



# Civil Society Initiative



The University of Central Asia's, Civil Society Initiative (CSI) was established in 2017 to foster an enabling policy and administrative environment for civil society in Central Asia and assist the development of a broad spectrum of civil society actors.

CSI's initial geographical focus is Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, with a longer-term goal to expand to other countries. With extensive outreach – both rural and urban, it aims to facilitate networks to exchange knowledge, know-how and practice to advance the work of civil society organizations.

Since CSI is based at a university, it can take a longer-term perspective. It is also able to access the rich international experience of sister organizations of the Aga Khan Development Network. CIS will address three areas:

## 1. Skills: Training Opportunities and Professional Development

Civil society organizations face significant capacity gaps that can be addressed through the development of courses. In many countries universities play an important role in this respect which is not the case in Central Asia. Online and blended-learning courses has the potential to democratise opportunities for learning, transcending urban-rural, rich-poor, kinship and gender divides and reach thousands of people using a low-cost and replicable model. CSI will offer a continuum of skills-building opportunities to civil society stakeholders:

- A package of training (with special attention paid to delivery in national languages) focused on practical skills and know-how required to start and run civil society organizations.
- Professional development certificate programmes in critical areas including policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, project management, non-profit law, media and communications, leadership, financial management and accountability.
- Programmes to support the growth of associations of teachers, nurses, journalists, lawyers and other professionals in representing the interests of their members and improving qualification and ethical standards.

## About UCA

The University of Central Asia (UCA) was founded in 2000 as a private, not for profit, secular university through an International Treaty signed by the Presidents of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and His Highness the Aga Khan; ratified by their respective parliaments, and registered with the United Nations.

The Presidents are the Patrons of the University, and His Highness is the Chancellor. UCA's mission is to promote the social and economic development of Central Asia, particularly its mountain communities, by offering an internationally recognised standard of higher education, and enabling the peoples of the region to preserve their rich cultural heritage as assets for the future. UCA brings with it the broader commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network.



*Kyrgyz government announced its National Plan for Open Government at a 23 October 2018 conference. Kyrgyzstan is the first country in Central Asia to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a platform of 74 countries to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. CSI role in the development of the Plan and the formation of the National Forum on open government was acknowledged in the Prime Minister's address.*

## 2. Knowledge: Research, Communication and Convening

There exist a number of critical knowledge gaps concerning the nature of civil society in Central Asia. The character of civil society – what it is and what it does – is evolving, and its role in societal development is largely unrecognized. A stronger knowledge base on and for the benefit of civil society would help create a more enabling environment for its development. CSI will:

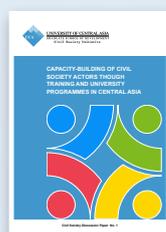
- Generate empirical research that maps the diversity, key trends and contribution of civil society actors across the region.
- Support civil society networks in identifying common sector goals and indicators, collect data and promote learning and informed action based on this information.
- Research the emerging field of digital social innovation that civil society actors could use to raise awareness of issues and support their activities.
- Offer a platform on an on-going basis for dialogue between policy makers and various civil society groups and networks on key issues facing civil society development.

## 3. Resources: Philanthropy and Income Generation

Fundraising are persistent challenges for civil society and for sustainability indigenous philanthropy needs to be developed. Philanthropy, as a long-term, proactive effort to advance human welfare is largely absent in the region because of limited awareness of this form of giving and a legal framework that stymies its growth. CSI aims to:

- Support efforts to improve the legislative, regulatory and tax environments to promote philanthropic activity. This includes raising public awareness of philanthropy, building the capacity of civil society organizations to become effective fundraisers, and research to generate credible data on giving.
- Facilitate the establishment of quality standards in civil society organizations and transparency that will increase the government's and the public's levels of confidence in their activities.
- Advance policy ideas on the promoting social enterprise initiatives.
- Pilot civil society actor's engagement with business that can provide examples of 'shared value' in undertaking activity.

## CSI Publications



### Capacity-building of Civil Society Actors Through Training and University Programmes in Central Asia



The paper can be downloaded via QR-code or at:

<https://ucentralasia.org/Publications/Item/2204/EN>



### Policy Practice and Legal Environment For the Development of Enabling Civil Society in Central Asia



The paper can be downloaded via QR-code or at:

<https://ucentralasia.org/Publications/Item/2205/EN>



### Professional and Business Associations



The paper can be downloaded via QR-code or at:

<https://ucentralasia.org/Publications/Item/2206/EN>



### Philanthropy



The paper can be downloaded via QR-code or at:

<https://ucentralasia.org/Publications/Item/2207/EN>

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