



Young generation in Kyrgyzstan: key to development

Context

Cholponay Talantbek kyzy has successfully graduated from the College of Telecommunications, Economics and Innovations. But she could not get a job in her field due to her lack of professional experience. “I have been looking for a job for two years, wondering how and where to apply. Many positions required work experience, which I did not have at the time. In order not to waste time I read articles, watched videos on self-development and worked as a mentor and coach,” says Cholponay. For young people in Kyrgyzstan, lack of work experience is among the main reasons why they are unable to land a job. Yet of course they cannot gain experience if no one wants to hire them. This vicious cycle lasts from one year to the next. Youth unemployment is among the most pressing problems in the country.

The Youth policy framework in Kyrgyzstan is weak and there is a lack of permanent, effective structures for youth promotion throughout the country. All domains affecting young people - social protection, health, housing, employment, education - should be included in a comprehensive policy. Compared with other areas, this topic is a low political priority. The State Agency for Youth Affairs, Physical Culture and Sports is active but still lacks human and financial resources.

One third of Kyrgyzstan’s population comprises young people between 14 and 28 years of age. More than 70 per cent of them live in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan and face high unemployment and little prospects. Many of them are prepared to engage in the society and interested in the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives. However, their opinions are rarely asked for and seldom taken seriously if it comes to social or economic issues. During the recent years, young people have realized that they need to unite and speak up collectively (e.g. through a youth council under the municipality or on behalf of an organization) for their opinions to be considered. Thus, the number of NGOs

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Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Kyrgyz Republic, provinces: Chui, Issyk-Kul, Naryn and Talas
Main Partner	State Agency for Youth Affairs, Physical Culture and Sports of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic
Duration	2019-2022

that are run by young people and work with youth has increased significantly. Unfortunately, many of them have little experience in such work and need additional knowledge.

Our objective

The implementation of policies and measures to strengthen the economic and social participation of young people has been improved.

Our measures

The Kyrgyz-German “Prospects for Youth” programme works in 20 municipalities in the four northern regions of Kyrgyzstan – Chui, Issyk-Kul, Naryn and Talas. It builds on the results achieved in predecessor projects and strengthens the capacities of governmental and non-governmental institutions in the youth sector.

First, the programme promotes cooperation and exchange among responsible administrations, youth NGOs, the private sector and different local and national interest groups. It contributes to improvement of intersectoral cooperation among government agencies, ministries, civil society and other stakeholders. This



Youth leaders training in Issyk-Kul oblast.

Opening of souvenir shop in Naryn oblast with support of youth employment promotion activities.

allows financing opportunities and human resources to be deployed more efficiently. For instance, the National Youth Council, which serves as a platform for cooperation between ministries and agencies, was revived in 2018. A long-term Youth Development Concept 2020-2030 was developed together with the participation of young people. It will serve as a roadmap for government agencies and partners in youth policy.

The programme activities are also concentrated on the local level. Municipalities are encouraged to engage in active dialogues with young people to allow the issues and requirements of them to be considered when taking decisions. Thanks to proactive youth organizations, during the recent years, annual budgets allocated for youth affairs have been increasing steadily. Measures for youth promotion are to be added to the municipalities' development plans so that more money is available for youth-related services. Local youth councils are being trained in individual municipalities to review implementation and participate in future planning. In five municipalities, information and communication technology (ICT) tools are being piloted to increase and facilitate youth participation. Applications and websites are good examples, because young people use these digital communication methods actively.

In order to achieve long-term positive effects, the programme places an emphasis on building the capacities of local, regional and national youth stakeholders. To this end, the support for certified training courses for youth specialists employed by the government as well as youth leaders of NGOs and young activists is provided. With the help of these courses, young people learn about youth rights, fundraising, community development and develop their soft skills. Since the start of the trainings, more than 100 youth specialists and more than 280 young leaders got practical knowledge. Youth NGOs also receive support to

strengthen their organization, their ability to manage projects and their cooperation with other stakeholders. Networking and exchange for mutual learning and support are crucial for the young people to become active movers.

To improve employment opportunities, the programme supports projects by local youth NGOs that focus on developing labour-market related skills. Employment promotion projects receive advice, training and financial assistance. Priority areas are innovative topics in business sectors with growth potential. In Kyrgyzstan, these include IT, eco-based tourism and the textile industry. More than 500 young people implemented their business projects and got to learn firsthand about project management.

“When I was 21, I was offered to attend the 6-month training course called “Dilgir” in Talas city (Talas Oblast),” recalls Cholponay. While studying “Youth Diversity and Rights”, participants learned about ethnic and gender stereotypes. “It has helped me shift my mind and since then I rely solely on my personal experiences. During the training, I met like-minded and ambitious people. My network has greatly expanded, and I was able to build professional and personal relationships,” she says. Since 2019, Cholponay has been working as a mentor in one of the projects that helps to educate children with disabilities in pilot schools of Kyrgyzstan. She has found her purpose and wants to participate in the future development of the youth sector so that young people in Kyrgyzstan have more opportunities and prospects.

The experience and skills gained create employment prospects for the young people, who can put their projects into practice and learn to cooperate with various stakeholders, including the private sector and the municipal administrations.

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