

CHALLENGES OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN*

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Introduction

Everything is new in Kazakhstan -- including the concepts of volunteering and volunteer management. Kazakhstan is a young nation, which became independent in 1991 after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It has experienced substantial social, political and economic change, to which people are adapting with difficulty. “Numerous Soviet-era institutions which took care of many needs of the population have disappeared or been severely weakened, making the situation of vulnerable groups even more precarious” (United Nations Development Program, 2002). Under these conditions, the importance of the nonprofit sector, and especially the involvement of the population in socially valuable activities of nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, cannot be overestimated.

Among the problems that the nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan has encountered is the effective involvement and management of volunteers. Research on volunteerism in Kazakhstan is limited. The first survey on nonprofit organizations in Kazakhstan was conducted by the Center of Public Development Accord (CPDA) to define relationships between the organizations and volunteers, and to learn about the motivations of volunteers. Another research project on volunteerism was conducted by the United Nations Volunteers Program (UNDP), together with local Kazakhstan analysts (Hansen et al., 2002). The main purpose of this research was “to raise awareness of the value and contribution of volunteerism to Kazakhstan’s society and economy, to identify strengths and weaknesses of Kazakhstan’s voluntary sector” (UNDP, 2002). Although both research projects did not focus on managerial issues, they identified poor management of volunteer work by nonprofit organizations as one of the major obstacles to the

development of a strong volunteer base in Kazakhstan (Oliferov, 2001; UNDP, 2002). Underdeveloped volunteer management practices in nonprofit organizations are a common problem for many post-Soviet countries (Grigoryan, 2002).

The present research is the first conducted in Kazakhstan to address the issue of volunteer management directly. At a time when the nonprofit sector has become a reality in Kazakhstan, improving its performance, scope, and reach depends on sound volunteer management practices. The purpose of this research is to learn about existing practices of volunteer administration in Kazakhstan and their implementation. To carry out the research, we implemented a survey of nonprofit organizations in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan. The first part of this chapter describes the context for the development of civil society organizations in Kazakhstan. The research methodology is outlined in the second section. The third part presents findings. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study results and practical implications for managers.

Kazakhstan: Essential Background

The modern history of Kazakhstan begins in 1991, the year of independence from the Soviet Union. Therefore we can speak of slightly more than a decade of independent development of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the nonprofit sector. Naturally, the present Kazakhstan political, social and economic institutions still bear a heavy legacy from the communist past. However, after several market reforms were undertaken in the period from 1992 to 1995, Kazakhstan has become a mixture of the authoritarian tradition and quasi-market development (Olcott, 2002).

The following brief description of the Kazakhstan nonprofit sector political, economic and social environment is based not only on the scant literature available but

also on interviews with experts -- six leaders of nonprofit organizations and international nonprofit and government support organizations in Kazakhstan¹.

Political realities. Democratization in Kazakhstan is developing from the top-down, rather than from the bottom-up. Kazakhstan leadership continues to declare democracy as its preferred course of development (Nazarbayev, 2005). This choice was legalized by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1995 (Article 1, Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995). Yet, Kazakhstan is still a presidential system with a very strong president and government, and a comparatively weak and dependent Parliament. The Constitution of Kazakhstan affirmed freedom of associations (Article 23), but at the same time limited the funding opportunity for public associations by prohibiting government financing (Article 5). The “Law on Public Associations” also prohibited the assignment of the functions of a state agency to a public association, or state funding of a public association (Article 4), thus raising a wall between the government and the nonprofit sector (Shindauletova, 2003). However, the intensive attention of international organizations to the development of civil society in Kazakhstan and the increasing visibility and popularity of some grassroots nonprofit organizations have brought the emerging nonprofit sector to the attention of the President, and induced the government to reconsider its relationships with the third sector. A law “On State Social Service Contract,” which provides for contracting out of social service to nonprofit organizations and further defines contractual relationships between the government and

¹ The nonprofit sector experts are the officers of the oldest local nongovernmental organizations, international and local resource organizations that provide institutional, educational and financial support to grass-root organizations in Kazakhstan. Such organizations include “Young Leaders of Kazakhstan”, “Women League of Kazakhstan”, UNDP, Soros Foundation, USAID, Counterpart Consortium, and CASDIN.

nonprofit sector organizations, is approved by the Kazakhstan Parliament and signed into law by the President in April 2005 (<http://www.ca-trade.com/news.html?type=press&n=517>). This draft law is motivated by the desire “that more should be done for non-governmental agents to engage in effective social service delivery” (Forrester, 2003).

Although Kazakhstan nongovernmental sector includes the whole spectrum of nonprofit activities ranging from membership organizations to advocacy groups, most NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) in Kazakhstan provide social services. According to the UNDP report, 66% of NGOs in Kazakhstan have a social orientation (UNDP, 2002).

Economic realities. In its communist past Kazakhstan was a centrally planned economy. Now, as an independent state, Kazakhstan is developing a market economy by introducing the appropriate laws and institutions. The process is slow because market relations and competition are still new notions for most of the population. The fact that market institutions are formally legalized does not guarantee smooth market operations. In addition, widespread corruption is a great inhibitor to further development of the economic market.

The break from the Soviet Union has resulted in a huge disruption of the formerly highly integrated economic system. In Kazakhstan, many industries were shut down, and many people lost their jobs. However, rich deposits of oil have helped to ease the transition period, and to solve some of the social and economic problems besetting the nation.

Social realities. The economic transition period has introduced many problems into the social life of the Kazakhstan people. Massive privatization programs have led to enrichment of powerful former communist party officials. The closing enterprises and growing unemployment reduced the tax base, and the budget has become unable to finance the expansive social protection programs that existed before the break up (Olcott, 1998; Cook, 2002). Many hospitals, kindergartens, and schools were closed down. During the first years of independence, many poor and unemployed people did not receive any support from the government. The level of trust of formal institutions was low before the break, and it fell even further after independence (Sergeyenko, 2000). However, the level of interpersonal trust remained strong, thus creating informal links for helping each other. Research conducted by Rose (1997) in several former Soviet states found that although the level of trust of government and nongovernmental institutions in former Soviet countries was low, the informal support network was common and well-developed.

Volunteering. Helping relatives, friends, and neighbors is a long-standing tradition in Kazakhstan, a heritage which originated in times of nomadic life and strong kinship relations. Such informal volunteer assistance survived through the Soviet era but was never formalized. Had this tradition been formalized, it would have probably ceased to exist due to its attachment to the cultural roots of this spontaneous form of volunteering. Many Slavic and other eastern European nations had similar spontaneous volunteering tradition, which is described in the United Nations Volunteers (UNV, 2002) sponsored studies of volunteering in Albania and Bosnia/ Herzegovina (Croatia); (Dervishi, 2002; Kacapor, 2002). During the last years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan, as in

Russia and other Soviet republics, people developed low trust of formal “voluntary” organizations because of the close control by the communist party (Zlotnikov, 1997; Nowicki 2000, Voicu and Voicu, 2004). As a result, organized volunteering is developing slowly in Kazakhstan, primarily because of the low level of trust of institutions. In addition, the nontransparent finances of nongovernmental organizations also contribute to low trust. Another reason for the low level of volunteering, as compared to many western countries, is that the role of churches and religious organizations was limited during the 70 years of communist power (Heap et al., 2003). As a result, religious motives to volunteer are not widespread.

Nevertheless, volunteering is gaining popularity in Kazakhstan, especially among the young. A 2001 CPDA survey found that 50 % of the organizations surveyed had predominantly college and university students as volunteers. Although the sampling of these organizations was not random, the predominance of young volunteers was confirmed by the opinions of experts. The results of a survey among young, educated people conducted by CPDA in 2001 at higher educational institutions indicated that 25% were ready to volunteer immediately, and another 40% were not sure. Many had found volunteer work beneficial. About 20% of respondents stated that the acquisition of useful skills and knowledge was the most motivating factor in their decision to volunteer, followed by the opportunity to find a good job (13.6%), and the chance for communication and socialization (13.2%); (Olifirov et al., 2001). Volunteering among adults would likely have been higher if people were able to devote more time and energy to their favorite causes, instead of working on several jobs to support their families. As the UNDP report contended, in Kazakhstan many people’s predominant motivation was

to make more money, or simply to survive. “Working for free for the welfare of society was an extremely rare motivation” (UNDP, 2002).

Three Periods in the Development of the Nonprofit Sector. According to the opinion of the nonprofit experts interviewed for this research, after independence there were three periods in the development of the nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan, which were characterized by three distinctive motivations. As many veterans of the nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan recall, the first period from 1987 until 1993 was characterized by the idealistic anticipation of freedom and democracy. The destructive transition from centrally planned economy to the market economy had not yet begun. During this period the groups that advocated for human rights and a safe environment became most active and visible in Kazakhstan. The leaders of the oldest nonprofit organizations recall this period as a time of “pure” and massive volunteerism. At that time the economic hardships did not yet strike the majority of the population of Kazakhstan, and did not deter people from volunteering. People seemed eager to volunteer their free time because they were inspired by the cause, or mission and worked enthusiastically for it.

According to our interviewees, the second period started after 1994, when the privatization program in Kazakhstan wrought major change in people’s lives. Paradoxically, privatization of industrial enterprises together with government withdrawal from economic activities caused many enterprises to shut down. Impoverished, jobless, and unprotected people started to band together in search of assistance. During this period many self-help organizations were established, such as ones for single mothers. Another example was the association of homeless people, which

brought together families that moved to big cities in the search for jobs, and who had to advocate for the right to build houses within the city limits.

During this period major international nonprofit organizations arrived in Kazakhstan. The purpose of most of them was to facilitate democratic development in an emerging market economy, which included assistance to civil society organizations. Local experts argued that international organizations, such as UNDP, Soros Foundation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Commission program for Technical Assistance to Commonwealth of Independent States and Mongolia (EC TACIS), Eurasia Foundation, and International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC) were key actors in strengthening the third sector. These organizations helped to organize, support, and finance activities of many nonprofits in Kazakhstan. As a result of the financial assistance from foreign groups, many nonprofits developed a dependency on these organizations' support, and some organizations learned to "adjust" their agenda to the needs of donor organizations by stepping back from their original causes and missions (Luong and Weinthal, 1999). OPPORTUNISTIC SECTOR.

The distinct feature of this period was the growth of local nongovernmental organizations in Kazakhstan (Franz et al., 2002).² Experts maintained that for some entrepreneurial Kazakhstan people the third sector was a means to create jobs for themselves and others. Some organizations were created specifically to apply for grants. This development explains the impressive number of small registered nongovernmental organizations established in this period (Luong and Weinthal, 1999). The requirements

² Annual growth of nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan is described in publication of the Institute for Development Cooperation, the nonprofit research and support center. The Institute used the Statistics Agency registration data in order to follow the dynamics of the third sector development.

of the grant proposals for management competence may help to explain the infusion of the US-based volunteer management practices into Kazakhstan, which we discuss below.

Although the number of nongovernmental organizations continued to grow in Kazakhstan, the volunteer movement started to show signs of decline. At this time many Kazakhstan people were struck by disillusionment with values of the market economic system and democracy, because OFTEN PREDATORY market ACTIVITIES were understood as an integral part of democracy. In addition, people experienced severe economic hardships, which contributed to the overall decline of the service OR “HELP” ethic.

The third period, from 1999 onward, is characterized by the gradual withdrawal of international financial support, and as a consequence, the closure of many weaker nonprofit organizations. The lack of funds also induced many strong, popular, and productive nonprofits to engage in profit-making activities, such as education, consultancy, and research. A continuing decrease from high levels of volunteerism of the earlier period also marks this period. According to the UNDP data, 68% of surveyed organizations said that they would like to involve more volunteers -- but the UNDP report found that the need for volunteers exceeded the number of volunteers available (UNDP, 2002).

At this writing nonprofit organizations in Kazakhstan remain in this third phase of development. Training provided by international support organizations has taught them the importance of management. Nonprofit organizations have become aware of the necessity to manage human resources, including volunteers. Several factors, however, challenge nonprofit leaders and volunteer coordinators in the management of volunteers.

The UNDP (2002) and INTRAC (Heap et al., 2003) reports on development of nonprofit sector in Kazakhstan maintained that the status of volunteers was not yet defined or legalized by the legislature; a lack of professional and skilled managers in civil society organizations reduced the efficiency of human resources management and performance; and finally concluded, “the public and the Government do not see volunteer activity as a strong, skilled resource, which is essential for the resolution of many socially significant problems and for getting people involved in civil society” (UNDP, 2002; Heap et al., 2003).

Thus, many hurdles exist to developing a strong pool of volunteers in Kazakhstan. One challenge that the leaders of nonprofit organizations face is effective management of those people who continue to give their time and skills to the organizational mission. A more professional approach is likely necessary to raise volunteer program effectiveness. In order to assess the state of volunteer management practice in Kazakhstan nonprofit organizations, we conducted a survey of nonprofits that enlist volunteers in their work. The following section describes the survey procedures and sample.

Methodology

The data for our research emanate from the city of Almaty, the former capital and the largest city in Kazakhstan with a population of 1.3 million people (Franz et al., 2002). This focus is justified by the number of nonprofit organizations registered in Almaty: one-third of all nonprofit organizations in Kazakhstan (32 percent) are based in this city, and most international organizations have offices there (Franz et al., 2002; UNDP 2002).

Because many nonprofit organizations in Almaty actively interact with foreign nonprofit organizations, which provide training support and educate local organizations about managerial issues, we would expect these organizations to be more informed about volunteer management practices than those outside of Almaty. Nonprofit organizations located in distant cities and villages have limited access to international support organizations and their educational resources. Thus, if our survey finds limited knowledge about practices of volunteer management in Almaty organizations, we can anticipate that nonprofit organizations in other regions of Kazakhstan would, at best, attain the same level--or more likely, a lower level -- of managerial awareness.

Our sampling decisions for the study were guided by the fact that many nonprofit organizations in Kazakhstan do not have volunteers. Organized volunteering is still a developing concept in Kazakhstan (see above), and only the largest and most visible and active organizations are able to attract many volunteers. As a result, with random sampling we risked including a considerable share of organizations that do not have volunteers. Instead, we started by seeking expert opinion about the types of nonprofit organizations in Almaty that enlist volunteers, and interviewed directors and managers of several nonprofit and government organizations for this purpose. Based on this information, we decided to focus the research on the most visible areas of nonprofit activity: women, youth, and environmental organizations. Nonprofit organizations in these three policy areas were expected to involve volunteers regularly in their operations and programs.

Because data collection in Kazakhstan was a challenge in itself, we went through several stages to obtain a sampling frame for our survey. The first task was to locate a

reliable list of nonprofits in Kazakhstan. We found, however, that a reliable list of nonprofit organizations did not exist for several reasons. Although the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan keeps registration records of nonprofit organizations, accurate and timely information on the closing of nonprofits is not available. The closure procedure is cumbersome and costly, and many nonprofits do not bother to close down officially. The list of nonprofits that we obtained from the Statistics Agency and the list provided by the Almaty city government contained 2014 public associations and foundations registered in Almaty since 1991. Even though the Statistics Agency routinely keeps track of “idle” organizations, the number of “active” organizations is grossly overstated.³ We consulted the experts on the number of nonprofit organizations in Almaty; almost unanimously the experts indicated that the number of nonprofit organizations actively working in Almaty did not exceed 300⁴.

We decided to obtain existing lists from the various organizations that had compiled them since 2000. We discovered that these organizations maintained their lists for their own internal purposes. International organizations such as the UNDP and the Soros Foundation compiled the lists for programs on their agenda. The Central Asian Sustainable Development Information Network (CASDIN), a resource organization,

³“Active” is defined by statistics Agency of Kazakhstan as those organizations that annually report their activities. “Idle” are those nonprofits that do not report their activities for two year. To give an example, in 2002 the number of registered organizations in the whole Kazakhstan was 6796, while the number of “active” organizations was 3836. However, the experts on the nonprofit sector of Kazakhstan maintained that in fact there were only 700 to 800 of actively working nonprofits in Kazakhstan. The trick is that “active” in the statistics agency sense is different from the “actively working” in the sense the experts who monitor the activities of these organizations imply. This distinction is important for our further discussion. Having the full registration list from the statistics agency was useless for the purpose of this research because 90% of the organizations on the list were not actively working, according to the experts.

⁴ Another reason for the absence of a comprehensive list of nonprofits in Kazakhstan is that no organization or association is committed to investing time and resources in compiling and maintaining such a list. Several organizations at different times have undertaken the compilation task, but they had no incentive to update the list.

maintained a list to offer their services. The United States Agency for International Development together with the Counterpart Consortium -- a nonprofit international development organization -- have put the most resources into systematic maintenance of a comprehensive list. And still their list was hopelessly outdated for our survey purpose: on this list only about one in nine nonprofit organizations were active and accessible. The rest were either nonexistent, or had changed their addresses and telephone number without giving notice⁵.

In order to pursue our research, we decided to create our own list of nonprofits in Almaty based on lists provided by the above organizations. We compiled the lists that we had received from the various agencies and organizations and targeted our survey to environmental, youth and women's organizations. These three types of nonprofit organizations were expected to use volunteers more extensively than others and, hence, held most promise for our study. As Table 1 shows, the compiled list that included only environmental, youth and women's organizations consisted of 130 organizations. We telephoned all organizations on the list in order to refine it and to ensure that we were dealing with working organizations. Some organizations were easily accessible, but others were out of reach for several reasons: address change, telephone number change, the "idle" phase, or closure. Those organizations that we defined as closed did not answer multiple telephone calls, or answer emails, and could not be found even with the help of a special telephone locator service.

Place Table 1 about here

⁵ It may sound unusual to people who live and work in western societies that organizations change their location and contact information so often. But in the situation of general social and economic instability in Kazakhstan, nonprofits as well as small businesses come and go, and move quite often.

As Table 1 indicates, these procedures revealed that of the 130 nonprofits on our list, 54 organizations were non-existent, leaving a total of 76 organizations that we proceeded to contact. Because our interest is in volunteer management practices, and 16 of the 76 organizations (21%) reported no volunteers, we were left with 60 organizations as our effective sample. We contacted and sent our questionnaires to all 60 of these organizations. We received responses from 45, for an excellent effective response rate of 75%.⁶

Description of respondents. We received information from 45 respondents employed by the targeted nonprofit organizations. Our respondents consist of those who say that they have responsibility for volunteers in their organizations, or who told us that they were knowledgeable about volunteers in their organization.

The educational level of the volunteer coordinators is high. The average number of years of formal education completed is 16.5, which suggests that the average volunteer coordinator has a university education. This result mirrors a finding from a large survey of U.S. volunteer administrators (Brudney and Schmahl, 2002).

⁶ Three organizations (5%) refused to participate; two of the organization leaders said they did not believe in the usefulness of surveys, and one leader refused without explanation. The completion of 45 questionnaires required multiple follow-ups. We contacted some organizations four or five times to persuade their leaders or volunteer managers to respond to our survey. Some organizations participated only after seven to eight follow-ups. Despite our efforts, non-respondents constituted 20% of our sample. We classified as non-respondents those who initially promised to fill in the questionnaire and never did it regardless of our follow-up efforts. After analyzing the situation with non-respondents we came to the conclusion that these organizations were in the “idle” phase of existence. Idle organizations try to keep their reputation as working organizations in the community of nonprofit and international donor organizations. The leaders of the “idles” participate in the conferences, training sessions, and forums organized by nonprofit support and donor organizations to maintain visibility. Often they have their office at home, where there is somebody to answer the phone. In reality, the leaders of these organizations work as consultants, or trainers while looking for the opportunity to receive a grant and to continue their regular nonprofit operations. Despite our efforts to contact them, they were not accessible. We have classified these organizations as “idle,” that is, as existing but temporarily having suspended their operations. Other nonprofit leaders corroborated our assessment.

The average volunteer coordinator spends about 30% of her or his time on the job managing volunteers in the organization (mean); the median is smaller, 25%. These values are comparable to the U.S. (Hager and Brudney, 2004). About 70% of the respondents work full-time and receive a salary. Forty-seven percent of the volunteer coordinators had received training in volunteer management.

Findings

Adoption of Managerial Practices. A primary purpose of this research was to document volunteer management practices in nonprofit organizations in Almaty, and to suggest which factors may influence the rate of adoption of various practices described in the literature. We also sought to explore and describe volunteer coordinators and volunteer programs in Kazakhstan nonprofit organizations.

Brudney (1999) has thoroughly studied and summarized best practices described in the US literature. The list of recommended volunteer management practices includes: written policies to govern the volunteer program; job descriptions for volunteers; outreach activities to recruit volunteers; orientation of volunteers; basic and on-going training of volunteers; empowerment of volunteers to manage other volunteers; recognition activities; evaluation of volunteers; training for paid employees to work with volunteers; sufficient resources for volunteer programs; and liability insurance for volunteers (Brudney, 1999; Ellis, 1996; Fisher and Cole, 1993; Grossman and Furano, 1999; McCurley and Lynch, 1996; UPS Foundation, 1998, 2002). Studies in the U.S. vary considerably with respect to the number of volunteer management practices

examined. A study by the UPS Foundation, for example, lists 23 practices, whereas most other studies focus on substantially fewer, from eight to twelve practices.

It is worth considering how nonprofit managers in Kazakhstan learned about best volunteer management practices described in the US literature. The answer was received at interviews with local experts on the third sector development in Kazakhstan. For several years, starting from around 1995, international nonprofit organizations such as Counterpart International, Soros Foundation, World Bank and others have been providing a series of trainings on management of nonprofit organizations and human resources for the leaders of Kazakhstan local nonprofit organizations in the country and abroad. These trainings also aimed at creating local training capacity. As a result, some of the oldest local nonprofit organizations (e.g. CASDIN) started to work as resource and support organizations, providing management training to new nonprofits in Kazakhstan. American literature on nonprofit management in general and volunteer management in particular was translated into Russian, adjusted to meet practitioner needs, and printed and distributed by Soros Foundation and Counterpart Consortium as briefs to nonprofit organization leaders⁷.

In compiling the list of recommended volunteer management best practices for our questionnaire, we adapted longer lists of US-based practices to local conditions in Kazakhstan. Certain practices were excluded because they were found irrelevant in the context of Kazakhstan volunteering practices. Given the limited experience of NGOs in Kazakhstan in working with volunteers, we excluded the empowerment of volunteers to

⁷ One author of this paper had participated as facilitator in the series of training programs organized by the Counterpart Consortium in Washington DC in 1997. Training program curriculum included strategic management, volunteer management, fundraising, and other aspects of nonprofit organization activities. Participants were the leaders of the most active nonprofit organizations from all former Soviet Republics in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

manage other volunteers as an advanced volunteer management technique. The evaluation of volunteers was also excluded from the list of best practices. By contrast, invitation to luncheons is consistent with local traditions of Kazakhstan to honor guests and family members; thus, we separated this item from award ceremonies and added it to our listing of best practices.

The survey questionnaire asked volunteer coordinators to indicate whether certain listed management practices had been implemented in their volunteer program. The results in Table 2 suggest that organizations adopted volunteer management techniques unevenly; some management techniques were employed more often than others. The most frequently reported practices across the sample of the NGOs were: recognition ceremonies for volunteers; participation of volunteers in luncheons; and formal orientation for volunteers on how to do the job. More than half of all the organizations in the sample reported using these practices. Slightly less than half of the organizations implemented such practices as: job descriptions for volunteers; reimbursement for the work-related expenses of volunteers; and training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to assume greater responsibility.

Place Table 2 about here

Table 2 displays the rates of reported implementation of volunteer management practices by the sample of organizations as a whole as well as by the subsamples of youth, womens, and environmental organizations. As might be expected, by comparison to the U.S., the reported incidence of the implementation of recommended practices for

volunteer administration is less in Kazakhstan. With the exception of recognition activities for volunteers and training for volunteers, the results from a large nationally representative sample of U.S. nonprofit organizations that enlist volunteers show that the U.S. sample more often uses recommended practices (Hager and Brudney, 2004). In the U.S. study, for example, nearly half (46%) of the nonprofit organizations reported that they have implemented to a large degree liability coverage for volunteers, compared to just 2% of Almaty nonprofit organizations in the sample.

According to a 2002 UNV survey on volunteering in Eastern European countries, about 67% of nonprofit leaders in Albania reported that they knew about volunteer management practice in general, and that they had these practices in their organizations. Yet, the survey found that in Albanian organizations the record keeping of volunteer activities was not established (Dervishi, 2002). In Bosnia and Herzegovina about 50% of responding organizations employed volunteer management practices. However, many did not make special outreach effort to attract more volunteers (Kacapor, 2002). The degree of adaptation of volunteer management practices varies by nation.

Table 2 shows that in the sample of nonprofit organizations, only twelve agencies (26%) reported having official rules governing the involvement of volunteers. Almost half of the womens organizations (46%) have such rules, the highest percentage across the three types of nonprofit organizations.

Less than 40% of the sample (38%) developed job descriptions for their volunteers (17). The women's organizations in the sample were more likely to use this practice. More than half of women's organizations have job descriptions (54%),

compared to about one-third of youth organizations (35%) and, one-quarter of the environmental organizations (27%).

About half of the organizations in the sample use recognition for volunteers to enhance morale (51%). Youth and womens organizations use this practice at a considerably higher rate than do environmental organizations (61%, 55%, and 27%, respectively).

The most popular volunteer appreciation practice in these organizations is an invitation for luncheons, used by 56% of the organizations in the sample. The three types of organizations, youth, womens and environmental, regularly provide this reward to their volunteers.

Forty-Four percent of the sample (n=20) reimburse volunteers for their work-related expenses. Almost half of youth (48%) and womens (46%) organizations reimbursed their volunteers, compared to only 36% of environmental organizations.

More than 60% of the organizations (62%) have formal orientation for volunteers (n=28). Youth and womens organizations reported this practice more often than environmental organizations (70%, 64%, and 46%, respectively).

None of the remaining practices was implemented widely across the sample, although interesting differences occur by organization types. Almost one-fifth (20%) of the organizations practice outreach to recruit volunteers; the practice is more common in the youth organizations (30%). Training for employees in working effectively with volunteers reveals a similar pattern, implemented by 18% of all organizations, and 30% of youth organizations. Eleven percent of organizations keep records of volunteer activities, such as hours and work assignments, with minimal differences by organization

type. Finally, only one organization in the sample (a womens organization) has liability insurance for volunteers.

The results in Table 2 suggest that two types of the Almaty nonprofit organizations--youth and womens--use particular practices, such as recognition ceremonies, reimbursement of expenses, orientation of volunteers and others, more often than do the environmental organizations. Youth organizations reported the highest level of implementation; environmental organizations reported the lowest⁸.

To better understand how nonprofit organizations manage volunteers in Kazakhstan we examined the characteristics of volunteer programs in nonprofit organizations. Our assumption was that differences in volunteer programs and in characteristics of nonprofit organizations may be a factor that influenced the degree of adoption of recommended practices for volunteer management. The following section describes the volunteer programs in the sample of Almaty women, youth, and environmental nonprofit organizations.

Volunteer Programs in Kazakhstan Nonprofit Organizations

General tendencies. The average nonprofit organization in the sample employs about 10 salaried staff, whereas the median is about 7 staff. These organizations are not large by western standards. The organizations involve about 55 volunteers, on average, with a median of about 8 volunteers. This divergence is explained by the wide range in

⁸ This analysis carries the caution that the size and the content of our data limited the ability to make inferences and generalizations. We compared three groups of organizations working in different policy areas within one sample of 45 organizations, which was divided into three unequal and small groups (23 – youth organizations, 11 womens organizations, and 11 environmental organizations). Although our sample gives an excellent representation of nonprofits with volunteers in Almaty, we do not use statistical inference to further validate our results beyond the sample.

the numbers of volunteers involved--from 1 to 801 volunteers across the organizations in the sample.

Differences by types of organization. The information presented above describes the sample in general. In addition, important differences are evident across the types of organizations: youth, womens, and environmental. Our earlier analysis showed that some differences do occur in volunteer programs and management practices depending on the policy domain of the nonprofit organizations.

Our analysis of Table 2 showed that the rate of implementation of volunteer management practices in the various types of Almaty nonprofit organizations differed. Several factors may have influenced the adoption rate: the level of formalization, which we defined as paid vs. unpaid volunteer supervision and record keeping behavior; size of the volunteer program, which was defined by the number of volunteers per organization and the number of hours contributed; the level of volunteer coordinator preparedness, which was defined as availability of volunteer coordinators trained in volunteer management; and the activities specific for a given organization type, which is described by mass or individual participation of volunteers and by the level of professional competency required. These factors are discussed in the following section.

As Table 3 shows, youth and womens organizations involve more volunteers in their activities than do environmental organizations. On average, youth organizations involved 88 volunteers per organization, while womens organizations involved 21 volunteers per organization, and environmental organizations involved only 12 volunteers per organization. The number of volunteers per youth organization confirmed conclusions of previous researchers (see above), and opinions of experts in Kazakhstan

that young people volunteer more readily there (Accord, 2001; UNDP 2002). In addition, volunteers in youth and womens organizations contributed on average more hours on an annual basis (132 and 146 hours, respectively) than the average volunteer in the environmental organizations (39 hours). From interviews with experts we know that youth and womens organizations often attract their target population to volunteer, while environmental organizations usually provide education, advocacy, and expertise services to external constituencies, both individuals and organizations.

Place Table 3 about here

Internal structure also differs across the three types of organizations. Youth organizations are less formal. The youth organizations have the largest percentage of unsalaried and part-time volunteer coordinators, 39%. Record-keeping appears to be loose and not performed by many youth organizations. About three-fourths of the organizations (74%) did not provide statistics on the number of clients served, and nearly half (47%) did not provide information on the number of hours that volunteers contributed to the organization. Volunteer coordinators in 7 youth organizations reported no paid staff (30%), which leads us to conclude that this proportion of the youth organizations is volunteer-run. Youth organizations may stay informal by design to attract young people who want to be on equal footing with each other and with leaders.

The womens organizations are more formal. Full-time and salaried volunteer coordinators constitute about 90% of respondents in this group. They have better record-keeping practices than the youth organizations: 45% of the womens organizations keep

records of the number of clients served, and 72% have records of hours contributed by volunteers. Only one womens organization is volunteer-run, and the rest have paid staff.

Environmental organizations are also more formal. Most of the organizations have full-time salaried volunteer coordinators (81%). These environmental organizations do better keeping volunteer hours and volunteer deployment records as compared to youth organizations, and are comparable to youth organizations in keeping other records. The information on the hours that volunteers contributed are recorded by most environmental organizations (63% provided the data), but information on the number of clients served by these organizations (73% did not provide the data) is incomplete. Ninety percent of respondents in environmental organizations reported having paid staff. As in the subsample of womens organizations, only one environmental organization is volunteer-run.

To summarize, although many nonprofit organizations in Kazakhstan do not keep records of their volunteer management statistics, youth organizations are the least likely to keep or be cognizant of the information. Youth organizations are less formal than the two other types of organizations, as indicated by the number of non-salaried and part-time workers, the number of volunteer-run organizations, and more lax record-keeping.

Discussion

In this chapter, we attempt to explain why variations in adoption of volunteer management practices are found across the types of organizations. As mentioned above, although we observe some differences across the types of organization in terms of the level of formality (number of paid supervisors, and record-keeping), these differences do

not appear to translate into the adoption of management practices for volunteers: environmental organizations are most formalized, yet have the lowest level of adoption. Close examination of responses to the question about the number of volunteer management trainings revealed that more than half (53%) of the respondents had not received training in volunteer management. We found that only 11 per cent of respondents received extensive training in volunteer management. Others (36%) participated in just one training session over the past nine years. We believe that this lack of managerial awareness explains the lack of relationships between the volunteer coordinators' competence and the rate of adoption of volunteer management practices. By contrast, other factors such as the number of volunteers involved, the hours that volunteers contribute, and the time that volunteer coordinators devote to working with volunteers seem to influence how organizations apply volunteer management practices. The size of volunteer program and time devoted to managing volunteers may make the difference.

On average, youth organizations have far more volunteers (88 per organization), followed by womens organizations (21 per organization), and environmental organizations (12 per organization). Table 2 shows that the youth organizations apply the recommended management practices more often than do the other organization types, and that the environmental organizations do so least often.

Variations across the organizations in application of recommended practices may also stem from differences in the types of activities that the three groups of nonprofits perform. Youth organizations involve more volunteers because most of their activities require mass participation, such as sport events, cleaning national parks, national holidays

celebration, and youth forums. By their nature such activities require high levels of coordination, orientation, and training. Table 3 demonstrates correspondingly that youth organizations in most cases apply appropriate managerial techniques and outreach more often than do the other types of nonprofit organizations.

Although womens organizations involve fewer volunteers, they do so on a regular basis: in many cases the volunteers are also beneficiaries of the programs. Perhaps for this reason, volunteers in these organizations contribute more hours than volunteers in environmental organizations. The work of volunteers in some womens organizations is bound by more regulations and rules because these organizations' clients are needy and abused women. A number of womens organizations work closely with international organizations, providing gender analysis of laws, consultancy and expertise. A close connection to international organizations may be one of the factors that influence how womens organizations manage their volunteers. Some womens organization leaders maintained that sponsoring organizations often closely control implementation of the programs to ensure that results are achieved.

The leaders of some environmental organizations explained that these organizations typically preferred experts in the field of environmental protection to work as their volunteers. They often limit involvement by untrained volunteers for this reason, and do not need to spend much time on volunteer training and education. Such experts require minimum supervision, training, rules, and regulations. The high level of volunteers' competence in this domain may help to explain why environmental organizations seem to pay the least attention to volunteer management practices.

Our discussion suggests that the most important factors that may account for differences in application of volunteer management practices in Almaty nonprofits are the size of volunteer programs, the need for volunteer help, and the nature of activities performed in the various organizations. The larger the size of the volunteer program the more we can expect these organizations to apply the recommended practices for volunteer administration. The activities of these organizations may also affect the managerial techniques chosen. Activities involving greater number of volunteers may require more outreach efforts, coordination, and training.

Implications for Managers of Nonprofit Organizations and Volunteer Programs

The study of volunteer management in former countries of the Soviet Union is rare. In this chapter, we have presented the first enquiry focused on the state of volunteer management in Kazakhstan. The study was conducted on a sample of 45 nonprofit organizations in Almaty, the largest city in the country. Because our interest is in volunteer management, the sample was targeted to three types of nonprofit organizations in which the involvement of volunteers was anticipated to be robust: youth, womens, and environmental. The particular findings are summarized throughout the article. Here we close with some general results and recommendations to practicing managers.

Kazakhstan has been an independent state for only a short time, and the nonprofit sector and formalized volunteer movement are relatively new to this developing nation. Perhaps as a result, the volunteer programs in our sample of nonprofit organizations are modest in size, and involve smaller number of volunteers on average compared to

nonprofit organizations in western countries. As might have been expected, too, the volunteer coordinators in these nonprofit organizations do not seem to apply the practices for volunteer management recommended in the western literature very regularly. Yet, our research findings show that the rate of implementation of these practices varies according to the three types of nonprofit organization, youth, womens, and environmental, thus, suggesting that even at this early stage of development of the third sector in Kazakhstan, the management of volunteers seems to have been adapted to organizational circumstances. Among the factors that we speculate might explain these differences in implementation are the size of the volunteer program, time devoted to volunteer management, and the nature of the activities performed by the different organizations. These findings and results merit further attention as we try to explain and understand the growth of volunteer management practices in former Soviet Union countries.

Practical recommendations for volunteer managers emanate from the findings of our study. It seems that better education in volunteer administration may help managers of Kazakhstan nonprofit organizations to deal and relate successfully with volunteers. Certain practices recommended for attracting more volunteers are not fully utilized. If volunteer coordinators devote more effort to outreach volunteers, empower them and provide training to assume more responsibilities, and develop new skills, they may expect higher level of volunteer involvement. We recommend that the nonprofit organizations concentrate outreach efforts at colleges and universities because young people are more responsive to recruitment efforts, have more time and fewer responsibilities. Besides, young people may appreciate more than older people the opportunity to volunteer in

formal organizations because it allows them to socialize with peers, expand their contacts, and learn new job skills. In sum, we can say that there is high potential for further development of volunteer organizations in Kazakhstan through improvement of management in these organizations, and through raising awareness of volunteer managers about new approaches to attract and retain volunteers.

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Table 1

Sampling Frame

Respondents	Environmental Organizations	Youth Organizations	Womens Organizations	Total Organizations		
				N	Popula tion	Sample
Initial sampling frame	48	52	30	130		
Contacted sampling frame	29	31	16	76	100%	
Reported no volunteers	13	3	0	16	21%	
Effective sample	16	28	16	60	79%	100%
Responses	11	23	11	45		75%
Refused	2	1	0	3		5%
No response	3	4	5	12		20%

Source: Kazakhstan Nonprofit Survey, 2004.

Table 2

Volunteer Management Practices Implemented by Types of Organizations

Practices reported by respondents	All org-s (45)	Youth (23)	Womens (11)	Environ- mental (11)
Official rules for involvement of volunteers	26%	22%	46%	18%
Training for employees in working effectively with volunteers	18%	30%	9%	0%
Liability insurance for volunteers	2%	0%	2%	0%
Job descriptions for volunteers	38%	35%	54%	27%
Recognition for volunteers, such as award ceremonies, certificates	51%	61%	55%	27%
Participation of volunteers in luncheons	56%	61%	55%	46%
Reimbursement for the work-related expenses of volunteers	44%	48%	46%	36%
Formal record keeping for volunteer activities (hours contributed and work assignments)	11%	13%	9%	9%
Outreach efforts to recruit volunteers	20%	30%	9%	9%
Formal orientation for volunteers on how to do the job	62%	70%	64%	46%
Training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to assume greater responsibility	40%	57%	27%	18%

Source: Kazakhstan Nonprofit Survey, 2004.

Table 3

Differences in volunteer programs

Program description	Youth organizations (23)	Womens organizations (11)	Environmental organizations (11)
Number of volunteers per organization	88	21	12
Contributed hours by an average volunteer	132	146	39
Average number of clients served by volunteers per organization	1703	55	69
Organization has:			
Information on number of clients served	26%	45%	27%
Information on number of hours volunteered	53%	72%	63%
Paid staff	70%	90%	90%
Unsalariated, part-time volunteer coordinator	39%	9%	18%
Paid, full-time volunteer coordinator	61%	91%	81%

Source: Kazakhstan Nonprofit Survey, 2004.