

# Improvement of potential and support of civil society in implementation of initiatives on a local level

## Context

Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia to have parliamentary democracy fixed in the Constitution. Despite the existence of democratically legalized political institutes, the country is notable for high political and social instability. On the other hand, an active and well developed civil society, which has thoroughly used donor support since the end of 90-s, separates Kyrgyzstan from adjacent countries. Nevertheless, civil society organizations still need financing, an increased qualification level and help in organizational and functional development, particularly outside of Bishkek and in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

## Objectives

The goal of the Civil Society Fund is to support civil society institutes and aid in the realization of their initiatives on a local level in cooperation with local self-governments (LSG) in Naryn, Issyk-Kul and Jalalabat regions of Kyrgyzstan. Also, the reinforcement of these institutes and consolidation by expansion of potential, increasing the qualification level and financing of project. This is realized with a usage of effective mechanisms of interaction between civil society (CS) and LSG. Those projects are directed to problems' solution, which are actual for local community.

Project name	Civil Society Fund
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country	Kyrgyz Republic
Partners	Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, State Agency on Local Self-Government and Interethnic Affairs
Overall term	2012-2016

## Approach

To satisfy foregoing needs, the project works in three directions. First, it directs financing and organizational support of projects on a local level. The second direction is connected with the expansion of potential and professionalism of civil sector organizations, which will let non-profit organizations (NPO) pursue their goals on a constant basis, alongside the self-reliant development of a strategic approach and business models. Additionally, the development of partner mechanisms is foreseen within the scope of the second project direction; those mechanisms will let new NPOs closely collaborate with more experienced and successful capital NPOs. The third direction is based on the straightening of relationships and interaction of NPOs with LSGs on rural and district levels. In the medium and long-term perspectives this approach will let CS organizations penetrate and, consequently, actively participate in decision-making processes and decentralization, which Kyrgyzstan impetuously pursues, along with filling flaws in a customer service sphere on a local level.



Left: Young readers inside of e-bilim mobile digital library, Naryn region, Kyrgyzstan

Right: Students of The Bishkek rehabilitation center for PWDS working on wood handicrafts, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

## Results to date

The strategic approach of the project's work was built on the basis of jointly defined needs of seven initiative work groups (IWGs), consisting of CS and LSG representatives. This contributes to the creation of trusted relationships, dialog and collaboration among them. As a result of the joint work of these IWGs the most noticeable CS problems were supported and solved in three out of ten planned municipalities. For example, a center of preschool preparation for 50 children from deprived families was opened in Darhan village. This led to the creation of 11 work positions; another kindergarten for 120 children was opened in Mailuu-Suu town, which created 30 new work positions.

Concerning problem solving in access to information in rural regions of the country a conference hall was built in Toguz-Toro village and a local library was equipped with information material and computers for the needs of youth and other village inhabitants. In the Naryn region, a project of mobile digital library e-bilim with an extensive data base on different digital and printed carriers has started; since the beginning of 2014 more than 3000 villagers of Naryn region and Ak-Taly district including people from nearby jailoos have used the library. Also, inside of events for improvement of access to information, TV and radio programs oriented towards increasing financial literacy questions for youth are supported. They are broadcasted and available for more than 200 000 inhabitants of Talas region. 235 journalists-volunteers of communal radios from all over Kyrgyzstan now train journalism basics and skills. A radio project to increase awareness of the rural and distant population has been launched through "Jash FM" micro radio network. It is made to decrease social stringency and conflict conditions by creating a cycle of informational and social programs which are directed towards prevention of conflicts and stabilization of the situation in the regions. Also, within the project an association of more than 15 masters of power-efficient construction and technologies is initiated and created in the southern coast of Issyk-Kul lake, with the purpose of distributing the energy conservation experience throughout Issyk-Kul region.

In the sphere of social problems' decision-making, work on approving the forms and methods of collaboration between NGOs and LSGs has started on the national level as Municipal (social) order in 12 municipalities of Kyrgyzstan.

Within the component on improving the potential of CS organizations 23 trainers for sustainable development of NPOs are qualified. 11 of them conducted seminars in 5 regions of the country for more than 170 representatives of NPOs. References and feedback of participants prove the necessity of this kind of training (70% evaluated them as "very useful", 30% - as "useful"). The Central Asian Network of the Workshop of SC organizations was created as the result of the "Practice of formation of sustainable NGOs in the region" annual Workshop in November 2013, where more than 40 representatives of SC from five Central Asian countries participated, with the aim of exchanging experience and information. On a regular basis the partners of the project get information about fundraising and other opportunities for NPOs, which is in demand. 7 representatives from Kyrgyz NPOs were chosen and then completed internships in successful and experienced SC organizations in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. There they got and consolidated new professional knowledge, skills and abilities, alongside with possible active participation in duties and activities of host organizations. Two manuals in Kyrgyz and Russian languages which have an applied character and are present in the NPOs' work were added to a series of books being published by the project.

Through the constant support of IWGs, commissions on realization of the municipal social order, representatives of SC on rural and national levels on different phases of their activities (beginning from the analysis on needs), training, joint planning and realization, monitoring and evaluation - local communities will be able to solve problems independently. Therefore, the Civil Society Fund contributes to consolidation and sustainable development of the civil sector.

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