

## Terms of Reference

Contract no.

Scoping study on civil society in Kyrgyzstan

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## BACKGROUND

Civil society in Kyrgyzstan is considered the most vibrant and active in Central Asia. According to different estimates, up to 30'000 civil society organizations (CSOs) have been officially registered, however only a few hundreds are operational on a regular basis. The most prominent and active CSOs are concentrated in the capital of Bishkek and Osh. CSOs cover various thematic areas from broader democratization issues to more specific ones focused on a particular topic (e.g. environment, human rights) or a target group (e.g. children, elderly, internal migrants). CSOs are heavily dependent on donor funding, and their work is often guided and shaped by donor priorities rather than by their own strategic vision and mission. Also, CSOs often lack transparency and accountability toward their constituency.

Despite a relatively open enabling environment for civil society in the country, from time to time they have to deal with attempts to restrict or shrink their space of operation (e.g. a draft law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) initiated in 2019)<sup>1</sup>. Some human rights defenders and civic activists have fears for their personal security.

Assuming that a strong civil society is a key element for sustainable democratic development, the Swiss Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic would like to launch a scoping study on civil society in Kyrgyzstan and modalities for its support.

The study findings will be used to assess the relevance of developing new interventions addressing the needs of civil society in the country.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Provide an overview of CSO landscape, capacity for the past 2 years trying to cluster various types of CSOs.
2. Provide an overview of major strengths and weaknesses of CSO actors (institutional and financial sustainability, legal strengths and weaknesses, etc.)
3. Provide an overview of the civil society context, opportunities and challenges (also risks and potentials) the civil society is facing, including the main drivers for restricted or shrinking space for civil society and the systemic challenges to an enabling environment for civil society over the past 2-3 years. Please include a specific reference to youth movements, women's organisations and religious organisations.
4. Provide a brief analysis of civil society involvement in domestic public policies and key challenges and opportunities with particular reference to promotion of democracy and good governance principles, human rights, gender, youth and media.
5. Provide an overview of existing response strategies and approaches based on the existing civil society support initiatives by development partners or civil society's own initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Comments of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on the draft law on NGOs can be found here: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25115>

6. Provide an overview of mechanisms and modalities for support and partnership with civil society based on the existing programmes/projects and on key lessons, challenges and opportunities of (successful and unsuccessful) international experiences (joint donor arrangements; core funding to CSOs and other funding modalities; support to smaller civil society actors and informal groups; CSO institutional strengthening and capacity building; support to constituency engagement by CSOs and sector-related platforms).
7. Validate the findings with civil society actors in the country and make recommendations for development partners and CSOs.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

- Conduct a desk review of the existing information on civil society in Kyrgyzstan (including modalities of support) and based on this identify issues that need to be further clarified. Conduct a desk review of existing international practices on civil society support;
- Suggest methodology of the study, by taking into consideration the limitations caused by the coronavirus pandemic on data collection and restrictions for traditional face-to-face interviews. Explore the feasible way of data collection;
- Conduct a country-based mapping of international and local organizations providing civil society support;
- Define the list of interviewees/participants of focus group discussions, depending on defined methodology, and develop survey tools following a participatory method;
- Online focus group discussions (the facilitation will be supported through other sources);
- Conduct survey by using tools and channels as per adopted methodology;
- Produce a mapping of existing civil society support programmes/projects;
- Analyse data from the survey;
- Validate data with civil society actors and local and international organizations providing support to civil society (the facilitation will be supported through other sources);
- Develop two types of presentations of the study results: 1) a short version 2) a more comprehensive presentation for experts' use;
- Prepare online presentations of study results to civil society organisations and other interested stakeholders;
- Develop recommendations for development partners and civil society;
- Develop the final report containing the analysis of data collected through the survey and the set of recommendations. The report will include a short summary, a chapter on the profile/status of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, its needs/potentials, main drivers for restricted or shrinking space for civil society and the systemic challenges to an enabling environment, and recommendations for a potential future intervention, possibly with several options.

## **DURATION**

Time dedicated to the mission is up to 60 person-days.

## **DELIVERABLES**

Deliverables	Timeframe
1. Methodology/plan of the study 2. Desk review	April 2021
3. Collection of data/interviews 4. Mapping of existing civil society support programmes/projects	April-May 2021
5. Collation / review / analysis of data 6. Validation workshop/discussions 7. 2 types of presentations of survey findings 8. Analytical report with a set of recommendations	May 2021

A briefing and a debriefing with the Swiss Embassy will be organized at the beginning of the mandate and after the validation workshop.

All documents shall be submitted in the English language.

**Profile of the consultants:**

The team of consultants will have at least one international expert and one (or more) local expert. If the international expert is not fluent in local languages, the consultant team is responsible to arrange and to cover cost for translation of all meetings. The team of consultants will have a team leader who will be the point of contact for the Swiss Embassy.

An international expert will have the following minimum qualifications and experience:

- Master’s degree in social sciences or a bachelor’s degree with additional 8 years’ experience in development studies, political science or related field;
- Experience in conducting scoping studies;
- Proven technical knowledge and expertise in governance and civil society, and cross cutting issues such as gender and conflict sensitivity;
- Knowledge of the civil society context of Kyrgyzstan, including at the grassroots level;
- Proven experience / expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods and participatory approaches;
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills;
- Excellent communication skills;
- Political flair and sensitivity;
- Fluency in English and Russian, knowledge of Kyrgyz is an asset.

**Note:** A direct involvement into this assignment will make the selected company/consultants ineligible for the open tender procedure announced on any related topic by the Swiss Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic.

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