



The BOTA Foundation: Final Report Executive Summary

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Overview

The BOTA Foundation final report describes BOTA Foundation's programs, achievements, and impact after five-and-a-half years of operation in Kazakhstan. The BOTA Foundation was founded in 2008 by the Governments of Kazakhstan, U.S., and Switzerland, and five Kazakhstanis, as a means of returning more than \$115 million in disputed assets in support of poor children, youth, and their families in Kazakhstan.

The Foundation's mission was to improve the lives of vulnerable children and youth suffering from poverty in Kazakhstan through investment in their health, education, and social welfare. The World Bank contracted IREX, an international non-governmental organization based in Washington, D.C., to build the Foundation, oversee its operations, and support the administration of its programs to ensure that BOTA reached its stated goals and that the funds were used for their intended purpose. Save the Children provided technical assistance to three of the Foundation's departments. A predominantly Kazakhstani Board of Trustees (BoT) served as the governing body of the BOTA Foundation, the World Bank provided supervisory support, and the three government Parties had ultimate authority on how the funds were used.

Programs

The BOTA Foundation was the largest child and youth welfare foundation in Kazakhstan during the time of its operation from 2009 to 2014 and was able to improve the health and poverty status of over 208,000 poor Kazakhstani children and youth through its three programs: conditional cash transfers, scholarships to attend Kazakhstani higher education institutions, and grants to support innovative social service provision.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program was designed to address a key need associated with ameliorating poverty: increasing the access of poor families to health, education, and social services. BOTA CCT program was a demand-side program that aimed at removing monetary and non-monetary barriers to accessing existing services. The program delivered regular cash payments to four categories of beneficiaries within poor households: those with preschool aged children, women with infants up to the age of six months, and households who have children with disabilities up to the age of 16. The fourth category of target beneficiary, introduced in mid-2011, was young people aged 16-19 who have completed school and had not yet found employment. By the end of its operations in September 2014, CCT had enrolled **154,241** beneficiaries from **95,000** poor households in the six regions where it operated. CCT exceeded its original target of 50,000 beneficiaries by more than three times.

The goal of the Social Service Program (SSP) was to improve the health, education, and social welfare of impoverished children, youth, and families by supporting improvements in quality, availability and sustainability of non-government or non-commercial child welfare services and systems. SSP took a holistic approach to achieving these goals and objectives. A multi-tier grants structure was offered that allowed for organizations with little or no experience to receive small grants (up to \$2,000) for planning and community mobilization, and very experienced NGOs to receive large grants (up to \$50,000) for replicating successful projects, training other NGOs, or working towards improving Kazakhstan's framework for social assistance. Close to three quarters of the grants were given to small and medium

size organizations for the provision of social services. Between 2009 and 2014, SSP conducted **eight grants rounds** and funded **632 projects**.

BOTA's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) provided means-based scholarships for young people from impoverished backgrounds who normally would not have the opportunity to attend college or university due to the high costs relative to applicants' income. TAP allowed students to attend any college or university in Kazakhstan that accepted them and pursue any area of study. The main goal of the TAP program was to break the cycle of poverty for tuition assistance recipients by providing students with higher education, which in turn, would lead to gainful employment. TAP had **four open competitions** from 2009 to 2012. Over that time, a total of **841 educational grants** were awarded. The original goal for the program was to distribute 400 scholarships, and similar to BOTA's other programs, the BOTA reached more than double its beneficiary target.

Results and Legacy

BOTA Foundation achieved, and often surpassed, expected results in a number of areas. In its five years of work, BOTA more than doubled the number of beneficiaries it served, compared to numeric targets envisioned in the 2011 mid-term strategy. BOTA's first strategic objective was to use its resources to assist 100,000 poor children, youth, and mothers in Kazakhstan. In the end, BOTA served over 200,000 beneficiaries across Kazakhstan.

External evaluations by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) state that "overall the qualitative evaluation has confirmed that the BOTA programs have been implemented across all three activities with high levels of effectiveness for those that receive the benefit, and; BOTA has been having a positive impact on recipients across all three activities."

While the Foundation closed at the end of 2014, it leaves behind an important legacy with several sustainable dimensions. BOTA was able to efficiently and effectively return more than \$115 million in assets associated with corruption to poor children, youth, and their families. The Foundation's experience and lessons provide a model for future asset restitution cases worldwide. Its significant impacts in Kazakhstan that will last well into the future include: BOTA's Conditional Cash Transfer Program (CCT) is serving as the basis for a pilot that could lead to restructuring how social assistance is delivered in Kazakhstan. The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) leaves behind hundreds of graduates who are on their way to breaking the cycle of poverty through finding gainful employment. Through the Social Service Program (SSP), BOTA strengthened hundreds of child welfare NGOs, some of which have gone on to found a national coalition of child and youth welfare NGOs dedicated to continuing the type of work that BOTA had been funding. Former staff of BOTA provide the final leg of the Foundation's legacy, as they have already gone on to work for international organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, and other international agencies, as well as start local NGOs, and bring BOTA's high standards and expert child welfare expertise into their new positions and roles.

Lessons Learned

There are important lessons learned from the BOTA Foundation that are relevant to similar programming that might be implemented in Kazakhstan and possibly other countries as well as to future asset recovery efforts. **Responsible repatriation via civil society is possible** – with international partnership the BOTA Foundation was able to transparently and productively repatriate over \$115

million. Having a **contextually relevant mission is important** – having a mission that is capable with the needs of the country and has the buy-in of civil society and government provides the opportunity to achieve real impact. **A balance between independence from the government and collaboration with the government can be achieved** – the right balance creates an environment where funds can be safeguarded and efficiencies and impact can be gained. **Oversight structures should be considered carefully and resources to support those structures should be commensurate** – how many and exactly which partners are necessary should be carefully considered from both prudence and feasibility perspectives. **Shared expectations and trust among partners is key** – without this, small day-to-day operations as well as larger sustainability agreements are hard to reach. **Corruption is always a risk** – the strictest financial controls need to be in place coupled with constant monitoring.

In addition to lessons learned, BOTA was a successful case study of how assets can be repatriated to their country of origin via civil society. As the results from building the BOTA Foundation and implementing its three programs show, involving civil society consistently in the asset-return process provides important opportunities to build trust in local institutions, provide oversight, and identify and meet the needs of citizens.

Civil society can contribute to each stage of the asset repatriation process. Civil society can conduct research, stakeholder mapping, and landscape analysis; help design asset-return mechanisms; manage or monitor the return of assets; synthesize learning and develop recommendations to inform future mechanisms; and conduct outreach and advocacy to promote the use of new knowledge in other contexts. Most importantly, civil society can advocate for citizens and amplify their voices throughout the asset-return process.

Everyone benefits when civil society is engaged from the outset. In BOTA's case, the U.S. and Swiss governments witnessed the successful return of disputed assets to poor people in Kazakhstan, the GoK learned valuable models for implementing social protection programs, child welfare organizations in Kazakhstan grew their capacity to better serve their communities, and children and youth living in poverty in Kazakhstan received much-needed services so that they can build healthier and stronger society. Involving civil society throughout the asset repatriation process therefore provides an important opportunity to repatriate assets in a way that benefits all stakeholders involved, particularly the world's most vulnerable populations who need it the most.