



**Donor-NGO collaboration functioning:  
Case study of Kazakhstani NGO**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge base on the collaboration functioning by using a model developed by Corbin (2006), The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning.

The research applied a case study design. Main data were obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews with five informants from a Kazakhstani NGO Aman-Saulyk that engaged in health promotion practice. Aman-Saulyk collaborates with Soros Foundation Kazakhstan.

The results show that collaboration is successful. Input interaction, leadership, negotiation, well established communication, structures and clear roles create positive loops of interaction. Negative loops of interaction represented by communication and structure. The Mission was found to be a base for collaboration functioning. External factors such as economical and/or political situation in the country have strong influence on collaboration functioning.

The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning is proved as a pragmatic framework and a guide for analysis of this partnership.

*Keywords:* Donor-NGO partnership, partnership, collaboration, synergy, environment.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Need for collaboration**

Today, in the age of globalization, it is difficult to solve health related issues without help. It needs participation of different people with diverse backgrounds to benefit in the improvement and promotion of public health. “In an increasingly globalised world, none of the critical issues we are dealing with can be resolved within a solely national framework. All of them require cooperation, partnership and burden-sharing among Governments, ..., regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society”, stated Kofi Annan in his report (UN, 2001). “All countries must now deal with the international transfer of risks” (Frenk&Gómez-Dantés, 2002).

As new health care problems, needs, and trends arise, the need for collaborations between professionals within the whole world is increasing (Boswell&Cannon, 2005). Partnerships and collaborations are a common approach to solve problems and to reach better health outcomes. WHO calls for partnership year after year. In 1978 WHO encourages all countries in Alma-Ata Declaration: “All countries should cooperate in a spirit of partnership ... to ensure primary health care for all people since the attainment of health by people in any one country directly concerns and benefits every other country” (WHO, 1978). In 1986, in Ottawa Charter “the Conference urges all concerned to join them in their commitment to a strong public health alliance” (WHO, 1986). In 2005, in Bangkok Charter - “This ... Charter urges all stakeholders to join in a worldwide partnership to promote health, with both global and local engagement and action” (WHO, 2005). IUHPE (2007) considers that “appropriate alliances with professionals and academics from related fields that share the common goal of promoting health” are required.

Particularly in health promotion, participatory approaches including collaboration and partnership are well established. The formation of partnerships with public, private and NGOs is designed to create sustainable actions across sectors to address the determinants of health (Mittelmark et al, 2008).

Although coalitions, partnerships, and consortia are popular strategies for dealing with complex health and social problems, it is a very hard work to bring together diverse partners and to manage a successful collaboration. The process is complicated and dynamic and requires resources, structures, processes, activities, and actions to survive (Wandersman, Goodman&Butterfoss, 2005; Weiss, Anderson&Lasker, 2002). Besides that, it involves various collaboration-building tasks. They are “recruiting members, identifying lead agencies, generating resources, establishing decision-making procedures, fostering leadership, building the capacity of members to participate”, etc (Zakocs&Edwards, 2006).

### **1.2. Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan – Aman-Saulyk partnership**

This study explores Donor-NGO partnership functioning. As donor organisation is the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan, and as a local NGO is Aman-Saulyk. The NGO, Aman-Saulyk (AS), is located in Almaty (Alma-Ata), Kazakhstan. It was created in May 2007 in order to find solutions for the most pressing social issues. AS carries out conferences and round tables on the most acute problems of the various categories of citizens, provides health education of civil society (through the media, at meetings, etc.), improves quality of life of the population by improving social determinants of health in order to achieve own objectives (Aman-Saulyk, 2009). Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan (SFK) is a member of the international network of Soros Foundations functioning in more than 60 countries around the world. It is a non-governmental non-profit organization that works to promote democracy and civil society development in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Open Society Institute (OSI) established SFK in September 1995. Since the beginning of its activities in Kazakhstan, SFK has granted more than 50 million US dollars to promote open society development in the country. SFK works to promote partnerships with NGOs, donors, and government for a “more tolerant, active society and responsible, tolerant government” (Soros Foundation, 2009). This collaboration began in September 2007 from the project “Drug Supply”. The collaboration is still an ongoing process.

Research question:

***How do Donor-NGO partnerships work in Kazakhstan from a local NGO point of view?***

- a. What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that promote synergy?*
- b. What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that inhibit synergy?*
- c. What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that result in antagony?*

## **2. Background**

What makes some partnerships to succeed and others to fail? From the existing literature it was discovered that even though some information exists, details of how and why specific health-based partnerships are formed, decision-making processes, accountability, and, most importantly, effectiveness, are rare in the public health literature (Gupta et al, 2002). As partnerships have been widely employed in the health care arena, and have existed at the local, state and national levels for several decades, evidence and monitors of good practice are increasingly required for their effectiveness, more evidence and less rhetoric on collaboration in the context of health care was recommended (El Ansari, Phillips&Hammick, 2001; Zahner, 2005). Lasker, Weiss and Miller (2001) regret that the established frameworks do not recognize the mechanism which makes partnerships to achieve more than individuals and organizations by themselves alone. Furthermore, only a small minority of studies conceptualised success in terms of the outcomes of partnerships, and only a few investigated whether specific partnerships had produced successful outcomes and the results were ambiguous even in these (Dowling, Powell&Glendinning, 2004).

### **2.1. Partnerships**

A partnership is “a formal alliance of organizations, groups and agencies that have come together for a common goal” (El Ansari, Phillips&Hammick, 2001), or shortly “it is a negotiated outcome among partners” (Brinkerhoff J., 2002a). Interorganisational relationships demonstrating “a high degree of mutuality and reliance upon and maintenance of respective organization identities” can be assumed as partnerships (Armistead, Pettigrew&Aves, 2007). Partnership is seen as a more efficient and effective way of achieving goals (Johnson&Wilson, 2006). It is also suggested that organizations form partnerships because they can build on their comparative advantages and distributions of labour, build up integrated and win-win solutions to problems, and develop the public good in a sustainable way by decision-making processes, in addition, actors have something unique to offer, whether this concerns resources, skills, relationships, or consent (Brinkerhoff J., 2002a). The purposes could be also knowledge sharing, operational response to some issues, and advocacy (Lindenberg, 2001).

Nevertheless, most commentators have concluded that there is no one clear, uncontested definition of what comprises a partnership, and there is unquestionably some confusion about terms relating to partnership within the literature (Armistead, Pettigrew&Aves, 2007; Miller&Ahmad, 2000; Glendinning 2002; Powell&Glendinning 2002; Dowling, Powell&Glendinning, 2004). Partnership literature represents ‘methodological anarchy and definitional chaos’ (Ling, 2000). There are some similar terms to partnership, such as collaboration, cooperation, and joint working. Some scholars (El Ansari, Phillips&Hammick, 2001) suggest that there are subtle differences between them, while others presume they are synonymous and interchangeable (Miller&Ahmad, 2000; Dowling, Powell&Glendinning, 2004). In addition, some authors for the purposes of their work notify readers that they use these words as synonyms (El Ansari, Phillips&Hammick, 2001). For the purpose of this work, it was preferred to side with latter and assume that terms collaboration, partnership and coalition are interchangeable.



### 2.1.1. Donor-NGO partnership

In the international development arena, partnership is both a core element in programs to improve the delivery of key goods and services in poor and transitioning countries, and a frequently applied descriptor of the relationship between external funders of those programs and the organizations or groups in the countries involved in carrying them out (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004). Northern/Western partners play a crucial role in facilitating transnational advocacy networks, which in turn are able to strengthen significantly local NGOs' capacities to modify and shape local political discourse. This facilitates the establishing of a global civil society (Henderson, 2002).

Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff (2004) states that this type of partnerships is interesting because of several reasons:

1. The quality and success of NGOs relationships with donors influence the success of assistance in distributing worldwide development.
2. It is necessary to evaluate Donor–NGO partnerships, since there is doubt in their value.
3. Donor–NGO partnerships reflect concerns related to other intersectoral partnerships.

Until the 1980s many Northern NGOs (NNGO) usually implemented own 'development' projects. However, this implementation approach has changed to one in which local 'partner' organisations are recognized and do most of the work while Northern NGOs fill a funding and organisational support role. In addition, many donor organizations from the North started funding Southern NGOs (SNGO) directly, so the role of NNGOs as "project-implementers" became irrelevant. Some of NNGOs became donors and started to guide and finance projects, rather than to implement them and to do all work themselves. They also began to identify their relationships with SNGOs in a new ways, like 'partnership', 'accompaniment' and 'capacity building'. But these terms were overused in almost all relationships in developmental projects

and became worth less (Ahmad, 2006). Many SNGOs prefer to call the NNGOs as "donors and funders operating in an inequitable environment" (Ahmad, 2006).

Through different debates, a move away from the traditional hierarchical patron–client relationship between donor and recipient partners towards a more balanced North–South power relationship was indicated. Some aid relationships were renamed into partnerships. In such relationships, recipient partners are granted more ownership and equality in stating their development strategies (Bontebal, 2008). Donors focused attention on learning how to make partnerships work better, expanding funding policies to target partnership, and/or adding staff to deal with NGOs through new programs and activities (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004).

#### 2.1.2. Collaborations with NGOs in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan "community development initiatives tend to be donor or government driven and lack of decentralisation to date restricts opportunities for partnership between community based organisations, NGOs and local authorities" (Earle et al.2004). Since independence, 1991, Kazakhstan has received considerable assistance from external donors in a broad variety of areas to support the move to a market-based economy and minimize the decline in people's welfare due to the reform process. International organizations provided grants in order to support social initiatives. Grants included not only money but also trainings and other educational activities. It led to a growth of local NGOs in Kazakhstan (Franz, Shvetsova& Shamshildayeva, 2002). However, from 1999 withdrawal of international support began. Donor organisations required experienced partners who could speak foreign language to communicate with them and who adopted their bureaucratic procedures (Earle et al.2004). Hence, many weak and "unserious" NGOs stopped functioning. On the other hand, only strong NGOs were able to survive and to make a difference towards democratic development of the country (Brudney&Nezhina, 2005). However, NGOs in Almaty have greater access to foreign donor

support (grant and training programs), and tend to be more mature than the sector in general, and occupy a discernible niche. As such, they have more opportunities to boast developed internal management structures, professional staff, and an appropriate technical base with which to conduct their activities. The vast majority of other NGOs are either entirely dependent on grants from foreign organizations or exist on informal support from local residents and businesses. This ongoing reliance on foreign donors is problematic for several reasons. Foreign donors are limited in number, which creates a competitive, rather than cooperative dynamic within the sector. It hinders NGOs' ability to plan and operate in the mid- to long-term (USAID, 2001). However, as Earle et al (2004) noticed, local NGOs due to above-mentioned situation adapted to address a greater number of ideas and issues with fewer resources.

## **2.2. Models of Partnership**

Partnerships can operate at a number of levels: from very pragmatic to transformative relationships. On the pragmatic level the parties come together to work on a single short-term task. On the level of long-term transformative relationships, it becomes difficult to imagine working in any other way (Miller&Ahmad, 2000). Mackintosh (1992) identifies three such models of partnership. The first is the synergy model, in which the sum is greater than the parts, the outcome is better than that produced by all those concerned but working separately. Second is the budget enlargement model, designed to gain access to additional funds. Finally, there is the transformative model that creates innovation and change amongst the partners as well as bringing about a different outcome for the service recipient. Snape&Stewart (1996, in Miller&Ahmad, 2000) identify three types of partnership that closely match those of Mackintosh: facilitating, coordinating and implementing partnerships. Facilitating partnerships are concerned with managing long standing, highly problematic, contentious and/or politically sensitive issues, where there are real issues of power at stake and trust and solidarity are essential for success. Coordinating partnerships are found where stakeholders have other priorities, but are

concerned with the management and implementation of less contentious issues and where there is a broad agreement on priorities. Corbin (2006) differentiates three types of partnership outputs: synergistic, additive, and antagonistic outcomes. 1) Additive outcomes are outcomes that have not been enhanced at all by the partnership interaction. The partners gain nothing from the interaction and they produce what they would have produced anyway. 2) Synergy is the combining of inputs through interaction that produces outcomes that could not have been produced by those inputs separately. 3) Antagonistic outcomes occur when the partnership interaction has a draining effect. Antagonistic output is substantially less than what the inputs would have produced without the partnership process. That is, something was lost in the process. Antagonistic output manifests as no output at all often (Corbin, 2006).

### **2.3. Synergy**

Thus, from above-mentioned models it is seen that synergy is the most desirable but difficult to reach outcome for partnerships. Lasker, Weiss and Miller. (2001) define synergy as the extent to which the involvement/contribution of different partners improves the ability of the partners to be creative, holistic, realistic, take action, be accountable, respect stakeholders' needs and obtain community support. They surmise that the key determinants of partnership synergy include resources, partner characteristics, relationships among partners, characteristics of the partnership arrangement and factors outside the partnership (environmental context).

Synergy is the power to join the standpoints, resources, and skills of a group of people and organizations. It is not just an exchange of resources, the group creates something new and valuable together by combining the individual viewpoints, resources, and skills of the partners,- "a whole that is greater than the sum of its individual parts". Synergy is manifested in the thinking and actions that result from collaboration and in the relationship of partnerships to the broader community (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001).

So what is required to achieve such a desirable outcome as synergy?

## 2.4. Partnership inputs

Basic inputs for synergy are financial resources and intangible capital. By combining these resources in various ways, partners create something new and valuable that exceeds what they can accomplish alone. Many partnerships highlight the significance of money, equipment, space, and goods, such as computers, books (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Most scholars and practitioners support the idea that partnership work requires “additional start-up investments in terms of time, energy, and money” (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004). Adequacy in the types of resources is important for realizing high levels of partnership synergy (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001).

Some of scholars assume characteristics of the partnership mission and goals as the most important in order to unite partners and to achieve synergy in collaboration. For instance, partners should develop realistic goals that are widely understood and supported (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001), mutual understanding of issues, a greater sharing of goals and a shift of decision-making authority and control of programme sources to the beneficial partner (Bontebal, 2008). One of the important factors that facilitate a positive relationship is “the strong commitment by all partners to the project’s goals and mission. The mission statement helps to establish a common purpose beyond the particular interests of any participating organization. The shared mission is a significant factor cited by the community agencies as cultivating the partnership” (Merzel et al., 2007).

Alter and Hage (1993) assume that “collaborative action depends on the perceived need for collaboration and the willingness to collaborate. Bazzoli et al. (1997) add “the ability of organizations to collaborate. In addition, one of the strengths of collaborating is the ability to bring different types of information, connections to particular organizations and people together. For example, decision makers, stakeholders, target population, funding organizations, etc (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001).

Partners in collaborations are resources themselves also. They use skills, connections, and credibility in order to reach the goal of collaboration and to obtain external funding and support. Partnerships must be able to recruit and retain partners who can provide necessary resources in order to achieve high levels of synergy (Lasker, Weiss& Miller, 2001).

## **2.5. Input Interaction**

### 2.5.1. Negotiation and equity

Finding a truly mutual goal requires negotiation and diplomacy. Often negotiation consists of “positional bargaining: each player takes a position, argues for it, and then makes concessions, which is time consuming and inefficient and endangers relationships” (Plamping, Gordon&Pratt, 2000).

The opportunity to participate and influence equally means that each actor can more easily protect its organization identity and, hence, the efficiency, effectiveness, and synergistic rewards of the partnership. Organization identity is the impetus for initiating a partnership strategy. Mutuality can reinforce organization identity. The opportunity to participate and influence equally means that each actor can more easily protect its organization identity and, hence, the efficiency, effectiveness, and synergistic rewards of the partnership. At the outset, no one organization can understand the implications of its or the partnership’s actions for members’ organization identity. Mutuality at least affords partner organizations the opportunity to consider and explain these implications and potentially defend their distinctive advantages, skills, and legitimacy — all of which are necessary for the partnership’s success. Mutuality also implies that the activities partners undertake lead to outcomes both partners seek to achieve (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004). Brinkerhoff (2002a,b) suggests that there is a complex set of norms, values and practices embodied in mutuality, for example: ‘horizontal coordination and accountability and equality in decision making’, ‘jointly agreed purpose and values and mutual

trust and respect', 'mutual dependence respective rights and responsibilities', commitment to goals.

### 2.5.2 Leadership

Weiss et al. (2002) in a study in the health sector in the USA, identified leadership as the most important factor in motivating synergy in partnerships.

One of the key challenges of collaboration is that the type of leadership needed to achieve synergy is not the type of leadership most sectors and professions are producing (Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 2001; Alexander et al, 2001). Working in partnership compared to single organizations is more complex and confusing. Inter-organizational relationships can be horizontal as well as hierarchical; there is doubt about who leads and who follows; organizations rather than individuals within organizations can represent leadership. (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007; Alexander et al, 2001). Leadership in partnerships must be relieving, because 'if leadership can't shift then no organisational process can succeed' (Kaplan, 2002).

Carley (2000) points to shared agenda-setting and management activities; 'institutional space' for different agencies to be involved in their own terms and at their own speed; and attention to the interaction between partners with different cultures and structures, and how these might need to adapt to shape more effective partnerships (Armistead, Pettigrew & Aves, 2007). Partnerships need boundary-spanning leaders who understand and appreciate partners' different perspectives, can bridge their diverse cultures, and are comfortable sharing ideas, resources, and power (Alter & Hage, 1993).

Effective partnership leaders look beyond the narrow interests of their own organization, the interests of the partnership itself, and focus mainly on the needs and priorities of the community as a whole. Staff leaders can bring to the partnership a fresh viewpoint and awareness of trends, generate enthusiasm and creativity and keep members engaged (Alexander et al, 2001). Alexander et al (2001) differentiate types of leaders in partnership. One of them is "situational leader" who plays an important role in making up the partnership's course and

activity as an expert in specific issues. They also give an example of such leadership: a member who represents a community clinic may put forth great leadership on issues concerning access to primary care but play only a supporting role in fundraising. The most effective leadership in partnership identifies "the need for appropriate balance—between power sharing and control, between process and results, between continuity and change, and between interpersonal trust and formalized procedures" (Alexander et al, 2001).

Leaders in partnerships need "strong relationship skills to foster respect, trust, inclusiveness, and openness among partners" (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). They also have to create an environment where different opinions can be heard. Leadership should successfully handle conflicts among partners. Ability to unite partners' different ideas, to motivate and to inspire partners, and to combine effectively partners' diverse resources is also required (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001).

## **2.6. Environment**

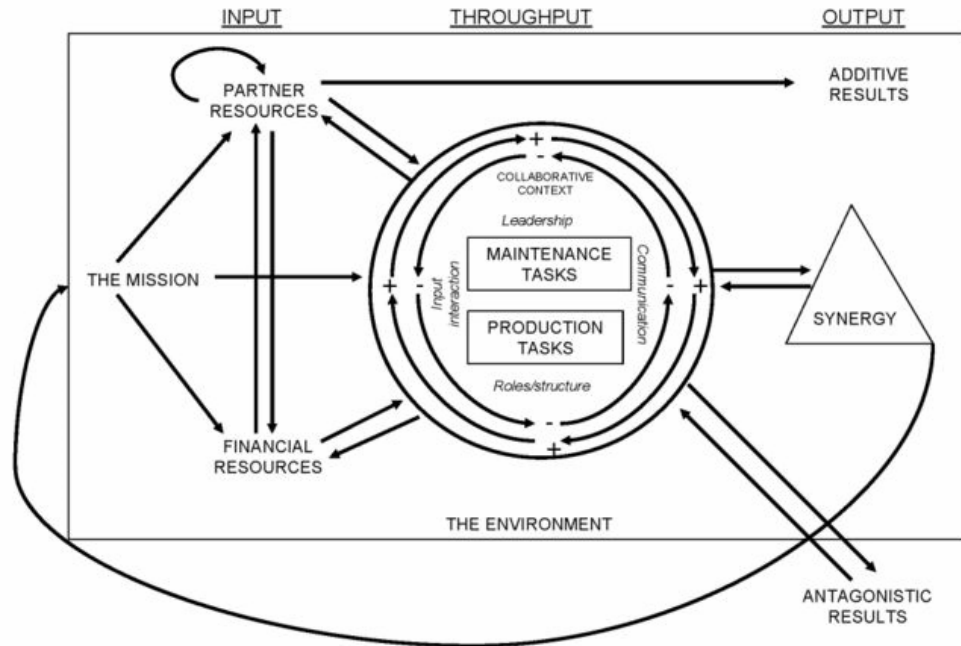
Besides inputs, leadership, equity, etc, achieving synergy in partnership can be affected by "environment". It is external factors such as "economic conditions, political climate, culture and ecology" (Ahmad, 2006). Environmental stability gives greater confidence in establishing and maintaining partnership structures and procedures (Brinkerhoff J., 2002a).

## **2.7. The Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning for analysis**

It is a new model that was developed by Hope Corbin (2006). Using Corbin's (2006) definition of the model, it is "a systems model of understanding collaborative interactions".



### BERGEN MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE FUNCTIONING



According to Corbin (2006), in a system there are input, throughput and output. Inputs of partner resources, financial resources and a unifying mission enter the collaboration context (the throughput part of the system). Within the collaborative context, positive and negative cycles of interaction affect and are affected by the interplay of the different inputs, the leadership, communication and the roles and structure within the collaboration. It is in this context of positive and negative cycles that tasks, both maintenance and production, are worked on.

There are three possibilities for output:

1) The collaborative context has no impact at all on the work, partners accomplish no more than they would have on their own—the output is additive ( $2+2=4$ ).

2) The collaboration is successful in combining partner, financial resources and harnessing the motivating power of its mission to create something that was not otherwise possible—thus, synergy was achieved ( $2+2=5$ ).

3) The collaboration does not accomplish its goals; time, energy and money were wasted—the results are antagonistic ( $2+2=0$ ) (Corbin, 2006).

In addition to evidence of this model's usefulness in a case study of The Global Programme for Health Promotion Effectiveness (GPHPE) (Corbin, 2006), the BMCF has proven a useful framework for a collaboration of NGOs working to influence alcohol policy in Norway (Endresen, 2007) and an inter-departmental collaboration within a large teaching hospital (Corwin, 2009). Thus, a contribution to the utility of this model could be done during the research.

### **3. The case**

In qualitative research, we have to select the “right” cases, groups and materials in a somehow defined way (Flick, 2007). There are several sampling strategies in qualitative research: convenience, purposive, snowball, and quota sampling (Berg, 2004). The most appropriate for this case was purposive sampling, because the impetus was to explore NGO that has experience of working in partnership with the donor organization, and that concerning public health issues. The Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan and USAID are main major organizations that support Kazakhstani NGOs in the health field. When lists with partnering NGOs from above-mentioned organizations were received, information about NGOs was checked in the Internet. NGO Aman-Sauilyk was chosen because of great results it has achieved during the rather short period of existence. Email was sent to the NGO with the proposal to participate in the research. Time and settings of interviews were discussed via email after approval of participation. Thus, at the first stage the purposive sampling technique was applied, that was finished by convenience (“availability sample”) sampling (Berg, 2004).

NGO Aman-Sauilyk was created in May 2007 in order to find solutions of the most pressing social issues. The mission of the NGO is to develop dialog between state ministries, NGOs and lay people, which represent different social classes, in order to solve together mutual

problems (source: documentation). To achieve the objectives NGO is implementing the following activities: carrying out conferences and «round tables» on the most acute problems of the various categories of citizens, health education of civil society (through the media, at meetings, etc.), to improve quality of life of the population by improving social determinants of health (Aman-Sauilyk, 2009). For two years Aman-Sauilyk was held four public hearings, during which state projects and programs were analyzed. One of the greatest achievements of the Fund was the organization of a hotline for citizens on issues related to medical care. From this project partnership between Aman-Sauilyk and SFK began. Only 9 months of 2008 in Almaty alone, received 1386 applications. Comparing with Ministry of Health for the year 2007 throughout the country received only 1387 applications. With the support of the Soros Foundation in 6 regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan in November, 2008 Aman-Sauilyk introduced hotlines for drug security. The problems that seriously impact on health are: internal and external migration, unemployment, growth in the share of socially vulnerable layers of population, aging population, poor quality drinking water, poor quality food, poor environment, high accident, the inaccessibility of most modern medical technology, lack of health and social rehabilitation. Reports are sent to the Government Fund, the Ministry of Health, and anti-corruption committee (Association of Pharmeconomical Investigations, 2009).

Besides partners in Kazakhstan, Aman-Sauilyk is partnering with NGOs from Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The NGO is also a member of such organizations as NGO Confederation in Almaty, Independent Association of businessmen in Kazakhstan and others.

The purpose of this study is to obtain knowledge on the processes and factors through which SFK-AS collaboration is functioning.

Research question:

***How do Donor-NGO partnerships work in Kazakhstan from a local NGO point of view?***

- a. *What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that promote synergy?*
- b. *What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that inhibit synergy?*
- c. *What are the ways of working, systems and social processes that result in antagonism?*

## **4. Method**

### **4.1. The case study method**

Following the methodology used by Corbin (2006) qualitative case study was implemented. The need of this type of research methodology also aroused from the research questions (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2009). In the qualitative research a research question is broad open-ended, comparing to close-ended in quantitative, and begins with words *what* or *how*, comparing to *why* in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2009). Particularly case study inquiry was chosen because the researcher wanted to explore in depth a process of collaborative functioning. “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 1998). The case in this particular study is bounded by setting, time and activity (Creswell, 2009). The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003). So, case study as other qualitative researches takes place in natural settings (Creswell, 2009).

### **4.2. Data collection**

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence (documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, physical artifacts). Any findings or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information

(Yin, 2003). During the data collection period documentation, direct observations, and semi-structured interviews were collected.

#### 4.2.1. Document data

Except for studies of preliterate societies, documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic. This type of information can take many forms and should be the object of explicit data collection plans (Yin, 2003). Newspaper clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media were analyzed. It was mainly information about projects that were implemented by the Case through partnership with other organizations. From the Internet site of the Case there were obtained some background information such as mission and objectives of the NGO, experience, projects. Administrative documents gave information about partners and aims of partnership, rules and obligations of the parties. All documents were available only in Russian and some of them in Kazakh languages. Document data were used in order to prepare for interviews and to compare data obtained from interviews with document data.

#### 4.2.2. Observation data

*Direct observation* can involve observations of meetings, sidewalk activities, factory work, classrooms, and the like (Yin, 2003). The researcher made observation for 2 weeks prior to interviews in order to understand more interactions between members of the NGO and to find out who can give information about collaborative functioning between the NGO and SFK.

#### 4.2.3. Interview data

It is one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 2003).

The qualitative interview is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world. Interviews allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words (Kvale, 1996).

There is no common procedure for interview research. Interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art. The varieties of research interviews approach the spectrum of human conversations (Kvale, 1996). In-depth semi-structured interviews with interview guide were applied.

### **4.3. Participants**

Participants were selected during the observational period. There were five participants, which were stakeholders of the NGO, project managers and staff members, those who can give the most relevant information. In the NGO the staff consists only from women, therefore all participants were women.

### **4.4. Access**

All participants were asked about interview face-to-face during observational period. Only one participant could give an appointment, while others were interviewed without any schedule. The researcher was in the NGO every day during working time for one month. First two weeks were observation period, during last two weeks interviews were provided when participants had time for that. It was the best solution for participants. All of them individually were told about the purpose of the research.

### **4.5. Interview guide**

For the interview data collection semi-structured interview guide was developed, according to the Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning (Corbin, 2006). However, the guide was not followed scrupulously. It was used according to participants' individuality. Nevertheless, all main points were explored with each participant. The guide was not tested in pilot interview, and probably it weakened the richness of the interview data. Participants understood some of questions differently. Some questions needed clearance.

#### **4.6. Interview settings**

The interviews were conducted from July 7, 2009 till August 15, 2009. All of them were hold once during working time and lasted 30-60 min. Interviews were recorded on the tape recorder Olympus Digital Wave Player. The tape recorder functioned well, the quality of the data are good. The interview 5 was interrupted three times because of the phone calls and by colleagues. The participants were asked before interviews to allow using the tape recorder. Nobody denied. The participants saw when recording began and stopped.

#### **4.7. Data analysis**

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data. Data analysis is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study (Creswell, 2009).

##### Transcription from tape to text

On this stage of analysis interviews were transcribed from tape to text. All participants got code names in terms of privacy. During transcribing speech language was transformed to written Russian language.

##### From Russian text to English

The second stage in the data analysis was translation of the transcripts from Russian into English, because all interviews were hold in Russian. All efforts were made in order to prevent language bias. So translation was not made word by word but the aim was to get the meaning of the interviews. Translations were discussed with and revised by supervisor.

##### From text to results

At this stage Creswell (2009) recommends to begin detailed analysis with a coding process. It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences into categories, and labeling those categories with a term. Coding process was made together with supervisor. The most important quotes were chosen and labeled with terms related to the BMCF. None of computer programs were used.

#### **4.8. Ethical considerations**

Researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies. Researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that may reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems (Creswell, 2009). Moral research behavior is more than ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it involves the person of the researcher, his or her sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and actions: "Clearly, researchers need both cases and principles from which to learn more about ethical behavior. More than this, they need two attributes: the sensitivity to identify an ethical issue and the responsibility to feel committed to acting appropriately in regard to such issues"(Eisner&Peshkin, 1990, quoted in Kvale, 1996).

The interviews were hold in comfortable for participants settings and in appropriate for them time. They were acknowledged that they can withdraw the research anytime they want. During data analysis and interpretation each participant was coded. The researcher does not pretend to the ownership of the data, which will be deleted after 2 years.

#### **5.0. Results**

Main results from the collected data will be introduced according to Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning.



## 5.1. Inputs

According to the model and data collected there are three main inputs in partnership functioning: the mission, partner resources and financial resources. Each of them will be presented in turn.

### 5.1.1. The Mission

The Mission in the BMCF is the purpose of the particular partnership, i.e. why particular organizations have agreed to collaborate. Every organization when established has own unique mission and own goals. But for the partnership they choose a goal, which appeals to the interests and missions of both organizations. For instance, AS and SFK were united by their desire to build democratic society, but SFK wants to do it in the whole world and AS – only in Kazakhstan. Following quote shows it:

*We began to work (with SFK) with project on Monitoring... We saw on the website of SFK that there was a grant for this project and we were interested in it at once because [the purpose of the project] is a part of [our] mission. (I-2)*

The mission should be understood by both partners similarly as informant I-5 says.

*You might think that SFK wants to study drug supply and monitoring, but behind that is a big idea – to build the democratic society in Kazakhstan. I see THIS idea. I see not just an idea regarding drug supply, but, also, (I see) people who can [build democratic society]. I think it unites us. When SFK wants to make patients as people who lay claim to their rights, I see the idea of building the public society... We with SFK have one idea. (I-5)*

Maybe it was mentioned because they speak on different languages, they have different backgrounds. On the other hand, similar understanding of one word could be an issue regardless of language barrier.

It was interesting to observe that importance of mission was mentioned at least once by each interviewee. Some of informants spoke about the importance of the Mission several times in different parts of interviews. For instance, in while defining of the collaboration or partnership:

*In my opinion, collaboration is a mutual work; it is to solve mutual tasks and to achieve mutual goals. (I-1)*

Informant I-2 is totally agree with previous informant:

*Partnership is when for one problem we solve the same questions together. (I-2)*

So as I-4 does:

*[Partnership] is established connections, when all partners put their own efforts to achieve the certain goal. (I-4)*

Informant I-3 explains that to understand the mission similar by both partners is main achievement of collaboration with SFK:

*The main (achievement) is that we found the touch points and we understand that we do the one job. We have one goal! (I-3)*

Interviewee I-5 sees the mission as the main condition to be a partner:

*I see myself as a partner when, for example, SFK has a task to change the world into the democratic society, and I help them to achieve this aim, this is a partnership. I*

*also want to do this and we work together. I am not a poor beggar, but I assist [them] to achieve an aim of [theirs]...(I-5)*

and explains why:

*The main [in partnership] is the idea, ideology, mutual interest. If you see that the core is one then no barriers will stop you. But when there is no such belief, no such core, you can invest billions, but there won't be any result. It is unequivocal. This belief also plays the main role, it appears from the idea. Such ideological belief and ideological understanding play the basis of everything. (I-5)*

The mission is obviously uniting partners. They should be interested in the mission. But the mission should have several characteristics in addition to mutual understanding. For example, it should be achievable:

*Achievement of goals [is important], donors should not set impossible goals, which cannot be achieved. (I-4)*

Interviewee I-4 mentioned that the mission should serve ethical ideals:

*...The goal must be good, because even gangsters may collaborate. (I-4)*

Even though there were so much data on the mission, there is also such input as financial resources.

### **5.1.2. Financial Resources**

Donor-NGO partnerships in general differ from other types of partnerships. They divided roles from the beginning: Donors provide financial support, while local NGOs implement

projects. It is common that in developing countries local organizations do not have money to do something. This case is, generally, not an exception in opinion of some interviewees.

*We try to find the actual questions; we know how to do that. Because very experienced doctors work here [in AS] and they know how to do it more optimally. But as you understand, we do not have money. We are not a commercial organization and one problem often appears - where to get the money from. The idea is good but we need money to implement it. And then the organizations like SFK come in sight, and (they give) real help (by financing us). (I-3)*

Interviewee I-5 is totally agreed with interviewee I-3:

*SFK invested the considerable amount of money through which we were able to launch a hotline in six regions during six months.... We held seven public hearings according to its results. We gathered the reports and sent them to the MOH (Ministry of Health). SFK financed this project. (I-5)*

But some of data showed that even in such types of partnership both sides make financial inputs:

*The part of resources was from SFK, some from other sources. There was our input also. (I-1)*

Moreover, the same informant assumes that financial input was equal:

*I think that AS made a big input in this project. In every project you need invest at least 20% of own financial resources. Besides (that), AS was looking for other resources in order to do everything as we wanted - to widen (a project), to make publications. We would not be able to inform so many people – 3500, and we would not get feedback (from people). So, to speak about money, I think it was equal input. (I-1)*

Probably, informant I-1 consider term “equal” regarding finances as equal value of investing money for donor organization and local NGO.

Informant I-5 considers that it is essential for partnership functioning sufficient amounts of financial resources.

*Generally, in my opinion, the aim of SFK is to finance building of civil society. And I see that it's (SFK) money are directed to it. I am impressed with that. First of all I like their (money) amounts. They give a tea spoon three times a day, it means they really measure. This is also very important. (I-5)*

From the data it seems that such input as Financial Resources was not a problem. AS had enough money for own activities, particular for production tasks. But what about maintenance activities?! Interviewee I-4 considers that for maintenance tasks they have to pay themselves:

*From theirs side the inputs are financial resources, theirs brains, which is human resources. From our side we invested material resources too: techniques', our salaries, we do not ask them to pay us the salary, to pay for our work time and even overtime. (I-4)*

### **5.1.3. Partner Resources**

Besides the mission input partner resources such as skills, time, partner values are vital prerequisite for productive partnership functioning. SFK as a donor organization gives not only financial resources, but also provides capacity building through education before projects implementation, so as during projects management:

*We do not receive just the funding, [specific colleague] and I took a course in the School of Budget, where we learnt main methods of budget analysis, discussed ... important(ce) and what aims they must work for. So right now we already can analyze*

*financial system of the Ministry of Health. So, they do not give just financial resources but also they educate us, help us in education process. (I-2)*

Informant I-1 agrees with informant I-2:

*First, even during the project planning (development) we had consultations. Secondly, they trained the people what should be done and how to do things before the project started... There is informational, legislation and consulting support all the time. (I-1)*

Besides education partners allocate own skills in order to improve communication between partners:

*For example [specific partner] is our permanent consultant, expert, advisor, etc... call it as you want. In addition there were communication inputs. S/he made a network for us; we communicate and work through it. We ask –s/he responds, ors/he asks – we respond. (I-4)*

Partner resources could be vital when organization decides to create partnership.

Informant I-3 describes SFK as kind, successful people. Great respect and admiration to partners are felt in these words:

*From international organizations we work just with SFK, because they develop ideas very successfully and positive help comes from them. We take off hat to them. They do many good things, support good projects, for example, “Budget Transparency”, project on medical supplementation and others. They work on problems of public health and patient rights...*

*I like that the SFK itself matches to its name: Open Society Institution. This is the main structure of SFK. I like that they want to involve the people in the civil society. They*

*find the concrete use for their principles. I think good people work there, clear minded, non bureaucratic! They always answer on our questions as soon as possible; they find some optimal, optimistic solution. They do not condescend; they are not too formal, not too bureaucratic. I think they are good nice people. (I-3)*

AS in turn shares own experience and knowledge with other less experienced partners. In spite of that AS is just 2 years old, people working there have great experience in field of public health. Almost all of them worked in state organizations and NGOs long time before they organized AS. Informant I-2 describes why they want to share own skills with other partners:

*I think that the reason for [partnership] is that the organization itself is quite strong. It is strong because we have a professional staff with a great experience. But when we work with younger organizations, we want to share our experience, organizational-leading guidelines in order to make them strong too. And then when they are strong too we can solve different problems together. I think it will be more interesting then... We try to involve and activate those NGOs which have a potential, but do not have an opportunity to work on this level. (I-2)*

Besides skills, knowledge and experience data show importance of such human values as friendship, trust, honesty, openness, respect, responsibility and kindness. They want to see partners as friends:

*It must be friendship [in a partnership]. (I-4)*

Informant I-5 describes ideal partnership with donor organization as friendly, trustworthy relationships:

*When you give your money for [project], you give [money] to people whom you trust and to people who can realize this task. This is a partnership.*

*S/he does not throw the money to me like “take it, you poor”, but sees a friend and like-minded person, like a person, who is ready to complete the idea and completes it. (I-5)*

Honesty and trust are seen as basis for partnership by some of interviewees:

*When we have mutual understanding, we can [establish] trust [in our relationships]. Trust produces everything else. We understand that we found very good partner [in the name of SFK]. (I-3)*

Besides that responsibility in work is also needed:

*I think that first of all this is a responsibility to complete the duties which you accept as a partner and honesty during the collaboration and professionalism of course. (I-2)*

Informants want open and transparent relationships with partners. They speak about it probably because of experience of partnership with government.

*Honesty, trust, openness, , one idea that moves us, to find a joint point of contact, ability to speak openly about their ideas, debate, and after the decision is done, honestly fulfill the task, ... possibility to announce your position openly... All these is the basis for the partnership. (I-5)*

Informant I-1 even compares partners from SFK with people from government:

*People [from SFK] whom I was talking to are young; they studied abroad and speak English. They are very responsible in their work. It is easy to work with them, because they realize that they have no undercurrents. When we talk with the officials there is always someone whom they are depending on, they doubt if something is possible*



*or not, the chief will allow it or not. But these people (from SFK) know exactly what they have to do and how to do. It is so easy to work with them – I just send [a question] by email, we adjust it, and problems are solved. Everything is ok. (I-1)*

Informant I-2 describes relationships with SFK without any difficulties:

*There always was the mutual understanding to each other. Ethical relationships, respect. Everything goes perfect when we understand each other very well. Maybe they had the difficulties ... (laughs)(I-2)*

As it was mentioned in the Mission section, understanding of each other plays a crucial role in partnership. Not only mission should be understood similarly, but partners should understand each other in all terms:

*There was a great success that AS and SFK had a possibility to understand each other. (I-3)*

Sometimes it is needed negotiator between different partners. If one of partners will volunteer to be a negotiator then it will advance partnership functioning. So such quality as willingness to act as a negotiator between partners is required in some relationships. Informant I-5 has such quality:

*Partnerships sometimes must be multifaceted. For example, (partnership) is like a sandwich: there is one partner on the left side, and another on the right side, and I am in the middle if, for example they do not want to collaborate. I am like a bridge [between them]. When you join hands, you can complete many tasks. It is not necessary for them to hold each other; let me to be between them. There will come time when everything will be ok and they will be able to join their hands together [without me]. (I-5)*

In the opinion of informant I-1 it is required absence of some partner resources for partnership functioning. It gives interest to collaborate:

*Demand on consolidation of the resources, because somebody has something, others have something else...*

*Qualities needed for organizations are the opportunity to be interested in collaboration. For example, there was created the Union of Legal Persons and several NGOs came down to this work for collaboration on the patients' rights base. Everybody has different interests – diabetes, hemophilia, aged-people, but there is mutual problem – protection of patient rights... That is the mutual interest. (I-1)*

There are three main inputs in partnership: the mission, financial and partner resources. For the synergistic outcome these inputs should interact with each other. In addition there should be some processes held. Next section is about it.

## **5.2. Throughputs**

Throughputs are the processes which carried out within the partnership.

### **5.2.1. Input interaction.**

Inputs alone are not sufficient for effective partnership functioning. The mission, partner and financial resources interact with each other in order to reach the best possible output. The following quote shows it in an example of present case:

*On the project of “Budget transparency” I had trainings on the “Budget monitoring”. So, during this and others programs we achieved good-neighbourly, respectful relationships. I mean the tasks given by program, SFK, we understand as they do. And all resources invested in the project to be used to the full extend (potential) and*

*even more. Of course, we need consult, discuss, and make decisions on all stages (steps) for that purpose. Sometimes decisions can be quite unexpected and brave. (I-4)*

Partner-partner input interaction take place in SFK-AS partnership:

*When we arrange any activity we always invite them. I think, when they take part in our activities, they receive a benefit from it also. They always take part in hearings. I think here we have a mutual process. We learn and they learn too. When we were giving a report of our work, we were collecting the general information in order to get a general picture from the regions [of Kazakhstan]. During that time we established partnering relationships with many NGOs from those regions. We widened the area of interaction, made many friends, and SFK also, in my opinion, met other organizations which can work well and be responsible during work. (I-2)*

So, partners have mutual benefit from such type of input interaction.

Partner-finances input interaction is also take part in present case:

*And today the main achievement is probably that I began to see the PARTNER in the face of SFK and not just a person who just donates me the money and whom I depend on. I see [SFK] as the real partner who also wants to change something. This is very important position. And they also consider me as the partner. And I [consider] them [as a partner], not just as 'moneygivers'. It is very important position, do you understand?! It happened because if I needed just the money I would agree to all their terms. But when we show the teeth and say that something is not correct, and they began to listen to us and that redounds to theirs honor. I think this is also the achievement that we are becoming the partners. They are reliable and I think that our organization is reliable too. (I-5)*

## 5.2.2 Leadership

It is difficult to find any organization or collaboration without leaders. Leadership is a moving power. In Donor-NGO partnerships it is rather difficult to define a leadership. On the one hand, there is Donor organization who identifies mission, allocate financial and other resources for it and provide guidance during project implementation. On the other hand, there is local NGO who takes leadership in project implementation. In addition, there could be a person or a group of people, who connect these organizations and influence communication processes between them. Probably, leadership is like a challenge cup. In different time and circumstances different people take a responsibility to be a leader.

In the present study there were several examples when different people had a leading role when it was required. First example was probably a milestone in AS-SFK collaboration establishment:

*Initially we wanted to make a hot line, but they wanted us to make a survey with questionnaires for monitoring... So (specific colleague) defended the hotline very much (was tenacious of hotline). SFK did not agree for a long time, but finally they agreed. (I-1)*

Almost all informants told about this case during interviews. It was a symbol of equality between AS and SFK, which empowered AS.

Next quote shows SFK as leaders:

*I think all cases are special, because we did not have such experience. It is the first organization which holds your hand and walks with you, helps, observes during whole project. They guide us... They guide us in terms of general direction. Many other organizations just give money and that is all. But SFK is different. They are always interested in our life, not only in project but also in our work, in other problems, in other*

*projects, which they are probably not dealing with. I think they get some ideas from our meetings, our relationships. So in my opinion it is mutual growth of potential (I-4)*

Through positive and smart leadership organizations can achieve very good relationships:

*We have informal relationships, without any fear of them as a donor organization. [We have] absolutely normal human relationships. (I-3)*

### **5.2.3 Structure, roles and procedures**

This section describes formal procedures, structures and roles. Usually, every organization has particular structure and separation of the roles between partners, because it helps to organize and manage work. This case shows that organizations divided roles, established rules from the beginning. Informant I-1 thinks that it is basic prerequisite for collaborative functioning:

*there are many terms [for successful partnership]: mutual development of the rules during the collaboration and to follow these rules afterwards. (I-1)*

The same informant explains it in detail:

*For this project AS recruited 6 NGOs to carry it out. And all the work goes in accordance with the treaty and the specific plan. Everything is clearly written down in the frame of the project – the timeline, the funding, maintenance activities, the resources required. For example, as you saw today, when we are planning to conduct any event we do it together. When we hold public hearings, advertised, organized a hotline, organized seminars for the executors from the regions, we always invited representatives of the SFK here in order them to see that we really do it.*

*We make accountings in time. There are attached all necessary documents to confirm, lists with contact details, photos of participants. So everything is very transparent and can be easily verified - if it was held or was not, how well it was done, etc. Even the things like publications, advertisements in newspapers we coordinate in working order, because it is written in the rules clearly. Therefore, I think the SFK's methodological approach is right - when you sign the contract with clear rules, the logical frameworks of actions, graphics and responsibilities. Everything is written down. This is what we do not have in state projects. (I-1)*

It is not easy to be responsible and to follow all the rules. It can be time consuming and tiresome:

*AS does what was planned but always gets (SFK) know about the process. Every month AS makes the periodical accountings, so they always monitor our activities. They do not just give money and neglect (the project) afterwards. Every month we report our activities. For example, we wrote letters to the Ministry, or Public Health authorities, to the Quality Control Group, and so on regarding people's complaints and references. It is used for a monitoring of financial resources. And our activities, all these (above mentioned) letters, lists, publications are sent every month also. We make not just a list, but we include number of the newspaper, number of the page, and so on, we even scan (the article copies) and send it to them. So they have all information what they need. Of course it is laborious (hard) work, coordinators have to deal with these reporting, and they are adhered to the reporting. But if you want something to be done, you have to do it. (I-1)*

It is obvious from the previous quote that formal roles are separated. Each organization, partner, is getting done its part of the task. However, they always keep in touch, get feedback

from each other, and work together on intercross fields. It brings the involvement of all partners and motivates to improve.

*...We consult, discuss at all stages. We invite them on our meetings, seminars and trainings, which we have with other partners, and they invite us too. We discuss how to work on the project at all stages. (I-4)*

Partition of the roles from the very beginning is the basis for beneficial partnership in informant's I-3 opinion:

*We do one job. But we do it through the organization and they finance us. I think this is the most optimal alliance. (I-3)*

Nevertheless, there is still place for negotiation:

*They analyze, make decisions, monitor the process, and so on. Our job is to introduce interesting projects, describe and defend them. But when it is necessary we can stand fast. For example, last year when we had a project on drug supply they called us and said: "we like your project but we have one term – you have to change the hot line into questionnaires. But we ... defended our point... and they accepted it. They said: 'ok'. (I-3)*

It is really impressive when partners can negotiate. Informant I-2 gives more examples on negotiation:

*Personally, I liked the understanding... We have a lot of other work to do and we did not catch the schedule. So when we moved the report schedule, I liked that there was such a good understanding from [specific partners]. They made advances and moved the schedules. And even now, for instance: they agreed with us that the conference must be moved to September. Yes, according to the schedule we should have arranged [the*

*conference] in July. Essentially we could do that, it was possible, but what will be the effect and the significance [of the conference]?! The reason was that many experts and scientists are on vacations as summer is a holiday period, and chances are that the conference would not be so effective and interesting. And I liked that SFK made advances for us. (I-2)*

Freedom and negotiation in formal structure give a feeling of some kind of independence and right for decision-making process. All these in turn motivate and empower partners to fulfill tasks in a best possible way:

*Usually they give us a freedom, if we did not do something, they give us an opportunity to do that during the project run, if we have an adequate substantiation, we may correct the project to some extent, and this is very important. Because when you start something, you went inside the field and you feel that something is happening in run (that must be changed) and it is very important for SFK to keep in mind. (I-5)*

Nevertheless, there are some difficulties for one of the partners in following the structure:

*I can say only one thing...- they have very hard financial accountings. This is only one thing. The structure..., I wish them to have a different structuring (in accountings). But it seems they have such requirements and they cannot change it right now. So we try to adapt. (I-4)*

Informant I-3 adds some “wishes” regarding procedures:

*it is not really a disappointment, but my wish...I understand that they are in a foreign country and work within some bounds, they have many frames. But very often, I think, they have too many bureaucracy procedures, if they would slip some procedures, it*



*would be easier...I understand they have a structure and they are obliged to provide some formal procedures. (I-3)*

In addition there were recommendations regarding equality in collaboration:

*Partnership – this is Equality. Inputs could be different from partners, but relationships between them must be on equal terms. For example, one organization may be rich and powerful, other one may be small, but as partners all of them have the same rights, decision making must be collegial, mutual. (I-1)*

Informant I-1 probably gives example of SFK and AS collaboration in this quote.

Informant I-2 has almost the same opinion:

*Partnership is when the identical problems are solved from the equal positions. (I-2)*

#### **5.2.4 Communication**

Communication is definitely important part in all organizations, especially in collaborations.

Communication between SFK and AS goes via emails, phone calls, and face-to-face conversations. *“Mostly it is electronic communications. Phone (calls are used) rarely, only in cases of urgent necessity” (I-4). “But when we have control milestones they come, and we consult”* says informant I-4.

Participants have mutual agreement that communication is going well between SFK and AS:

*The day we signed the contract they gave us their business cards, which included all contact details. Basically we did not have problems with the communications. (I-2)*

*As I understand everybody communicate very well. At any point when the question arrives [specific colleague] either calls by phone or send an email. I mean we do not have any problems. (I-3)*

*We have well-established communications. (I-4 )*

However, informant I-4 claims that there could be some obstacles in communication if partners work geographically far from each other, especially if they work in different cities in Kazakhstan.

*I: what are the difficulties in partnership?*

*4: Communication. But it is not regarding SFK, because in a not clear case [we can make clearance as] we are in the same city territorially. We have 5 partners which are located in other cities. This is complicated of course. We have difficulties to receive the documentations, feedback. But everything is solvable; it is just a question of time. On the other hand our post service leaves much to be desired. Sometimes it happens that documentation does not reach us -they sent it, but we did not receive. (I-4)*

### **5.2.5. Maintenance and Production Tasks**

According to the BMCF there are two types of tasks, maintenance and production. They are two main categories which... Informant I-1 describes management of tasks:

*First, there is a coordination project, where we solve different maintenance (activities) questions regarding the organization and the guiding of the project.*

*Secondly, for the project management there is a project manager and the coordinator...*

*For example, we decided that the conference we will carry out not like it was planned,*

*not in June but adjourn it to September. So, when we have such problem we solve it jointly with colleagues and the project manager, afterwards we email to SFK, discuss and agree – adjourn the conference because we have many objectives reasons. But if there is any routine problem and they (SFK) call us while the manager is absent, we can ourselves answer (the phone call) and solve the situation. (I-1)*

### **5.3. Outputs**

There are three types of outputs: synergistic, antagonistic and additive outputs. This section describes these outputs on the example of AS.

#### **5.3.1. Synergy**

Synergy is the most desired outcome for collaboration. Partners can get much more than if they would achieve alone and even sum of their results. Informant I-4 says that people collaborate because they will achieve synergy and not only synergy:

*So, there are too many problems [in the world] and we think that if we will consolidate than we will get not only synergy, or how do you call it, but our effectiveness will increase because we will work together. Actually, I am an adherent of collaboration. (I-4)*

Synergistic outcome is an outcome that is valuable not only for partners but for all people:

*Not only financial resources were invested in the project, but also our time, human resources. We as resources rather forceful (powerful) resources! (laughing). All these [resources] were invested in the project in order to get a good result, a good output, and [good] not only for us but also for our beneficiaries. And generally in order to get some result that is applicable not only in a small part but in a hole system. (I-4)*

On the question “What achievements do you have from collaboration with SFK?” the same informant answers:

*You know, you can only see the big picture from a distance. So right now I cannot say exactly... But I think the best is the benefit not for us but for our citizens, people who called us [by phone during hotline project] are solving their problems and hard situations. If I will to consider such moments, there are too many achievements like that – exact and concrete achievements. Probably, the biggest one will be when we will generate recommendations from scientific conference. ... (I-4)*

Synergy can also give positive “side effects”:

*That all goals are achieved, the project is almost completed, I think it is achievements of collaboration. In addition, we got a great side effect – the creation of the Union of Legal Persons for Patients’ rights. New direction – patients’ rights followed from the main project. I think this is also our mutual achievement. (I-1)*

Informant I-5 explains synergy on realistic examples from collaboration with SFK:

*Probably, it is that they began to listen to us. First time it was when they suggested making a survey [but afterwards they agreed to make a hotline]. In principle they could have the courage of convictions – they would get fewer headaches in such way. But the ability to hear is very important. Second time, when they saw that we spend the money normally (adequately), we save the money; they began supporting our ideas via their experts. I think some kind of understanding was developed. I mean, they noticed that we are the organization, which will exist even without them, and the organization where is the best way to invest the money, because we give more profit and we do not hide where we get the money from. We do not cheat and we do not make any secrets, we*

*are the organization, which put own resources also: our skills, our work. And we multiply it (resources and results). For example, we have to organize 6 public listening in the project, but we managed to make seven. In addition, we achieved that hotline began working independently without their further financial support, from six regions in three the hotline still works; it shows that the project is stable. (I-5)*

Interviewee I-3 explains very interesting view of partnership aiming to obtain synergy:

*When we spoke about partnership and values, [I would like to add] again [about] openness: we must show a good example. For instance, if you have decent information – share with others, and they will see that it is absolutely normal to share the information, it is not bad. Because the more you give, the more you receive. You must always think about it in partnership. You should not think about what you can get from partnership, what you can make out of SFK, no, absolutely not. Partnership is how we together can be useful for mutual idea. For example, [if we speak about] AS and SFK, [and our project on] patients rights, when we are together we can give to this movement much more than one by one, singly. Additionally, the more of us, AS and other organizations, the more we will be able to accomplish together. The partnership should be considered just from such position - what you can give, not what you can get. If every partner would think like this, the benefit and effectiveness would be much better. I think it is a right strategy and gives good results. (I-3)*

The same informant compares partnership with “five fingers of the hand”:

*[Partnership] is like 5 fingers of the hand: one can do a little job, but all together is greater power. United we stand, divided we fall! When [you have] power, contacts, and opportunities and if you team all these up, then more possibilities arrive. Everybody*

*has own experience, own experts, own contacts, and when we unite it then we get more results, more opportunities, more benefit for the society. (I-3)*

It seems that synergy is the only one outcome in ideal partnership in opinion of informant I-5. On the question “Why partnership?” s/he gives various matters and examples:

*It is easier to solve problems if partnering even physically, for example. Everybody needs a companion. Somebody has money, somebody has human resources, somebody has the desire and human resources, etc. When we are together, we get power. Just money do not work, just human resources are not enough. We must all unite. When it works in synergy, then there is harmony! It is like if you start the sentence, and I finish it! This aerobatics! Any harmony, is a set of differences, it's like a symphony orchestra, and creates unique. Aerobatics is when society becomes your partner. When each person understands that he also gave his penny. Partnerships must be always and in everything. True partnership... the cord is a kind of general idea. If the soul does not share this idea, then any partnership will not work.. I as a doctor compare it as mentally sick person, or for example, if paralyzed, the eye twitches, hand does not write, a leg cannot walk. A healthy society as a healthy person can give a lot. I can also give an example of the railway construction. In former Soviet Union each new stakeholder razed five kilometers of a railway that was built by previous stakeholder. This is not collaborated actions. In Europe, for instance, each stakeholder began to build five kilometers of railway from the fifth kilometer of railway that was built by previous stakeholder. Thus, [Europeans] got the whole railway and every new part of railway was better then previous. But we still flail around building first kilometers of railway. They had continuity [and successful collaboration]... Never mind, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. (I-5)*

### 5.3.2. Additive Outcomes

Additive outcome can be gained by simple summing of results of each partner alone. So, there is no need to collaborate in order to achieve such outcome. In this study there were not examples of such outcomes. Probably collaboration is too young to have such experience or these organizations knew from the very beginning what they want. On the other hand, absence of such examples can be due to the researcher and lack of questions on this topic.

### 5.3.3. Antagonistic Outcomes

Antagonistic outcomes are the most undesired outcomes. It is when partners got results even worse than additive. Nobody gave example of such outcome. There was not such experience in SFK-AS collaboration. But there were examples of what can lead to such outcome:

*[Partnership could be hindered because of] closeness..., unreal goals and bad communications, then everyone will fight because will understand the goal differently. Everything should be clearly written down, because unclear relationships, unclear goals or absence of the goal will hinder a partnership. Because even though there is a common goal in partnership, every partner has own subtask – it is what he want to gain from the partnership. They (subtasks) must not contradict, because any contradictions (controversies) hinder partnership. Over ambitions hinder also, for example, when one of partners is overambitious and he wants to batten on the efforts of others, or to steal thunder. So to say, partners' relationships must be regulated. (I-4)*

*Absence of permanent communication and interaction [can threaten partnership]. For example: we have a problem and we need to solve it quickly. And if we cannot get the answer soon, it will be difficult to work. (I-1)*

In addition there were several situations with other partners when AS got unpleasant

feelings:

*For example today one of our partners came. [Specific partner] was in [specific country] on the conference in order to get some interesting documents and information. Instead of sharing with everybody [specific partner] does not want to give it away and want to use for own self only. The [partner] uses different excuses in order to not to share. But [specific colleague] never do anything like that. For example [colleague] came from [particular courses] and brought a guidebook. First what [colleague] did – shared all information about courses [colleague] got. Such openness and willingness to share make everything to move on. Somebody will use it, somebody will not, at least people will know [new] information. Actually everything is already invented; you have just to know information about it...(I-3)*

And another example:

*I am speaking not about SFK, but about other international organizations, which are ready to give grants for certain activities that promote their interests. But they pursue another aim. For instance I know some international organizations, which are dealing with international adoption. The main goal is international adoption, but they want to implement alternative form of family education here. They develop a project, finance it, but the true aim is hidden. So this is not a partnership (I-1).*

#### **5.4. The environment.**

According to the model the environment is all external factors, which make a partnership to function. In this study it seems that political situation in the country, some reforms eventuate in prolonging of the partnership. For example next interviewee says about it:

*Now we want to prolong this project for several months till next year. Because the*



*situation changed in the country now, we have new ministry, new policy of pharmacy supply. How will this continue? We wrote the application and [the project] will go on. (I-1)*

Sometimes some state policies can limit work of international organizations. So, international organizations have to work through local NGOs. That is why the idea of partnership can arise.

*If we are going to speak about impact on [state] politics... SFK may not influence on a state politics. For example all international organizations have to coordinate own goals, aims, area of business, concrete plans, programs with government when they get an admission to work in our country, or in Russia, or any other country. Everything comes along with as it was agreed. UNISEF, Counterpart Consortium, UNESCO, SFK, and all other international organizations have to coordinate own goals and missions [with government]. So in this regard, as input in reforms, I think that [local] NGO [plays] bigger role. Because [international] organizations and funds have own hands tired. They cannot shout or explain anything. That is why they act by civil society. (I-1)*

Economical situation in the country can also instigate International Donor-NGO collaborations. Informant I-5 concerns about it:

*Generally international grants impress me because they give more freedom, freedom in activity... I would like to hope that for example SFK or any other international organizations would not decide that we are oil rich country and stop their funding. Because democratization process is not as we would like, it is far from perfect. (I-5)*

Economical and political environment has the most impact on this particular collaboration.

## **6.0. Discussion**

Partnerships and collaborations are a common approach to solve problems and reach better health outcomes. Partnership is the latest and potentially the greatest approach to addressing seemingly insolvable challenges of international development and public service delivery (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

In reliance on previous research, this study analysed processes that hinder and/or reinforce synergy and antagonism in Donor-NGO partnerships.

### **6.1 The Interaction Model of Partnership Functioning**

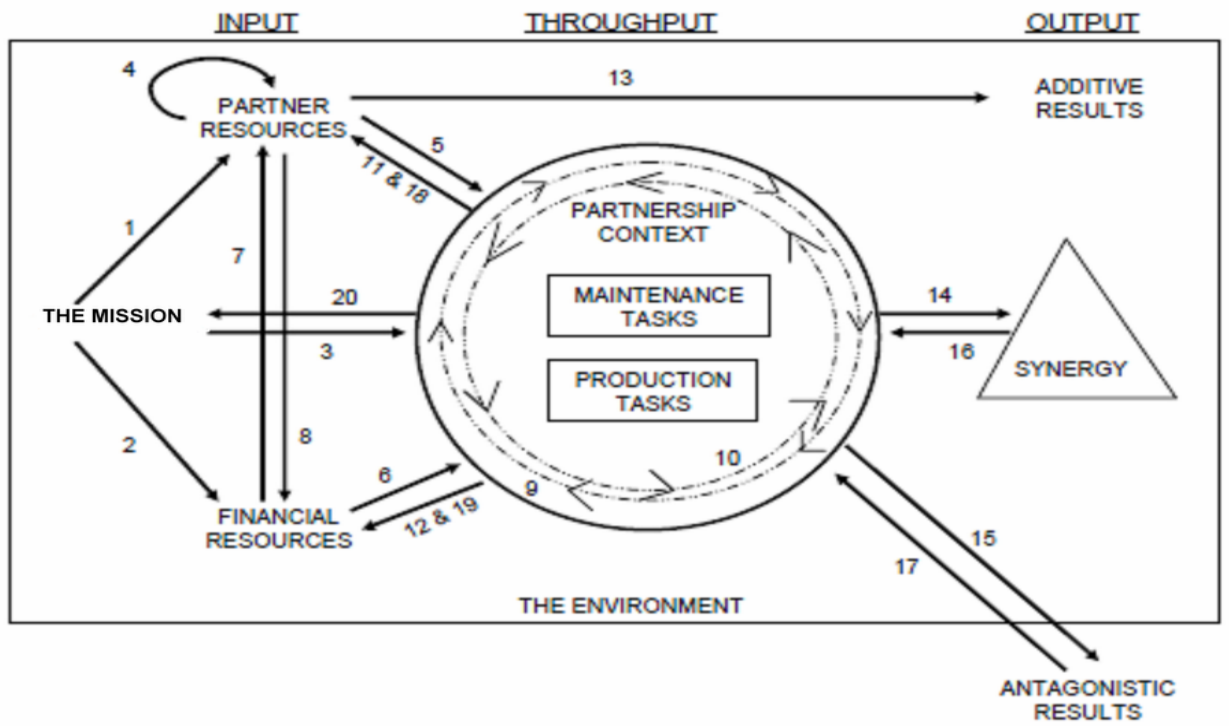
In order to answer the research question, the main findings of this case study were systematised into a model (Figure 6.1). The model encompasses interactions between factors and processes through which partnership functions. There are three groups of processes through which partnership collaborates - inputs, throughputs and outputs. Interactions are numbered 1-20 (Corbin, 2006).

#### **6.1.1. Inputs In The Partnership**

The *basic building blocks of synergy* are financial and partner resources and the problem or the mission which unites partners (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001; Corbin, 2006).

Findings from the present study show that one of the most important factors that facilitate a positive relationship is the strong commitment by all partners to goals and mission of the project (Merzel et al., 2007). Partners should develop realistic and achievable goals that are widely understood and supported (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Besides that, the mission should serve a good purpose. Such mission can attract financial resources (2) and partner resources (1).

**FIG. 6.1 INTERACTION MODEL OF PARTNERSHIP FUNCTIONING (Corbin, 2006)**



Partners are the source of the most resources in partnership (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). They provide partnerships with financial resources directly (8). They also use own capacities such as *skills, connections, credibility* (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001), brains and overtime. Thus, partners recruit new partners (4) and directly affect partnership context (5) (Corbin, 2006).

Adequate financial resources are essential in the collaboration (Endresen, 2007). They affect collaboration functioning directly (6) and indirectly by attracting new partners (7).

### 6.1.2. Throughputs In The Partnership

Partnership processes can be analysed through the relationships of those involved and through the partnership activities (Johnson&Wilson, 2006). There are two types of partnership

activities: maintenance tasks and production tasks. They are involved in the partnership context and affected by positive and negative interaction within it (Corbin, 2006).

### **Positive loops of interaction (9)**

Positive loops of interaction are positive processes in the working environment. There were found such categories as leadership, communication, roles/structures and inputs which cause positive interaction in the collaboration context (Corbin, 2006).

Partnerships need *boundary-spanning* leaders who understand partners' different points of view, can connect their diverse cultures, resources, and power (Alter&Hage 1993; Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Leadership in partnership reinforces trust, respect, and honesty.

Trust is a required condition for successful collaborative relationships (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Ability to solve conflicts is needed in leadership. Conflict can promote synergy if differences of opinion intensify partners' dialogue on issues and stimulate new ideas and approaches. However, if conflict is not managed well, the same differences of opinion can lead to tense relations among partners (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Partnership between SFK and AS began from the conflict on the project implementation. Through the effective leadership, partners came to a mutual agreement. Effective communication strategies facilitate synergistic actions (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001) and secure feedback between partners. The best way for communication is face-to-face meetings (Corbin, 2006).

Partners should know how to make decisions about the rules *jointly* that would determine their behaviour and relationships. Well-established structures reinforce agreement on collaborative activities and goals through shared power activities. These ideas are base for collaboration and include both the negotiation and commitment processes (Thomson& Perry, 2006).

Positive loops of interaction reinforce processes in partnership, thus they increase chances of synergistic outcomes (14). In addition, these processes bring additional financial resources (12) and new partners in collaboration (11).

### **Negative loops of interaction (10)**

Negative loops of interaction, by analogy with positive loops, are negative processes in the working environment. They were also found in the case, mostly in such categories as structures and communication. Donor organization's administrative procedures and practices can undercut the full expression of partnership principles (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004). Difficult financial accountings and bureaucratic procedures are a major concern in this study (Wildridge et al, 2004).

Communication between partners that are geographically distant can be a problem for successful collaboration outcome. AS has involved five partners from other cities for the project. Data show challenges in communication processes between AS and partners. It is not an issue in communication with SFK, because these two organizations located in one city.

Negative loops of interaction inhibit processes in partnership, thus they hinder chances of synergistic outcomes and reinforce antagonistic outcomes (15).

### **Loops of interaction**

The data of the present study show that both positive loops of interaction and negative loops of interaction exist at the same time (Corbin, 2006). However, almost all participants expressed very positive emotions regarding SFK and their relationships. It was very rare to hear something negative. Probably, this is happened due to the short period of collaboration between AS and SFK - only one year.

### 6.1.3. Outputs

According to the model there are three types of output – additive, synergistic and antagonistic outcomes (Corbin, 2006). There are only synergistic outcomes in this study. Most likely there is only one type of outcome because collaboration is functioning during a relatively little time. Synergistic outcome came about through an effective collaborative processes between AS and SFK. Despite negative loops of interaction, positive processes were dominant. Thus collaboration between SFK and AS was successful. Synergetic outcome influence positively the collaboration context and reinforce positive loops of interaction (16). It increase motivation of the partners to accomplish own tasks, for instance. In addition, synergy positively influence on the inputs through the collaboration context (18, 19, 20).

However, data from the study and existing literature on partnership suggest that *it is difficult to document the effectiveness of health partnerships in achieving health and health system goals* (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). In addition, it is impossible to suppose that all partners would consider an additive, synergistic or antagonistic output similarly (Geneau, Legowski&Stachenko, 2009).

### 6.1.4. Environment

The ability of a partnership to achieve synergy is influenced not only by the internal factors discussed above, but also by factors in the external environment, which are impossible to control (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). External environment may encourage *dependent 'partnerships'* to form collaborative actions based on the availability of resources rather than on mutual objectives and *shared risks* (Ahmad, 2006). However, it is not a case in this study. Political and economical situation in Kazakhstan influence the collaboration functioning, but AS and SFK do have mutual goals.

## **6.2. Methodological Considerations**

In order to validate the present research data were triangulated. There were observational, document and interview data. One month with breaks was spent on the field by the researcher. These measures validate the qualitative research according to Creswell (2009). However, interview guide for obtaining interview data was semi-structured and was not followed strictly. Unfortunately, a pilot interview was not held. In addition, interview guide was not tested on existence of leading questions. Thus, possibility of leading questions appears to be. Furthermore, there were not used such validating procedures as ‘peer debriefing’, ‘member checking’ and ‘external auditor’ for the research (Creswell, 2009). In addition, language issues could threaten validity of the research. The research was developed in Russian. Selected quotes of transcripts were translated into English. The not bilingual supervisor checked meaning of translated quotes.

In terms of reliability, there were done almost all possible measures for qualitative research. Transcripts were checked several times in order to prevent existence of mistakes that could be done during transcription. One researcher developed all phases of the research (Creswell, 2009).

Generalizability is not the intention of the qualitative research. The most important is “particularity” (Creswell, 2009). The present Case is unique even in Kazakhstan. Example of effective collaboration of AS and SFK can be highly advisory for other organizations in Kazakhstan. However, the present research adds some issues on generalizability of BMCF. This research, in addition to previous studies of partnerships using BMSF, rounds out applicability of the model to different types of collaborations.

## **6.3. Researcher bias**

The present study was the first significant research for the researcher. Thus, there probably were various mistakes during collection data period. It is also possible that during translation of quotes and writing the report the researcher missed some important information or did not pay required attention to some of data.

Meaning of quotes is seemed to be correct, because the researcher has almost the same cultural and educational background. The researcher is a citizen of Kazakhstan so as participants. Participants studied medicine, public health and economics, so as the researcher did. However, age and experience in political parties have great differences. The researcher is younger then participants and does not belong to any political movement. Almost all participants belong to different political parties.

The researcher does not have any affiliation either with any of participants or collaborating organizations.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

Donor–NGO interorganisational relationships are an long-term aspect of the international development scene (Brinkerhoff&Brinkerhoff, 2004). Donor-NGO partnership is established practice in Kazakhstan, but successful collaboration is rare. The ideal partnership for health is based on the common mission, sufficient financial resources and negotiation in order to realise better health outcomes for communities and individuals. The basic idea of the work of Donor-NGO partnerships is that achieving health and health system goals depends on how well partnerships function (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001). Partnership processes can be analysed through the relationships of those involved and through the partnership activities (Johnson&Wilson, 2006). To strengthen the ability of partnerships to realize the full potential of collaboration, donors and participants in partnerships need to know what influences the ability of partnerships to achieve this outcome (Lasker, Weiss&Miller, 2001; Wildridge et al, 2004).



An important point to consider is that collaboration needs to be viewed as a process as well as an outcome (El Ansari, Phillips & Hammick, 2001).

Even when partnership appears beneficial, its success may not last in the long term (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004). Two factors can effect in limiting the achievement of synergy. First, *donor agency administrative procedures* may hinder synergistic outcomes (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004). Second, external factors such as political and economical situation in the country, can inhibit the long-term collaboration and success.

Besides that, it is necessary to point out that it was possible to reproduce the major findings to the Bergen Model of Collaborative Functioning in almost every aspect. Due to this model, it was unproblematic to identify core elements of inputs, throughputs, and outputs, and interaction between these elements of collaboration functioning resulting in synergy or antagonism. The BMCF is a practical framework for analysis of collaboration functioning in the health field in Kazakhstan.

## **6.5. Implications**

The research findings contain interesting information about factors and processes in collaboration functioning. Further research is needed in order to recognise an importance of the mission in Donor-NGO partnerships. It would be very pragmatic to carry out the same research with the same participants in several years. Thus, it would be possible to see long-term effects produced by this collaboration processes. In addition, collaboration processes should be studied from the both sides, i.e. to include participants from donor organisations. It will help to see the full picture.

More research is needed to establish clear and simple outcome evaluation tools, because it is very difficult to interpret data related to outcomes clearly and unambiguously. Or, is it enough if at least one partner considers obtained outcomes as successful? Is it real to obtain the

long-term effect by the efforts of two organizations? And how many years are required to get such an effect?

Additionally, it seems that other research methods, such as mixed-method, would be helpful in order to understand the real situation with Donor-NGO partnerships.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Interview Guide**

#### I stage – warming-up

1. Can you tell me about your work in Aman-Saulyk? How long? Position?
2. Can you tell me about Aman-Saulyk? Its aim? Field of work?
3. Can you tell me about Soros Foundation?

#### II stage – inputs

4. How did you begin working with Soros Foundation?
5. What do they contribute?
6. What does Aman-Saulyk contribute?

#### III stage - processes

7. Can you describe the relationship between your organization with Soros?
8. What projects have you worked on together? Are they ongoing?
9. How do you communicate with them? Phone? Email? Visits? How often?
10. Who is the “leader” of this group? One person? A committee? Negotiation?
11. What do you think have been the greatest accomplishment of working with Soros?
12. Can you think of a particular occasion that you were impressed with the relationship?
13. Can you think of a particular occasion you were disappointed with the relationship?
14. What are the challenges in the collaboration?
15. What limited your ability to success?
16. What qualities are necessary when you are working in partnership?
17. What is partnership in your understanding?
18. Do you have something else to say?