



Oxford Policy Management

KAZAKHSTAN: EXTERNAL EVALUATION, BOTA PROGRAMS

Qualitative Assessment of the Social Services
Programme

Report from the second round of the evaluation

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Table of contents

Acknowledgements	i
List of tables and figures	iii
Abbreviations	iv
PART A: INTRODUCTION	1
1 Context	1
1.1 Objective of assessment	1
1.2 Introduction to the SSP	1
1.3 Report structure	2
2 Methodology	3
2.1 Note on data analysis	4
PART B: FINDINGS	5
3 Status of SSP grants	5
4 Effectiveness and efficiency	8
4.1 The application process	8
4.2 Payment and reporting processes	12
4.3 Monitoring requirements	13
4.4 Length and size of grants	13
5 The relevance of the SSP to NGOs and their beneficiaries	14
5.1 The relevance of the themes of the SSP	14
5.2 NGOs as providers of social services through government social commissioning	15
5.3 BOTA role in supporting innovation in relevant areas of work	15
5.4 BOTA role in building capacity of NGOs	16
6 SSP impact	18
7 Sustainability of activities and NGOs funded by the programme	20
7.1 Financial sustainability	20
7.2 Alternative funding sources	21
7.3 Future funding plans	24
7.4 Sustainability of BOTA SSP	24
PART C: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
8 Conclusions	27
8.1 Effectiveness and efficiency	27
8.2 Relevance	27
8.3 Impact	28
8.4 Sustainability	28
9 Recommendations for the SSP programme	30
9.1 Consider future possible roles for the SSP	30
9.2 Deepen BOTA's understanding of award patterns to grantees	30

9.3	Continue systematic provision of technical assistance	31
9.4	Involve grantees and beneficiaries in exploring potential roles for the SSP	31
9.5	Continue to focus on improving systems and processes of the grant-making programme	31
Annex A	Question matrix	32
Annex B	Fieldwork conducted (2012)	34

List of tables and figures

Table 2.1	NGOs interviewed	3
Table 3.1	Grants awarded or being considered, by work area and type – five rounds	5
Table 3.2	Estimate of amount of funding awarded by type of grant – September 2012	6
Table 3.3	NGOs with multiple grants	7
Table A.1	Key questions for SSP (from evaluation plan)	32
Table B.1	List of NGO interviews conducted	34
Figure 3.1	Amount of funding awarded by area of work – September 2012	6
Figure 7.1	Pathways through BOTA's grant process	20

Abbreviations

CCT	Conditional cash transfer
CP	child protection
CSI	community social integration
ECD	early childhood development
LLH	livelihoods
MCH	Maternal and child health
GMS	Grant management system
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
SSP	Social Services Programme

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1 Context

1.1 Objective of assessment

The objective of this assessment report is to provide independent qualitative feedback on the processes and impacts of the BOTA Social Services Programme (SSP), drawing on fieldwork in Almaty, Astana and Pavlodar cities and surrounding oblasts. This report extends and deepens the qualitative SSP evaluation report of November 2011.

The report from the first phase of the evaluation focused mainly on reviewing the operational arrangements and grant-making processes of the SSP. It reviewed the entire process of grant administration, from the start-up of each grant round (targeting, application, selection, enrolment and registration), through to implementation (case management, payments, institutional relations and coordination) to monitoring and evaluation.

The objective of the second phase of the assessment is to assess more closely the impact and sustainability of the SSP programme in relation to the non-governmental organisation (NGO) grantees and the funded projects and to examine in more depth their relevance and effectiveness in contributing to meeting the programme's objectives. Where relevant, the assessment also reports findings that may be relevant to ongoing operational processes. A full list of evaluation questions is presented in Annex A.

BOTA has a well-established monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place that generates a range of data that permits systematic monitoring and assessment of its programme. The study aims therefore both to provide independent corroboration of BOTA's own observations, and also reveal challenges and successes not yet documented by BOTA's internal monitoring and evaluation process. The findings are intended to provide conclusions on impact and sustainability and recommendations that are directed at helping BOTA to maximise and secure the legacy of its investment.

1.2 Introduction to the SSP

The SSP makes grants to Kazakhstan NGOs working to improve the lives of children and youth from impoverished families. The NGOs mostly apply to the BOTA Foundation for funding in semi-annual open competitions. Applicants are assessed on their institutional and professional capacity effectively to deliver social services and improve the welfare of children and youth suffering from poverty. The BOTA Foundation has held four complete grant rounds to date for the SSP with the fifth round assessments being finalised at the time of writing.

There are five types of grants under the SSP:

1. Action plan development or community mobilisation (up to 290,000 tenge - \$2000) – in 2011 application for these grants were made into an 'open door' process where applicants can apply at any time of year
2. Social services (up to 3,750,000 tenge - \$25,000)
3. Scaling up/Replication (up to 7,250,000 tenge - \$50,000)
4. NGO capacity building (up to 7,250,000 tenge- \$50,000)

5. System reform (up to 7,250,000 tenge-\$50,000)

There are also 'Renewal grants' which are awarded after a simplified application process to existing grant holders to further build upon the existing grant activities. So far, grantees whose first application was in the first round, and that have been offered a renewal, have been given a 'Renew 1' grant; and those whose first application for a grant was in the second round, and that have been offered a renewal, have been given a 'Renew 2' grant. 'Renew 3' grantees were being considered under the fifth granting round.

Starting from the fourth round SSP classified its four target groups/areas of work in four sectors:

1. Early childhood development (ECD) – expanding access to preschool for 4-6 year olds and improving quality of education
2. Youth Livelihoods (LLH)– facilitating transition from education to employment; offering training and services that will help young people from poor families find, and be ready for safe and productive employment
3. Child protection (CP) – includes two programme areas 1) Services for children and youth with disabilities – integration, inclusion, community based rehabilitation; expanding existing services to poorer communities; 2) Services to children and youth in difficult life situations (DLS) – child/youth and family social work, prevention of institutionalisation, creating alternative care options, facilitating deinstitutionalisation, supporting care leavers, children and youth in conflict with the law.
4. Maternal and child health (MCH) – reproductive health information for young people, infant abandonment prevention, strengthening parenting skills to prevent harm and create a safe environment, anaemia prevention and with a focus on low income families in urban and rural areas.

In addition to these main four grant areas, the SSP awards grants to NGOs to provide integration and rehabilitation services to children and young people with disabilities and their families enrolled in the CCT programme, which are known as CSI grants (Community Social Integration).

The number and type of grants awarded as of September 2012, and the amount of funding allocated to the grantees, is presented in section 3.

1.3 Report structure

Part A, the introduction, continues in section 2 with a summary of the methodology for the assessment.

Part B presents results of the fieldwork and data analysis. Section 3 summarises the current situation regarding the size and number of grant awards under the SSP. Sections 4–7 analyse SSP operations under headings that are in keeping with the framework of enquiry agreed in the evaluation plan, namely effectiveness and efficiency; relevance; impact; and sustainability. Throughout the fieldwork results we present relevant recommendations from respondents.

Part C, the final section, offers some conclusions and recommendations from the assessors for the BOTA SSP.

2 Methodology

This assessment draws on a set of 38 interviews conducted in August and September 2012. These comprise face-to-face interviews with successful grantees and unsuccessful applicant NGOs from Almaty, Astana, Pavlodar and nearby oblasts; telephone interviews carried out with NGOs from several more remote oblasts; and two key informant interviews at the national level with UNICEF and the World Bank. Planned national level key informant interviews with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection did not take place as the interviews could not be secured at the necessary times when field work was being conducted. The evaluation team also held several meetings with BOTA SSP team representatives who helpfully provided detailed reports on a number of aspects of SSP programme implementation. The interviews were complemented by analysis of programme data drawn from the SSP's grant management system (GMS).

Of the 36 NGOs that were interviewed, seven were unsuccessful applicants (mainly those whose application for renewal of a previous grant had been rejected, those rejected for the community mobilisation grant under the 'open door' policy or rejected MCH applicants from round 5), and 29 were successful applicants. The latter included former grantees no longer receiving funding, grantees with projects still active, and one NGO that had recently been awarded a grant under the new 'maternal and child health' category. (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 NGOs interviewed

Type of round	Almaty	Almatinskaya oblast	Astana & Akmolinskaya oblast	Pavlodar	Other regions	Totals
Rejected Applicants for Renew 2 grants	1	1	1	1		4
Successful Renew 2 grantees	2	2	4	3		11
Closed grants from rounds 1-3	2	2	4	3		11
Round 5 MCH	1				3	4
Open door	1	1	2	1	1	6
Total	7	6	11	8	4	36

Source: OPM. Note: A full list of the key features of the NGOs that were interviewed can be found in Annex B.

NGOs were selected for interview in two stages.

1. First, the assessment team chose according to the status of the grant. The database was divided into different grant rounds. For each round NGOs were categorised as either unsuccessful or successful. Successful NGOs were further identified as having either an active project, a closed project, or as having had successive grants through the 'Renew 1' and 'Renew 2' mechanism. This field of enquiry relating to sustainability—whether the grant in question was closed, 'Renew 1' or 'Renew 2'—was intended to build an understanding of how the services that have been funded by BOTA continue to be funded after the BOTA grants have been completed, and how the 'renew' facility builds on previously funded projects. In fact, most of the NGOS selected for interview as having closed projects from rounds 1, 2 or 3 had

subsequently received further funding from BOTA. Only three of the 11 NGOs interviewed under the criteria of having closed projects had received one grant and no further funding from BOTA. Three NGOs that were interviewed for this assessment had received three grants, although in two cases they were not linked in the SSP grants management system as associated projects so the information provided to the assessment team showed them as having received only one or two grants.

2. Within these divisions, a range of NGO and grant types were then selected to ensure that interviewees represented as full a range of applicants as possible.

This sample represents around 9% of SSP grantees who have been awarded (or are being considered for round 5 awards) at least 1 grant from the list of July 2012, which is not a statistically representative sample, but is an adequate sample for this qualitative assessment.

These interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. The guides covered the key topics set out in the list of evaluation questions, restructuring the topics around accessible questions.

2.1 Note on data analysis

The analysis presented in this report is based on three sets of data:

1. A list of NGO grants provided to the OPM evaluation team in July 2012 by the SSP team that gave information on all grants awarded under rounds 1-4 and under the open door system by July 2012 and all grants being considered for funding under round 5. According to this list 323 grants had been awarded and 83 were being considered for awards.
2. A list of NGO grants provided to the OPM evaluation team by the SSP team in September 2012 that gave information on all grants awarded under rounds 1-5 and under the open door system by September 2012 except for a handful of round 5 large grants that were still awaiting BOTA board of Trustee approval in order for the contracts to be signed. At this point 393 grants had been awarded.
3. A presentation on the SSP from September 2012 which provides data on the number of grant, amounts of funding awarded and other statistical information relating to the SSP.

The report refers to all three sets of data as initial analysis was carried out using the July 2012 list which it would have taken too long to repeat with the September 2012 list.

PART B: FINDINGS

3 Status of SSP grants

At the time of the research in September 2012 the SSP had awarded a total of 323 grants under its first four semi-annual grant rounds and under the 'open door' scheme for the smallest grants (Table 3.1).

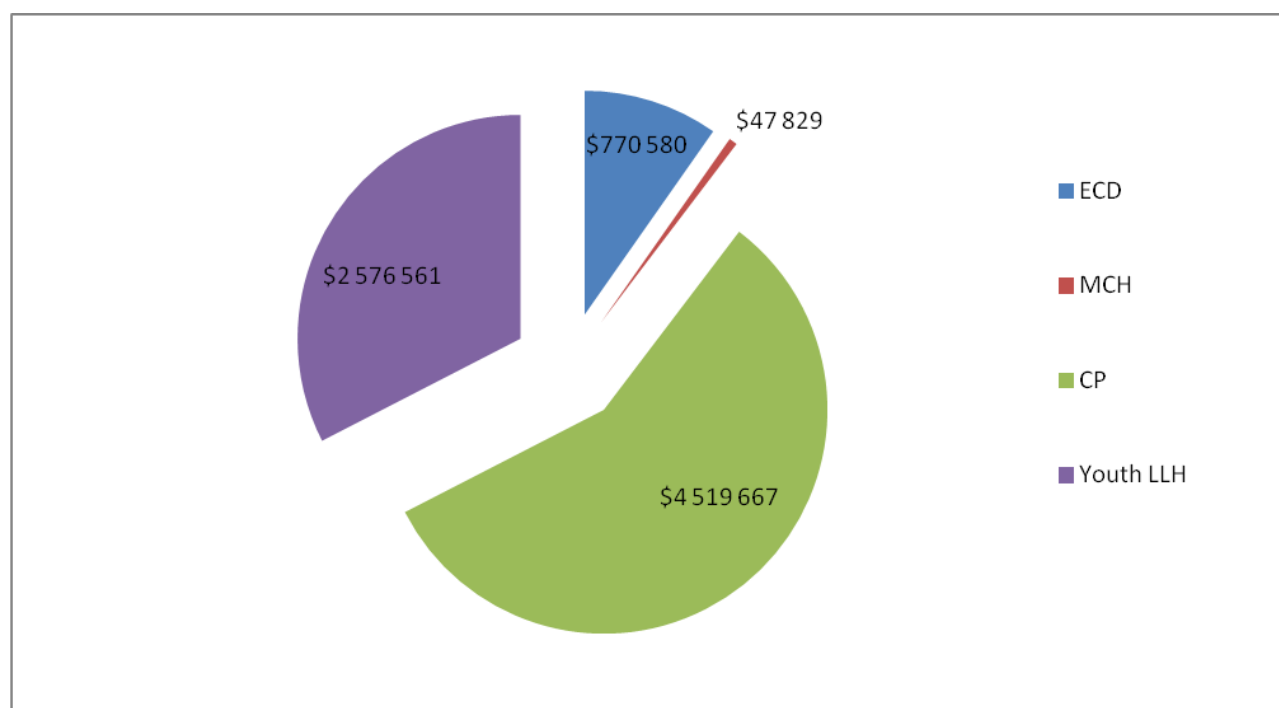
Table 3.1 Grants awarded or being considered, by work area and type – five rounds

Area	Awarded in rounds 1 to 4, and under the open door policy	Being considered in round 5	% of total awarded and being considered
By work area			
ECD	36	6	10
Youth LLH	102	31	33
CP - Youth in difficult life situation	90	20	27
CP - Disability	91	23	28
MCH		3	1
CSI	4		1
By type of grant			
Action plan development/ community mobilisation	91	14	26
Social services	192	56	61
Scaling up / replication	23	8	8
NGO Capacity building	8	2	2
CSI	4		1
System reform	5	3	2
Total	323	83	100
Of which: Renew 1 & 2 grants	13 & 29	1	11

Source: adapted from SSP records provided by BOTA/SSP team in July 2012.

Data from September 2012 provided by the SSP team show that 393 grants and \$7.9m had been awarded in total since the beginning of the programme. The additional 70 grants to which these data refer, compared with the 323 in Table 3.1, are those that have been awarded funding under round 5.

The distribution of the number of grants awarded across grant types and areas of work does not necessarily reflect the amount of funding invested in each type of grant or area of work as the amounts vary for each type of grant. In terms of area of work, the bulk of funding has been directed to benefit youth, youth in difficult life situations and children and young people with disabilities (Figure 3.1). These categories are shown in the SSP data presented in figure 3.1 as 'CP' – Child Protection and 'Youth LLH' – Youth Livelihoods.

Figure 3.1 Amount of funding awarded by area of work – September 2012

Source: BOTA, SSP (CP=Child Protection; Youth LLH = Youth Livelihoods)

Of the 393 grants awarded by BOTA by September 2012 around 104 were for small grants of less than \$2000 and around 289 have been for larger awards. Over 70% of the funding has been provided for awards for social services delivery, followed by those for scaling up and replication (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Estimate of amount of funding awarded by type of grant – September 2012

	Number of grants awarded	Estimated average level of award	Estimated overall amount awarded for each type of grant	% of overall amount awarded
Action plan development	104	\$2000	\$200,000	3%
Social service	223	\$25,000	\$5,575,000	71%
Replication/NGO Capacity building and System improvement	35	\$57,000	\$2,000,000	25%
CSI	5	\$25,000	\$125,000	1%
Total	393		\$7,900,000	100%

Source: BOTA, SSP and author's calculations.

Since many NGOs receive multiple grants the number of beneficiary organisations is smaller than the 393 grantees indicated above. According to estimates by OPM and BOTA SSP staff the number of NGOs who had received at least one grant as of September 2012 is 281 (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 NGOs with multiple grants

	Number of NGOs	Number of grants
Single grant	180	180
Two grants	94	188
Three grants	7	21
Total	281	389

Source: OPM adapted from BOTA/SSP team data from July 2012.

The SSP team estimates that 33 NGOs have moved from small action plan development grants to larger social services grants, which represents around 12% of the number of NGOs that have received grants.

It can be difficult, however, to identify the number of grants received by a single organisation because of discrepancies in the way that NGO names are recorded when entered into the BOTA SSP grants management system. A small difference in spelling will result in the organisation being counted as a separate entity. Grants are recorded under project numbers and not NGO numbers. The SSP GMS permits projects to be linked into associated projects when they have been granted to the same organisation and can generate an 'Associated Projects Report' that gives details on associated projects or proposals from a given NGO. Not all applications have been checked for linkages since GMS was implemented starting from the fourth round. The SSP team may want to consider assigning a unique number to each NGO grantee in order to simplify the process of tracking grantees as well as project grants. The implications of multiple grants for sustainability, impact and relevance is explored in more detail further in this report.

4 Effectiveness and efficiency

4.1 The application process

Responses of current and former grantees and rejected applicants interviewed for this assessment largely correspond with the experiences noted by respondents in the 2011 assessment¹. Since the last assessment BOTA has made amendments to its application process, including to the application form. Since many respondents had applied for more than one round they were often familiar with the changes, and also more prepared for what the application process was likely to entail. Nonetheless some respondents continue to find the application process onerous and in need of streamlining, particularly with regard to the application form itself:

The application form has changed a bit, but even so it is still difficult for me to fill in the form about beneficiaries as it is difficult to calculate the number of beneficiaries at the beginning of the project. In my view, this is unnecessary ... I don't like the application form: columns, columns, it is inconvenient and unreadable (Active, Renew 2)

The SSP team clarified that 'at the beginning of the project we request only the number of beneficiaries the grantee is *planning* to serve'.

It should have been possible to simplify the application form and shorten the time taken for reviewing applications (Closed, Action Plan Development)

The application form as not completely clear or convenient, many questions are duplicated and weren't understandable (Rejected, Round 5)

There were complications with the application forms which were overly complicated...the BOTA Foundation should simplify the application forms and procedures for submitting applications. Especially for the NGOs that have already proven themselves, that have implemented several projects and submitted applications three or four times. (Closed, Round 1; Renew 1; Under consideration, Round 5)

The main complications in completing the application forms are the complicated terminologies. Compared to other international application formats (Soros), there were difficulties in completing several points, it wasn't clear what needed to be written in. We had to spend a lot of time trying to understand... Our main request is to simplify and perfect the application form. The main difficulties are with the work plan which has to be re-done several times during the process. It might make more sense to prepare the work plan at the very end because last time, because of delays, the grant was received not on April 1st, but on June 1st. (Renew 2, Active)

¹ OPM Qualitative Assessment of BOTA Social Services Programme November 2011

Other respondents, however, noted improvements to the application process:

It was a bit difficult at the beginning, but then, with time, it has become easier... the BOTA Foundation has already made changes to some aspects of the application procedure, they are perfecting it in the process of implementing the programme. (Social services, Round 5)

In the beginning the forms were complicated, the wording of questions was sometimes incomprehensible (maybe because of the translation from English), but with time they have taken into account the requests of NGOs, all the inexactitudes, and they have perfected the forms, so it has become clear and easy. (Open door, Active)

Others had few problems and no recommendations for further changes to the application process:

There were no difficulties. The BOTA manager gave full consultations in response to all questions. (Renew 2, Active)

We have no recommendations – the application procedures are good as they are. (Closed, Round 2, Renew 2, Active)

No comments, because BOTA takes into account all the wishes and comments of the NGOs that they have received since the beginning of the SSP programme. So many issues have already been taken into account and improved. (Renew 2, rejected)

On the whole, respondents in this round of interviews find the application process more constructive and positive than in the previous round of interviews. While many acknowledge the complexity and challenges of the application process, they also find it useful as it helps them to work through the logic of their applications and design stronger, more strategic projects that are subsequently more straightforward to implement and manage:

It's good that when we plan a project, we also plan the risks. (Active Renew 2)

Their comments are not suggestions, but hints that make you think and work. It's good. (Under consideration, Round 5; Closed, Action Plan Development; Rejected, Round 1)

They have a very specific application form that helped to clarify the objectives and target groups. (Rejected, Action Plan Development)

4.1.1 Length of application process

Several respondents highlighted delays in the planned application timetable having knock-on effects in relation to project implementation and several expressed a desire for the length of the application process to be shortened:

The main request is to speed up the work processes and the receipt of the grant. When we received the second grant, the process of getting the grant stretched over 5-6 months (we applied in June and

only November started to work). (Active, Renew 2; Closed, Rounds 1 and 2)

The timing of the awards can be problematic for some NGOs that work with children if their activities coincide with the school year. It can be difficult to start spending a grant awarded in late May or early June immediately as this is the time that schools and residential institutions may close for the summer. An alternative solution suggested by NGOs, apart from speeding up the application process, is to shift the dates of the grant rounds:

A problem emerged because the project was approved at the end of May, beginning of June and at this time the schools and boarding schools close for holidays, so the children leave the town for holidays in the villages and other towns. The reason for this situation was the long assessment of the application... The BOTA managers should take into account the timetable of the project when they are assessing applications and either give their decision in these cases more quickly or revise the timetable for the implementation of the project. (Active, Renew 2)

...our target group is either school children or students and therefore our services are better delivered during the academic year (from September to May or June) when they are available in the town. During holidays many leave the town and the schools that we work with close for the summer period. It would be convenient for us if BOTA could fit the grant cycle in with the academic year. The period between rounds is too big in BOTA, there is a long assessment (sometimes half a year) and during this time, the specialists that we hire often leave for other projects, find other work and as a result we have to find other specialists (Active, Renew 2)

The SSP team clarified that '*grant seekers can choose a more convenient time for project implementation depending on their beneficiaries' needs. There are no restrictions from the SSP side on the project start or end.*' It may be that this needs to be communicated more clearly to grantees at the application stage.

4.1.2 Experiences of rejected applicants

Most rejected applicants, whether previous recipients of grants or first-time applicants, express some dissatisfaction with the feedback they received on their unsuccessful applications:

The reason for rejection given was general. If they don't want to give details, then it is better to say that straight away in the application form, that they don't give reasons for rejections... [The reason for rejection given was] inconsistency with the goals of the programme. It would be good to know in more detail what we wrote wrong. It is not clear what the inconsistency was. (Rejected, Action Plan Development first time applicant)

We would like to have a more detailed explanation about what areas did not get enough points, what we didn't work through, about the reason for the rejection... We didn't receive any reason for the rejection, only the number of awarded points which weren't enough. (Rejected, Action Plan Development, first time applicant)

I wasn't given an exact reason for rejection, not enough points. Maybe one of the reasons was that our director wasn't able to the fair organized by BOTA in Almaty. (Rejected, Renew 2)

The SSP team clarified that it has never organised a fair in any region.

We don't completely understand the reason for the rejection. We were told that the budget wasn't put together correctly, but we weren't told which points exactly. We don't understand this because in the other project the budget was discussed and corrected anyway. Why then wasn't it possible, instead of a rejection, to try and review and correct the budget?

It could be that this negative reaction is to be expected from applicants whose applications have not been supported. The SSP team clarifies that it *'works with grant seekers on clarification and finalisation of the budget only when a proposal has been recommended for financing by the Selection committee'*. Some NGOs may not have a clear picture of these different steps in the selection process. It is worth noting, however that even when rejected, some applicants appreciate that the demands of the application process are pushing them towards more thoroughly planned projects and often offer a constructive view of the application process as a whole even when dissatisfied with feedback on their applications:

The reason for rejection was given in a letter: lack of a clear work plan for staff, and something else (can't remember). They recommended that next time I should consult with the Foundation managers about each point in the application. It was made clear to me that my organization and project suits BOTA, but a problem occurred because of insufficient attention to specific issues in the application. I agree that the application wasn't sufficiently worked through. (Rejected, Renew 2)

4.1.3 Training and other support from BOTA SSP team during application process

Nearly all respondents, including rejected applicants, are very positive about the support they receive from the BOTA SSP team during and after the application process. The training sessions on grant application processes delivered by the team are almost universally praised as 'useful', 'exhaustive', 'very detailed':

The Foundation organized special training about the submission of applications. After these no problems at all came up. (Active, Renew 2)

I took part in a seminar, asked questions several times, they answered normally, gave very useful suggestions both by phone and in writing. (Rejected, open door)

Many applicants and grantees emphasise the advice and support of the BOTA SSP team in the correct preparation of applications:

The BOTA Foundation managers helped us very much with the application. It is difficult to overestimate how much their help meant. (Closed, Round 2)

They help very actively, advise, answer questions. (Under consideration (Under consideration, Round 5; previously closed, open door)

4.2 Payment and reporting processes

Almost none of the respondents report any problems with the receipt of payments. All transfers are reported as arriving on time according to the 'standard BOTA system'. As in the first round of the assessment in 2011, respondents raise a range of issues in relation to financial reporting and the BOTA SSP financial rules. The main issues concern the need for three quotes for sub-contractors and the limits on the amount of cash that the grantees can use, especially in rural areas.

...the Foundation has a limit on the withdrawal of cash – it is not allowed to withdraw more than 15,000 cash from the account. And some NGOs have demanded during training and conferences that this limit be more. Many NGOs have talked about this problem. (Closed Round 1, Active Round 5)

Some NGOs consider the need for original bank statements and other financial documents as an excessive reporting requirement.

It would be good to shorten the time for reviewing financial reports (3-4 weeks is too long), and also cancel unnecessary, in our view, demands to present accounts tables (*табеля учета*), write-off certificates. These documents relate to internal book-keeping... It is good, that everything is done through non-cash payments. (Renew 2, Active)

It is notable, however, that many of the respondents recognise the need for such constraints in order to ensure transparency and are more constructively accepting of them than complaining.

I had not received three quotes for the provision of food to the children who took part in our training events... I just used my usual supplier... The payment was excluded from the grant even though the BOTA people came and saw that we had spent the money on food and had not deceived them... and we had to cover the expenses from our own pockets... At the time I was angry about this. The position of BOTA seemed to be that the grantee is trying to deceive them and base the whole financial system on this premise. But I have since understood that from the point of view of project management and transparency, they are right and the fault was mine. (Closed, Round 3)

...before we hadn't submitted these kinds of reports, at first it was difficult but now there are no problems, the book-keeper has every automated... We like it that all the work is built on transfers. We like it that when a project is planned, the Foundation's staff are ready to discuss and decide on working issues, give help on one thing, compromise on another thing. We are using a new technology – excel files. (Active, Renew 2)

One respondent appreciated that comments on salary limits had been taken into account by the BOTA SSP team.

Our recommendations about increasing the level of salaries were taken into account. Now you can give a justification and the justification is accepted. (Active, Renew 2)

No other respondents indicated that salary caps were a problem, and given that this was one of the major complaints noted among respondents in the first round of interviews for this assessment, it is evident that the SSP team has been responsive to the feedback of NGOs on this issue.

4.3 Monitoring requirements

One NGO requested that BOTA SSP should be sensitive about contact with beneficiaries during monitoring processes as their work is based on building trust with clients and respecting confidentiality where young women have been the victims of violence or rape. In these cases, they ask that the requirement to give the addresses of the women in their services to BOTA for monitoring purposes be waived.

4.4 Length and size of grants

One key national informant highlighted the one year grant cycle adopted by the SSP as a barrier to the development of services

One year is not enough...NGOs want to continue and come back to us and to the government to ask for further funding. They are excited by what they have set up, but frustrated that they have to stop. (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

This informant also mentions that this also creates a barrier for NGOs wanting to work towards system change at the level of the Akimat, for example through SSP system change grants.

Akimat system change takes 3-4 years, it is problematic that one year grants are too short. If possible it is better not to change NGOs so quickly, leave NGOs who are doing well a bit longer.

It could be that the informant was referring to experiences with Round 1 or 2 grantees before the Renew mechanism was introduced. It could also be that the one year planning cycle has meant that NGOs are more focused on shorter term service development rather than longer systemic change programmes that might have greater impact and more sustainability.

Only a few NGO respondents mention the length or size of grants as being problematic. One larger NGO indicates that the upper limit should be larger if they are to apply again:

We are ready to re-apply, but we want the amount to be more than \$150,000 as \$50,000 is not enough. (Active, Renew 2)

It could be that many NGOs have got used to the idea that the SSP grant system, with two application rounds per year and the Renew mechanism, represents a steady and almost uninterrupted source of funding.

The length of the project meant we could work in a more stable way and not think all the time about where we are going to find money from. (Active, Renew 2)

5 The relevance of the SSP to NGOs and their beneficiaries

5.1 The relevance of the themes of the SSP

In the first round of the assessment considerable attention was given to the question of relevance both in relation to the content of the SSP project grants and in relation to the way in which the SSP has been intervening through funding and providing training for NGOs. The assessment team concluded that the programme areas identified by BOTA are highly relevant to children and young people and social services NGOs, that funding is a major constraint and therefore the provision of funding through grants is a highly relevant intervention and that another constraint is lack of knowledge and expertise that can constrain innovation and dilute impact.

According to respondents, the SSP has continued to remain relevant. A new area of work was introduced in the fifth round, Mother and Child Health, which is assessed as relevant by NGOs working in the sphere of reproductive health who applied for the first time to Round 5 when the MCH area of work was introduced: *'We work in many different fields. The SSP areas didn't quite fit with ours until the MCH theme was opened' ... 'We heard about the MCH theme at a special seminar of this Foundation. The themes that they had until then didn't quite fit with ours.'* (Round 5, MCH applicants)

Key informants at the national level confirm that the BOTA SSP team consulted extensively with them on priorities at the planning stages for the programme and consults regularly in order to 'fine tune' relevance to changing priorities across the country. Maternal and child health, for example, is considered by UNICEF to be of particular relevance as quality of health is a major issue for young children and in particular the prevention of trauma and injuries which is one of the big factors in under five mortality.

Most NGO respondents are clear about the importance of the ECD target group, especially where it is their area of focus:

Education work with pre-school age children is the most important work. The academic success of children at school and the prevention of child criminality begins at the very earliest age, from pre-school age. (Closed Round 2 and 3, ECD)

The lack of day-care and kindergartens, especially in rural areas, is a high priority, according to one multilateral organisation key informant, 'but what about quality and training of staff?' The SSP intervention in early childhood development area is seen as a 'supply side intervention' which is hampered by a range of factors, not least the capacity of non-state entities to develop and deliver quality ECD services to the standard expected by the state. Even with a 'holiday on licensing' from the Ministry of Education in order to encourage more ECD services to emerge, the expansion of the network of kindergartens and informal groups has been slow. Nevertheless, 'small interventions and seed money can stimulate the creation of ECD services'. Another multilateral organisation key informant sees the demand for ECD services to be of equal importance as the supply, because there are many barriers in place including expense, cultural attitudes towards early education and parent awareness of children's developmental needs that prevents expanded demand for services. These demand-side issues are in part being addressed by BOTA's CCT.

The largest categories of beneficiaries which the grants are targeting, in roughly equal proportions, are: children and young people at risk, children and young people in difficult life circumstances (ie orphans and children without parental care), children with disabilities. Within these three groups there are a large number of sub-categories which have grown with each round. Nearly all of the

NGO respondents are positive about the relevance and focus of the SSP and many suggested additional potential priorities for consideration. These can largely be grouped into two types:

- increasing the upper age limit for beneficiaries to include the government defined upper limit of 29 years of age; and
- explicitly prioritising the development of services for children and young people who are in the penitentiary system.

One NGO mentioned in addition that *'it is important to target fathers in MCH projects, not only mothers. Fathers are as important as mothers to infant and maternal health.'* The SSP team clarified that *'in the request for proposals, 'parents' are indicated as the target group.'*

5.2 NGOs as providers of social services through government social commissioning

The government currently aims to extend the social services network through commissioning the delivery of social services from NGOs. In this context, the SSP intervention to build the capacity of local NGOs to engage in government commissioning is highly relevant. Similarly, BOTA has the intention of offering the SSP granting model as one way that the government can contract NGOs and build the social services network. One national informant indicated that analysis of the effectiveness of the Law on Social Services of 2008 within which the government commissions services from NGOs shows that *'52 NGOs are delivering specialised social services for children and adults with disabilities.'* There are issues around standards which are *'too high, NGOs can't meet these standards...Licensing and accreditation regulations have been developed for implementing the 2008 Law [on Social Services], but are not implemented yet.'* Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast and other pilot areas are seen as being ahead of other parts of the country. Overall, when considering whether the SSP offers a model for the Government:

...the Government was first in terms of social commissioning ('sots' zakaz) but maybe it matters who manages these commissions...BOTA not only helped to develop services, but helped to develop NGOs in rural areas. This is where the Government has to learn from BOTA. (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

...The biggest player in this field is the government through state commissioning giving grants all over the country...BOTA has provided not only funds, but technical assistance. (Multilateral organisation key, informant interview)

NGO respondents indicate a considerable level of engagement with the government service commissioning system which is detailed below in the section on sustainability.

5.3 BOTA role in supporting innovation in relevant areas of work

In the last year six thematic training seminars have been held for BOTA grantees delivered by Save the Children and by locally contracted trainers. This represents a significantly increased level of activity compared to the previous two years of the programme in the provision of new knowledge and ideas to NGOs in Kazakhstan. According to national level informants, the quality of, and more systematic approach to the delivery of, this kind of technical assistance has been notable:

BOTA has been improving on the technical assistance and very qualified resource people from Kazakhstan and abroad delivered master classes [at a recent conference]...NGOs were very happy. (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

The BOTA SSP team notes that an exhaustive needs assessment and process of agreeing terms of reference with the trainers had been undertaken and the result has been very positive.

When asked about the impact of BOTA seminars on their work and whether they are aware of new areas of work after BOTA seminars and training, almost all NGO respondents gave positive responses and specific examples of new ideas and areas of work which emerged from training provided by BOTA including:

1. **ECD:** 'Montessori teaching methods in early childhood education'; 'early development'
2. **Youth at risk:** 'Opening special 'living-rooms' in schools'; 'extending services to drug using young people and those living with HIV/AIDS'
3. **Social work with children in difficult life situations:** 'Undertaking additional work with parents'; 'opening a crisis centres for mothers'; 'creating a database for seeking relatives of children without parental care'; 'returning children to their own families, working with the family'
4. **Disability:** 'Inclusive education methods'
5. **Other:** 'New information technology and education programmes'.

Only one or two interviewees found the seminars less applicable or useful:

The training courses are interesting, but complicated to implement (the youth bank topic) (Active, Renew 2)

The BOTA foundation seminar was not wholly useful because it has a specific focus of its own which wasn't that useful for our direction of work and experience. (MCH, Rejected)

Respondents took relevant innovative ideas away not only from the thematic seminars, but also from the seminars that are mainly focused on preparing grant applications and project planning.

5.4 BOTA role in building capacity of NGOs

The focus of SSP grant giving has been mainly on the development and replication of social services; only a few NGO capacity building grants have been awarded. Multilateral organisation key informants and many NGO respondents have noted, however, that the systems that BOTA has in place to support the grant application and management processes have had the, possibly unplanned, but clear result of building the capacity of NGOs in this particular sector:

Both my staff and I took part in the seminars. It is very important as it raises the professional level of the staff. For me it was important to see that such experienced people work in NGOs. (Active, Renew 2)

Multilateral organisation key informants refer to the 'administrative capacity support' provided by the BOTA SSP and commend the particular role that BOTA has played in building the capacity of this particular sector of the NGO community, while recognizing that there are other actors which have a remit of NGO capacity building generally. The focus on children and youth seems to have enabled BOTA to target specific NGOs and more successfully strengthen their capacity than the

generic NGO capacity building bodies such as the Ministry of Culture and Information which works closely with the Civil Alliance.

6 SSP impact

The first round OPM report highlighted the growing numbers of beneficiaries reported to have used services supported financially by BOTA, as recorded by the SSP monitoring system. In November 2011 there were an estimated 17,000 children and young people who had received services from SSP grantees. In September 2012 the estimated figure now stands at just over 28,000. The report also commented on how NGOs are using the funds and on the 'additionality' that the SSP grants have permitted. Usually this has taken the form of being able to do more, with more beneficiaries, in more locations, or with new types of beneficiaries such as low income or at risk groups of children and youth.

This round of the evaluation has attempted to look more closely at the longer term impact on the way the NGOs operate. How have the interventions from BOTA changed the NGOs, and what are they now doing that they couldn't do before their BOTA funding? What is the impact on the target beneficiaries of these changes to the NGOs?

In response to the question 'what can you do now that couldn't have done without SSP funding' NGOs report they have '*widened the range of services they can offer*', '*increased the quality of services*', '*equipped services*', '*gone beyond the boundaries of the city...to serve beneficiaries in the villages*'. The strengthening and professionalization of staff, and therefore services, is mentioned by several NGOs as a major outcome from the funding:

Before, the NGO delivered a narrow range of services which as a rule were excursions and mass-cultural events. Now, with the support of the foundation, the NGO has a staff of medical workers, a psychologist / speech therapist and has the possibility of offering outreach health consultations. This year we have opened a music activity for people with visual impairments and appointed a theatrical musical teacher. (Renew 2, Active)

With this grant we were able to offer a set of services: psychological support, legal protection, material support, health advice. Such a range of services is only possible with this grant. (Closed, Replication grant; Round 5, under consideration)

One multilateral organisation key informant indicates that,

...it is difficult to say what the national impact has been. NGOs are filling gaps in services, particularly for the disabled. Small grants at first seemed not a good way to go, but in fact it has been a positive thing that they have worked on this small scale. There has been a reasonable level of support, oversight and monitoring. Most innovation has come from the NGOs themselves, rather than BOTA. (Multilateral organization, key informant interview)

The BOTA team notes that '*...BOTA's grant program is designed to promote and spread innovations which emerge from NGO grantees rather than impose them.*'

Impact indicators reported by NGOs include both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The involvement of beneficiaries in assessing impact through questionnaires and testing before and after interventions seems to be a familiar way of working for many of the respondents. Most are able to give clear summaries of how they measure the impact of their work on their beneficiaries:

Psychological tests of children and parents, reduction of conflict in the family, feedback on children's behaviour in school, stories of success. (Closed replication and Round 5 successful applicant)

During the project tests were done ... and the results showed that children learned to plan the financial side of their life, to set goals of some sort. For this category of children [children in difficult life situations] it is very important. (Active, Renew 2)

The parents of children with disabilities have more time as their children are in our centre. Many parents have found work. The psychological health of families of children with disabilities has improved. (Closed, Renew 1)

Other outcomes from SSP grants and collaboration with BOTA cited by respondents include having '*acquired enormous experience*' and '*increased their image*' in their local area. They feel that having a BOTA grant has given them a different status from other NGOs and has increased levels of confidence in them from the side of local authorities, regional government and private companies.

We acquired huge experience as we did many things for the first time. And also the cooperation with the BOTA foundation has had a positive effect on the image of the organisation. Confidence in our organisation has grown. (Rejected Renew 2 and Round 5 successful applicant)

...The image of our organisation has grown. Our training centre for children with disabilities has begun to work all day. We were able to attract good specialists on long term contracts. (Closed, Renew 1)

The number of staff has grown. The image of the organisation has been raised – a number of articles about the camps. The department of education contacted us, wanted to find out about our camps. (Active, Renew 2)

We received enormous experience in implementing projects that are new for us. We learned a lot about correct financial management and accounting. Our organisation has grown professionally, we have acquired a position of authority in our field. (Closed Renew 1 and Round 5 successful applicant)

Participation in the BOTA grant is a very good start for further work. The authority of the NGO has grown and so has my own status. The state authorities don't brush me away. It is very prestigious to work with BOTA. (Closed, open door)

One multilateral organisation key informant thinks that the '*independent board of BOTA creates an independent structure for NGOs*' and perhaps this is one of the factors in conferring some of BOTA reputation to its grantees. One important aspect, therefore, of the impact of BOTA's work, one of the returns on the investment in NGOs, appears to be a strengthened reputation for the NGO, a label of quality standard that engenders trust and respect and which represents a form of capital that can help the SSP grantees to gain further funding and support for their services.

7 Sustainability of activities and NGOs funded by the programme

This round of the assessment has explored mainly the financial aspects of sustainability and specifically how NGOs fund their services once BOTA funding ceases. Other outcomes that have an impact on broader, less tangible aspects of organizational sustainability such as reputation and management and human resources capacity have also emerged and have been discussed above.

7.1 Financial sustainability

Questions of concern to the assessment have been twofold:

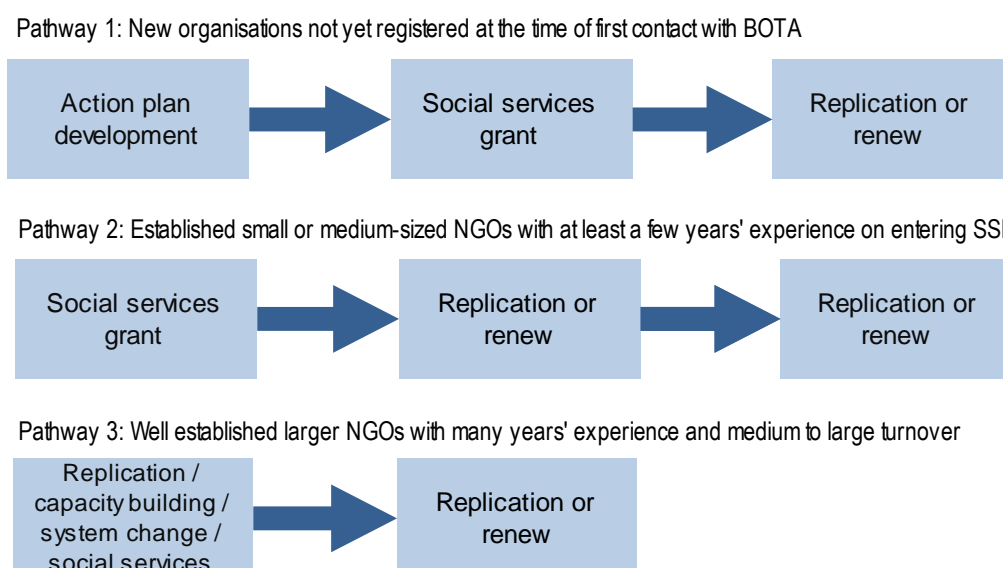
1. Is there a risk that dependency on a single source of funding has been created by the SSP for some NGOs, resulting in the cessation of services once the BOTA funding finishes?
2. For those NGOs that can continue working, will they be able to sustain the level and quality of services that they have been able to develop with BOTA funding once it is no longer available?

7.1.1 Avoiding or creating dependency

As discussed above, BOTA has awarded around 280 organisations with around 400 grants. Of these, a steadily growing proportion of organisations have received at least two or three grants. On the one hand, this continuity has enabled NGOs to grow and develop the quality and reach of their services. On the other hand, some NGOs may be becoming dependent on BOTA funding and failing to build other sources of income for service delivery.

There appear to be three main patterns in the awarding of grants (Figure 7.1):

Figure 7.1 Pathways through BOTA's grant process



Source: OPM, from information provided by SSP.

Each of these paths carries a differing set of risks and assumptions in terms of sustainability. As a broad generalisation, NGOs with more experience and a longer history before the beginning of

their work with BOTA are likely to have a wider range of income sources and greater chances of sustainability than those that were created soon before, or because of, BOTA involvement and which have not yet developed other sustainable or reliable sources of income.

It has not been possible to establish accurately with the available data how many of the 280 organisations supported by BOTA SSP belong to each of these main paths of development within the programme and therefore to give an overall assessment of the prognosis for sustainability. It has been possible to establish a reasonably good picture of how NGOs see their future sources of income and the sustainability of the services created through BOTA funding, as discussed in sections C and 7.3 below.

7.1.2 The level and quality of subsequent services

Nearly all NGOs interviewed which had completed projects report that the services begun or expanded under their BOTA grant are continuing to be delivered. In some cases these services are being funded by the government; in others they are being delivered on a voluntary basis by the NGO.

We continue to deliver these services. At present we deliver these consultations without special financing, for free, for those who ask us for them. (Closed, round 2; under consideration round 5)

A few NGOs mention that they sell their services on 'a commercial basis'. Some NGOs continue applying to BOTA in order to fund their service delivery.

We applied for a continuation of the project, but were rejected. The project does not continue, the services are being delivered by the government social workers that we trained, but we don't take part in this work any more. (Closed, round 1; under consideration, round 5)

... We are continuously seeking donors and grant-givers. We are also counting on a continuation of our cooperation with BOTA this year and in the future. (Closed rounds 2 and 3; under consideration round 5)

In nearly all cases there are some changes in either the quality, scale or age parameters of the services being delivered:

Support continues to be given as there are volunteers who are ready to help with the children. Of course the quality of services and the volume is lower, but at least twice a week we try to bring children and work with them. (Active, renew 2)

We deliver services with state financing, but there are slightly different age limits so the age of the beneficiaries has changed slightly. (Closed, round 2)

7.2 Alternative funding sources

7.2.1 Government funding

NGO respondents refer to a range of different government funding mechanisms which can be classified in three groups:

1. In kind – provision of office space, ad hoc transport or venues for training or events; provision of staff through the official employment service whereby registered unemployed people can be allocated to NGOs for a period of four months and their salary is paid by the employment service for that period at no cost to the NGO. One NGO was able to negotiate for staff to be assigned for a whole year in order to ensure greater continuity and stability.
2. One-off grants and support – for events or services such as summer camp provision. These may be recurring grants, but the funding mechanism differs from the state commissioning system.
3. State commissions ('gos zakaz' or 'sots zakaz') – a tender process for the delivery of services by the NGO to local beneficiaries

Twenty four respondents indicated that they have experience of government funding, five have no experience and seven gave no indication either way. This extensive experience of state funding and support tends to confirm the view of the key national informants that the government is the 'main player' in funding NGO service delivery and give some indication of the breadth and reach of this kind of funding. It also tends to indicate that BOTA grantees and BOTA funded services may find a considerable degree of sustainability as long as the kinds of services being developed are recognised as being eligible for government funding. NGO respondents report a range of experiences with state funding. Some find it accessible and important for ensuring the delivery of services, others find the application processes challenging or find their work is not eligible for funding and some mention corruption as a critical barrier to accessing this kind of funding.

The government procedures used to be more complicated. They are now becoming simpler and more convenient, but there are still many faults. (Closed, renew 1)

Applications for state financing are easier to prepare, they are not as full or detailed as BOTA where often the same things are repeated from different angles in different parts of the application. (Rejected, renew 2)

The state procedure is more complicated. It requires a large number of documents, certificates. Each time you have to present notarised documents which costs a lot of money when you have to do it lots of times. The reporting to government organs is fairly uncomplicated, it is not possible to compare state financing with grants from BOTA. (Rejected, renew 2)

Overall, it is clear that state funding is available, is being accessed by many BOTA grantees and most services being developed by BOTA grantees can have every expectation of being sustained by this kind of funding at least to some extent.

7.2.2 Funding from private donors

Fourteen respondents have experience of funding from private companies or individuals. In some cases NGOs have strong support from local companies or large corporations with interests in their local area. One NGO has a long-standing funding relationship, for example, with a company that has a manufacturing plant in the local area. The BOTA grant awarded to this NGO represented only a small proportion of the NGO annual income during the year when it was being implemented. This particular NGO has strong links with other local donors from the private sector and Akimat, but admits that it is heavily dependent on its relationship with the company in question.

Other NGOs report a range of relationships with a range of different private corporate donors and are confident that they can fund their work from these sources:

We have extensive experience of working with private donors, usually these are large companies which have their own programmes of sponsorship... As usual, we have become used to seeking funds from various sources. For one project we always look for a range of sources. (Closed, renew 1)

Entrepreneurs are one of the main sources of funding. The amounts are not large, and as a rule are from individuals. (Active, renew 2)

Many have no experience of engaging with private donors, or have less positive results:

Private donors are not active. We have looked a lot for sponsors but very rarely with any success. As a rule it is personal acquaintances who respond, friends or the parents of children. They help with small donations. (Closed, rounds 2 and 3)

In our town it is difficult with this because we have two big businesses, but they have their own programmes and with their partners. But there are very few other business structures. (Active, renew 2)

Over all the impression is of more limited opportunities for funding from the private sector than from the government sector, especially away from the large cities and their immediate surrounding areas.

We will strengthen our work with government commissioning. Because there are very few non-state donors which fund work with our target group. (Active, renew 2)

7.2.3 Payment for services

Several NGOs indicate that they charge for their services and that this either helps to pay for being able to offer their social services to vulnerable groups or it pays for the services themselves.

We continue the project. Funding comes from our commercial services. (Closed, rounds 2 and 3)

If there is a particularly popular activity in our clubs, then the fees the parents pay helps us to make sure that children from low income families can also take part. (Closed, round 4)

We have enough funding as we can always access additional funds from our commercial services. (Closed, rounds 2 and 3; under consideration round 5)

In some cases, the BOTA grant has enabled NGOs that usually charge for their services to extend the reach of their services to children and young people from low income households and the end of the grant simply means that they contract the reach of their services back to those who can pay.

Some NGOs who are currently not charging for services are considering payment for services as one potential source of income in the future.

7.3 Future funding plans

Compared to the first round of this qualitative assessment in 2011, the NGO respondents have generally given much stronger and more convincing responses to the question about future funding plans. Many appear to be aware that they need to diversify their funding sources in order to ensure their viability of their organizations and the sustainability of their services.

From the beginning we differentiated our sources of funding: they are Kazakhstan foundations, and international, and foreign. We will work further with them and also with state commissions. Also we want to develop commercial services. (Rejected, renew 2)

As a rule, older and more experienced organizations with at least five to seven years of experience appear to have a more complex and sophisticated idea of how they plan to move forward.

We have a strategic plan for 5 years which has 5 priority directions of work and in each direction there is a portfolio of ideas for projects. Each year the percent of successful applications is increasing. (Closed, round 1; under consideration round 5)

Less experienced NGOs with under five years of experience tend to be more focused on BOTA as a future funder, although they also mention other types of funding.

We will continue to deliver our services. We will seek funding in the first place from state and international donors. (Active, renew 2 – established 4 years ago)

We want to apply for a replication grant in order to open at least two of these clubs. We will continue to collaborate with the State foundation of support for youth policy. We will apply to international organisations. And also it is possible we may begin to partly charge for services. (Closed, rounds 2 and 3 – established 2 years ago)

Overall the impression is on organizations that have a healthy outlook on the prospects for future funding and while most are hopeful that BOTA will continue to support them, they appear realistic about the possibilities of finding funding from other sources.

7.4 Sustainability of BOTA SSP

NGO respondents appear to be unaware that the SSP is not due to continue indefinitely and clearly have expectations that funding will continue to be available from this source for work with the BOTA SSP target beneficiaries.

At last a foundation has appeared that is focused only on children from socially vulnerable groups. (Closed open door; under consideration round 5)

We hope to continue to collaborate with BOTA. In parallel we will continue to work with state funding, but system improvements are

needed for this. We have already begun to work in this direction.
(Active, renew 2)

In contrast to SSP grantees, multilateral organisations such as UNICEF and the World Bank are fully aware that the BOTA foundation is due to end its current programme of activities and funding by the end of 2014 and BOTA has involved them in a 'sustainability summit' to explore options for the future. These informants see a number of possible roles for the SSP activity strand which mainly build upon the idea, discussed above, that the SSP has been playing a major role in building the capacity of child- and youth-focused NGOs, not so much through its training and technical assistance, nor through the 'capacity building' grant category, but through the way in which the BOTA SSP staff have been engaging with and supporting NGOs through the whole project cycle from planning and application through monitoring and reporting.

BOTA should sustain the NGO development profile with a focus on services and system change...The executive Board [of BOTA] needs a fundraising strategy, not necessarily to disburse grants, but to: check on the disbursement of local authority funds; monitoring NGOs and the quality of services; linking government policy to the real needs of the population (for example through the network of volunteers [in the CCT programme]). (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

The SSP programme is seen by the same informant as being important for supporting system change at the level of regional and local government.

BOTA should work more with local authorities to make the services more sustainable. Should work with institutes and the academic community to help create the workforce for these types of new services. Should work with local authorities to develop budgeting for new services. (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

Another multilateral organisation key informant sees the SSP as one of the BOTA programme areas that has the most chances of becoming sustainable in the medium to longer term. Although this informant had less concrete examples of how this might be achieved, the main idea is that there is scope for BOTA to fit into some of the social assistance reforms currently underway:

The government is reforming the social assistance system, linking social assistance with social and employment services. It is still at an early stage of designing the reform...some of the elements and features of the BOTA programme may go into the government programme and/or the government may decide to outsource some of the implementation to NGOs and BOTA could be one of these. (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

All multilateral organisation key informants highlight the importance of BOTA documenting and capturing the experiences of the NGO services that it has supported. One multilateral organisation key informant says it is important for BOTA *'to identify good practice in their projects, document them and create a resource for sharing'*. Another says:

They need to document the project and this whole experience...to create a database and build a resource for all including materials and resources for example for parents, children and communities (Multilateral organisation, key informant interview)

Nearly all NGO respondents highlight the importance of the opportunities that the SSP has offered for exchange with other NGOs from other parts of the country. These have stimulated the cross-fertilization of ideas and practices.

One multilateral organisation key informant, when highlighting the important role that BOTA has played in enhancing and strengthening the capacities of NGOs to work with children and youth, indicated that the government is not planning to develop NGOs, has no strategy for developing NGOs and '*there is an opinion [among some government people] that the government shouldn't be funding NGOs as they will 'become dependent' on government funding*'. This national informant thinks that this illustrates the extent to which there is still a need to build understanding about the commissioning role of the government in a mixed market of social services and that perhaps this is a role that BOTA, among others, could undertake.

PART C: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8 Conclusions

This section sets out conclusions emerging from the fieldwork results.

8.1 Effectiveness and efficiency

It is clear that some of the complaints by NGOs which were noted in the first assessment report appear to have been addressed by the BOTA SSP team. NGOs indicate that issues that were a problem earlier in the programme such as caps on salary levels, are no longer a problem. Internal BOTA monitoring processes have also noted considerable positive improvement in feedback from grantees about communications with the SSP team members². NGOs continue to note the following areas where they would like to see some shifts in the BOTA SSP grant-making rules:

- length of the grants awarded increased to two or three years, especially for larger or more experienced NGOs (though it is noted that this no longer fits within the expected duration of the SSP);
- amounts of the upper limits of the grants to be increased;
- removal of the requirement for several quotes for services and supplies in rural areas; and
- increase the upper limit of cash that can be drawn by organisations, particularly in rural areas.

It is worth noting that even where NGOs have complained about these constraints, many clearly indicate their understanding of why they are required and even welcome the transparency and confidence in the NGO that they engender. On the whole, the BOTA SSP regulations on financial reporting appear to be fit for purpose and have, in fact, helped to contribute to the increased capacity and enhanced reputation of grantees.

8.2 Relevance

The BOTA SSP to date has been invested mainly in the development and replication of social services for children with disabilities, children and youth in difficult life situations and young people at risk. Early childhood development services have also been supported, but to a lesser extent. Investment in the development of maternal and child health services only began with the award of the first MCH grants in September / October 2012.

Most areas of work and target beneficiary groups considered relevant by multilateral organisation key informants and NGO respondents are encompassed in the existing SSP priorities including work with children in the penitentiary system and fathers (as well as mothers). Given that some respondents do not seem to be aware that the SSP priorities include work with these categories, there may be a need to check the wording of the grant guidance materials. Several NGO respondents highlight that they would like to see a higher age limit, up to 29 years of age, for beneficiaries, but this seems to be pushing the SSP away from the BOTA focus on children and youth and towards spreading its available resources far too thinly.

² BOTA M&E report, survey of SSP grantees, 2012

The SSP appears to be working with a quite large pool of NGOs, estimated in this report as 281 organisations, and awarding consecutive grants to the NGOs that have proven themselves more able to deliver effective social services to target beneficiaries. Some respondents indicate that grants with a longer implementation period of two or three years might be more effective than consecutive one year grants as this gives the opportunity for more strategic planning by the NGOs that can lead towards system change. While this assumption is true, the one year cycle adopted by the SSP appears to have advantages that set off this disadvantage. These can be summarised as follows:

- Less experienced community-based organisations and NGOs have been able to build their experience in planning and implementing this kind of grant project. Two or three year grants would carry much greater risks for less experienced organisations. The 'renew' mechanism appears to mitigate some of the disadvantages of a short grant cycle as experienced and effective NGOs are able to continue their work with only minimal disruption; and
- The intensive support provided by the SSP staff in the planning, application, implementation, monitoring and reporting cycle has clearly had an additional impact on NGO capacity. Longer grant periods would probably require less frequent contact.

This last point about the building of capacity that has come from the grants management and administration system being used by the SSP seems to be a significant 'unintentional' outcome from the programme. Although the SSP has always had NGO capacity building as one of its areas of work, this was intended to come through the grant-making itself and not the administrative functions associated with grant-making. Either way, it appears that the 'micro-management' by SSP staff that respondents complained of in the first round of interviews, has paid off as the programme and its grantees have matured.

There has clearly been a marked increase in the systematic provision of technical assistance to NGOs since the first round assessment. Whether it is this, or the NGOs themselves, stimulating innovation, the evaluation team has noted in this round that the services described by respondents during interviews for this round of the assessment reflect more interesting and complex services addressing more deep-seated social problems.

8.3 Impact

In keeping with the fact that the projects proposed by grantees have become more sophisticated since the first round of the assessment, it is notable that they appear to be achieving more significant outcomes for target beneficiaries. This could be because interviews were drawn in most cases from more experienced NGOs which have had 'Renew 1 or 2' grants and therefore are 'a priori' more successful and effective. Either way, it tends to indicate that at least some part of the SSP grants are filling real gaps in services, with real and effective interventions such as family reunification services for children without parental care, or meaningful support services for children with disabilities and their parents and not only 'nice to have' interventions such as summer camp or leisure activities.

8.4 Sustainability

While the 'Renew 1 and 2' mechanisms appear to have been effective in supporting, nurturing and pushing forward the boundaries of effective services, this assessment raises some questions about the possible dependency on BOTA of smaller or less-experienced NGOs that have received multiple grants. More detailed analysis of the patterns of award-giving to experienced / less experienced, or to larger / smaller NGOs, could provide more insight into whether this is a real

cause for concern or not. The assignment of unique number to NGOs as well as to their applications would help to facilitate such an analysis.

This round of the assessment has produced a clearer picture of how NGOs are funded at present and how they see their future funding prospects. It is clear that most are aware of and receive government funding and that this is the main source of funding available to NGO service providers. Many NGOs indicate that government funding has considerable limits and constraints, whether in the size of funding available, the barriers in the application processes or in terms of the limits on the types of services that can be funded in this way. Key national informants acknowledge that while there continue to be teething problems in the implementation of the 2008 Law on Social Services, these problems are continually in the process of being addressed by the government. NGOs themselves also report that there have been improvements in government funding mechanisms and several NGOs had no complaints about the government funding mechanisms.

Funding from the private sector for NGO services seems less developed and less available to NGO respondents than government funding. Whether this is a reflection of the situation in corporate social responsibility in Kazakhstan as a whole, or of a weakness in the capacity of NGOs to approach this funding sector, it is clearly an area that requires some attention to stimulate corporate giving. Funding from private individuals appears to be more or less non-existent only one or two NGOs mentioned individual donations, and even then as donations from 'individual entrepreneurs' rather than individual donors.

Several NGOs report that they sell their services. The commercial provision of services, while offering some scope for income generation, tends to form only a small part of the income of social services providers. By their very nature, social services tend to be aimed at the more vulnerable and lower income sections of society and it is the role of government to commission these types of services. Training and education services, particularly ECD services, are more likely to find a market than social services for vulnerable children and youth.

Overall, the assessment shows that SPP grantees have several avenues open to them in terms of securing ongoing funding for services that have begun with BOTA funding. It is likely that the prospects for viability and strong financial sustainability vary, however, according to the experience and history of each NGO, the type of services it is developing and delivering and the beneficiary groups that it is targeting.

9 Recommendations for the SSP programme

Given that BOTA is entering the final stages of the SSP with only two more grant rounds planned for October 2012 and February-March 2013, these recommendations are focused mainly on issues that might be relevant to the SSP as a potential model for government grant-making or for other potential future roles that the SSP may adopt as part of planning for sustainability both of the services and NGOs it has helped to develop, but also its own future sustainability.

9.1 Consider future possible roles for the SSP

The prospects for a continuing role for the SSP when BOTA ceases to exist in its current form tend to point towards some interesting options. It is unlikely that the SSP will be able to continue to disburse large amounts of grants, but it could build upon its experience as a capacity builder of NGOs in the children and youth sector in order to take up one of, or a combination of, the following possible roles at the national level:

1. *A resource centre for child and youth focused NGOs* that provides a best practice exchange resource across the country, a 'portal' to international best practice, training and technical assistance in management and organisational development tailored for NGO social services providers and an online database or other resource for corporate or institutional donors wanting to invest in children and youth NGOs.
2. *An independent monitoring and watch-dog body which supports children and youth NGOs to maintain a high level of probity and transparency*, conferring a label of high standards in management and governance and pushing NGOs towards greater innovation and effectiveness in the delivery of social services for children and youth. This body might become a sort of specialist 'accreditation' body for children and youth NGOs or services. It might even become a body that can play a role in the government licensing processes for social services delivery by offering independent licensing, monitoring and inspection of standards in service delivery organisations.
3. *An independent monitoring body that checks on disbursement of local authority funds targeting children and youth services* both to assess the effectiveness of the disbursements and to assess the quality of the services that are being provided.
4. *The hub of a network of child and youth NGOs* that can provide needs assessments based on grassroots experience of working with children, youth, parents, families and local communities. This network could help to inform and monitor public policy in relation to children, young people and families.
5. *A specialist research and monitoring unit* that can support the development, implementation and monitoring of government strategy in relation to the building of the NGO sector specifically in relation to child and youth services and the implementation of the Law on Social Services.

All of these possible roles have emerged from the respondent interviews and correspond to the characteristics of the SSP that have appeared in the interviews: independence, high levels of probity, focus on monitoring and quality of services, capacity building and best practice development.

9.2 Deepen BOTA's understanding of award patterns to grantees

If it is possible to designate individual numbers to grantees, this will facilitate analysis of the ways in which grants have been awarded so far within the programme and support planning for the future sustainability of services and organisations. Areas of interest will include the three

progressions outlined above in Figure 7.1 which could help to identify factors that strengthen the potential for sustainability.

Other patterns of interest will include single awards, analysed by type — action planning grants that have not led to further applications or funding; or social services grants that have not led to replication or renewal. Correlation of award patterns to the experience, size, location, types of services and target beneficiary group of each NGO will be important for establishing where the SSP can be most effective in building sustainable interventions. Analysis of award patterns can help in planning technical assistance interventions to support NGO sustainability before the end of the BOTA programme, but also support in the description of the SSP grant-making model for use by the government, private foundations, corporate donors or other potential grant-making bodies.

9.3 Continue systematic provision of technical assistance

The six seminars delivered in 2012 appear to have given considerable impetus to NGOs that participated in them. It would seem to be important to continue with this programme of carefully planned training interventions that meet carefully assessed training needs. Areas for further technical assistance will clearly be decided by NGOs themselves during training needs assessments undertaken by the SSP team and Save the Children. If the SSP team and Save the Children can continue, however, to expand the horizons of the target NGOs by helping them to learn about best practice internationally that might be relevant for Kazakhstan, this should help to further enhance the opportunity that the SSP has to strengthen and extend social services for children and youth. The list of training needs identified during the first round of this assessment remains relevant in terms of the content and focus of the services being developed.

Depending on how BOTA decides to further develop the SSP, it may become relevant to include more explicit organizational development needs in the training needs assessment. Areas for consideration that have emerged from this assessment and are particularly relevant to sustainability and longer-term impact include: business planning for NGOs; corporate, community and individual fundraising for child and youth service delivery; government contracting for NGO service providers; impact evaluation; community needs assessment.

9.4 Involve grantees and beneficiaries in exploring potential roles for the SSP

As BOTA and the SSP continue to explore potential future roles, it would be beneficial to include both grantees and beneficiaries in consultation exercises. Grantees and beneficiaries are the main stakeholders of the organization and are well placed not only to advise on potential roles, but also to advocate for whichever future roles emerge as optimal.

9.5 Continue to focus on improving systems and processes of the grant-making programme

The SSP team has been largely responsive to the issues that were being raised by NGOs in the last round of the assessment and within their own internal monitoring mechanisms. The only area that seems to require any action is the quality of feedback on rejected applications as several rejected applicants considered that the feedback was not detailed enough. It may not be practical at this stage in the programme to increase the amount of information provided, especially as this could have considerable implications for the use of staff time during the grant-making process. The SSP team may want to consider, however, offering an automatic way of incorporating some description together with the information about the number of points the application was awarded that can help the applicant to understand which parts of the application were weaker and stronger.

Annex A Question matrix

Table A.1 Key questions for SSP (from evaluation plan)

Question	
Relevance	<p>Do NGOs exist in relevant sectors? What type, and how many?</p> <p>Is lack of funding a key constraint for NGOs, or are other factors more pressing (e.g. lack of trained staff, bureaucracy)?</p> <p>Are the social service areas supported by the SSP responding to recognised social needs?</p> <p>Is there a demand for the services supported by the SSP (in other words, are there beneficiaries that will use the service)?</p>
Effectiveness	<p>On outreach: How do NGOs find out about the grants programme?</p> <p>What are the criteria for selection? How consistently are these applied?</p> <p>How widely known is it?</p>
	<p>What are the challenges with the application process?</p> <p>How long does it take for an application to be approved?</p> <p>Do NGOs think the selection was clear and transparent?</p>
	<p>What communication do the NGOs have with BOTA? Does this work well?</p> <p>How effective are any mechanisms for responding to NGO queries or complaints?</p>
	<p>What type of support do NGOs receive from BOTA? Do they get additional assistance to help them apply for and implement the grant? How effective is this support?</p> <p>What proportion of NGOs receiving small grants in the first year re-applied for larger grants in the second round, and how many of them were successful?</p>
	<p>How does BOTA ascertain how the funds from the SSP are being used by NGOs?</p> <p>Who reports to whom, and what information do they provide (e.g. do NGOs report to BOTA? Does BOTA provide feedback to NGOs?</p> <p>How does that information feed back into the revision and improvement of the programmes?</p> <p>To what extent are NGOs monitored?</p> <p>How could M&E process be improved?</p>
	<p>What is the cost to the NGO of applying for the grant? Does this vary by grant type?</p> <p>How much time does it take to apply for the grant? Do NGOs consider that the financial return is worth the time investment?</p> <p>What length of time between application and receipt of funds?</p>
Efficiency	<p>How are payments made, and how often? Does this work well?</p> <p>Do they come on time?</p>

	<p>What is the cost–transfer ratio (the ratio of the administration cost to the size of the grant)?</p> <p>What are the ongoing administration costs of the SSP?</p> <p>What processes are used to ensure that grants are not used for duplicate functions?</p> <p>What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure that the funds are spent appropriately? How well do these mechanisms work?</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Is funding sufficient to complete a project by itself?</p> <p>If not, does the NGO have access to additional funds?</p> <p>How does the NGO plan the continuation of its services after the end of the grant?</p>

Annex B Fieldwork conducted (2012)

Table B.1 List of NGO interviews conducted

N	Status	Grant Type	Location	Programme area	Experience (yrs)	N of core Staff
1	successful	Social service grant	Astana	Early Childhood Development	3	10
2	successful	Social service grant	Astana	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	4	5
3	successful	Social service grant	Astana	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	2	3
4	successful	Replication	Astana	Children and youth in difficult life situations	11	4
5	successful	NGO capacity building	Astana	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	13	3
6	rejected	Social service grant	Akmola obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	4	1
7	successful	Social service grant	Astana	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	13	7
8	successful	Social service grant	Akmola obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	11	3
9	successful	Social service grant	Akmola obl	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	7	3
10	successful	Social service grant	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	7	5
11	successful	Action plan development	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	1	1
12	successful	Social service grant	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	10	11
13	successful	Social service grant	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	2	3
14	successful	Replication	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	6	5
15	successful	Social Service	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	20	4
16	successful	Social Service	Pavlodar and Pavlodar obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	9	10
17	successful	Replication	Almaty	Children and youth in difficult life situations	13	17

N	Status	Grant Type	Location	Programme area	Experience (yrs)	N of core Staff
18	successful	NGO capacity building	Almaty	Children and youth in difficult life situations	8	7
19	successful	System Improvement	Almaty	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	10	7
20	successful	Social Service	Almaty	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	15	4
21	successful	Social Service	Almaty	Children and youth in difficult life situations	11	7
22	successful	Replication	Almaty obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	12	6
23	successful	Social Service	Shymkent	MCH	2	4
24	rejected	Social Service	Almaty	MCH	15	14
25	successful	NGO capacity building	Karaganda	MCH	12	20
26	successful	Action plan development	Almaty obl	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	3	3
27	successful	Open Door	Almaty obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	3	3
28	rejected	Open Door	Almaty	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	1	2
29	rejected	Open Door	Almaty obl	Youth opportunities and risk prevention	7	9
30	successful	Open Door	Jezkazgan	ECD	1	5
31	successful	Social Service	Almaty obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	6	14
32	successful	Social Service	Almaty obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	10	3
33	rejected	Open Door	Astana	Children and youth in difficult life situations	7	1
34	rejected	Social Service	Almaty obl	Children and youth in difficult life situations	15	10
35	successful	Social Service	Aktau	MCH	4	5
36	successful	Social Service	Akmola obl	Services for Children and Youth with Disabilities (aged 0-24)	6	6

Source: OPM.