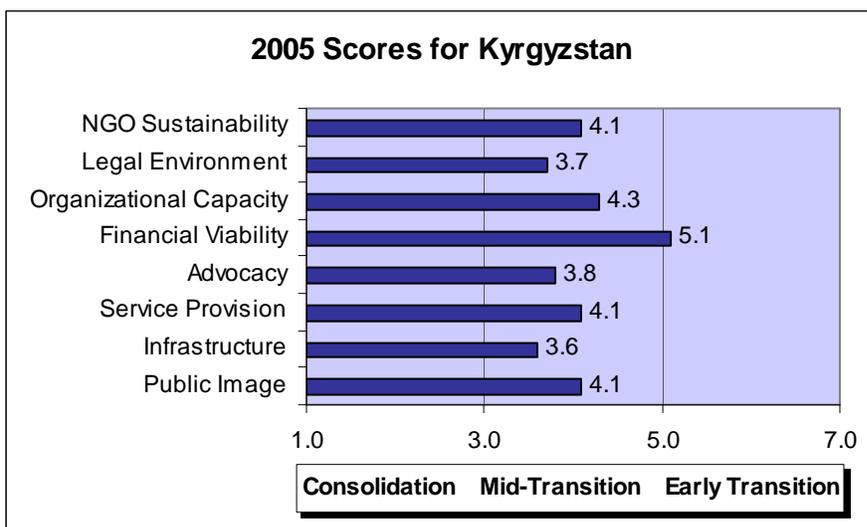


Kyrgyzstan



Capital: Bishkek

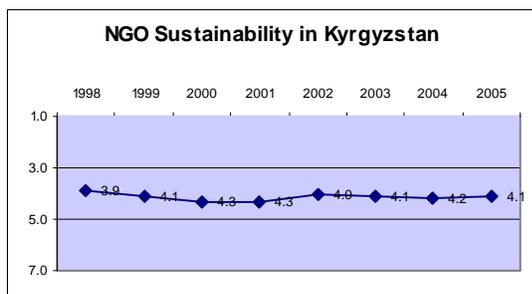
Polity: Republic

Population:
5,213,000

**GDP per capita
(PPP):** \$1,800

NGO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.1

The NGO sector continues to play an active role in Kyrgyzstani society, with about 2,200 of the 9,000 NGOs registered considered active. Organizations continue to depend primarily on foreign funding, though many are beginning to diversify by exploring other sources of funding, such as charging fees for services.



The regime change on March 24, 2005 presented civil society with new challenges. Organizations found themselves with an unprecedented opportunity to influence the new government's priorities and implement their own agendas in a newly open environment. Civil society presented a united front at the National Civil Society Forum in April, where it organized proposals for reforms to the Constitution, the judicial system, and state-run media. It also called upon the new

administration to implement measures to reduce corruption.

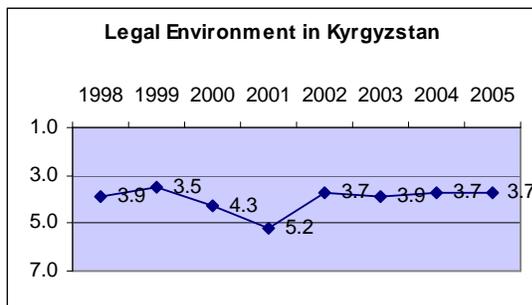
Organizations also played a vital role in conducting voter education campaigns leading up to the February parliamentary elections and the July presidential elections. This is in stark contrast to 2003, when government officials applied significant pressure and scrutiny to NGOs active in the flawed and politically charged constitutional referendum. Organizations continue to gain experience conducting advocacy campaigns on issues such as election reform, NGO taxation, CBO legislation, schoolchildren's nutrition, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Organizations generally maintain good relations and even collaborate on projects with local governments. Instability following the March 24th change in government also led to changes in local governments. NGOs have had to build relationships and trust with the new leadership, which has been a setback for the NGO-government partnerships. Foreign funding is decreasing, which has generated both competition and partnerships among NGOs. In one example of greater cooperation, NGOs worked together to educate voters and monitor the voting process for the

parliamentary and presidential elections. In fact, for the presidential elections, a steering

committee of leading organizations partnered to set priorities and allocate small grants.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.7



The legal environment governing NGOs did not change over the past year, remaining permissive and supportive of NGO activities. The registration process is still without significant problems, and free of charge. Once registered, organizations are able to engage in economic activities, though most NGOs are unaware of the various ways to generate income or compete for government contracts.

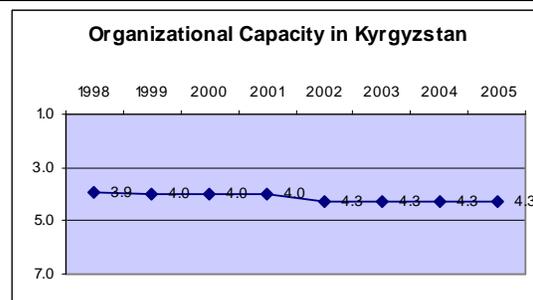
NGOs complain that local attorneys lack understanding of NGO laws and issues. In 2004, USAID began funding a network of NGO resource centers that provide legal services and

information to NGOs in the regions. Despite these efforts, organizations in the remote areas are unable to take advantage of these services. Harassment by government officials is not as bad as in previous years, though organizations are still subject to unannounced inspections by local law enforcement agents. Some NGOs report that tax inspectors make arbitrary demands for documents. Other organizations continue to report that while NGOs work in Kyrgyz, the local language, the government at times requires them to submit documents in Russian.

Government officials did not interfere with NGO activities in the parliamentary and presidential elections. Organizations around the country conducted educational programs, as well as trained and mobilized election observers, who were given good access to the election procedures.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.3

While a small number of larger organizations located in the urban areas have strong organizational structures and internal management, most NGOs are small and poorly staffed. NGOs often rely on one or two leaders that understand and are committed to their organizations' missions. In the small towns and rural areas, organizations operate out of their directors' homes and use the directors' addresses and phone numbers as the organizations' contact numbers.

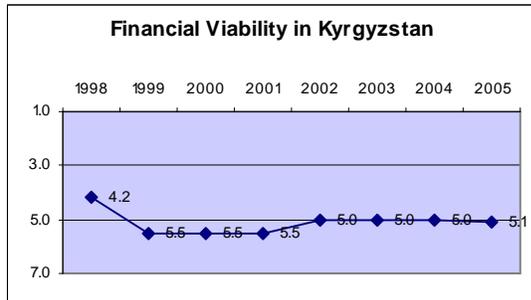


Many organizations fail to understand the importance of strategic planning and few outside the capital have a strategic plan. Similarly, while many organizations have boards of directors, they are rarely used effectively. Few organizations understand the distinct roles and responsibilities of, or distinguish between, their staff and boards of directors. Most NGOs have few financial resources beyond what they receive through grant programs, making it

difficult for organizations to pay their staff regular salaries and attract young professionals to the sector. Organizations are increasingly

recruiting volunteers from high schools and universities to work on projects.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 5.1



In general, the financial condition of most NGOs did not change over the past year, despite a slow Kyrgyz economy that limited local philanthropy and other economic opportunities. Relationships between NGOs and the business community continue to be underdeveloped, and donations are rare. Individual philanthropy is also underdeveloped. Numerous organizations received support from parliamentarians, who helped them to capitalize their microcredit portfolios, to rehabilitate social infrastructure, and requested them to distribute humanitarian aid under their names. This support, however, was likely related largely to the individual parliamentarians' re-election campaigns.

While the decrease in donor funding has limited the availability of grants, NGOs are forging new partnerships with other NGOs and local governments. Local governments at times provide assistance to NGOs for specific projects, though few take advantage of a law that allocates funds for local civic organizations. Under the law, the Ministry of Finance may

ADVOCACY: 3.8

The NGO sector conducted numerous advocacy campaigns over the past year with some having great success. Emboldened by the March 24th change in government, numerous NGOs increased their advocacy activities. A nationwide campaign for fair elections united many national organizations around voter education and monitoring drives. Local NGOs, organized in the U.S. State Department-funded

provide seed grants via the local governments to community-based organizations. The procedures are extremely bureaucratic and require funding requests to pass through every level of local and regional government; as a result, few organizations have succeeded in securing such funding. Other government support is limited to space for events, or other in-kind donations. One exception, however, is the town of Nookat, in the Osh Oblast, in which the local government allocates funding to support local organizations. In general, donors tend to support specific initiatives, rather than institutional development. USAID, which began offering an institutional grant program for local NGOs, is an exception.

The scarcity of economic opportunity, as well as the lack of capacity, limits the fundraising success of most NGOs. Some NGOs, however, have had success. One organization in the Issyk-Kul region generates income by operating a small hotel. Other organizations earn income by providing training for local government officials and consulting services for businesses. Leading up to the presidential elections in July, Kel Kel, a youth organization, coordinated a series of high-profile "Rock the Vote" concerts and organized funding from a variety of donors such as OSCE and the Democracy Commission under US Embassy.

Some organizations are increasing their transparency and publicizing their financial records and the results of their projects.

information centers located throughout the country, conducted campaigns to monitor government compliance with legislation. Civil society representatives had a strong presence on the Constitutional Council appointed by President Bakiyev in April to develop constitutional amendments. The presence of civil society representatives was diluted in October when the President expanded the

Council to nearly 300, adding representatives from local government and municipal institutions, media, school systems, and the farming community.

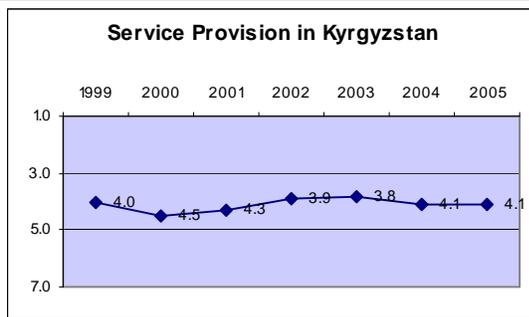
NGOs often have productive relationships with local authorities, though lobbying at the local level is often limited to participation in budget hearings. The frequent changes in local government staff following the March 24 changes has set back relations with local officials, as organizations have to build new relationships and trust.

Only a few larger organizations that have a national presence are able to organize independent nation-wide advocacy campaigns.



Throughout the year, organizations have launched advocacy campaigns on topics such as alcohol abuse, tenants' rights, migratory labor, and communications operators. Smaller organizations that are unable to initiate nationwide campaigns tend to join coalitions supported by international donors.

SERVICE PROVISION: 4.1



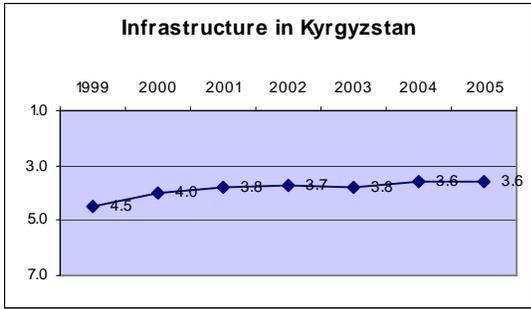
While some organizations are able to provide consulting and training services for a fee, the Kyrgyzstani economy is not yet strong enough

to offer many opportunities for NGOs. In addition, NGOs often lack the capacity and knowledge to tap into existing markets. A few well-established organizations provide training materials, reports, handbooks, and research for other organizations, political parties, and government ministries. Others provide training to law enforcement officials on domestic violence issues. Charging a fee for such services is an increasingly accepted practice.

INFRASTRUCTURE: 3.6

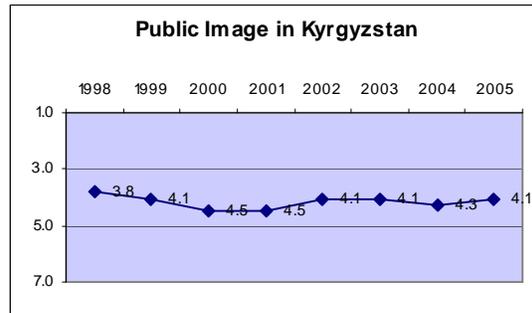
NGOs in Kyrgyzstan enjoy access to numerous resource centers that offer training and other services. Many of the services however, are not offered in small towns and rural areas. The Civil Society Support Centers funded by USAID provide technical assistance, access to computers, information, and legal services. The NDI Information Center for Democracy, funded in part by the U.S. State Department, offers infrastructure support for NGO activists by providing access to media resources, facilitating discussions, and providing meeting spaces. Other organizations provide a variety of training opportunities, including trainings of trainers that have led to a cadre of local

trainers. Donors also fund resource centers that provide NGOs with internet services and computer training. Media resource centers in Bishkek, Osh, and Karakol host frequent press conferences. Most resource centers are located in oblast or rayon centers, leaving NGOs in the regions to struggle with communications and access to information. Two youth groups, Kel Kel and Birge, created popular listserves that provided other organizations with information about civil society, government activities, and grant opportunities.



PUBLIC IMAGE: 4.1

Both the independent and state-controlled media continue to increase their coverage of NGO activities. Leading up to the February parliamentary elections, state-controlled media and government officials criticized organizations supported by the U.S. and accused them of violating local laws and promoting instability. Following the March 24th change of government, state media was far less critical of those organizations involved in human rights or pro-democracy activities. Independent media, while more balanced in its coverage, does not actively seek out information on NGO activities. Most organizations lack sophistication in public and media relations, though following the regime change, NGOs in Bishkek held more press conferences to announce new activities or campaigns.



A poll funded by USAID found that public awareness of NGOs is high, though this awareness does not necessarily translate into a positive public image. The beneficiaries of NGO services are more likely to have a positive image of NGOs; the majority of citizens however, are not interested in the NGO sector.