programmes. Almost half of the surveyed organisations deliver different types of training to around 100 people annually. Approximately 36% of them taught between 100 and 600 people, 8%—between 600 and 1000, and 10%—more than 1000 people. Eighty-two percent of organisations suggested that training and educational programmes were provided for free, around 3% were paid, and 15% had both paid and free programmes.

The survey findings reveal that NGOs' educational initiatives in the education domain are shaped by various factors, including their expertise, funding opportunities, and societal demands. Notably, the analysis shown in Figure 12.2 demonstrates that these programmes mainly arise from the convergence of NGOs' specialised knowledge and societal needs.

Additionally, it is important to mention that only a small fraction of organisations take funding sources into account when designing

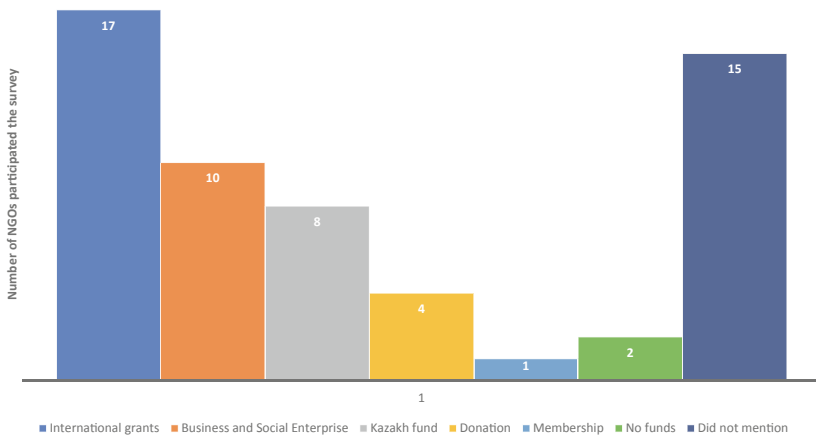
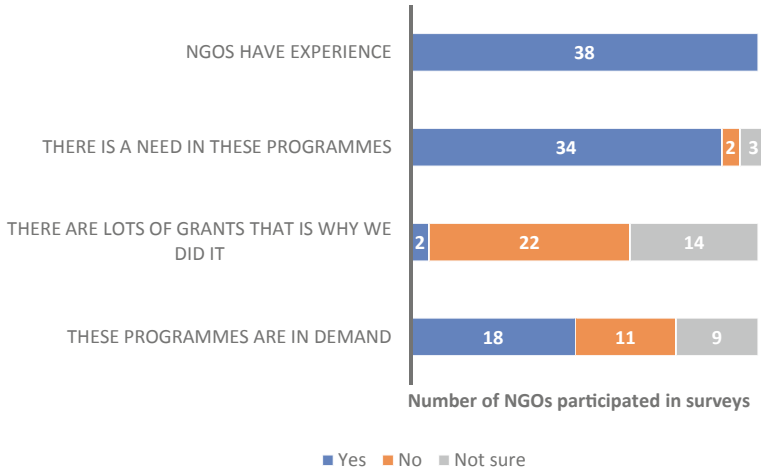


Fig. 12.1 The funding sources of NGOs in Kazakhstan



**Fig. 12.2** The rationale for NGOs developing their programmes

and implementing educational programmes. Despite organisations' confidence that the developed programmes meet society's needs, it is intriguing to note that less than half of these initiatives are in actual demand.

### *International and State Funding*

Two organisations participating in this study developed various educational programmes to promote their organisational purposes: human rights and volunteerism. However, to fund them, they have to search for financial support every year by either receiving long-term international grants or short-term project-based state or international support. For example, the independent human rights organisation has its work supported by international bodies: 30% from institutional (long-term) grants and 70% from project-based (short-term) grants. Trainer Ali shared that he has never been a full-time trainer despite working for this organisation since 1998 and devoting a significant part of their time to human rights education.

Unfortunately, such work in our office is not funded. Why? Because those who provide support for human rights development do not have a positive attitude to education and do not want it will be done with their grant support. (Ali, trainer, NGO-C)

Lea suggested that NGOs working on human rights do not receive grants from the state, mainly because the funders have inflexible conditions for receiving them. Similarly, NGO-B does not have consistent financial support. However, despite financial sustainability issues, sometimes they intentionally do not apply for state grants. Zhanar, the leader of NGO-B, pointed out two major challenges with the current funding situation. Firstly, the grants they receive are relatively small and cannot contribute significantly to the project's quality, growth, and sustainability compared to the larger international funding. Secondly, public funds are usually only given for a short time, which is insufficient for creating, developing, and implementing the project. Overall, NGOs often have their goals and missions, which may not always align with the requirements of the grants available to them, leaving them with a difficult choice. As Lea suggested, this can lead to the NGO spending all of its time on the donor's requirements and becoming distracted from implementing its public interest.

The unequal distribution of grants and competition exacerbates the situation. After public grants became available to all Kazakhstani NGOs, they attracted organisations that regularly work in the field and those only interested in obtaining funding. These latter organisations were referred to as “grant-eaters” (“grantoezhki” in Russian). They moved from one initiative to another, driven solely by funding availability.

It is fashionable; it is on the ‘wave’...So many organisations were opened just because it was the year of the volunteer. And the decline goes accordingly because the year of the volunteer was over. Grantoezhki all left, and those who had worked before remained. (Zhanar, leader of NGO-B)

The expert further discussed the issue of government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGO), which always have better chances of receiving project funding.

They are created by former civil servants, relatives or friends of existing civil servants. I have repeatedly noted that such NGOs win all the state grants and competitions for the state social order. (Lea, independent expert)

Finally, Lea shared her experience with facing another form of unfair funding distribution. Once, she was unsuccessful in applying for “children protection in education” funding. The NGO that received the grant

had no expertise in the area but had a connection to one of the prominent people in the human rights sector. Overall, the environment in the sector is “toxic”, where some NGOs that exist for extended periods are overpowering those with shorter experience.

Those who stay at the “feeder” for a long time are afraid of young NGOs. They always mock them, write negative reports, and try to close them so that they won’t take their piece of the pie. The environment is very, very toxic. It seems people focus on earning money instead of helping people. (Lea, independent expert)

In our interview, Lea suggested two ways of breaking this continuing cycle of “survival” for NGOs. One was to take a path of “diversification”, where the NGO team members have paid work and volunteer for the NGO. Another way is to blend social enterprise principles into the work of NGOs.

### *Social Enterprise*

The 1996 law on Public Associations (*Law on Public Associations*, 1996) explicitly stated and later in 2001 affirmed that a public association had the right to engage in commercial activities to fulfil their statutory goals. One of the organisations that chose a hybrid approach, a combination of paid and free education, was NGO-A. From its establishment, the organisation adopted a social entrepreneurship form of financial support. The executive director, Igor, explained:

English courses, including different levels from beginner to advanced, are paid for, and they went very well. All the other [here and further notes from author, projects] are social... educational initiatives like Expeditions [HIV/AIDs experience], “Struggle for Survival”, and social club [for people with disabilities]. They are all always free. (Igor, head of NGO-A)

Engagement in business activities provided them with the means to cover their overhead costs, recruit highly skilled employees, and achieve self-sufficiency without depending on external aid. It, in turn, allowed them to concentrate on their social initiatives. In the early 1990s, due to the economic downturn and its impact on education spending, which led to a lack of skill development and inadequate quality of secondary and higher education (Silova, 2010), NGO-A took up the task of providing English courses.

There was unemployment; there were no skills... Even now, we still have a strong demand for English courses. People need that skill". (Igor, head of NGO-A)

According to Zhana, head of the English department in NGO-A, more than 50% of their students are motivated to improve their academic performance. This is largely due to the belief among parents that English is a crucial language that their children must learn, regardless of the school curriculum. A large group of students enrol to prepare for standardised tests such as IELTS and FLEX, while others seek to learn the language itself.

As the courses became profitable and met the organisation's needs, the English department was able to operate without external funding, including public or volunteer work. This enabled the organisation to hire professional staff to deliver English courses and implement social projects. Despite a regular income, the salary of the staff and teachers was half and, in some cases, a quarter of a similar salary in schools or other organisations. Igor suggested that they lacked financial literacy and expertise and, overall, were not "good businessmen". Working with the community, addressing social issues including but not limited to concern about the HIV/AIDs rate rapidly rising in the region, extreme poverty, and the issues with the disabled community in the city, NGO-A struggled to "raise prices on [English] courses" (Igor, head of NGO-A) while making them affordable for many. At the same time, they admitted that people who paid for the courses are "elite and rich", or as one teacher said, someone "whose basic needs are covered, when they have a roof over their head, parents, clothing and food" (Tash, teacher, NGO-A). Further discussion with teachers and the head of the organisation also indicated that they clearly understood that the paid education programmes might aggravate societal inequality. The head of the organisation shared that even he cannot afford these courses for his child. Nevertheless, despite creating inequality, the NGO tried to mitigate it to some extent. They created a social work "system" by offering up to fifteen scholarships and discounts for those who cannot afford their studies. It included their staff who could use the privilege of working in the organisation to have free-of-charge programmes for their children.

## CONCLUSION

This study presents a snapshot of the findings focusing on the financial sustainability of Kazakhstani NGOs offering education programmes. This chapter explicitly explored the different types of injustice related to the sustainability of education programmes provided by NGOs. By discussing some of the current challenges, NGOs face in their ongoing financial struggles, the social-economic, cultural, and political areas of injustice examination provided multi-layered insights. The findings showed how different funding sources underpin and shape the NGOs' vision for providing education programmes.

Redistributive injustice should be approached not only from the understanding of a lack of financial support for NGOs, instability, or issues of dependency on international funds (Alymkulova & Seipulnik, 2005; Saktaganova & Ospanova, 2013). Representation and reconciliation are needed to understand “why” and “how” such injustices can be addressed. Representation of GONGOs and “grant-eaters” organisations might create unfair access to state funding. While the umbrella approach, when the organisation has a prominent person on their trustee board, might create unequal competition in any grant support environment, where knowledge, experience, and expertise might not be considered in contrast with respect and relation to one person. As Lea argued, it creates a highly competitive and unequal funding distribution.

Furthermore, the legislation development, specifically relating to the work of independent NGOs, explicitly led to the political exclusion of those organisations funded by international funds. It creates a “negative” attitude from the state, making it extremely difficult to access state funding. On the other hand, it is not surprising that NGOs, which do not have support from the state, also do not have support from the community (Gusarova, 2016).

One way of changing this practice is to find a way to merge social enterprise business with the work of NGOs (Alymkulova & Seipulnik, 2005). However, as the study showed, a social enterprise might solve the sustainability problems but create another inequality issue of access to quality education. Although the NGOs quite quickly recognised and addressed the new issue, this example shows how another “create-solve” cycle might be created within society. Thus, the analysis suggested that each social enterprise programme should go beyond just addressing the

financial needs of the NGO and consider whether or not this new project might create another injustice within or outside the NGO.

The implications of the study findings for the financial sustainability of NGOs in Kazakhstan are related to the ways resources are supported and distributed. While the sustainability of civil society organisations was somehow addressed by state legislation, it did not consider the context-specific factors of cultural diversity, such as different languages, ethnic groups, and representation of different groups of society in the decision-making process. To facilitate an equitable grant selection process, it is necessary to reconsider the criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of NGOs, placing emphasis on their strong expertise and experience. Additionally, it is important to pay attention to and address the issues of imbalanced access to education, which might be created by developing and implementing the education programme strategy by NGOs. Financial support at the micro-level is one of the ways to consider those with limited access to educational programmes. Although the form of scholarships and stipends, and other approaches might be helpful for less privileged individuals, a long-term solution should be developed, suggested, implemented, and disseminated not only at the NGOs level but also at the community and national levels.

Thus, a full-scale research study is needed to scrutinise the financial sustainability of education projects provided by NGOs in Kazakhstan. To understand how financial inequality might contribute to the political and socio-economic injustice in the sector, it should include a larger number of urban NGOs and an equal number of rural NGOs providing education programmes. This study did not cover the findings on cultural injustice of recognition that might be included in a further study. Finally, there are few research studies on NGOs with social enterprise structures. Developing further research might present good practices and opportunities for NGOs in Kazakhstan to address their sustainability issues.

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