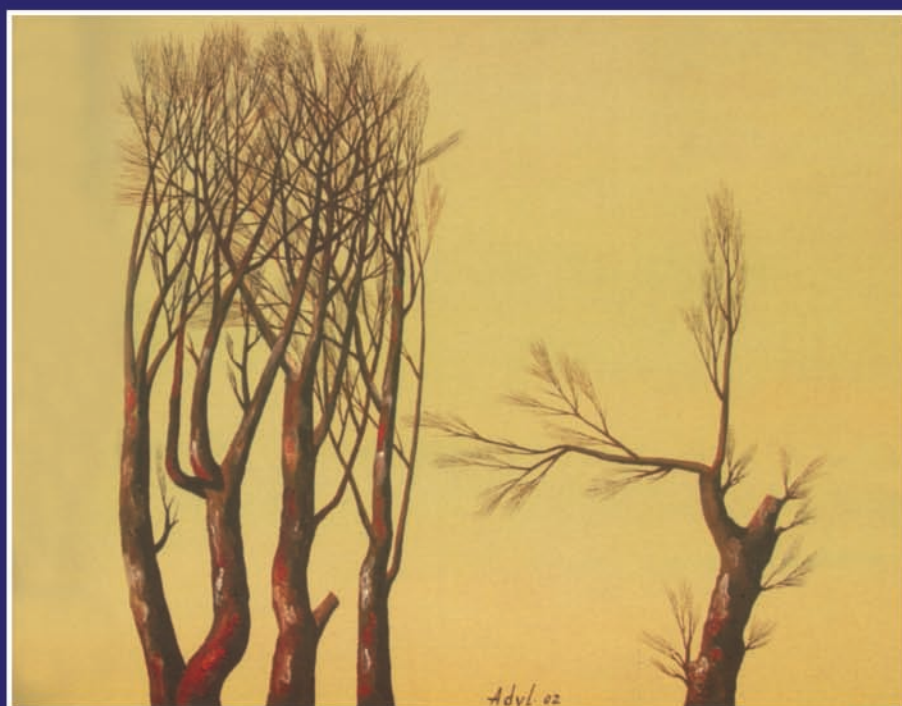




Kyrgyzstan Case Study Sourcebook: Partnership and Collaboration between Government and Civil Society Organizations



A K D N

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



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Bishkek 2007

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The aim of this book is to introduce the acquired experience of partnership between the government and civil society organizations in the development field throughout Kyrgyzstan. Twenty five case studies describe effective and sustainable collaboration at local and regional levels of Kyrgyzstan. The case studies demonstrate real care and concerns of the local population, local self government bodies, and civil society organizations.

The book is designed for further usage of civil society organizations, government bodies, local self government bodies, international agencies, trainers, consultants and other stakeholders working in collaboration between government and civil society organizations in Kyrgyzstan.

This book will, it is hoped, lead to discussion between government and CSOs at national and local levels on improving and sustaining government/CSO collaboration and partnerships. The book was prepared by Public Association Counterpart-Sheriktesh with the financial support of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Aga Khan Civil Society Program.

The opinions of the authors do not reflect the official position and views of the Aga Khan Development Network.

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List of acronyms

ACSSC	Association of Civil Society Support Centers
AO	Ayil Okmot
ARIS	Community Development and Investment Agency
CAG	Community Action Grant
COA	Communication Operators Association
CS	Civil Society
CSSC	Civil Society Support Center
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CBO	Community Based Organization
DSAP	Development Strategy and Action Plans
DFID	Department for International Development
EIDHR	European Union Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights
ICNL	International Center for Non-profit Law
IG	Initiative Group
JSC	Joint Stock Company
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
LDF	Local Development Fund
LSG	Local Self Government
LROY	Labor Registration Office for Young People
Ltd	Limited Company
MTC	Ministry of Transport and Communication
NCA	National Communication Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA	Public Association
PF	Public Fund
PCA	Participatory Community Appraisal
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RLROY	Republican Labor Registration Office for Young People
SHG	Self Help Group
TC	Territorial Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

Description of Terms for Kyrgyzstan's context

Oblasts & Rayons in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan consists of 7 large territorial subdivisions called oblasts. They are Chui, Issyk-Kul, Naryn, Talas, Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Batken. Oblasts serve the same function as states in the U.S. or provinces do in Europe. In addition, Bishkek as the capital of Kyrgyzstan has special status and has similar rights as oblasts. Within each oblast there are several rayons, which are comparable to districts in the West. For example, Naryn Oblast has 5 rayons or 5 districts. Each rayon or district is then broken down into local self government bodies, in Kyrgyzstan ayil okmot. Each ayil okmot consists of several village and their local councils

Public Association- public membership based organization legally considered to be a non-commercial organization

Public Foundation- public non-membership based organization established by founders and is one form of legal non-commercial organizations in Kyrgyzstan

Territorial council- public council established in a particular territory of an urban housing area to discuss and solve local problems and make air their concerns to the city council

Quarter committee- committee established in cities and villages to make various decisions on household related issues

Ayil okmot- local self-government comprising several villages and local councils

Local self-government-ayil okmot

Ayil Kenesh- village council

Rayon Kenesh- rayon level board

Rayon Akim- director of rayon or district level administration

Currency rate in Kyrgyzstan is approximately: US \$ 1 = 38.5som.

Foreword

I was delighted to be asked to work with Counterpart Sheriktesh on compiling this handbook of case studies on good practice in partnerships between civil society organizations and local government. I am equally pleased to contribute some opening words to the now completed handbook. Six of us have worked together in a spirit of true partnership in collecting and presenting the case studies – an approach which seems appropriate for a book that examines partnership processes and projects.

As we worked together we thought about and discussed what good practice in partnership really means, what it can achieve and how it works. We also kept reminding ourselves that our aim in compiling the case studies was to provide useful, practical and timely information to users of the handbook that would share new ideas and insights into the world of partnership working. I hope we have succeeded in this. As practitioners ourselves we have all had experience of what works and what does not work in partnerships between the structures of government and the rather less formal systems of community based organizations. We have also experienced the excitement and inspiration of seeing people in a community taking positive steps to take charge of their lives and of developments in their communities that affect them and others. It has been satisfying to collect some of these experiences so they can be shared more widely.

In writing and reading the case materials one of the things that has struck me is that it is often quite difficult to get partnerships moving at the start. Someone or a group come up with ideas or proposals about a new way of doing things and it takes time to get these accepted. As anyone involved in change management like myself will know, the ‘prime movers’ of new initiatives require certain qualities of determination and commitment, as well as the ability to put across their new vision in creative and compelling ways to those who can influence it. Sometimes there is resistance or even strong opposition to be overcome. It can help to have real life examples of what has worked in other places both to strengthen the personal visions we may have and to help persuade others about what is possible. I hope this handbook of case studies goes some way to serving this purpose.

I have now had the privilege of compiling four different sets of case studies of initiatives taken by village level groups in Kyrgyzstan and each time (including this one) have been re-charged in my belief that the key to making progress in improving lives and livelihoods at village level is through ways of ‘empowering’ people to help themselves. Working on this set of cases has

reminded me of how important it is for all those who have a stake in improving life at the community level to cultivate and sustain productive and supportive relationships among themselves. I hope we have captured some useful data on how to do this, and wish all our readers well in their own ventures to achieve effective partnership working. We hope you will follow up any particular interests roused by our case study collection either with Counterpart Sheriktesh or with those people named as contacts in each of the case studies in the handbook.

Sue Burke, Sourcebook Adviser

December 2006

Introduction

In Kyrgyzstan, since the fall of the Soviet Union, civil society organizations (CSOs) have established partnerships and collaborated with various government institutions in order to solve critical social and economic problems and meet community needs. The successful implementation of a myriad of local and donor programs and projects could not have been achieved without CSO and government partnership and a continued effort to improve cross-sectoral relations. Throughout this process Kyrgyz CSOs have acquired significant experience in establishing and developing partnership with state structures, local self-government bodies, and business communities.

Through the funding and support of the Civil Society Program of the Aga Khan Development Network, Public Association, Counterpart-Sheriktesh, set out to research examples of strong and effective collaboration between government and civil society organizations in Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the project was to identify positive partnerships and relationships between CSOs and the government and document them through case studies. It is our hope that CSOs and government agencies will use these case studies as a guide to developing and cultivating sustainable partnerships that are ultimately necessary both for development in Kyrgyzstan in general and for the development of a sustainable Kyrgyz civil society.

The case studies that appear in this book were compiled with the help of representatives of governmental structures, local self governments, CSOs and communities at large. The data was collected through individual interviews and surveys conducted with representatives of CSOs, government, beneficiaries and various stakeholders. This case study sourcebook focuses on 25 case studies that depict efficient and sustainable partnership between civil society organizations and the government at the regional and local levels of Kyrgyzstan. The practical examples highlight the real concerns and needs of the local population, local self government and community organizations. The cases highlight the history of collaboration and partnership development, key success factors and challenges, lessons learned, and benefits that partners have obtained. The case studies document positive collaboration and partnership in all seven oblasts of Kyrgyzstan: Chui, Issyk-Kul, Talas, Naryn, Osh, Jalal Abad and Batken.

It is hoped that this handbook will be a stimulus for creating new collaboration or enhancing existing collaboration between the government and civil society, especially community organizations, state structures, local

self government bodies, international agencies, trainers, consultants and other stakeholders. This is something that we understand the AKDN's Civil Society Programme wants to work on in the future.

Counterpart-Sheriktesh, expresses gratitude to authors, consultants, public associations, state structures and local self government bodies for their contribution in developing the book.

Counterpart-Sheriktesh wants to give special thanks to the Civil Society Program of the Aga Khan Development Network for financial support; without your help this publication would not be possible.

Tahmina Musalimova
Project coordinator
The primary author

KYRGYZSTAN

Chui Oblast

CSO ALGA, Issyk-Ata Rayon

Collaboration between rural women and government on the local, rayon, and national level

Summary

ALGA is a CSO that supports the development of rural women and the contributions they make to the lives of their families and communities. Its name, which comes from the name of a collective farm where the founding group of women lived, means “moving forward” or “going ahead” in Kyrgyz. **ALGA** works with women’s groups in villages across 6 rayons (districts) in the eastern part of Chui Oblast in Kyrgyzstan. It also plays an influential role in a number of governmental programs and policies. When **ALGA** was founded in 1995 it operated in only one village – Jerkazar. Since then it has initiated or encouraged many community based partnership projects with local self governments. This case study is about the partnership experiences of **ALGA** working with a cross section of governmental bodies on issues ranging from poverty alleviation and economic development to human rights, health, and tackling violence against women.

How did the work of ALGA begin?

ALGA grew out of the chaos of the fall of the Soviet Union. For the first several years after the fall day to day life in Kyrgyzstan was difficult as the infrastructure of the previous administration ceased to work, and basic services like schools, health care, and water supplies deteriorated or stopped operating altogether. Life for those living in villages was particularly difficult. As Olga Djanaeva, one of the founders of **ALGA**, described it, “The majority of people were in despair. They had lost their jobs and were not used to working on their own. They had no vision of the future and no experience of how to survive using their own resources. There was huge desperation about what they were facing.”

At that time, Olga made a difficult decision to give up a good job teaching at National University in the capital, Bishkek, because she had no means of transportation from her village, 25 kms away. Alternative means of transportation were expensive, unreliable and dangerous, and also cost so much that they absorbed most of her salary. She and her family therefore decided that she should abandon her research degree in sociology. Instead she became a housewife living in the village. This meant that she could put

her time and energy into growing vegetables and wheat needed for the family's survival. She also had time to reflect on the situation she found herself in, including the difficulties faced by the people of her village. "I wondered if this was the end of my life and asked myself if it was the end of my dreams?"

Olga began to think about how women living in poverty in other parts of the world managed, and searched for information. Throughout her research, she was impressed with the work of women's groups in several African countries, in India, and in Latin America. She decided to share what she had learned with other women in her village, especially about the way women's groups worked and the contributions they made to improving village livelihoods. Many of the women in the village at that time did not believe they could change the situation, but some were interested in taking action.

In the beginning: early roots of partnership



In the spring of 1995 Olga and a group of about 10 other women from Jerkazar village started to meet to share experiences and ideas in the house of Kalbubu Kadyrbaeva. Such informal gatherings of women to discuss their lives and their problems had long been a part of Kyrgyz traditional life. One of the first issues the group

discussed was how land reforms were being taken forward in the newly independent republic of Kyrgyzstan. Although the constitution acknowledged equal rights between men and women, the experience of group members was that under the government's agrarian land reform policy land was not being given equally to women, especially women who had to manage family life alone. Because this was such an important issue for improving the lives of poor rural women and their families, the group decided to take action and discuss it with the local government authority in their area. Challenging government officials in this way was almost unheard of at the time, especially if it was done by poverty stricken village women.

At first the group's lobbying was unsuccessful, so they took their cases to the oblast (state) level, and finally because they were unsuccessful again, they had

no option but to appeal to the authorities at the national level. The first 11 cases of the women who appealed were accepted. This meant a significantly increased land allocation from half a hectare to over one full hectare of farm land per family i.e. around a three fold increase. This was a land mark decision and a precedent for women and women's groups all over the country. It also marked the first significant step in **ALGA's** contribution to improving the lives of rural women – a contribution that has continued to this day. At the time, this achievement gave the founders of **ALGA** the feeling that they “could change the world in a very short time.” Their subsequent experiences have brought a greater sense of the realities associated with social and economic change. Nevertheless what **ALGA** has done and continues to do is impressive and offers some interesting lessons about the principles of partnership and collaboration with the government.

One woman's contribution and benefit

Kalbubu Kadyrbaeva, a former kindergarten teacher in Jerkazar, was one of the founding members of women who started **ALGA**. It was in her house that the group held their first meetings. She had lost her teaching job and her income because the kindergarten closed in 1991. A widow, she was living in a small village house with two elderly women and three small children, trying to survive with no regular income. As she pointed out she was just one of many rural women faced with similar problems at the time. During soviet times in Jerkazar, most people worked on the collective farm in the village, and were only familiar with the way of life and support that this provided. After 1991 many had relied largely on emergency food allocations from official sources to survive.

Her case for a better land reform deal was one of the successful ones achieved through the lobbying activities of the Jerkazar women's group in 1995. On her early experiences with the group she says “It is so great to feel you are not alone,” when having to cope with the kind of challenges she and other group members had faced.

Kalbubu Kadyrbaeva also benefited from the micro-credit agency set up in 1995 for purchasing seeds (see below), and after two years was able to buy a cow with the proceeds of her harvests. The cow provided milk to consume and to sell and also enabled her to make butter and sour cream. This gave her a sustainable source of income.

She also says that she, like others in the group, has changed from being a shy and modest woman lacking in self confidence to being a leader and an activist – something she could never have imagined would happen back in the early 1990's. Today she holds a position of respect among women in the village who often go to her for advice and counsel about personal and family problems. She is also confident about contacting, advising, challenging and working in other ways with officials in governmental agencies.

First steps towards becoming a CSO and working in partnership with government

It took two years for the women's group of Jerkazar to get officially registered as the civil society organization, **ALGA**. During that period ALGA applied to the LSG of the village for office space. Despite their differences over the land allocation question the village authority acknowledged the contribution of the women's group and allocated them a room in its building (1996). This was welcomed recognition of their work and commitment. At the time the group was working hard to clarify its mission and agree on its priorities for action

Members of the founding group obtained training to help them in this from the National Forum for Women based in Bishkek. This provided them with information on the roles of CSOs, on business planning, on fundraising and on other important aspects of organisational development – an important basis for building their future relationships with governmental bodies. Most important of all, it enabled the group to gain experience and develop their own skills. This commitment to continuous personal and professional development is one of the reasons Olga Djanaeva gives for **ALGA's** successful partnership with local self government.

Meanwhile the group was continuing to play an active part in improving the lives of women in the village. In the spring of 1995, while they were lobbying for land reform, the group also decided to support women's work on the land in other practical ways. At the time seeds were in scarce supply and of poor quality, and in any case rural women did not have money to buy them. So members of the group approached different organizations which they thought might provide credit for the purchase of seeds.

One organization they approached in 1995 was FINCA which at the time was only working in Bishkek and not in rural areas. Drawing on their growing confidence, the group persuaded FINCA to provide micro-credit to

help one group of women in the village buy seeds. They also found ways to give the women advice on planting and cultivation. With the initial micro-credit support the women were able to raise enough capital from their first harvest to purchase chickens, sheep or cows as a further source of much needed income. **ALGA** was also able to draw on this source and start its own seed bank of wheat, sugar beet, and vegetable seeds; thus, supporting even more women and helping them to improve their lives. Micro-credit was also used to help set up rural bakeries. By 1997, five groups of women in the village were receiving micro-credit help of this sort, around 50 women in total.

Self sufficiency in action

The founding group of **ALGA** was also in need of money to support its work, so it decided to take a loan for a group venture to cultivate some land and raise group funds. The land was given to them by a family member of one of the group. On this they grew safflower bean – a product used in cooking oil and spreads. The harvest from the plot was good, but times were hard in the village, so it was necessary for group members to guard their produce day and night to keep it safe. One or two of them slept with the crop at all times! The income from the first harvest enabled the group to do two things. First, they had enough funds to run the office they had been given by the local self government. Second, they had funds to provide help to families and elderly people living in serious poverty in the village. This encouraged them and helped them to feel that they were taking charge of their own destiny.

What is **ALGA**'s approach to partnership?

Today **ALGA** has expanded considerably. Over 150 village initiative groups are now supported by **ALGA**, mainly in the eastern part of the Chui Oblast. Several of these CSOs work in close partnership with their LSGs and will appear in the next few cases. From the single office that **ALGA** was given



in the local self government in Jerkazar in 1996 it now (end of 2006)

occupies the whole first floor of the local government building, with facilities including a resource center, a training room, a business advice center, two administration offices, and a kitchen. It employs over 26 staff, and also has offices in Epkin, Ivanovka, Kairma, Bishkek and Kant.

The **ALGA** approach is based on working in a spirit of real partnership with government agencies, whether at local, district or national level. **ALGA** sees this as fundamental to its goal of achieving social change, and considers it a



core principle in its success to date. From the **ALGA** perspective working in partnership means working hard to build trust and confidence in the relationships between all of those involved in any partnership arrangement. It was not easy to get this point across when **ALGA** was getting started. Both villagers and village

authorities were suspicious of each other and fearful that working together would be disadvantageous and difficult. Some CSOs also felt that **ALGA** was not sticking by them in their attempts to challenge governmental organizations to change. To demonstrate their commitment to working in partnership, representatives of the original women's group, and **ALGA**, have always attended meetings of the local council, and invited members and officers of the council and other relevant government bodies to attend their own meetings and conferences. They encourage the village initiative groups and community organizations they support to do the same.

Commitment to partnership – a fundamental belief

Since the early days **ALGA** has stuck to its belief that it is essential to work in partnership with government agencies if the vision of improving the lives of rural women living in poverty is to be achieved. As Olga Djanaeva points out, *“this means working hard to build understanding between everyone on all sides of the partnership so that each person sees the rest as just people trying to do their best for their communities.”*

One of the ways that **ALGA** maintains good links with potential partners is through a 7- person consultative council of stakeholders. This includes heads

of local self government, senior representatives of the rayon and oblast administrations, and members representing business, the local press, libraries, and CSOs in its area of operation. This influential external council is headed by a senior official from the rayon administration. Its role is to provide advice and support to **ALGA**, while also acting as the body to which **ALGA** is accountable. In addition there is a grants committee which supports the process of accountability and transparency in the way **ALGA** works.

Another **ALGA** core principle is based on the belief that everyone in the community has something to contribute, no matter what their economic or social circumstances, and that community based organizations are best placed to take initiatives that will realize this potential. Building confidence, providing knowledge, and encouraging self empowerment through capacity building are all part of the **ALGA** approach to village development. This generally means encouraging people to 'dream first' about what they want, and then supporting them in taking the initial small steps necessary to achieve their goals, similar to the way that **ALGA** got started.

What are the main achievements of the Alga approach to partnership?

Today **ALGA** is a highly respected CSO that continues to play an active part in working with and for a cross section of governmental organisations at different levels. One of its big achievements has been that it is now a recognized and welcomed provider of consultancy and training on partnership for heads and other senior officials from local self government. The training focuses on how to build effective social partnerships with CSOs and other community based organisations, particularly on how to support them in working with village activists to develop a vision and a strategy for a better future. The first training took place in 1999-2000 with the support of the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan. This was reinforced with an invitation to participants from Soros to bid for small grants that would enable the heads of local self government to undertake partnership projects with civil society organisations.

More recently **ALGA** has offered an annual 5 day 'time out' for heads of local self government to enable them to work with the **ALGA** team to review current issues faced in rural communities, and explore together what needs to happen to tackle these and how partnership with CSOs can best play a part in this. This is seen as a prestigious event and one which is popular with many heads of local self government.

In parallel with these initiatives, **ALGA** has provided an extensive training program and other support to village initiative groups and other community based organizations on how best to work with local self government. As part of this it has assisted many village groups with undertaking consultative PCA's (participatory community assessment) to enable villagers to identify local needs and priorities and agree how best to solve them. This like the training for local self government participants covers management and organizational development, team building, business planning, fundraising, marketing, and creating social partnerships.

To encourage and support staff from local self governments in developing social partnership, **ALGA** has helped the Central Library of Issykkata Rayon expand its collection of materials and databases on legal and other practical aspects of effective partnership work with the community.

ALGA also works with the National Conference of Women advising on the development of initiatives by rural women. In particular it has been able to provide practical examples from the field of effective ways of partnership including initiatives like self help groups, rural cooperatives, and women's groups.

Progress in getting support for partnership at the national level has been slower and more challenging. A current concern of **ALGA** and similar organizations is how to get legislation in place which would permit regional and state organizations to provide finance to support the civil society sector. Nevertheless **ALGA** has been and continues to be represented on many national commissions and advisory groups, particularly those concerned with development of policies and programs affecting the needs and interests of rural women and communities. It played an active part in the development of the national poverty reduction strategy, in the national strategy for development, and in the national strategy for reproductive health.

National partnerships in practice

In 2001 **ALGA** collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to create a seed fund to improve the quality of seeds used by farmers across Kyrgyzstan. It has also had a joint program with the Foundation of Obligatory Medical Insurance under the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic for improving the quality of health care services in villages.

In a different sector **ALGA** has worked with big businesses that operate in Kyrgyzstan. A recent example was a joint project with the Central Asian Breeding Company which agreed to provide free equipment, advice and medicines to farmers in return for a subsidy raised by **ALGA** to pay for artificial insemination available from Swiss sources for their cows.

At the international level **ALGA** has been successful both in raising funds to support its own work and in helping to channel international funds to grassroots organizations. Its experience is now widely recognized by the international community and it has membership in several international networks including APWLD (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development), AWID (Association of Women's Rights in Development, WECF (Women of Europe for Common Future), and CWLR (Consult for Women's Land Rights).

ALGA is now widely recognized as an organization with expertise in the specialist area of women's contribution to rural development, and one that can provide high quality advice and consultancy to support the development of civil society at all levels. Its success in this cannot be separated from its perspective on the importance of partnership with government, particularly local self government.

What are the key success factors in the ALGA approach to partnership?

- From the very beginning, even before it was registered as a CSO, the **ALGA** group of women was committed to partnership with government agencies. This has underpinned all the initiatives subsequently taken by **ALGA** whether at village level, oblast or rayon level or at the national level. This is combined with practical experience and commitment to ways of working across sectors that embrace the building of equal and open relationships, mutual respect and recognition, and a fundamental valuing of the contributions of every member of society
- **ALGA** has found creative and productive ways of consulting and working with people in village communities, especially women, to help them to articulate their hopes and concerns about the future and find practical and outcome-based ways to resolve them. It has also helped these groups to understand how to influence and work with local self government

- In parallel with this, **ALGA** has demonstrated to officials at different levels of government ‘a new notion about the position of civilians in relation to government’ and has provided training to government officials in PCA principles and methods.
- The **ALGA** team has managed to combine direct face to face contact with people at different levels in society with an approach that focuses in productive ways on improving livelihoods and conditions in rural communities. One aspect of this is that **ALGA** works in ways that achieve real and recognizable outcomes for all parties engaged in partnership activities – an important principle behind its success.
- As it has grown and its influence has expanded **ALGA** has not lost sight of its roots and what it had to do to make progress. These early experiences have profoundly influenced everything that it does now and has done up to this time.
- **ALGA** has been both professional and thoughtful in the way it works. Everything that it does is carefully researched, analysed, planned, reviewed and evaluated. This has ensured its credibility as a partner with something substantial to contribute.

What are the main lessons learned?

1. *“It is always a learning process,” says Olga Djanaeva “When we became a democratic society in Kyrgyzstan we did not understand the “slogans” about democracy. It took us time to understand what democracy really means. The same has been true about partnership working for the local people we work with”. In practice what this means is that every piece of work undertaken by **ALGA** is monitored and reviewed, and is treated as an opportunity to learn and improve. This began in the early days when members continuously reviewed and developed their own capacities. It is this kind of professionalism that has enabled **ALGA** to establish such a strong reputation and to gain the confidence of partners in government.*

Olga herself says
“Partnership of rural communities with local governments (LSG) is favorable ground for the birth of the “seeds” (or springs) of real democracy. It makes civil society strong and powerful to make (or to bring) positive changes in life.”
2. At a recent meeting held with staff to evaluate the work of **ALGA** one participant said *“...in the very beginning we felt a non-*

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- friendly attitude from some community members. They looked at us as a group of women who had created some kind of sect on the basis of American money....it was necessary to organize a meeting with some officials and those we had helped...to tell the purposes of our group and the problems many women face.”* It is this kind of mutual support between the **ALGA** and its partners in government that illustrates how important it has been for **ALGA** to maintain strong relationships with government partners - relationships that are based on trust, respect and reliability.
3. The same evaluation demonstrated that while **ALGA** places high value on strengthening partnership with state and government structures which include improving information dissemination, skills and experience exchange, it also runs a broadly based program of activities that support its mission of improving rural women’s status and standards of living. This ensures that it is in close touch with its target group and is well able to represent the issues and concerns that impact on the lives of rural women. It also ensures it is a reliable source of data and feedback as well as a channel for contact and communications with them. However **ALGA** works on the principle that people at the grassroots level are able to represent themselves and are quite capable of improving their own situations given the right kind of support.
 4. **ALGA’s** staff is knowledgeable about women’s (legal) rights, violence issues, and also about economic activities, micro-finance opportunities and related matters’ states the evaluation report. This is the basis for a number of awareness building activities and training which have enabled them “to get involved with local administrations and elected bodies as well as at national level without getting entangled in party politics.”
 5. In supporting the development of women’s groups and other village level organisations **ALGA** has passed on its principles and working practices many times over. The case studies from Ivanovka, Krasnaya Rechka, and Otogon will reflect the wider influence of **ALGA** and its impact on building effective partnerships between civil society initiatives and local self government.

Information sources

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2. Tatyana Temirova, manager, Kant CSSC
3. Interviews with the LSG Chiefs of the Issyk-Ata rayon
4. Publications in the printed and electronic Mass Media
5. Evaluation reports on activities of the NGO Alga

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Public Association ADEPT Issyk-Ata Rayon, Ivanovka village

Collaboration between ADEPT and the Ivanovka Local Self Government help mobilize the community

Summary

The Ivanovka Local Self Government (LSG) and Public Association **ADEPT** have worked together ever since **ADEPT** was set up by a village initiative group in 2001, although the LSG worked with the civil society from 1998 when it was first approached by ALGA. **ADEPT** and the LSG have a positive relationship and recognize each others strengths in contributing to a number of projects to improve the quality of life in the village. These include agricultural and water supplies projects as well as building public awareness of LSG budgeting and taxation.

Background

Ivanovka is a large village on the main road that runs east along the Chui plain from Bishkek to Tokmok. It has a population of 16,000 of which between 500 and 800 are farming households which grow sugar beet, spring and winter wheat, sunflowers, cabbage, corn, tomatoes and potatoes. In total there are about 3,700 households in the village. The population is ethnically and culturally diverse with about 30% Kyrgyz, 30% Russian and 30% Dungan. Before independence there was a much larger Russian and German population, but almost all of the Germans have now returned to Germany, and many Russians have returned to Russia. There are three industrial plants

in the village, including a paperboard plant, a fur factory, and a construction materials factory. The village infrastructure includes three secondary schools, a kindergarten, a hospital and health clinic, a telecommunications office, a library and a bank.

Partnership between LSG and CSOs began in 1998 when ALGA first approached the LSG. This led to the establishment of a village initiative group in 2001 following a Participatory Community Assessment (PCA) exercise funded by the European Union through Counterpart Kyrgyzstan, and facilitated by ALGA. The PCA identified key problems and priorities facing the village and the village initiative group. As a first project the group took up the need to provide safe drinking water to residents that were without it. This problem affected about 860 people mainly among the vulnerable population. Later the group raised funds and labor to repair a school roof. Then it launched a micro-credit project based on potato growing, and at the same time began to run group learning sessions for children in the village library.

How has partnership working developed in Ivanovka?



In 2002-3 the village initiative group decided to set up a new public association which they called **ADEPT**. Its role was to build on the earlier experiences of the village initiative group in mobilizing the community to play an active part in making things happen and getting things

done. This development has been welcomed by the LSG which now works in close partnership with **ADEPT**. The head of the LSG is particularly keen to hear the ideas and advice of local people and to engage them actively in problem solving in the community.

Current and recent partnership projects have included:

- An initiative to educate the population on the local authority budgeting process and taxation. Non-payment of taxes has been a problem in the transition period since independence, because people

do not understand the need and how the process works. The aim of the project is to make LSG finances as transparent and understandable as possible to the local population so they are aware of what is being spent and can play an active part in the decision making process, including problem solving. So far 60 community leaders have received training towards this end, and leaflets have been produced for general circulation. The next step will be the first annual budget hearing held in public so that the community can actively engage in regulating expenditures and priority setting. A first step was taken in 2003 when there was a public hearing of the rayon budget.

- A series of agriculture initiatives to educate and mobilize farmers to improve their production processes have been implemented. These have covered improving the quality of seeds, improving the quality of cattle and cattle breeding processes, and creating an agricultural cooperative. Educational site visits have been an important part of this and the LSG has played an important part in giving farmers confidence in the plan and mobilizing them to participate
- Earlier projects included installing a heating system into a school, providing a well equipped sports hall for young people, income generation, micro-credit initiatives, and setting up an agricultural technical service center that rents tractors and other machinery to farmers.

What have been the key success factors?

Initially, around 1998-9, it proved to be quite difficult to interest members of the Ivanovka population in playing a part in improving their own lives and the conditions in the community. At that time ALGA (see ALGA case study) and a local CSO of Tajik refugees got together and ran a series of PCA's across the diverse and rather scattered village of Ivanovka (previously it had been 3 villages), but it was not until the LSG joined them in 2001 that a village wide PCA meeting was held and a village initiative group elected. Since that time, the group began to progress. Members of the group and other community leaders were given training in problem solving and planning, including analytical skills, facilitation and mobilization, evaluation, social partnership, and finding resources. Here is what some of them have said:

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- ☐ “Before we thought everything was someone else’s responsibility. Now we have changed our ideas. We know we can solve our problems for ourselves.”
 - ☐ “The trainings we have received, and the opportunities I have had to exchange experience with people from other parts of the country have enlarged my life! I now have the skills and experience to facilitate a community needs assessment and to train others to do the same.”
 - ☐ “My self confidence that I can bring benefit and profit to the people in the village has grown. Even though I did not come from here originally I now believe that I am integrated as a community leader and that I can really do something for the community.”
 - ☐ “I am much more effective as a consultant and trainer, and feel much better able to demonstrate agricultural methods and to pass my skills on to others.”
 - ☐ “I have gained respect within my family and especially from my husband. Now he takes account of my opinions, and sometimes even comes to me for advice.”

The first village initiative group started small in its endeavours to tackle the problems identified in the first PCA. However the group was not daunted by this, and was helped considerably in building its effectiveness by the trainings provided during the drinking water project (see above). The LSG contributed to this early project by providing specialist expertise and some co-finance. Its involvement also helped to mobilize a wider group in the population.

Part of the early training was designed to cover the role of CSOs and the importance of teamwork across all sectors to ensure that community problems would be solved effectively. The biggest challenge at this time was to overcome the apathy of the population about getting actively involved in building their communities. Many of those who took up the challenge at that time are now holding leadership positions in Ivanovka and elsewhere.

What are the main lessons learned from partnership working in Ivanovka?

1. A group of stakeholders, both from the civil society and from the LSG, recently agreed that working together as a team brings greater community benefits than working separately. A teamwork approach helps to maintain commitment to the community and to the growth of Kyrgyzstan as a nation.
2. The leader of the self help group in Ivanovka noted that in his view it is important to collect together all stakeholders in problem solving so that each can make their contribution to finding the solution.
3. He also said that in his experience it is helpful to identify local leaders who have the ability and commitment to raise the energy of the local population so that people are ready and willing to contribute to building their communities.
4. A woman deputy on the Ivanoska Council had attended a training for women leaders in 2004. This, she said, had helped her to develop her potential as a leader, so that she was ready to take on this role 2 years later. Another community leader who had played an active part in the project to mobilize farmers has also become a deputy on the council. His experience as an activist had given him the confidence to take on this role.

Information Sources

Ivanovka Case Study prepared for Counterpart Kyrgyzstan as part of its evaluation report to the European Union Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights by Sue Burke, 2003

Interview with Head of Ivanovka Local Self Government and some of the leaders who work in partnership with the LSG, 2006

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Public Association Krasnaya Rechka, Issyk-Ata Rayon, Krasnaya Rechka village

Krasnaya Rechka LSG wins awards because of “effective collaboration and partnership”

Summary

The local self government (LSG) of Krasnaya Rechka has worked closely with ALGA and a local public association Krasnaya Rechka since 2001. A number of successful collaborative projects have been undertaken on the basis of information gathered through regular Participatory Community Assessments (PCA's) conducted in the village with the help of ALGA. The LSG has received a number of awards in recognition of its success in meeting community needs. Some of the factors underpinning this successful partnership are described in this case study.

Background

Krasnaya Rechka is a village about 30 km east of the capital Bishkek on the main road to Tokmok. It lies on the Chui valley plain and has a population of around 7,000 people comprising 1,500 households. Nearly 400 of the households are small farms and the residents mainly live off the land. The population is very diverse with 30% Kyrgyz, 30% Turkish, and 20% Russian. The rest are Dungan, Chechyn, Ukrainian, Korean and Armenian, and also includes a small group of Tajik refugees. The village originally had a mainly industrial base, but most factories closed down around the time of independence when many of the Russian population returned to Russia.

After independence many people were without jobs, but were allocated land in the land reform process so they had to learn how to live off the land very quickly. There were several very difficult years when lack of machinery, seeds, transport, and experience hampered efforts to rebuild the local economy and infrastructure. Today the village has a secondary school, a boarding school, a kindergarten, a health clinic, a communal service center, and a public bath house. The sugar factory has re-opened under private ownership. However the main source of income is farming the land, with farmers growing sugar beet, spring and winter wheat, corn, onions, and early cabbage for income, and other crops for family consumption.

How did partnership activities in Krasnaya Rechka begin?

The local self government (LSG) began working with ALGA in 2001. Before that there were no active CSOs in the village. At the invitation of the head of the LSG, ALGA, agreed to organize a series of Participatory Community Assessments (PCA) in the village so that villagers could be consulted on the priority needs and problems they faced. The rationale behind the invitation was, “I was a member of the ALGA Consultative Council at the time so knew of their work, and I could see that they were the strongest CSO in the area.”

The PCA project was part of a wider series of initiatives taken by international donors to “strengthen community participation in civil society.” The PCA process identified a number of problems: unemployment; poor drinking water; poor electricity supplies; bad roads; public bath house in need of repair; high crime rate; deteriorated irrigation system; no sports center for young people; and loss of the kindergarten. It also elected a 9 person village initiative group to start organizing plans for addressing these problems.

Early initiatives...

The first task undertaken by the village initiative group was a major community project to refurbish and re-open the kindergarten. This project was set up in a way as to encourage and mobilize people to take action to improve the situation in the village. The project was co-financed by the LSG and international agencies on a 50:50 basis. This included the LSG providing construction materials, help with water supplies, and a transformer to provide heating and lighting to enable the kindergarten to open. The refurbished kindergarten opened in 2003.

Around the same time the village initiative group supported a project to refurbish the school sports hall with help from parents, teachers and pupils. Part of the old floor of the sports hall had been recycled to become a new floor for a technical training workshop at the school. As well as providing labor and materials, members of the community raised funds through the traditional ‘ashar’ custom whereby anyone in need of help can call on others to give assistance to a practical problem that is beyond their capabilities alone.

Other projects initiated included setting up a micro-credit scheme to support vulnerable members of the community, especially single mothers. This has

enabled the single mothers to use their land more effectively and to upgrade their farming practices. About 400 people were assisted in this way.

The head of the LSG says that at this time he was keen to work with the CSOs, and especially with ALGA because it meant that 'real' projects could be undertaken with the help of their experience and expertise. This included the particular focus of ALGA on problems faced by women. He said, "80% of the taxation income of the LSG had to come from farmers who generally could only contribute in kind," so community projects provided an opportunity for this to happen.

What progress has been made through social partnership in Krasnaya Rechka?

In 2003 the village initiative group set up **Public Association Krasnaya Rechka**. The leader of the village and association is Elvira Usupbekova. This has continued to the work and the partnership approach of the original group. Working arrangements between it and the LSG are enshrined in a Memorandum of Understanding. This was based on a model memorandum provided by ALGA. This sets out the aims of the partnership and defines the rights and responsibilities of both parties. A recent project undertaken on a partnership basis is described below:

Partnership in action - Working together to improve the village telecom service

During 2005, as part of an annual community consultation process in the village of Krasnaya Rechka a serious problem with access to telephone services was identified by the villagers attending the consultation. ALGA, which facilitated the consultation process, raised the issue with leaders of the community, including local deputies and representatives of the local self government body. Together they worked out how the problem could best be solved, and decided the way forward was to hold a roundtable discussion between themselves and the provider of the telecom service (Kyrgyz Telecom) where they could work out how the problem would best be resolved. ALGA provided a lawyer to help draw up a final agreement between the parties.

During the meeting all of those present made some commitments to help resolve the problem. These were recorded in a formal protocol prepared by the ALGA representative that was signed by all concerned. This included an

agreement by the telecom agency to expand the number of phone lines to the village and to implement improvements to the quality of existing phone lines. As a result 250 households and some commercial organizations in the village got better phone service. Currently the partnership initiative has negotiated for 300 more lines to be provided by a different provider.

This initiative cost very little but had a big impact on improving services to the community. Both ALGA and the local self government representatives felt this was a good example of the kind of thing that effective partnership can achieve. They were particularly satisfied that it was a project with a sustainable outcome.

Currently the LSG and **Krasnaya Rechka** are working together on building public awareness and understanding of the budgeting process of the LSG so that there can be better informed public engagement in the authority's financial planning and budgeting in future. This includes a focus on ensuring gender awareness in the process.

What are the key success factors in this partnership?

- ☐ The head of the LSG and representatives of the public association agreed that shared or mutual responsibility was key to their successful partnership. There had to be shared aims, including shared views about gender issues and social problems.
- ☐ The trust that had built up between parties was also an essential ingredient to its success
- ☐ There had been mutual commitment to the rights and responsibilities of each side of the partnership, which had been signed in a memorandum of agreement which set out what responsibilities each partner would have in the list of projects agreed.
- ☐ The local community had been very active in the various projects that had been taken on through partnership and in addressing the problems identified through the PCA processes
- ☐ The head of the LSG and his staff had been very responsible in working with the public association.

What are the main lessons learned?

1. Both the head of the LSG and the representatives of **Krasnaya Rechka** agreed that it was important that there was openness and

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- friendliness in contacts between all of those representing the two parties in the partnership.
 2. They also agreed that because those involved in the partnership relationship from the start had a lot of personal motivation this had helped to make things work, even when things became difficult or challenging. This had played an important part in helping everyone to keep each other motivated.
 3. The head of the LSG said that he had been impressed by the preparatory research that was done by ALGA and **Krasnaya Rechka** before they embarked on any project, and with their familiarity with local problems. Conducting regular PCA's had proved to be particularly useful as a source of information
 4. **Public Association Krasnaya Rechka's** representatives, including ALGA said that they always had a discussion with the LSG before they conducted a program or project, and that when possible they conducted programs with the staff of the LSG.
 5. The head of the LSG pointed out that his authority had received many awards in recognition of the successful work they had done, and in his view this was largely because of the partnership between the LSG, ALGA and **Public Association Krasnaya Rechka**.

Information Sources

1. Interview with the Head of the LSG and representatives of ALGA and the public association in Krasna Rechka, December 2006
2. Case Study of the Krasnaya Rechka Village Initiative Group prepared by Sue Burke for Counterpart Kyrgyzstan, 2003

CSO Shazet, Issyk-Ata Rayon, Otogon village

Shazet and the Issyk-Ata Rayon authorities improve local infrastructure

Summary

Since 2001 when the first Participatory Community Assessment (PCA) was initiated in Otogon village by ALGA and the Kant Civil Society Support Center, and a village initiative group was elected, considerable progress has been made in improving the life and socio-economic conditions in and

around the village. The village initiative group expanded to become **CSO Shazet** and from the start worked closely with the village authority. Since 2001 funds have been raised from various international and bi-lateral agencies to support a wide range of community projects across the 8 villages that make up the local authority area. Over this period **Shazet** and the Issyk-Ata local authorities have gained considerable experience in partnership. Some of their achievements and lessons that can be drawn from these are recorded in the case study below.

Background

Otogon is a village of approximately 800 residents living in 386 households in the Chui Oblast about 20 km south of the main Bishkek to Tokmok road. The road to Otogon from the main road winds its way across the cultivated agricultural lands of the Chui valley plain. It is a small farming village nestled in the foothills of the Tien Shan mountain range. By 1998 the village water supply had deteriorated, and 54% of the population lived in poverty. In 2001 a village initiative group was started to help with the reconstruction effort following the break up of the former Soviet republic. This was done with the help of Counterpart International, the Kant CSSC, and ALGA (rural women's development organisation), and with funding from the European Union. At the time Otogon had no street lights, only dirt roads, and houses largely built from clay or 'saman' bricks with outside toilets at the bottom of the garden. The community was served by a secondary school, a medical aid center, a library, various kiosks selling items for local use, and a village club. It was also the base for the management unit of a large local reservoir. On the basis of its early work the first village initiative group became registered as a public association called Shazet.

How did the partnership with the local authority begin?



Otogon is part of the Issyk-Ata rayon (local authority). Today the village authority recognizes **Shazet** as a right hand partner in its work. The foundation of this partnership was laid when the village initiative group of Otogon was first launched following a Participatory Community Assessment (PCA) project that

was organised in the village in 2001. A village meeting attended by over 100 residents elected members of the first Otogon village initiative group to make plans to address the priorities identified through the PCA. The priorities problems included: no bath house, no telephone connection, no kindergarten, no street lighting, obsolete water supply system, unemployment among women and young people, lack of agricultural machinery, and expensive food stuffs.

Support for village initiative group by village authority from the start

The first project that the initiative group in Otogon tackled was to repair the school roof with the help of a grant from the EU via Counterpart and some additional money, materials and labor from the local authority. Many people in the village were doubtful that the project would finish until they saw a truck arrive with all the materials for the job. From that point on the refurbished school roof became the focus for a major effort by everyone in the village. Through everyone in the village pulling together the new roof was in place in 40 days: families contributed wood for construction work, men contributed expertise and labor, women provided workers with food, children and older people moved materials around, and the elderly gave advice. It was a huge community mobilization effort.

Since that time the village initiative group has expanded and become registered as Shazet, and the group has continued to work closely with the village authority. Between 2001 and 2003, Shazet and the local authority raised funds from the World Bank to strengthen village infrastructure, from the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan for a tree planting project, and from GTZ for setting up a community grain mill. Both parties see these kinds of partnership as triangular, in which the third point of the triangle is the funding agency.

What has partnership achieved in the Issyk-Ata Rayon?

Partnership has gone from strength to strength in and around Otogon. Today three members of the original village initiative group, who also became part of **Shazet** are now deputies on the village authority. **Shazet** has 5 workers and around 25 volunteers handling its projects. It is also supported by one staff member from the village authority.

Shazet's work now covers 8 villages that are covered by the local self government of Issyk-Ata, which serves a population of 6,000 people. The

area includes 4 secondary schools and one high school and increased employment opportunities have been created. Over 4 years the poverty index in the area has dropped from 80% to 30%. PCA's are conducted across all the villages every year and the results are reported to the village authority. A council of older people also provides information to the local authority.

Originally PCA's across the area were conducted by **Shazet** with the help of ALGA. Now local people from **Shazet** conduct them and also train community members in business planning, budgeting, human resource management and resource mobilization. One of the original members of **Shazet** recently said *"there would be no community based projects without the support of local self government which always tries to support groups in the community."* However she acknowledged that the relationship is a two way street and *"local people are now fully aware of local self government and its role and contribution."* It helps that local government recognizes that Shazet will come up with the results it needs to fulfil its work, while **Shazet** believes that partnership with local self government is a good way of mobilizing external resources. Together **Shazet** and the village authority for Otogon have been very successful in raising funds from international agencies.

Some current partnership projects

A recent partnership project which has been funded by the UNFPA is the refurbishment of the medical center. The local authority has contributed to the repairs to the building, supplied a security guard, paid for a gynaecologist to work at the center, and provided transport. Shazet has mobilised the support of a group of family doctors as project partners as well as a team of 4 people who have been trained as pharmacists.

Other current projects include:

- ☐ A 1 year gender budgeting project funded by a Finnish Fund for Cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).
- ☐ A project to attract rural investment and help alleviate rural poverty by providing credit loans that is supported by the ARIS.
- ☐ Plans to set up an agriculture information center in the new village resource center – see below
- ☐ A project in the local secondary school to be co-financed by the LSG and Mercy Corps with some contributions from the local population.
- ☐ A project on decentralization of the local budget funded by World Bank.

Shazet and the Otogon LSG are in the process of remodeling a community building in the center of the main village, so far with financial help from ARIS, and with support from ALGA. The building will be resource center for the villages in Issyk-Ata, providing information on possible sources of financial and other support. **Shazet** has provided some equipment and furniture. LSG has repaired the building, including the heating system, and has begun to build up a bank of computers that will be part of an internet café. It is also providing someone to manage the center who is also a specialist in fundraising. The LSG contribution is set out in a signed teaming agreement.

The resource center initiative and computer café are seen as vital for the future of Otogon given the isolation of the village. Arrangements between **Shazet**, ALGA and the LSG have been formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding. Implementation will be overseen by the community council of the area, with ALGA monitoring and evaluating progress.

What are the key success factors in the partnership arrangements in Issyk-Ata?

- ☐ Like its 'parent' organization ALGA, Shazet is committed to working in partnership with local self government, and sees this as fundamental to making a difference to life in the community. It has therefore maintained close relationships with the LSG and is now a well respected partner.
- ☐ Shazet has put in place sound systems for consulting the local community on a regular basis with annual PCA's across the 8 villages where it is now active. It is the effectiveness and professionalism of these processes that have given it credibility in its work with the LSG.
- ☐ A core group of village activists and leaders have remained committed to improving life in Otogon and surrounding villages and have 'grown' with the expansion of Shazet's role and influence, to the point that some of them are now involved in the process of local self government itself having been elected as deputies.
- ☐ From a small beginning, when it faced quite a lot of resistance from within the community, Shazet has proved itself as an organization that does what it says it will do. This has generated trust and confidence in its work and its approach, both in the LSG and in the community. Life in and around Otogon is better for the visible contribution of Shazet.
- ☐ Both Shazet and the LSG have formalized their partnership arrangements in accordance with the needs of each project they have undertaken. Their approach to their partnership has been flexible, with

different arrangements according to the areas of expertise of the partners. What has been important however is that roles are made clear and agreed on from the start.

- There has also been a system in place for reviewing how projects are progressing, and how well they have worked. This is based on a series of Observation Commissions, one in each of the 8 villages now covered by Shazet and the LSG. These monitor progress and submit reports to a Local Reviewing Commission that evaluates and signs off all projects once they have been completed.

What are the main lessons learned about partnership?

1. According to one member of Shazet “the most important thing is that ideas for improvements come from the community, bottom up,” and that Shazet, or whatever other community group is involved, conveys these to their contacts in local self government. However, in his view, this could only be achieved if CSOs were led by people who were fully aware of the situations and problems in their village, and who could make concrete suggestions based on accurate facts to local self government about how to address these. The Shazet representative who brought this up said, “I have to know the realities that people in the community are experiencing if I am to do this well.”
2. Another member of Shazet pointed out that projects undertaken in partnership with local self government were more sustainable than those where CSOs were working independently. One of the reasons for this, he suggested, was that there was much more consultation when working in partnership so problems were identified and could be ironed out as part of the partnership process.
3. Transparency in communication between local self government and community leaders was also identified as important, along with mutual accountability. “We should not hide information, especially information about weaknesses,” adding that this applied to both parties in the partnership. Open mindedness by local self government was also cited as a key part of successful partnership working.
4. Both partners have to “honor their commitments” i.e. demonstrate that they can deliver what they have promised and agreed, or else must openly acknowledge if there are difficulties and explore how these can best be overcome.

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CSO ZIONIS, Chui Oblast, Tokmok city

Zionis' collaboration with Tokmok government officials puts people to work

Summary

Over the past six years, Public Association of Active Young People ZIONIS in Tokmok city has been developing mechanisms which help young people find themselves and realize their potential, think about their values and culture, discover their role and place in society, and help their families. ZIONIS especially works to create opportunities for youth to work and helps them find employment. Since 2005, the PA has been assisting Kyrgyzstani citizens in finding jobs in the Russian Federation. Their work has been successful due to their partnership and relations with the Tokmok City Administration, Republican Labor Registry Office of Young People, Social Protection Administration of Tokmok, State Department of Employment, and CSOs.

Partner Information

ZIONIS was organized in 2000 at the initiative of some young leaders in the city government and youth groups in Tokmok. The mission of the organization is to enhance the social and economic conditions for the population in Tokmok and Chui Oblast between the ages of 20-55 by creating favorable opportunities for self realization, exposure, and fostering each person's inner potential.

The main partners of **ZIONIS** are the Tokmok City Administration, Republican Labor Registry Office of Young People, Social Protection Administration of Tokmok, and the State Department of Employment.

Tokmok City Administration was formerly known as the city council. The mission of the city administration is to be the mobilization center for

citizens' efforts towards progressive economic development, solving ecological and social problems, and improving life for all citizens and with a transparent management system.

Relations between the city administration and local self government bodies are built strictly on the legislation of Kyrgyzstan and the constitution.

Republican Labor Registration Office for Young People (RLROY) – its mission is to improve the quality and level of organizing job placements for young unemployed people throughout the republic and the implementation of a united public policy in the sphere of the employment of young people, students, and adolescents.

The main goal is to find jobs for young people, students and adolescents. The labor registration office for young people is not only an employment center for young people, but it is also a scientific center, where students have an opportunity to study practical trades and have internships. The government is creating a state program on the creation and development of the labor registration office for young people. These labor registration offices are functioning throughout all oblasts in Kyrgyzstan.

The Social Protection Department in Tokmok provides social support for disabled and needy people, participants of the Patriotic War, War in Afghanistan, and liquidators of the Chernobyl atomic power plant.

Background

Tokmok is located 40 km from the capital, Bishkek. Local citizens call Tokmok a city of friendship. Tokmok is a unique place because there are many different nationalities and yet common traditions are followed by all citizens.

“Young people are the core of the community. The community can be assessed by education, activeness, and the professionalism of young people,” according to Almaz Ismayilov, first vice-major of Tokmok city.

The reforms of the 1990's in Kyrgyzstan brought serious changes in different spheres of the local community, particularly social and economic. Tokmok was a center of active industry. At one time more than 15 large enterprises functioned and they immediately stopped at once after the fall of the Soviet

Union. All the factories were closed or destroyed. The highly qualified specialists left the city and as a result the population was reduced by 1/3 and the city infrastructure collapsed.

Unemployment was one of the main problems of the socially vulnerable population, especially for young people. The number of unemployed young people has grown only adding to the labor migration issue.

Unemployed people below the age of 35 needed professional training that would provide them with skills and information about job availability. Lack of self confidence hindered the majority of young people from showing their leadership skills necessary for achieving the success.

Today, more than 59,000 people live in the city, 20,000 of which are between 14 and 35 and the average age of the population is 30.

The majority of young people do not know their own rights, especially regarding labor legislation, and they face many problems during the job search process. Many problems connected with violations of the law by employers have caused serious conflicts between the employees and employers.

With the unemployment problem in mind, a partnership was forged between **ZIONIS**, Tokmok City Administration, and Republican Labor Registry Office for Young People, Social Protection Administration, State Department of Employment, and CSOs to tackle unemployment and help find young people work.

“Partnership with the city administration has significantly influenced in defining the general direction of our activities”
– Vyacheslav Kucherenko, leader of the **ZIONIS**.

The goal of the partnership was to reduce the level of unemployment among young people in Tokmok and Chui Rayon through trainings, consultations and technical assistance.

How did the partnerships between the ZIONIS and governmental agencies develop?

ZIONIS realized early on that it could not solve the unemployment problem by itself and needed to collaborate with local governmental organizations in Tokmok and Chui Rayon in order to get positive results. Negotiations with the mayor of Tokmok, directors of the Republican Labor Registry Office for

Young People, and State Department of Employment took two months, where they discussed establishing a labor registry office for young people in Tokmok. They also discussed the creation of a project that would help adolescents and young people between the ages of 16 and 29 to find jobs. The negotiations led to all organizations deciding to collaborate and work together on project development and implementation.



As a result, the year of 2000 was declared as the Year of Young People. The Tokmok City Administration initiated a partnership project with **ZIONIS** called “*A job placement project for adolescents and young people ages 16 – 29.*” A labor registry office for young people in Tokmok was founded within the framework of the project, which was jointly financed by the Tokmok City Administration, Republican Labor Registry Office for Young People (LROY) and the State Department of Employment.

Partnership challenges and solutions

The regional office of LROY in Tokmok was placed in the building of a former dormitory with narrow halls. Three organizations were located on one floor: Oblast Department of Employment, City Center for Employment and the regional representative for LROY. The regional representative of LROY delivered legal consultations and services as a psychologist. All work including the fulfillment of registration cards, journals and cover letters, were made by hand. Searching for job places for clients took a long time. All the above listed difficulties hindered the work of the labor registry office and prevented quality service delivery for clients.

Consequently, **ZIONIS** asked to place LROY in its organization. This initiative was supported by the Oblast Department of Employment because the office of **ZIONIS** is located in the



city center and is technically equipped, which assisted in automating job search system by using the internet, creating a computer based database that is regularly updated, and placing news, vacancies and resumes on its web site. Thus, the labor registry office for young people was part of **ZIONIS**. The agreement about using the office of **ZIONIS** for the labor registry office for young people was declared in a Memorandum of Agreement signed on November, 2004.

The aim of this partnership was to increase efficiency and service quality delivered by the labor registry office for young people in the Tokmok.

LROY paid the salary for 2 experts, gave monthly supplies, paid for the communications and office rent and equipment, and conducted activity monitoring of LROY's activities.

ZIONIS provided technical (equipments and furniture) and human (staff and volunteers) contributions. The Tokmok City Administration provided administrative resources (office and communications).

The creation of LROY in Tokmok through partnership with **ZIONIS** was a good experience for all interested parties including **ZIONIS**, the State Department of Employment, regional representative of the Republican Labor Registry Office for Young People, and the Tokmok City Administration.

LROY in Tokmok also provides job placements, vacancies, consultations, technical assistance, and training for free. In addition, free internship and practical experience for students in the youth employment fields are available.

Orphans and other young people with financial difficulties often apply to LROY. Lack of jobs, stipends and social allowances often lead to poverty, sometimes starvation, and therefore desperate people often are forced to commit crimes. In order to improve their situation LROY has special vacancies for these clients. Also, LROY has special vacancies for graduates or adult level education students.

According to Korkina Luidmila Alekseevna, senior specialist for the Social Protection Administration in Tokmok, *"partnership is an interrelation and interaction between the organizations. It is a mutual aid. Together we reduce the social tension."*

ZIONIS and LROY helping those in need

Alexander Naidenov applied for a job at LROY in Tokmok in December 2004. In January 2005 the experts of LROY offered him a job in Ltd, Altur factory. He agreed and worked there for 2 months as a simple worker, and then he became the master of his shift. The directors of the Ltd saw his perspective and potential and appointed him to be a Chief of the Department. Now he manages over 40 workers. The Ltd, Altur employs many young people and always works closely with LROY. Currently 11 people work at the factory with the help of LROY. Alexander expresses his gratitude to **ZIONIS** and LROY and owes his future with them and LTD Altur.

The Tokmok mayor has always supported all the initiatives of the **ZIONIS**. The project “Expansion of the LROY Network” in Tokmok and Bishkek was supported by the local authorities, Eurasia Foundation, and the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan. A database of unemployed young people was compiled and a web-site with vacancy information was created. More than 1,400 young people have found a job and more than 4,500 people have received consultations.



Another step forward in social partnership was the organization of a job fair; job fairs can be a great tool for employers and potential employees. The goal of the job fair was to give information to the unemployed and job seekers. Students and young people eager to study were given information about the professional education opportunities and specialties available. Employers had the opportunity to meet and hire skilled workers. In total 12 Job Fairs were conducted and more than 90 job seekers were placed. Many volunteer school children and volunteer students helped to organize and work at the job fairs.

A promotion center for labor migrants functions under LROY with the support of local authorities and Eurasia Foundation. When job seekers apply to the promotion center they will be assisted in finding a job in Sverdlovsk Oblast and Ekaterinburg city in Russian. Managers of the promotion center

work closely with the employers in Russia and potential employees and give consultations on how to fill out the appropriate documents. Lawyers give legal consultations.

Success Story of Elena Suhovskaya

Elena Suhovskaya, a resident of Ivakovka village of the Issyk-Ata Rayon, is a psychotherapist. She has been searching for a job throughout Kyrgyzstan and Russia for a long time. She applied to LROY in Bishkek. She was then sent to the LROY in Tokmok city because Ivanovka village is closer to Tokmok than Bishkek. She came to the Tokmok LROY in July 2006. They gave her information about the available legal work in Russia and helped her write a CV and gave her consultation and technical assistance (copying, photo, and fax). The LROY experts found a vacancy in Sverdlovsk Oblast in Russia. She got training for 3 months in Bishkek, then in November 2006 she went to work in Russia at the employer's invitation.

The following projects were undertaken by **ZIONIS** and government agencies in collaboration from 2003 – 2005.

- “Reducing the level of unemployment among the young people of Osh city by creating and developing a representative of LROY in the South together with promoting the service quality and professionalism of LROY experts through introducing new methods and approaches in the employment sphere” This project resulted in the creation of two public associations Agla and Adis.
- “Reducing the level of unemployment among the young people of Balykchi by creating and developing the LROY in Balykchi”. The unified database framework of ZIONIS was used to bring together unemployed and employers. Training for “Job search methods” was delivered and leaflets on “Labor rights of young people” and “Successful job research” were published.
- “Involvement of young people working in the Kyrgyz Chinese Garment Factory in Tokmok in the human and labor protection process.”

What was achieved through partnership?

Collaborative actions gave the following results:

1. Official permission of the Employment Department to move the representative of the LROY to the office of ZIONIS resulted in strengthening and improving the quality of services.
2. Development and introduction of the innovative technologies in other regions of the Kyrgyz Republic: consultation for target audiences, especially for young job researchers and the creation of job places for building a future career.
3. The experience of LROY in Tokmok was expanded throughout other regions and regional LROY representatives opened in Balykchi (Issyk-Kul Oblast), Osh (Osh Oblast) and Jalal Abad.
4. Public associations similar to ZIONIS were established in Bishkek, Osh and Jalal Abad.
5. ZIONIS initiated an informal network of youth CSOs to realize projects on a larger scale.
6. Sustainable positive relations with local governmental bodies were built and they see ZIONIS as a reliable and honest partner.
7. Experts of ZIONIS are members of the Working Committee which aims to work out the Development Strategy of LROY to 2010. It was created by the Employment Department under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Kyrgyz Republic.
8. ZIONIS takes an active part in the realization of the "Development Strategy of Tokmok until 2010" and in discussions of social and economic problems of the city and public budget hearings.
9. Since May 2006 the joint planning of the Republican LROY is being held twice a year with regional representative of LROY, which are based at ZIONIS.
10. Co-financing of partnership activities by local self governments and state organizations is taking place.

"Partnership is a collaborative work to satisfy Tokmok's needs for job placement. To find a job for one person is important. Collaborating together we can deliver more services to the population," says Luidmila Teplinskaya Stepanovna, vice-chairman of the State Regional Committee of Migration and Labor in Tokmok.

"Decency is very important. Working with partners we pay attention to achieving the goals set and try to implement the project so that trust is justified. It is impossible to achieve success without trust in collaborative work and the ability to trust is essential."A. Idrisov, Director of the republican LROY.

Together with the State Committee of Migration and Labor and the republican LROY and its representatives ZIONIS is planning to arrange job fairs for labor migrants on a regular basis.

What were the main success factors in partnership building?

The following factors were the key factors in creating and developing the partnership:

- ☐ **ZIONIS** works on the principle “We build the life as we want!”
- ☐ Staying mission driven
- ☐ Acquiring the knowledge and skills on the development of social partnership.
- ☐ Competence and communication skills
- ☐ Professional teams - there is no labor fluidity. Experts only leave their jobs if they are promoted to good positions and work in well-developed companies.
- ☐ Mutual trust between partners. Partners have to clearly understand their roles in the community and they need to unite the efforts of the government and CSOs
- ☐ Partner accountability to each other

*“We value our reputation and paid attention to this when we started to collaborate with various organizations. After some time our reputation began working for us.” V. Kucherenko, Chief of the **ZIONIS**.*

What lessons have been learned from the partnership?

Partnership must be built on mutual trust and accountability to each other; *“We should have written the responsibilities of each side concisely, before proceeding to collaborative project realization.”* (Chief of **ZIONIS**)

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CSO Sairon, Chui Oblast, Issyk-Ata Rayon

Sairon and LSG's collaborate to improve the lifes of Tajik refugees and their communities

Summary

June 20th has been celebrated as World Refugee Day for more than a half century. This day is devoted for people who were forced to leave their homes, relatives, and friends. The refugees from Tajikistan, Chechnya and Afghanistan, living in Kyrgyzstan have kept their pride and courage. This case study is about their struggle and **CSO Sairon** which gives them hope for a better tomorrow.

“At the time only a few refugees could live in their own houses. The majority stayed with relatives and acquaintances where it was safe. My large family has been divided; five of my brothers and sisters stayed in Kyrgyzstan, the others moved back to Dushanbe. The most difficult thing was that I could not say ‘good-bye’ to my father and could not bury him as it was unsafe to go to Dushanbe,” Vahobjan Rasulov, leader of Sairon. Currently, approximately 22, 000 ethnic Kyrgyz and Tajik refugees from Tajikistan live in Kyrgyzstan as a result of the civil war from 1992-1993 and the subsequent economic and social collapse. Many Tajiks and ethnic Kyrgyz refugees went back to Tajikistan after the war, yet many still remain and now live in the Chui Oblast of Kyrgyzstan. Most of the refugees and later on, migrants, live in the Issyk-Ata Rayon in the villages of Ivanovka, Krasnaya Rechka, Urievka, Ken-Bulun, and Kirshelka. **Sairon** along with the Local Self Government is trying to solve the social and economic problems of the Tajik refugees and the local population.

Background

Sairon was created in 1999 through the initiative of refugees from Tajikistan and the local population living in Issyk-Ata Rayon of Chui Oblast. **“Sairon”** means passage in the Tajik language.

The mission of the organization is to promote sustainable democratic and civil society in the Kyrgyz Republic, by protecting and integrating refugees and migrants from Tajikistan, and improving the social and economic situation of vulnerable people through:

- ☐ Legal defense and the promotion of interests of the new citizens (ethnic Kyrgyz) and the local population;
- ☐ Delivering information and consultation services (including obtaining citizenship in Kyrgyzstan);
- ☐ Conducting educational and medical programs;
- ☐ Developing social partnerships;
- ☐ Rehabilitating infrastructure in the Chui Oblast;

Local and international organizations played a great role in establishing and developing this organization. ALGA, an organization working in the Issyk-Ata Rayon and Chui Oblast, has sustainable partnership relations with the rayon administration and LSG, and introduced Sairon to its partners.

Today, **Sairon** is conducting legal consultations for ethnic Kyrgyz and Tajik people, educating them about how to earn money, receive credit, and

participate in agricultural, medical and educational programs. Sairon has significant experience working with the Issyk-Ata Rayon State Administration, the State Committee on Migration and Employment in Issyk-Ata Rayon, passport department, schools, the Chui Oblast Medical Insurance Department, rayon polyclinics and hospitals, and seven LSGs in the eastern part of the Chui Oblast.

Situational Analysis

Village Residents View

“At the beginning the majority of refugees thought that we will use their resources, but we proved that we would not ask for anything, but earn it ourselves. We began cultivating the land that the LSG gave us. The land was far and not good for planing, but we dealt with it. We have planted sugar beets, potatoes and corn and studied to be cooks, carpenters and builders.” – Aziz Satibaldiev, a former refugee from Tajikistan. Now he is a citizen of Kyrgyzstan and an expert working for Sairon.

Social economic problems in Ivanovka village needed urgent solutions. Social infrastructure in the village, especially schools, hospitals and water pipes needed refurbishing and reconstruction. In 2000, **Sairon** working collaboratively with ALGA conducted a PCA in the village and local residents along with refugees from Tajikistan participated. Repairing secondary school # 3, refurbishing the roof

and heating system of secondary school #1, and repairing the dormitory where the refugees live were defined as acute problems and priorities. Many problems concerning the refugees were also determined. These included getting permanent and temporary residence permits, getting birth-certificates, registration of marriage, obtaining the status of a refugee, lost documents, obtaining citizenship, finalizing contracts, and employment. Analysis of the surveys and questionnaires showed that more than 80% of ethnic Kyrgyz people, who came back and now live in the eastern part of the Chui Oblast from Tajikistan did not know the local legislation, their rights, and have encountered legal and social problems, which they cannot solve themselves. These problems were the key factors in establishing partnership activities between **Sairon** and LSG of the Issyk-Ata Rayon.

How was the partnership developed?

The repairing and reconstruction of village infrastructure was not achievable without the support of local authorities. For instance, in order to repair the dormitory where the

«Shazaman Aliev Askerovich, Chief of the Krasnaya Rechka LSG states, *“Without the partnership with non governmental organizations, I am sure, it is impossible to improve the village.*

refugees lived, many resources were needed. **Sairon** applied for help from the Ivanovka LSG, which also was aware of the problem and was committed to solving it. The action plan for implementing the repairs was jointly developed with specialists from the LSG and was undertaken on the “Ashar” or voluntary basis. It was the first partnership experience of the LSG and a local public association of refugees, and its success inspired other projects to improve the real social infrastructure of Ivanovka. In particular the roof of secondary school # 1 was refurbished in order to create favorable conditions for educating village children; and the sport hall of the secondary school # 3, which celebrated its 101th anniversary in 2006, was repaired to use sports as a way to integrate refugees’ children with the local children. In addition, the branch office of the central hospital and a medical room in Ivanovka was repaired. To assist in the realization of these projects, the ayil okmot provided a letter of support and letters of guarantee, where the LSG indicated it would give a financial contribution. The project was ultimately supported by the UNHCR and Mercy Corps.



Achieving positive collaboration with the Ivanovka LSG influenced the future strategic plan of **Sairon**. As a result, **Sairon** conducted negotiations with other neighboring villages such as Krasnaya Rechka, Urevka, Ken-Bulun, Budenovka and Sovetskoye where refugees

from Tajikistan live. Hearing about the good partnership experiences they had with the LSG, the neighboring LSGs expressed willingness to collaborate with **Sairon** in solving village problems.

The partners conducted a joint PCA in each village and defined the problems of the village. Some problems included unclean drinking water, repairing the heating system, roof of the secondary school, sewer system, etc. The projects which aimed to solve these issues were developed jointly with the representatives of the LSG based on the results of the research and analysis. They jointly researched the social infrastructure that needed repairing and they worked out a budget and agreed to purchase building materials. The



LSG contributed not only in financial means, but also in human, in-kind, and technical contributions for up to 20-30% of the whole project costs. The LSG also provided letters of guarantee and support. As a result, the water pipe and heating system were repaired and the old transformer was replaced with a new one in Krasnaya Rechka; the water pipe system was repaired in Ken-Bulung and Budenovka; the roof refurbishment was completed in the secondary school in Urievka; the sports hall was repaired in Ken-Bulun, and the sewer system was repaired in Sovietskoe.

The rehabilitation of the social infrastructure had an important value in building partnership relations between CSOs and LSGs. The joint activities showed the necessity of uniting the efforts and resources of the LSG and local community organizations in order to solve the social and economic problems of the village.

What were the next steps?

The next step in partnership relations was to solve one of the most acute problems facing the refugees from Tajikistan (mainly ethnic Kyrgyz)- that of obtaining citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic. The most acceptable long-term solution for ethnic Kyrgyz refugees was integration into the local community. To achieve this goal **Sairon** had actively worked in partnership with governmental bodies, rayon state administration, passport departments of the Administration of the Internal Affairs of the Issyk-Ata Rayon, and LSGs in the eastern part of the Chui Oblast. Experts from **Sairon** had conducted a number of roundtable discussions on *“Ways of solving the problems of local refugees and the local population through social dialogue and building partnership relations with village communities and LSG bodies.”* Chiefs of LSGs, chiefs of the passport departments, chiefs of the rayon departments of the Internal Affairs and representatives of the UNHCR in Kyrgyzstan participated in the roundtables. At the roundtables they decided to apply to the president and Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic. As a result, the agreement *“About granting the citizens of the Tajik Republic a simplified order of citizenship disaffiliation in the Tajik Republic and granting the simplified order of citizenship acquisition in the Kyrgyz Republic,”* was reached.

Expert testimony

*“Without the help of **Sairon**, we could not deal with many documents for acquiring citizenship.”*

Kazim Islamov, the ex-chief of the passport department in Ivanovka village of the Issyk-Ata Rayon Department of the Internal Affairs.

Citizenship empowers

“This was the most joyful day, when we acquired citizenship. We organized a holiday, prepared plov, served a meal, and invited neighbors. Now we can move freely without any problems from the militia, see the doctors, get a birth-certificate, and even vote in the elections. We stopped feeling like second rate people.” Vahob Rasulov, chief of **Sairon**.

Several workshops were conducted with the experts of the passport department, where they provided information about the rules and procedures for obtaining citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic and about the current legal documents necessary to apply. The passport department directed people who wanted to acquire citizenship to Sairon. The experts of **Sairon** gave consultations and information about collecting and preparing the documents for the passport departments that are necessary to get citizenship.

During this project, more than a thousand refugees, living in the territory of the Issyk-Ata Rayon, became citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic. The ceremonial handing of citizenship passports to refugees was organized with the joint efforts of all partners.



Today **Sairon** keeps working in partnership with state governmental officials in the same field. They assist refugees from Tajikistan in acquiring citizenship, actively work with “new citizens” delivering special services, giving credit for income generating activities to poor families, and conducting training and seminars for them. The organization has also acquired practical partnership experience in the micro-financing sphere.

What was achieved through partnership?

1. **Sairon** acquired the experience of coordinating partnership projects, delivering various services for refugees, ethnic Kyrgyz people and the local community.
2. An information consultation center and medical-social room for refugees and the local community was created based **Sairon's** work. Sairon not only supports a center for individuals, but for community organizations and village initiative groups as well.

3. Issyk-Ata Rayon Administration, LSGs, law enforcement bodies and local community organizations have acquired collaboration experiences, joint decision making skills, experiences of role distribution and responsibility- and this has resulted in realizing social and economic projects within the Issyk-Ata Rayon.
4. Vahobjan Rasulov, leader of **Sairon** was nominated as a deputy of the Ivanovka Village Council.
5. **Sairon** is actively participating in the realization of the Ivanovka Village Development Plan.
6. Celebration of the June 20 as “World Refugee Day” in Ivanovka has become traditional.
7. The successful implementation of various important projects helped hundreds of refugees from Tajikistan become integrated citizens.

Partnership Testimonial

“Because of the gained partnership experiences with local CSOs ALGA, Sairon and Abdikayir, we were included in the supervisory council of the ARIS project.”

Shazaman Aliev
Askerovich, Chief of the
Krasnaya Rechka LSG.

What were the key success factors in partnership?

- ☐ Mutual trust and respect between the partners;
- ☐ Collaborative identification of the local community problems;
- ☐ Joint decision making;
- ☐ Clear responsibilities;
- ☐ Clear and joint vision of goals and tasks.

What lessons have learned in the partnership?

All stakeholders must be involved in the partnership, there must be willingness to fairly and transparently use resources, and all partners must have a deep understanding of the program activities.

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Communication Operators Association (COA), Bishkek

***COA collaborates with the National Communication Agency and
the Ministry of Transport and Communication so consumers
win!***

Summary

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." This quote by Henry Ford is a motto for the Communication Operators Association in the Kyrgyzstan. The Association

has spent several years working in partnership with the Ministry of Transport and Communication and the National Communications Agency on implementing the task described in this case study. The case study focuses on the development of partnership from the “coming together” stage up to the joint work conducted between the Association of Communication Operators, Ministry of Transport and Communication and National Communication Agency on solving problems in the sphere of information and communication technologies in the Kyrgyzstan.

Who are the partners?

The **Communication Operators Association (COA)** was established in November, 2000. Its main tasks are to present and protect the interests of communications operators in Kyrgyzstan, expand and strengthen links with public, state and international organizations, introduce advanced communication technologies to the country, and promote the development of information and communication technologies. It was founded by: ElKat Ltd, SeTech, AsiaInfo, Internet KG, Ala TV, and Transfer Ltd – communication providers. Currently 14 leading communications companies are members of the association, including: Ala TV Ltd, AsiaInfo, Winline, KATEL, ElKat Ltd, Sky Mobile, AkTel, BiMoKom, Total, Saima Telecom and IP, Kyrgyz Telecom, and Kyrgyzstan based representatives of the ZTE corporation and Huawei.

The Ministry of Transport and Communication (MTC) is responsible for policy development and the management and administration of the road transport system and communication and information in the Kyrgyzstan.

The National Communication Agency (NCA) is responsible for state regulation of the activities of communications enterprises. This includes creating favorable conditions for competition, attracting investment, the development and improvement of measures to control monopolies, and protecting consumers' rights.

Why was a telecommunication partnership needed?

Information and communication technology is one of the strategic development priorities of the Kyrgyz government. In 2005 the telecommunication industry made up 6 % of the gross domestic product of the country. The national strategy for future development of the industry is set out in the government's policy documents “Information Communication

Technology for Development of the Kyrgyz Republic” and an associated National Action Plan. However, it became clear that the strategy needed to be incorporated into the day to day work of the telecommunication industry at a practical level and this had not been addressed. The Ministry of Transport and Communication, as the executive body of the Information and Communication Technology Council therefore took on the responsibility of developing plans for implementing the National Strategy as one of its main tasks.



Recognizing the importance of the telecommunication strategy for the future development of the country as well as for their own roles and services, a group of public agencies, CSOs, CSOs and the business sector lobbied the Ministry of Transport and Communication and the National Communication Agency to consult them and take their opinions and needs into account in its work in developing the information and communication strategy. This led to the development of a partnership between state agencies and the civil society structures in the formation and planning of the national telecommunication strategy.

Communication is one of the most important services in Kyrgyzstan. Decisions about the development of telecommunication in the country affect everyone. Kyrgyz Telecom, the public corporation responsible for running telecommunication, is a monopoly which oversees access to and use of the national telecommunication network. Problems of access to communication channels and equipment have become increasingly acute over the past 5 years with the arrival of new telecommunication providers bringing both fixed systems, cellular systems, and access to the internet. Competition between telecommunication providers has been unequal and unfair because basic principles, terms and pricing methods have not been agreed upon, and as a result, the population's access to the new communication services has been limited. Terms for joining the national telecommunication network, for its regulation, and for improving operators' network interconnection are key issues for the efficient development of the future communication system of the republic.

It was the procedural problems for entering the national network, access of rural areas to telecommunication systems, administration of the telephone system, and management of the radio-frequency spectrum that led to the establishment of a partnership agreement between the **COA**, MTC and NCA.

How did the partnership develop?

Step 1: Discussions between the **COA**, MTC and NCA on Information and Communication Technology began in

2003. **COA** together with the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan had already initiated public discussion on the issues, and had begun to assess and investigate what was needed to meet the different requirements of the population, telecom operators, and the government if rural areas were to get reasonable access to telecommunication services.

Initially, working out the minimum communication services for the population that

could be guaranteed by the government was very unbalanced, both in the way that the targets were set and in the way that they would be monitored.

This prompted the discussions that led to starting a new partnership which brought together the providers of the telecommunication services and their consumers. These early discussions also included representatives of local communities and other civil society organizations.

According to Almaz Altibaiev from Logic Company, "... in order to have lasting partnership, it is important to listen to opinions, the needs of participants and to eventually see results. Only in that case more enthusiastic people will get involved ..."

Extracts from the Collaboration Agreement

"... this confirms their partnership agreement to collaborate on the principles of openness, agreement positions and mutual consultations, according to their responsibilities and competences on main directions of the priority problems in the sphere of information and communication technologies"... joint actions by all stakeholders based on the mutual understanding of problems in the sphere of information and communications are an efficient way to reach agreement on tackling some of the problems."

Step 2: The next step in partnership development began in 2004. It took the form of a partnership project between **COA** and MTC and was designed to formulate a policy in the sphere of information and communication technology, and to develop an action plan for

the MTC of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2005. It resulted in a “*Collaboration agreement on the development of information and communications technologies*” aimed to hold constructive dialogue between public agencies, representatives of civil society and business communities, which are currently functioning. The most important outcome of this was the development of a procedure for the annual preparation of an action plan based on collaboration between public agencies, the business sector, civil society, and international organizations. Its purpose was to provide an institutional framework for the partnership project, a process that included an agreement to hold annual conferences on information and communication technologies to be attended by all stakeholders.

The major tasks of the conferences were to work out recommendations and agree on actions for all participants representing the information communication technology sector in Kyrgyzstan, develop a competitive market in information and communication, define the values and the legal basis of this, and to formulate the conceptual and strategic tasks and methodologies for progressing the development of information and communication in Kyrgyzstan



The conferences on information and communication technologies are not one-time activities but are annual events during which participants formulate research proposals and commissions and jointly discuss and elaborate in order to agree on decision making related to problems and issues in the information and communication

technology sphere. In working out ways forward, each participating agency contributes technical assistance, logistical assistance, financial and other resources. The core aim of the process is to examine the advantages and disadvantages of future plans and proposals, and to consider the risks and rewards which various participants have obtained before implementation.

Over the last 3 years three conferences on information and communication technologies took place between the **COA**, MTC and NCA, all supported by the Soros-Kyrgyzstan Information Program and Program of Public Administration. The third conference also had support from local companies in the form of technical assistance, information and organizational help.

Step 3: COA has conducted regular PCA's and defined essential priorities and problems with the participants of the PCA, namely communication operators: Winline, KATEL, Bitel, AkTel, ElKat, Saima Telecom, and IP, representatives of the National Communication Agency, and Public Corporation Kyrgyz Telecom. The last PCA research was conducted in June 2006. Participants analyzed problems in communication and information technology in Kyrgyzstan and identified a way to get equal access for general use of channels by the operators' networks as one of the main problems. This problem was taken up through the partnership project which highlights the need for equal competition in the communication market and was resolved in 2006 with assistance from the Ministry of Transport and Communications and National Communications Agency as main partners.

Partnership building processes

Partnership building processes in this project included scheduled and unscheduled meetings, personal meetings with officials of various levels, analytical work on materials of other countries, active correspondence via e-mail, internet discussions, round tables and workshops. Joint information campaigns and organization were undertaken via the information distribution lists of the **COA**.

Next steps: The next task facing the public organizations in the information and communication partnership was making amendments to the "Law on electric and postal communication".

What did the partnership initiative achieve?

A number of joint activities have been undertaken and are planned as a result of the partnership between the **COA**, MTC, and NCA. These include:

1. The MTC and the NCA both engage workers from the **COA** as branch experts, and are keen to maintain on going partnership arrangements.
2. The National Strategy for "Information and communications technology for development of the Kyrgyz Republic" is being successfully implemented, and within the framework of the strategy three annual conferences on information and communications technologies have been held. The executive director of the **COA** is in charge of the Organizational Committee of information and communication technology conferences. The third and latest conference in November 2006 identified a need to revise the existing partnership mechanisms to take into account current realities such as

managing different levels of activity and the appropriateness of existing working tools. It was therefore decided that the regulation and structure of the conference should be changed. As a result of decisions taken at the conference the following happened:

- ☐ powers between the public agencies on the administration of the radio-frequency spectrum have been divided,
- ☐ the tax law on communication service delivery was changed, telecommunication tariff and anti-monopoly legislation were developed,
- ☐ monitoring systems for information and communications technologies were modified

3. In addition the following have been created:

- ☐ A Working Group under the MTC for development of values and laws for electric and postal communication.
- ☐ A Commission on Research and Analysis has been set up under the NCA, which includes representatives of the **COA** and other Public Unions.

4. The following amendments to the government policy and law in the sphere of information communication technology have been agreed:

- ☐ The “Methods of establishing the fixed rates for delivering the network services by electric community operators, which form the electric community network for general use” was developed and confirmed by the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic on January 4, 2006;
- ☐ NCA has estimated a united rate of the network communication; Amendments and changes were included in the Price List of the “Services for communication operators” section;
- ☐ “Agreement about the internetworking connection” was agreed, which promotes the improvement of internetworking communication between the electric communication operators.

5. The MTC of the Kyrgyz Republic, together with the **COA** and the business community, coordinates relationships between all stakeholders. Based on constructive dialogue and learning from other countries’ experiences, the mechanism for working in this way

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- is being worked out and it will make the process more regular and efficient.
6. Currently the conference on information and communications technology is the mechanism for effective partnership.
 7. The Association has gained experience on collaboration with many stakeholders, which has strengthened its organizational potential and advanced its competence to work within national legislation on information and communications technology. This has enabled it to take part as an expert in the formulation and implementation of national information and communications policy at both a technical and organizational level. This has meant it has been able to contribute to activities set up to design future regulation and develop and apply new information and communications technologies while also providing qualitative advice and legal assistance to its members and consumers.
 8. Sustainable business relationships were achieved through working together on the improvement of values and laws on communication, and mutual trust was built between the participants and a partnership agreement was finalized.
 9. Coordinating and unifying the different interests of governmental, business and public organizations on development of the information and communications community of Kyrgyzstan was successfully achieved.
 10. The successful activities of partnership have brought benefits to many members of the population in Kyrgyzstan by providing them with the right to access to a wide range of modern information and communications technologies (mass media, cellular, fixed communication, internet). These technologies are now used by international and local business organizations, governmental supervisory, executor and regulation bodies. The partnership has also influenced the quality of communications services delivered by making the telecommunication providers more competitive.
 11. The prospect of making amendments and additions to legislation on *“electrical and postal communication of the Kyrgyz Republic”* as part of the annual action plan of the MTC and NCA of the Kyrgyz Republic will enable the partnership agreement to have a long-term impact on the country’s future information and communications policies.

What are the key success factors?

The following factors have had a crucial influence on the process of building and developing sustainable and efficient partnership and dialogue in this project:

- ☐ A constructive approach by participants throughout the dialogue processes;
- ☐ Willingness to discuss and assess alternative solutions and options;
- ☐ Open discussion of problems;
- ☐ Consolidation of the resources of members of the partnership;
- ☐ Regular and productive exchanges between all participants on both policy development and policy implementation
- ☐ Responsiveness of all stakeholders, with growing transparency and accountability.
- ☐ Effective work by Working Commissions and Consultation Councils set up under the partnership agreement, together with continuing consultations between the MTC and NCA with the **COA** which have allowed the national bodies to support the partnership initiatives in a timely manner and in ways which will have a positive impact on reforms that are planned.

According to Oleg Jerbko, Executive Director of **COA**, *“the work of the Association and all other CSOs is not only about problems. It is also about making proposals and lobbying, which includes the identification of professional and, effective options to tackle the problems which have been identified.”*

What lessons have been learned?

1. Joint discussion to address national issues around information and communications has shown that regular collaboration is needed not only between the **COA**, the MTC and the NCA, but also a wider range of participants who work in or are affected by information and communication technologies.
2. At the first stage of the partnership resources of the **COA** were directed towards establishing business relationships with leading Russian organizations working on information and communication technologies, and obtaining from them experiences and examples of regulating documents. This saved a lot of time and financial resources particularly for the task of working out *“Methods for establishing prices for*

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- the delivery of network services*” by those operators of electric communication which provide the network of electric communication for general use. This helped to achieve rapid results.
3. Partners learned to find joint solutions to fundamental problems in the field.
 4. Business companies became aware that consolidated efforts and working together can help to formulate and change national policy.
 5. Mass media publications, both printed and electronic, can be used to influence the position of national communications agencies on communication problems. In this case they consequently became partners of the Association.
 6. It will be necessary to develop an efficient information strategy and campaign in future both to attract public attention and to build a broader support base.
 7. Disputes and problems in the development and delivery of information and communication in Kyrgyzstan can now be discussed openly between partners thanks to the partnership mechanisms that have been put in place. As a result problems can be jointly resolved.

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Issyk-Kul Oblast

CSO Leader, Issyk-Kul Oblast, Karakol city

***15 years of collaboration between Leader and Issyk-Kul Oblast
government officials help achieve positive change***

Summary

CSO **Leader** is a voluntary club of students and school children, and is located in Karakol, which is the regional center of the Issyk-Kul Oblast. Facing external and internal challenges for the past 15 years, **Leader** has grown into a vibrant and respected organization by building strong relations with government to facilitate development and improve the lives of its constituents. The major priority and goal of the organization is to enhance personal and organizational leadership capacities, development potential, and ensure everyone takes the responsibility to live with dignity. This case study describes the relationship and joint work between state agencies and Leader and the positive changes achieved in the community.

A Memorandum is a foundation for responsibility

Leader's project "Public Legal Reception" developed new ways of delivering legal assistance to the needy. During the project's development, clear roles and responsibilities were set out between **Leader** and the Issyk Kul Oblast State Administration. As a result, a roundtable discussion established the legal services that would be available to the population. In addition, problems, solutions, and perspectives of all stakeholders were discussed. The project and roundtable were possible due to the collaboration and partnership between government representatives and **Leader**, including the help of the Issyk-Kul Oblast State Administration, Representatives of State Administrations of Oblast and city levels, Rayon State Administration, Local Self Government (LSG), law enforcement bodies, mass media, and CSOs.

At the roundtable, a memorandum of mutual understanding and cooperation in the spheres of delivering legal services for the needy population was created, and the Memorandum was signed by 14 partner organizations. Partnership relations between the participating organizations and the Aksuu Rayon Department of Domestic Affairs and Karakol City Department of Domestic Affairs were established when the government agencies signed the memorandum. At the time this type of legal partnership was very unique, and it set an example of how to establish a sustainable partnership; the parties involved had a common goal and felt strongly enough about the goal to sign

a document stating they would work together to achieve the goal through implementing specific roles and responsibilities.

Leader and Karakol City work together to keep the city clean

Cleaning up trash on the street and reconstructing an irrigation ditch were found to be with the largest community problems according to a needs assessment conducted by representatives from **Leader**, representatives of Karakol Service Center of Municipal Improvements and Green Households, government departmental structures, deputies, and the mayor and vice-mayor of the Karakol City. The Karakol Service Center of Municipal Improvements and Green Households and the city delivers these services. The main goal of the project *“Enhancement of Service Qualities and Reconstruction of Aryk Irrigation Ditch”* was to clean up Karakol, especially to remove trash.

As a result of negotiations with local self government bodies and staff of a Karakol factory, a working group was created and strategic directions for activities were defined in order to keep the city clean.

Information from the population was gathered through questionnaires and conducting focus groups with the chiefs of condominiums, community based organizations, the city administration, and Karakol factory.

The results of the research on trash removal and irrigation ditch reconstruction were presented for testing and analysis to the Karakol City Administration. A basic plan of action, expected outcomes, and indicators of the proposed activities were developed on the basis of a roundtable discussion. Goals for improving the service quality were defined, responsible people for each point of the plan were appointed, and a working group of 9 people was created. The working group was trained and obtained the expertise of the Urban Institute to conduct research in the field of improving the service quality delivered by the local self government bodies.

The collaboration between the working group, government, and civil society has been so successful that it now presents analytical documents on quality of services annually to the city administration based on testing results. The city administration and government bodies have an opportunity to use the analytical data in planning, the budgeting process, and evaluation of activities. The work has continued as the evaluation method for ascertaining service quality is very universal and applicable in any sphere of city services, including the redistribution of land in Karakol.

Sustainable partnership requires trust and support

The Karakol City Administration asked **Leader** to act as an observer and an arbitrator in massive protests during May- June 2005. These were based on problems of Chelpek and Jolkolot villages of the Aksuu Rayon bordering with Karakol City who wanted to clarify the following problems and disputes:

- ☐ A definition of the borders between the Aksu Rayon and Karakol City;
- ☐ residents complained there was unfair distribution of lands in the village territories for construction purposes;
- ☐ residents wanted an explanation of the statute about the privatization of land resources for the plant-breeding station in the Issyk-Kul Oblast and unpaid taxes.
- ☐ inhabitants in the country bordering with Chelpek Ayil Okmot did not have village or city residence permits
- ☐ residents suspected corruption of officials directly working on the redistribution of land resources;
- ☐ residents needed an explanation of the functions performed by the state registration, the city architect, and the department of management of municipal properties.

Approximately, 2000 people from Octyabre and Chelpek Ayil Okmot conducted daily protests near the State Administration demanding the allocation of land for personal construction. The land in question was owned by Karakol City and rented. More than 7,000 people were waiting for their turn to get a site for construction. In the summer of 2005, the lobbyists wrote a letter to the president and government and arranged daily meetings. No decision was made and as a result some of the protestors used such forceful methods as threatening to capture the administrative buildings by force.

Being an initiator and a stakeholder in this issue, the Karakol City Administration sought out a third party that they could trust, **CSO Leader** to conduct a public inventory of the land territories in the Karakol City.

Public hearings on land policy in Karakol were held aiming to discuss the problems of land policy and the reasons for their occurrence with all stakeholders, and to listen to the standpoint and point of view of all stakeholders;

As a result of the public hearings the general position of the different stakeholders on problems of the land policy were defined:

- ☐ The need to develop a strategy for using municipal lands;
- ☐ A Study of the previous normative and legal acts on ownership of land

Through **Leader** and the government's long lasting partnership all stakeholders participated and felt that their voice was heard. The principles of transparency and equality, and the participation of citizens and all stakeholders in the decision making process ensured that the problem would be solved peacefully through dialogue.

Through effective CSO - government collaboration, the problems of the disputed lands in the bordering areas of the Karakol City with the Aksuu Rayon were avoided and resolved in a peaceful manner.

In addition **Leader** increased the capacity of the Karakol City Administration through its collaboration and transferred these skills:

- ☐ Expertise in organizing interdepartmental and intersectoral dialogues to discuss problems of local importance;
- ☐ Experience of introducing formats and procedures for formulating public policy;
- ☐ Attraction of new donors and partners willing to work with local self government bodies;
- ☐ Ways of attracting additional investment for the city budget, at least 3 million soms, through the conducted public inventory of land territories. During the inventory 2,259 free lands, 1,101,696 hectares were made available for sale or renting on the basis of auction;
- ☐ developing a strategy and use for municipal lands;
- ☐ Ability to work with diverse interest groups

Achievements

Leader and various government agencies facilitated and strengthened their partnerships and relations with the formalization of mechanisms through the creation of an Advisory Council, Local Grant Committee, Community Council, Public Municipal Council and the inclusion of **Leader** in various

state commissions. Above all the signing of the collaboration memorandums and agreements allowed the groups to:

- ☐ Reinforce and distribute positive partnership experience;
- ☐ Demonstrate the efficiency and benefit of partnership relations to partners and community;
- ☐ Create prerequisites for promotion of such new state programs and laws as “About the social order”, “About the community organizations” and make amendments to the tax code at local level.
- ☐ Promote accountability and transparency of activities undertaken by Local Self Government bodies;
- ☐ Promote the improvement of service qualities delivered by Local Self Government bodies;
- ☐ Provide resource contributions by partners;



Key success factors of partnership:

1. Joint needs assessments
2. Joint development of strategic documents;
3. Creation of partnership interaction bodies in the decision making process (commissions, working groups, councils);
4. Equality in the process
5. Mutual accountability;
6. Joint monitoring and evaluation;
7. Creation of sustainable mechanisms for encouraging partnership activities (like a social bank).

Lessons learned

The activities and partnership experience of **Leader** shows that it is possible to work efficiently and achieve good results working collaboratively with the state bodies in all spheres of implementation phases of ideas and initiatives, including conducting needs assessment; planning; preparation; assessment of resources and opportunities; realization; analyzing; monitoring and

evaluation. Partners must improve their knowledge and skills on establishing dialogue, conducting negotiations, and resource mobilization.

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Public Association Resource Center for the Elderly (RCE), Balykchy city

Collaboration and partnership between RCE and the government improve the life of the elderly at local, refional, and national levels

Summary

This case is about CSO Umut-Balykchy (Umut means hope), reregistered as **Public Association Resource Center for Elderly People**. At the beginning of its activities the organization did not have any external support and step by step it has been achieving its goals. Although it did not have external funding sources collaboration and partnership with the government helped it solve the local problems efficiently. The partnership activities were then expanded from the local level to the national and then to the international level based on the various levels of the governmental officials. Umut-Balykchy was established in 1991 and just recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. In 2003 it was re-registered as **Resource Center for the Elderly (RCE)** and it is located in Balykchy and works to improve the lives of elderly

people. The mission of the organization is to prepare and encourage favorable conditions for an effective state policy for elderly people and the development of tools that the public can use to make sure this policy is realized.

Today the activities of **RCE** cover all of the northern oblasts and even Osh and Jalal-Abad Oblasts in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. **RCE** has a representative in Bishkek. Since 2004, the organization began working in Kaliningrad City of the Russian Federation, where it has a branch office. The organization is a founder of the gerontological network called, AgeNet Central Asia without borders, and the network works throughout all Central Asia Republics.

Background

During the Soviet Union, Balykchy was one of the industrial centers of the Issyk-Kul Oblast. More than 30 union enterprises operated there and the standard of living was high. After 1993, problems such as unemployment, drug addiction, prostitution, and abandoned children and parents, touched Balykchy and people thought that the city was dying.

By the second half of the 90's many people were applying to CSO Umut-Balykchy and workers of the organization for help. In 1999 Umut-Balykchi decided to discuss the potential solutions and availability of resources to help solve these problems with the local authorities. The organization arranged a roundtable discussion with governmental officials. How would the CSO persuade the government that partnership was necessary? The activists of the organization decided to prepare a video about the life of Balykchy residents. They agreed to make a video about disabled children and elderly dying from hunger and from the effects of cold or because of a lack of medical care and medicine.

The city mayor of Balykchy helped the organization gather people and governmental officials for the discussion. In order not to hear such words as, "How can an CSO teach us what to do? We do not have time" Umut Balykchy organizers just showed the video to participants instead of officially opening of the roundtable.

The city mayor thought that the roundtable would continue for only 1 -2 hours, but it continued for 8 hours. An action plan was created during the roundtable. Every participant shared an opinion about what to do and how

to do it. Then, the action plan was hung in the building of the city administration for all to see. This was the first step towards social partnership. In a week, all partners including the city administration, City Department of the Internal Affairs and representatives of CSOs got together in the office of Umut-Balykchy and discussed how to implement the project and give social and legal assistance for the most vulnerable residents of Balykchy. The project was developed by all partners and it was supported by the Eurasia Foundation.

Social and legal consultation service

City administration, City Department of the Internal Affairs and the **Resource Center For the Elderly** became the project partners. The main goal of the project was to assist the citizens in realizing their rights and interests through providing them with free training on their rights, providing them with information, and giving them consultation and helping them analyze their problems. Retired people were the most vulnerable group; therefore, it was decided to deliver training and consultations on developing pensioners' self-help groups.

Over the years, **RCE's** work with the elderly has become very successful and **RCE's** experience has been studied by the OSCE, Eurasia Foundation, local self governments, and CSOs. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan is still interested in developing a similar project to help the elderly. This partnership initiative has covered 12 projects, which meet the city priorities and 5 small community councils have been created in Balykchy as a result.

Small community council

As this project was implemented small community councils began being created, and these councils included representatives of the community, chiefs of the quarter committees, courts for elderly people, district militia officers, representatives of the women's and young people's committees, and project lawyers. Regulations for the small community councils were created, and they had an organizational structure, a system and periods for implementing the activities, and clear tasks and functions of the council.

Big community council

The experiences showed that individual or collective problems of residents could not always be solved by one small community council or the city

authorities. In 2002, the small city councils and project partners founded a big community council, aiming to solve community problems through social partnership. A Collaboration Memorandum was signed during the implementation of the big community council, which highlighted the prioritized tasks, functions, and obligations of the partners.

The partnership work is continuing on...

A complex approach through the partnership experience for problem solving has been developed as a result of looking at problems from many different angles. All the newly created institutions helped create the development strategy of Balykchy. With the strategy in place the frequent change of governmental officials no longer poses a problem because organizations are bound by the strategy and not by individuals. Now lawyers of the small community councils work effectively, and therefore there is no more need to maintain the 12 public legal offices in the city. The results of the 12 partnership projects, for example, creating an information center, planting trees, and supporting children show the improvements in the city. The city administration reflects the results in their reports. The CSO stays mission driven. Before decisions were made by keeping silent, now decisions are discussed and people actively are involved in decision making.

Partnership experiences at local, national and international levels

The **Resource Center for the Elderly** has good partnership experience at the national level with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, and with the Bishkek City Council.

A representative of **Resource Center for the Elderly** is a member of the Working Group at the national level on developing the formats and procedures for public policy. The working group is aimed to develop the mechanisms and formats of collaboration between all community sectors. Representatives of the **Resource Center for the Elderly** are experts on the reform of monetary benefits and have taken part in the research on the benefit reform

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has called on this resource center to help develop a law on social order (state). A public hearing on developing the national program for solving problems of elderly people is currently being developed in partnership. This will allow partnership work

between the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Social Fund and Tax Inspectorate to expand in order to solve the problems of the elderly.

In 2004, **RCE** formulated a series of training courses on “*Complications on the development of aged people*” which included 5 trainings on the following aspects of gerontological development:

1. Social
2. Cultural;
3. Legal;
4. Economic;
5. Political;

“We plan to establish and develop the Eurasian gerontology network in order to implement the International Madrid Plan on aged issues” – Kanat Kasmaliev, moderator of the “AgeNet Central Asia without borders”

Representatives of 18 organizations working on issues of the elderly from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan took part in the workshop and they established the network “AgeNet Central Asia without borders”.

An International Plan on Aged Issues was confirmed in 2002 in Madrid and was signed by 159 countries. Countries in Central Asia have undertaken many activities within it. However, the “implementation of the Madrid obligations among the participant countries” in the Kyrgyz Republic has been positively improved because the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has become a member of this network.

An international conference on promoting the Madrid plan was conducted in September 2005. A real course of activities for helping the elderly was applied to the conditions in Central Asia and many proposals were developed during the conference. Later the **Resource Center for the Elderly** conducted public hearings involving state organizations. Results and documents on the public hearings are being discussed by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to see if the proposals can be implemented.

What has been achieved?

All the partnership activities with the state bodies on protection of rights and interests of the elderly led to:

- ☐ Increasing the public awareness and role of the citizens in problem solving;

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- ☐ Shaping the conception that the elderly are not alone and need to be provided with support and protection for realizing their rights and interests;
 - ☐ Raising self-confidence while protecting citizen rights;
 - ☐ Helping **RCE** work from the local level to the national, then to the international, which shows strong and efficient strategic decision making.

What were the key success factors?

Working in partnership is not always easy. To achieve good results, CSO activists noted how important it was to be partners instead of opponents and work together to find the key decision making people among the partners while establishing the partnership.

What helps to promote successful partnership?

- ☐ Clear division of rights and obligations between the partners;
- ☐ Agree on joint activities in written form by confirming the partnership agreements;
- ☐ Willingness to make the partnership activities transparent and accessible both for the partners and all stakeholders;
- ☐ Collaborative decision making on monitoring the joint projects and definition of the ways of exchanging information;

What were the lessons learned in the partnership?

- ☐ Choose partners who have the same goals and interests;
- ☐ Spend more time and effort in establishing the partnership;
- ☐ Achieve a profound understanding of goals and tasks by the different partners;
- ☐ Be aware of the exact contribution of each partner and value it;
- ☐ Be aware of the outcome expected from each partner;
- ☐ Have formal and informal ways of attracting partners to achieve common goals;
- ☐ Solve conflict situations at the early stages;
- ☐ Avoid dominating over the partners.
- ☐ Do your best to achieve the mutual understanding and trust between the partners;

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CSO Rural Life, Issyk-Kul Oblast, Jetioguz Rayon

Challenging Traditional Thinking

Summary

This case study reports on a positive and effective partnership experience between CSO Rural Life, the Jetioguz Ayil Okmot and the chiefs of Chirak

and Kabak villages in tackling village problems. Bibigul Bupebaeva, leader of the Public Association **Rural Life** began her story of the collaboration like this...“Our initiative group of 10 people was set up in the year 2000 to strengthen the role of villagers in solving key local problems that had been identified in Kabak village, and also to help raise living standards. We set up the Public Association. An important principle for us was that we were opposed to stereotypes. From the start our Association collaborated with local self government bodies, and they in turn expressed an interest in working with us, since both of us recognized the benefits and effectiveness of a collaborative approach.”

This account sets the scene for this case study which is about the work of the PA **Rural Life** in Kabak village. The village is in the Jetioguz Rayon of the Issyk-Kul Oblast, 32 km from Karakol, which is where the oblast center is located. Around 1,950 people live in the village. PA **Rural Life** has been successful in bringing together enthusiastic members of the community to solve problems.

Background

CSO **Rural Life** was set up in 2000. Since then, it has completed 11 socio-economic projects. Its mission is to mobilize the rural population to engage in solving real problems and in improving the quality of village life. It works in following ways:

1. Providing social support to villagers;
2. Promoting rural women’s interests by setting up women’s networks in villages;
3. Educational activities;
4. Supporting the development of micro-credit schemes;
5. Reconstructing and developing the infrastructure of the Jetioguz Rayon in the Issyk-Kul Oblast;

First steps toward developing collaboration

In 2000, a Participatory Community Assessment (PCA) was conducted in Kabak village which included all village residents as well as employees of the ayil okmot. The outcome of the PCA revealed that 88% of the population lived in poverty and that only 12 % of population had a source of income. The majority of the income earners worked in educational, social and economic institutions in Kabak village and in other neighboring villages

including Chirak, Jetioguz and Kyzylsuu villages. Creating additional employment, improving the village infrastructure, and increasing the standard of living in the villages were key goals in the strategic plans of local self government. Since **Rural Life** had the same goals, it proposed to the heads of the ayil okmot that it should collaborate with them in tackling these problems.

*“We took **the first step towards building partnership** with local self government bodies ourselves. It happened during the pre-election process of the new director of the ayil okmot. We helped Bolot Sulaimanov, a village activist and candidate for the post, to arrange meetings with electors and we also participated in the election process as independent observers. Our role was to ensure transparency and compliance with democratic election regulations. It was then that we recognized that partnership with the local authority as strategically important...”*

Bibigul Bupebaeva, leader of **Rural Life**

Rural Life was set up to develop Kabak village by finding ways to overcome the situation that emerged after “perestroika” (reorganization). At the time, it was important not to lose the interest and trust of villagers in the CSO and in local self government bodies.

One of the first projects implemented by **Rural Life** along with the ayil okmot was to organize daily hot lunch for 68 school children who came from needy families or were orphans. The project was supported by Mercy Corps and during a two year period 68 children were provided with hot lunch during the school day. Sulaimanov Bolot Kazmakunovich, the director of the ayil okmot, personally stepped in to influence the sustainability of the project. As a result, the LSG allocated one room in the secondary school for serving the meals and also gave practical and material support to assist the project. **Rural Life** has also worked with the Jetioguz Rayon Council to provide the public with election education and to explain the rules and norms of the democratic election process.. Through this partnership, data was produced to encourage and lobby for women to participate in elections for local village councils. One outcome of this was that Aigul Sulaimanova Erkinbekovna, a resident of Lipenka was nominated as a candidate in the election to village council of Lipenka. She was actively assisted by **Rural Life** in developing her election program, organizing her campaign, and meeting electors.

Rural Life, working with young people

There is a secondary school called “J. Amanbaev” in the village, 250 children attend the school, and 19 teachers work there. The school had experienced a number of practical problems over several years. These included:

- ☐ The need to refurbish the roof of the school;
- ☐ The need to install a new heating system in the school;
- ☐ The need for efficient and effective teaching

Members of **Rural Life** actively helped to solve the schools' problems which were regularly discussed at meetings of the school administration and ayil okmot. The school administration consulted **Rural Life** on how best to proceed with project development and implementation. This led to the ayil okmot agreeing to allocate 12,000 som for repairing the school heating system.

Later over the period from 2002 – 2004 the roof of the school was refurbished and a new heating system was installed with financial support from the Mercy Corps. Both the staff of the ayil okmot, village residents and school children played an active part in the repair works.

By the end of these two projects the ayil okmot began to invite members of Rural Life to meetings where it developed monthly and quarterly plans. The director of Kabak Ayil Okmot also nominated the leader of the Rural Life as a candidate for the village council in the expectation that her contribution would help to improve opportunities available to

Mutual Trust leads to further respect.

*I turned down this suggestion as I do not know the Kyrgyz language very well. Instead we nominated Nurgul Esenalieva, a secondary school teacher as a candidate.” Bibigul Bupebaeva, leader of **Rural Life***

villagers and assist with the successful implementation of scheduled village development projects.

Nurgul Esenalieva was successfully elected and became a deputy of the Kabak Village Council. As a deputy she has been able to present villagers' problems in sessions of the council and has also come up with possible solutions. Later she became a director of the secondary school

Next step in the partnership: Improving village infrastructure

In 2004, 50 street lights were installed in the neighboring villages of Kabak and Chirak following a resolution by the Jetioguz Village Council. An official agreement was reached between **Rural Life** and Jetioguz Ayil Okmot that maintenance of the street lights would be handled jointly by the ayil okmot and the village moderators of Chirak and Kabak.

Future plans

The Kabak Ayil Okmot and **Rural Life** have agreed to work together in partnership to implement the following:

- ☐ Make Kabak village a model village in the Jetioguz Ayil Okmot and the whole rayon.
- ☐ Organize consultations on community mobilization in such neighboring villages as Lipenka, Bogatirovka, Chirak, etc;
- ☐ Share experiences of partnership and collaboration between CSOs and the government to solve key community problems with other ayil okmots and village councils;
- ☐ Ensure the availability of standardized low interest credit facilities for villagers;
- ☐ Create a resource center for Chirak and Kabak villages based in **Rural Life** under the framework of an ARIS project.

The first partnership experience between **Rural Life** and local self government bodies in Kabak resulted in positive views about the civil society in the region and also motivated the members of **Rural Life**. After experiencing the contribution of **Rural Life**, the ayil okmot started inviting its members to join discussions on finding solutions to local problems, including opportunities to work on strategic development and operational plans for the village. The first joint plan focused on implementation of the ARIS project to mobilize the rural community in Kabak village. In the future, **Rural Life** plans to develop a strategy for working in partnership with local self government bodies in identifying and resolving village problems and achieving agreed upon goals.

What was achieved in the partnership and what were the lessons learned?

When asked, “What helped you collaborate with state bodies in achieving their goals and finding solutions to problems in the community?” the staff of **Rural Life** answered: *“Our openness to help, our potential, and our ability to provide information and skills that our partners lacked. Our partnership has been built on the basis of terms that are mutually beneficial, and which also provide for sustainability and effective relations within the partnership.”*

The partnership between **Rural Life** and government officials is stable. Members of **Rural Life** regularly participate in meetings of the Kabak Ayil

Okmot. In return, Bibigul Bupebaeva, leader of **Rural Life** expresses her gratitude for the material, expertise and moral support given to the CSO by the OSCE, the Agency of Social Technologies, and members of the national women's network whose motto is "Women can do everything!"

Being on the same page is key

To make sure both sides of the partnership stick to their agreed responsibilities as partners PA Rural Life and the Kabak Ayil Okmot agreed from the start that project partnerships would be backed up with formal partnership agreements. As a result, problems in their partnership arrangements have occurred.

Partnership agreements setting out the rights and responsibilities of each side were signed for all projects between Rural Life and the local self government bodies. Each party worked within the framework of its competencies and performed its responsibilities as set in the agreement. When there were delays for sound reasons, the partners agreed to revised schedules.

The experiences of CSO **Rural Life** are a prime example that it is possible to

solve problems of village development through joint activities which are based on citizen participation in decision making. Common goals, joint planning, shared project execution, and monitoring and evaluation all make a significant contribution to improving the standard of living. **Rural Life** supports and will continue to support the integration of villagers into the initiatives and projects of the ayil okmot. It will also assist all educational institutions under the Jetioguz Ayil Okmot as well as all active citizens in formulating and implementing the strategic plans needed to develop the area.

"The success of our partnership is due to the clear allocation of roles and functions for each partner which are set out in a signed agreement."

Bibigul Bupebaeva,
leader of Rural Life

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CSO Shoola,

Two strands of partnership: poverty reduction and disaster management

Summary

This case study is about the experience of Public Association **Shoola** (which means Beam) in working with vulnerable groups in the population. It reports on what **Shoola** has been able to do to help these groups overcome their perceptions of their own limitations and their lack of confidence in their own powers to change things. The achievements described were only possible due to partnership with state bodies including the ayil okmot and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Ecology and Disaster of the Kyrgyz Republic. The project has helped to overcome some of the stereotyped views that are held about the capacities and capabilities of CSOs by demonstrating the serious contribution that partnership can make.

Background

After the fall of the Soviet Union the kolkhozes and sovhozes in all rayons of Issyk-Kul Oblast, as in all of Kyrgyzstan, were reorganized. At this time, state industries across the country became privatized and many were bankrupted because of the inadequate and unequal redistribution of capital and because people were not ready for a market based economy. Unemployment grew because many people were used to a dependent way of life and the majority lived in poverty. Most people experienced multiple problems in seeking jobs or alternative work; citizens lacked information, lacked the means to process agricultural products, and lacked access to credit.

Public Association **Shoola** was set up in May 1996. It was one of the first organizations in Kyrgyzstan to pay attention to the needs of the vulnerable rural population. Initially, **Shoola** conducted a charity event for local women because they were the first target group. During this initial work it gained

experience which led to a change in thinking and approach from a focus on charity to a focus on development. Today the mission of **Shoola** is to create sustainable development for vulnerable groups in the Issyk-Kul Oblast through integrated rural development and the concept of self help.

In 2001 **Shoola** collaborated with the Chief of the Tortkul Ayil Okmot who provided the organization with statistical data on the number of vulnerable families in the area, and on the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the infrastructure of the ayil okmot. Also in 2001, the Kyrgyz Republic began to implement its Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and a National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The government promoted the importance of organizing community based organizations which could help implement various programs.

How was the idea of self help introduced in the partnership with ayil okmot?

A project to develop a self help approach in the Ton Rayon was jointly prepared in partnership and collaboration between **Shoola** and the Tortkul Ayil Okmot. As a starting point social workers' activities were analyzed. This was a matter of particular interest to the ayil okmot at the time because social work as a profession and an area of specialized work was new to the local self government. It had been introduced as part of the transformation into a market economy which had resulted in economic stratification and growing poverty in the population. Social workers were seen as key front line workers in implementing the programs and projects to be taken forward through the partnership. The focus of the planned joint project on poor and vulnerable members of the community was in line with the goals and mission of **Shoola**.

The role of social workers of the ayil okmot was to mobilize the population to set up the self help groups or SHGs. However, as the work got underway it became clear that only **Shoola** had the capacity to mobilize and motivate the community to establish SHGs. At first, social workers were unable to work productively with the target group. One of the reasons for this was local residents' distrust of state workers, and this was a barrier for a long time. The social workers themselves had not had any real practical experience working in the community. Through the training provided, they acquired skills in developing the local market, in solving gender conflicts, and in medical and agricultural issues. The state administration provided necessary statistical data. Currently, the local self government provides 8 SHG's with facilities and promotes the SHG's through other programs such as ARIS.

The project entitled, “Together against poverty”, was jointly planned and implemented with the Tortkul Ayil Okmot and support from the Asian Development Bank. By time the project had been successfully completed, 18 self help groups (SHG) had been set up in six ayil okmots in the Ton Rayon working on a collaborative basis with social workers. Within the project, the idea of self help was disseminated through a series of training programs for staff of the ayil okmot and members of the SHGs who would be working on the program and were in need of technical support. As a result of the project, two cooperatives were set up on the basis of the SHG’s and functioned well. The chief of the Ton Rayon having seen the achievements of the SHG’s reported this to the central government and as a consequence the SHG’s through one of the cooperatives won a tender for a new tractor. Local self government provided an old building to house the second cooperative based on an SHG, which was planning to open a wool processing business. “Seed capital” was included in the project budget for SHG’s to carry out further business development for public benefit and for developing the village infrastructure. The role of **Shoola** was to train the staff of the ayil okmot by providing them with knowledge and skills on the principles and practices of self help. The training program came from programs developed in India to support self help groups.

Conferences, roundtable discussions, and other activities to support the project were organized with the participation of local self government and the SHG’s. Activities include the identification of goals and tasks for further development in line with the long-term development plans of the territory.

Partnership with Ministry of Ecology and Disaster Management in the Issyk-Kul Oblast

Shoola has been working on two other partnership projects: “The resource center for vulnerable rural inhabitants” and “Reducing the risks of disaster situations in Issyk-Kul Oblast”. These were undertaken in partnership with the ayil okmot of Ton Rayon, the Ton Rayon Headquarter for Disaster Situations and the Civil Defense, the Ministry of Natural Disaster Situations, 8 local departments of disaster management and reconstruction in the Issyk-Kul Oblast, and secondary schools of the Ton, Aksuu and Jetioguz Rayons.

Shoola gave money to support these projects for fuel and for reconstruction of infrastructure affected by natural disasters. It also conducted training in first aid in case of future disasters. Teams from schools and adult teams have been created as a result of the project.

The role of the state partners in the project was to fund the project and or provide the equipment needed for reconstruction work and for the salaries of the workers who helped with the restoration of infrastructure which had suffered from disasters. Specialists helped with the overall analysis and with mapping the territory. The rayon administration had also contributed by mobilizing communities, allocating equipment, and finding contractors to do the repair and restoration work. The reputation of the Civil Defense Agency helped to motivate people and build trust because it is a body which was widely recognized as competent and professional. The comprehensive analysis of disaster risks in different villages was done by experts from Civil Defense who also worked out additional programs and initiatives for risk and disaster prevention in the Issyk-Kul Oblast. Secondary schools provided work space and rooms for training and education of adults and school teams. The leaders of these teams were chosen by teachers. Each of the partners also had to make reports according to state level standards. These were set when the partners arranged a roundtable discussion and conference to discuss and agree on accountability.

Currently a drainage system in Frunze village in the Tup Rayon and bridges in Kyzyltuu village in the Ton Rayon has been constructed with the direct support of **Shoola**. This work was monitored by donors and they gave a very positive response to the standard of the reconstruction works. Currently, roundtables discussions on the use and distribution of irrigation water to farmers are being jointly planned in some ayil okmots. The Rayon State Administration has already agreed to provide any necessary assistance, including issuing invitations and bringing in all the stakeholders needed to solve the water distribution problems.

What have the partnerships achieved?

- Disaster management and reconstruction work
Adults and school teams from the affected villages have gained new insights and understandings and showed that they are prepared to take action during a disaster. This is captured in an agreement that has been accepted by the two sides. The people's dependency attitude as receivers of help has been overcome and 7 social objectives for prevention of the disaster risks have been drawn up. Five teams of junior rescuers have been established and a summary map of the Ton Rayon that forecasts possible disasters has been matched against the populated areas to identify potential disaster risks. This has been distributed widely.

- ☐ Role and contribution of women
Women have overcome the difficulties they have faced and many have moved from the category of socially vulnerable to become part of the group who achieve average revenues. They have also become activists capable of solving their own and their groups' problems, and are well able to help other SHG members both materially and morally. They have learned to take on responsibilities and to perform them for the public benefit. Their dialogue, communication and conflict resolution skills have been improved. Overall, state officials and the population have acquired skills in resource mobilization and have been able to undertake profitable activities even when finances are in deficit.

Self Help Groups

The experience of **Shoola** in developing and sharing the idea of SHG's with the Ton Ayil Okmot is an example for the other 5 rayons of the Issyk-Kul Oblast and the 2 rayons of the Chui Oblast- Sokuluk and Alamedin. To date 115 SHG's have been set up involving 1115 families. The SHG approach is a major local resource that is a fundamental component in the development strategy of the region. Many SHG members have become deputies on Local Council Cooperatives and clusters (union of several SHGs) are being created, which support the development of the rural economy and can take decisions to satisfy the local population's needs. The most important aspect of this is that the local populations as well as the SHG activists in the 30 villages of the Issyk-Kul Oblast have changed, and have begun to defend their rights and interests more actively. Many new SHGs are being created. In particular SHG's have been active in instituting measures as follows:

- ☐ Clubs
- ☐ Farmer's insemination stations
- ☐ Provision of seed capital which has also paved the way for setting up more small village industries
- ☐ Providing and using information on the local market and on marketing.

What have been the key success factors in this partnership arrangement?

- ☐ Benefits have been demonstrated at all stages of work: preparation, implementation, completion and evaluation.
- ☐ The principles of transparency and publicity have been followed

- ☐ The ability to work at a community level which has included providing advice to people, as well as using the tools of PCA, joint planning, joint monitoring and evaluation;
- ☐ Willingness to change and adapt
- ☐ Resource contributions.

What are the main lessons learned through this partnership?

Problems arose in initiating the partnership on preventing disasters and managing risks because the chiefs of state bodies did not recognize the potential contribution of Venera Makaeva, the leader of **Shoola** and said, *“What can this young lady and her organization do, when men cannot cope with such difficult work as preventing the risks of disaster? This is not a job for women.”* After the project was accepted, Civil Defense agencies in all the rayon departments were given equipment including computers, printers, access to Internet, and video cameras, and web-sites were provided. The solution to this problem was reached using the principles of accountability and transparency, open presentation and discussion of the project, and distribution of equipment to the public.

A priority list of things that needed urgent repair was compiled along with interested experts and workers of the oblast and rayon disaster departments. They included:

- ☐ Irrigation canal
- ☐ Drainage system
- ☐ Mudflow derivation dam (the dam stops mudflow during flooding) (Balykchy, Kyzyl Tuu)
- ☐ Planting poplars for protection from wind.

In the summer of 2006 during the 15 year anniversary of the Ministry of Natural Disasters of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Minister expressed gratitude to **Shoola** *“For contribution in reducing the disasters in the territory of Issyk-Kul Oblast”* and Venera Makaeva, the leader of the PA was awarded a medal: *“For strengthening the army and civic collaboration.”*

Unfortunately, when chiefs or key personnel change in a partner organization, communication difficulties between the new people and old initiators arise. New chiefs want to make decisions using “new” methods.

The major value of this partnership has been the exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills. The government holds more information, and is a

valuable resource for getting and using the information, but CSOs have potential for educating and mobilizing the population to find their own solutions to problems. As a result, the serious challenge of developing an area or region and of improving the quality of life can only be solved jointly with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Information sources

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Venera Makaeva Tohtahodjaevna, Leader, PA, **Shoola**

Talas Oblast

CSO Hava, Talas Rayon, Kok Oy village

Women play a key role in building partnerships for development

Summary

This case study is about the experience of the Public Fund **Hava**, which has brought together and united many women and has been successful in showing the community that women can work for the public benefit just as successfully as men do. However, the Public Fund also knows that it is important to build partnerships and collaborate with the government if one wants to achieve optimal results. This case describes an experience of collaboration between **Hava** and the Kok Oy village council, the Talas Rayon Power Station, the Talas Forestry Department, the Tuberculosis Convalescence Hospital, and other state structures.

Background

Kok Oy village has a population of 7,200 and is at the center of Talas Rayon. Since Kyrgyzstan's independence, the economy and standard of living in Kok Oy village has declined. Kok Oy has 2 public secondary schools, private lyceum, hospital and a kindergarten.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, many government buildings were empty, and their facilities were plundered. The inhabitants of Kok Oy needed time and additional skills to adjust and adapt to the free market economy. For more than 10 years, throughout most of the 1990's village residents lost hope in the government system – a system which had previously provided them with everything. Nobody was in a position to respond to their needs.

Resident Testimonial

"It was very hard to see the infrastructure of Kok Oy village beginning to collapse, and especially to see the closure of the public bath house."

Ibadat Ergeshova, leader of **Hava**.

Public Fund **Hava**, which is headed by Ibadat Ergesheva, was set up to help women deal with the new situation. At first **Hava** brought together 8 women, mostly from professional backgrounds. They included teachers, doctors, nurses and agronomists. **Hava's** mission is to give legal support to women and to involve them in the local development process. Since 2003, **Hava** has actively supported women's initiatives and their efforts to support village

development. At first the local community did not get involved or share the Fund's ideas, but gradually the number of participants in **Hava's** work began to rise. Today, the power and level of influence of the organization in Kok-Oy village has increased significantly.

The closure of the bathhouse increased the dissatisfaction of the women of Hava because it meant that now the villagers had to go to Talas City if they wanted to use bath house facilities. This required spending money they could ill afford to use. Spending money on the bath house service and on transport to get there and back was difficult for many people so they simply stopped going. Poor hygiene developed and some villagers even stopped washing themselves, and as a result set a poor example for their children.

The activists from **Hava** decided to do something about this situation. But the challenge was to repair the bathhouse without any resources, without advice, and without partners. The majority of villagers at the time asked "What can these women do?" If men earning higher than average incomes over the past 10 years have not been able to improve the bathhouse, how can women? The women of **Hava** began to search for ways of refurbishing and reopening the public bathhouse for all, and particularly for ways of making it accessible for the poorest members of the population who had no other facilities for washing and bathing.

How did the bathhouse partnership get set up?

Members of the **Hava** Fund applied to **Aikol**, the Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) of the Talas Oblast. As a result of their consultations with the CSSC the Fund took part in a competition under the CSSC's Healthy Community Program in 2003, and the same year received a grant for refurbishing and reconstruction of the bathhouse in Kok Oy village. Fifteen trucks of rubbish were taken away from the grounds around the old bathhouse. Additional help was needed to move the rubbish and villagers stepped up and gave free labor. The walls of the bathhouse were rebuilt, the roof was replaced, and the water and heating systems were restored. The community contributions were given as follows:

- The bathhouse was repaired under the traditional Ashar system (voluntary). The ayil okmot provided the materials for replacing the roof. The director of the ayil okmot, who was the former Akim of the Talas Rayon, also donated to the cause personally;

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- ☐ The Talas Forestry Department allocated timber for preparing book cases and shelves;
 - ☐ Farmers made personal financial contributions towards the refurbishment of the bathhouse;
 - ☐ Residents whitewashed and painted the building;
 - ☐ The Rayon Power Station did the repair work for free, and the senior engineer himself participated in the work.

After 3 months of hard work the bathhouse was ready for use. This was primarily because of the efforts of the local community. However after this success some people in the village and some staff from the ayil okmot wanted to privatize the bathhouse. Despite this, the Kok Oy Ayil Okmot decided that from July 2, 2003 the bathhouse would be given to **Hava** on a rent free basis to run for 5 years. This decision was not considered satisfactory by the majority of people in the village who wrote to the village council and complained that 5 years was not long enough. At a further meeting of the village council deputies heard the residents appeal and the rent free arrangement for the bathhouse was extended to 2020 with a local tax exemption for one year. Before the bathhouse could open the health and safety was checked by the relevant health authorities and permission and clearance was given for it to open. However even now with a bath house available, there are many village women who do not take care of themselves and who look much older than they are. The activists of the Fund want to do more to improve their lives in the future. Their plans include establishing a hairdressing facility and a laundry at the bathhouse.

What happened next?

Today, many village residents use the services of the bathhouse, including 44 people identified by the ayil okmot who are needy and use it free of charge. These people include those who took part in the Great Patriotic War and the War in Afghanistan, disabled people, mother heroines (mothers, who have had lots of children), and unmarried mothers and their children. It was through the bathhouse project that **Hava** contacted and set up a self help group for unmarried mothers. This led to a training project for them on felt work, patchwork, and embroidery. This was set up on the basis of a partnership between **Hava** and Tau (a CSO working on the rights of mountain women) with technical assistance from the «Rural Development Center-Ele» in Bishkek. The Kok Oy Ayil Okmot also gave the project a free space inside a business incubator. As a result, the project has helped to

revitalize old craftwork techniques while also providing 12 unwed mothers (who between them had 37 children) with a source of income.

The shift to a market economy has not been an easy task. Because the educated people in the village had to take on additional work on the tobacco plantations, in the bean fields, and in other unhealthy places, they became sick. With the help of the Educational Center for Children some research was undertaken which showed that more than 30 % of population of the Talas Rayon had tuberculosis. Through its “Clean Lungs” initiative, and with the support of local farmers, **Hava** built a cow-shed and acquired 3 cows which were kept initially to provide milk to the T.B. Convalescence Hospital. Previously the hospital had been buying milk from the milk plant, but the volume of the milk was insufficient for its 30-50 patients who were residents there for between 3-4 months. In both 2005 and 2006 **Hava** provided patients with more than 3 tons of milk, as part of their recovery and convalescence. In return in 2005 the hospital helped **Hava** under a signed agreement to gather 4 tons of hay. In the future, **Hava** is planning to conduct a health survey and provide health education on T.B., the dangers of smoking and use of nasvai (a light narcotic drug), and nutrition. As part of this health campaign it will also organize competitions, including essay, photo and paintings contests.

What has Hava achieved?

The attitude of people towards following a healthy lifestyle has changed. People have also begun to get more involved in improving village life and have adjusted to life in a market economy. Once the ayil okmot made a contribution to the first **Hava** initiative and it was successful, this paved the way for future partnership. Deputies of the village council then signed a resolution to ensure long term project sustainability. A change in the thinking of the director of the ayil okmot was a key factor in the success of **Hava's** projects which have subsequently been based on partnership and resource mobilization from a range of stakeholders including the Talas Forestry Department, the Rayon Power Station, farmers, and village residents.

What have been the key success factors?

- ☐ Work must be based on shared values;
- ☐ It is important to follow the principle of starting small and then moving on to bigger things;
- ☐ Don't get hung up about stereotypes;

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- ☐ Rely on the support of deputies on the Local Council;
 - ☐ Have confidence that additional resources for implementing good and practical ideas will be found;
 - ☐ No agreement should be treated as dogma; any agreement can be modified and improved.

What lessons have been learned?

At the start many people did not believe the first project of PF **Hava** would succeed. The mentality in the village at the time was “*What can woman do?*” At a meeting in the summer of 2003 when progress was reviewed with stakeholders things changed and the responsibilities given to **Hava** were increased. What this case study shows is it is possible to bring about change in the community. However much depends on the quality of partnerships and initiatives and the level of trust that is built between the participants.

During the recent election campaign for the post of director of the ayil okmot, a woman doctor was put up as a candidate for the post with the support of **Hava**. She was not elected, but it raised the issue of women’s roles in society and created awareness that partnerships are better if women are represented in local self government bodies. For instance it would have been difficult to pass the resolution on the renovation and running of the public bathhouse, if women deputies on the Kok Oy Village Council had not supported it.

Hava says “There are no weak women!” Traditionally men have understood power to mean “power over ...”, but for women it means “power with.” **Hava’s** experience of successfully carrying out these partnerships is a good illustration of the latter. The villagers of Kok Oy have seen women’s potential in building partnerships and have experienced the changes these projects have made in their lives. That is why it is important to seek new horizons in partnership initiatives. One way to do this is to promote women to decision making positions where they can influence what happens in society! We should not become despondent if the first attempts at partnership building fail.

Information sources

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Ergeshova Ibadat Aigenbaeva, Leader of the Public Fund “**Hava**”

CSO Lady Shirin, Kara-Buura Rayon, Chimkent village

Authorities must listen in order to hear

Summary

Young widows comprise a unique category of women in the Kyrgyz community. Unfortunately, the traditional perception of this social group is based on stereotypes that characterize them as vulnerable, lacking potential, and only capable of doing routine work with little children. This case study reveals the opposite. Since 1998, Public Fund, **Lady Shirin**, has been working with young widows by bringing them together and providing them with support. Through its work the women demonstrated that they could be strong and could develop a positive perspective on life. For instance, one woman with children succeeded in learning to drive a car. With this kind of support everything in their lives is in their hands – finding solutions to problems and working effectively in the family, the community, the rayon ... Gulumkan Shabdanbekova, the leader of **Lady Shirin** is such a woman. This case is about her, **Lady Shirin**, and about the partnership between the fund and the Kara-Buura and Manas Rayon administrations.

Background

Lady Shirin was founded in 1998 in Chimkent village in the Kara-Buura Rayon of Talas Oblast. The village is located on two sides of the road between Talas and Bishkek, 71 km from Talas City, 50 km from Taraz City, Kazakhstan (Djambul), and 44 km from Maimak railway station and 7 km from Kizil-Adir village where the rayon center is located. The Chimkent Aiyl Okmot covers Chimkent and Kokdobo villages. Agriculture and cattle breeding are the main sources of income. About 6150 people, made up of 963 households, live in Chimkent village.

From the start, **Lady Shirin** faced very difficult conditions/circumstances in carrying out its work. At the time it was set up ideas about CSOs were very vague, especially among government officials. However, the majority of government officials believed that good results would be achieved through hard work. So CSO **Lady Shirin** started its work with 128 widows who between them had 35 young children, all with only one parent and all in need. The women organized themselves into 18 self help groups. With this organization taking place, the administration of the Chimkent Ayil Okmot, their employees and other village inhabitants began to understand what kind of work **Lady Shirin** wanted to do and began to take them seriously. The CSO's mission is to support widows, and their children in becoming fully integrated into village society.

What kind of activities has the Public Fund, Lady Shirin, undertaken?

During its 8 years of existence, **Lady Shirin** has completed more than 20 projects. These included a number of partnership activities. Here are some examples:

☐ **Setting up an office and a credit agency**

The Chimkent Ayil Okmot allocated **Lady Shirin** an office for its information center and also provided it with furniture for the center. Later on, if the Karabuura State Administration had not provided **Lady Shirin** with a safe office for its credit activities the fund would not have been able to achieve these new results. In this partnership project the **Lady Shirin** was able to set up a credit agency with a grant of \$1,200 from Counterpart International under its "Kireshe" project. The micro credit agency provided widows credit at an interest rate of 8%. Four years later, the agency has doubled its portfolio.

☐ **Self Help Groups and Seed Funds**

An initial seed fund was set up in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic with the support of DFID. Subsequently DFID support has enabled 7 more seed funds to be established in the 6 Ayil Okmots of the Kara-Buura Rayon. At the start, the Ministry of Agriculture provided high quality seeds including seed potatoes (3 tons), beets (450kg), corn (700kg) and barley (6 tons). Today the seed funds total 48 tons of wheat, 22 tons of seed potatoes, 270 kg of sugar beet and 720 kg of sunflower seeds. The Ayil Okmot supported this initiative because it met its post-independence target of allocating land under the land redistribution reforms to poor farmers. A

similar project which supported by Counterpart International was completed and in this arrangement 1 ton of wheat was provided to supplement the initial seed funds of the 18 widow self help groups. Today this has increased 8 fold. The Ayil Okmot, which originally allocated 2 hectares of land from the redistribution fund to this project, has now increased its allocation to 8 hectares.

□ **Combating slavery and human trade**

For the past three years Lady Shirin has worked with the Rayon State Administration on human trafficking prevention. In the summer of 2006, the Kara-Buura Rayon State Administration ran a 10 day summer residential camp on combating slavery and the growth in human trafficking and labor migration. School children from the 11 schools in the Rayon as well as other children and teenagers participated in the camp, and were provided with information, knowledge and skills to fight these problems. Goals, tasks and action plans for preventing human trafficking were developed jointly with the Talas Oblast Migration Department and the Kara-Buura Rayon Migration Committee. After the camp, participants were capable of identifying human trafficking victims and worked closely with the International Organization of Migration to identify them, help with training, support their rehabilitation, and provided practical assistance. A number of trainings about slavery prevention were also conducted which resulted in signed agreements with high schools administrations to deliver lessons on slavery and human trafficking to their pupils.

□ **Providing villages with drinking water**

Another partnership project focusing on “Taza Suu” (or clean water) assisted with providing 27 villages with clean drinking water. In this project the ayil okmot helped Lady Shirin with community mobilization by organizing a registry of consumers of drinking water in the village, and providing an office for free. Explanation of the work and its benefits and the collection of a 5% tax from the population were done together and yielded positive results.

□ **Transparent budgeting**

“Transparent budgeting” is a government initiative to reform state budgeting processes that has been taken up through partnership between Lady Shirin, the ayil okmot, and the Manas and Kara-Buura Rayon Administrations. Transition to a two level budgeting process was a reality that had to be faced by all partners. Together they

CSOs and village council work together to solve problems

“On one occasion we experienced a conflict situation. A government official took over 50 hectares of land for his own use. Local farmers were very indignant and said: ‘Why do officials take so much land and use so much irrigation water, while we cannot get enough water?’ After the publicity campaign that was part of the ‘Transparent budget’ project, one session of the village council tackled and resolved the problem of the 50 hectares of land that the official had taken over- 30 were re-allocated to needy farmers and the other 20 were offered for rent by auction. Solutions like this provide for local needs while also raising revenue for the budget of the village council” – Gulumkan Shabdannbekova, leader of the Public Fund Lady Shirin

discussed how the budget could be made more accessible to the population by working with the deputies of Local Councils. The Public Fund organized the first public budget hearings using an office provided by the ayil okmot, and invited people to attend the public budget hearings. The idea behind this was that public participation in the budgeting process can raise public awareness and increases civic participation and involvement. By working on a partnership basis different interest groups can jointly influence and change the ways in which local funds, including funds from international donors, are used and prioritized to meet local needs. The partnership allows

for cross-sectoral input on how to diversify the use of local profits through the support of international donors. It also gives opportunities to conduct transparent auctions with compliance of all local legal norms while considering local needs.

How are the partnership projects set up?

During village meetings people discuss the execution of decisions that were previously made during public hearings; leaders of seed funds or project coordinators give reports; then community members make further resolutions. Notices are set up on walls in villages. Working Committees of the various **Lady Shirin** community funds such as the seed fund and micro credit projects meet every Friday in the office of the Fund and share experiences and ideas and discuss future plans. After the Friday meeting reports, information is announced to the population through special issues of the community newspaper “Renewal”. This provides opportunities for local inhabitants to join in or support any of the activities that are proposed.

Decisions to take on any new project are taken not only at the initiative of the Public Fund, but also with the participation of representatives of local

government, the elderly, members of women committees, and other organizations and institutions. Ways of implementing new projects and action plans are discussed with them, and the responsibilities of each organization, of community members,

Coordination is key

"We meet Rayon leaders every week and I also join in the work of Rayon State staff every Tuesday. So the responsible people at the decision making level in the Rayon hear my opinions and take them into account. This means that hear the opinions of people from the bottom up. They also provide support letters for our projects. So it is good all round that a system for partnership has been established"

Gulumkan
Shabdannbekova, leader of the Public Fund **Lady Shirin**

and of the state authorities are clarified in the work plans, and agreements on the roles and responsibilities during implementation are set out very clearly with the expectation of full commitment to what has been agreed upon.

Working this way makes it very easy for community members to take initiatives and for ayil okmots to assist them. Consequently, all of

the **Lady Shirin** projects are implemented in partnership with local governments.

To date, the Local Authority of the Chimkent Village Council has supported **Lady Shirin** in the following ways:

- ☐ Provided **Lady Shirin** with an office;
- ☐ Provided labor during project implementation;
- ☐ Assisted with organizing meetings in villages;
- ☐ Enabled the participation of state bodies in projects;
- ☐ Given regular information about the activities of **Lady Shirin** to Rayon administrations;
- ☐ Provided material and financial contributions to projects.

What has been achieved?

1. A key achievement of the partnership described in this case study has been the development of mutual understanding between the partners. Through this citizens from socially vulnerable sections of the population have

New Found Mutual Understanding

"Today I recognize that without partnership work between the Local Authorities and CSOs social and economic goals cannot be achieved or will be pursued inefficiently. State bodies benefit from the work that CSOs do with vulnerable groups in the population and are provided with real feedback on their needs. This is how the work is targeted"

Baktigul Saparbaeva, Vice-Chairman of the Kara-Buura State Administration.

achieved average incomes and been able to participate actively in decision making. Partnership initiatives around the seed fund and the micro credit projects have meant that the credit agency was set up to meet the needs of widows and poor farmers and it has increased their financial resources.

2. Twenty community leaders, 10 heads of ayil okmots, 50 deputies of the village council, the Chief of the Kara-Buura Rayon Administration and the Speaker of the Rayon Council have participated in trainings on the organization of community funds at local level and as a result supported an increased allocation to community funds from the local budget.
3. The activities of the Public Fund have covered the whole rayon. One and a half years ago, at the insistence of the Akim of Kara-Buura Rayon, the office of **Lady Shirin** moved to Kyzyl-Adyr village, which is the rayon center, and was given a rent free room. The Director of the Kara-Buura Rayon explained his request by saying that this would enable the leader and staff of the Public Fund to help not only their fellow-villagers with development initiatives, but also all active people across rayon. The Public Fund can now actively and conveniently conduct trainings for the administration of ayil okmots, specialists and social workers among others.

Government values partnership

"Social partnership promotes effective socio-economic development at the village level" - Baktigul Saparbaeva, Vice-Chairman of the Kara-Buura State Administration.

What are the key success factors in Lady Shirin projects?

- ☐ There is a constant search for possible opportunities and a constant readiness to present activities positively to potential partners as opportunities;
- ☐ **Lady Shirin** produces accessible and transparent reports;
- ☐ The organization is not afraid of hard work!

Almost all the partnerships between **Lady Shirin** and local

Dialogue and collective decision making lead to change

"Before, during the Soviet time, I worked for a state organization. Only one person made all the decisions. Now on the contrary the state authority has begun to listen to the population. It is necessary and important to listen to the population. Only that way will the lives of ordinary people improve. This may mean that many meetings are needed. But if the authorities listen to the expectations of the people, there will not be a crisis in the country" - Gulumkan Shabdannbekova, leader of the Public Fund **Lady Shirin**

government have been fully developed following these principles. Gulumkan Shabdannbekova, leader of the **Lady Shirin**, always presents projects and results during meetings at the Rayon level which the Chief of the Rayon State Administration and other directors of state organizations attend and participate in.

Last word

“It is important to take the first step and never to feel embarrassed. It is also important to conduct dialogue, just as it is equally important to say ‘hello’ every day” - Gulumkan Shabdannbekova, leader of the **Lady Shirin**

Information Sources

Baktigul Kenensarivena Saparbaeva, vice-chairman, Kara-Buura State Administration

Lylia Tursunovna Mirzoeva, vice-chairman, Manas State Administration

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CSO Manas 1000, Talas city

Transparency helps partnerships to succeed!

Summary

This case study is about Manas 1000 and how it played a key part in the achievement of plans for social change; first by finding supporters and then by finding partners to work on new initiatives. In addition it covers how partnership initiatives, if they become institutionalized, can have an impact not only at a local level but also at the national level. The partnership experiences of the Public Fund Manas 1000 have spread widely throughout the country.

Background

Seren Sheishenov, a famous Kyrgyz sportsman, dedicated a swimming race of 10 kilometers across the Kirovsk reservoir to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the “Manas” epic in 1995. As a result, the representatives of the Oblast Sports Committee and the local community decided to open a jogging and swimming club in center of Talas City in his honor. They called it the “**Manas 1000**” Club. The aim of the club was to promote physical exercise and to encourage people to take an active part in the social life of Talas City. Seren Sheishenov was elected as its leader. Under his leadership the club actively raised funds and conducted charitable activities which were then used to help fulfill its goals. On January 15, 2000 the **Manas 1000** Club became legally registered. Its mission is to promote and educate the population to adopt healthy lifestyles.

How did the partnership get started?

The population of Talas City is around 34, 500 people. Ten years ago in the late 1990’s many houses and buildings were being built without proper planning permission in Talas City. Schools that were built in a rush did not meet the required architectural standards. Because of the dense population the area was christened “Shanghai”.

The size and density of the population in Talas had been growing as the number of new settlements increased. This brought with it increased alcohol consumption and smoking as well as other social problems and disruptions to the area. As a result, **Manas 1000** and other local activists were faced with a number of challenges. After much thought of how to solve the problems, they decided that building a mosque, repairing schools, and building a sports complex would help encourage people to practice the healthy lifestyles that **Manas 1000** was promoting. **Manas 1000** along with the Deputies of the City Council, who contributed 6,000 soms to the realization of the projects, implemented the following work:

- Construction of a sports complex supported by a grant from the Soros-Foundation Kyrgyzstan and was built near the secondary school. The grant covered approximately 60% of the total project cost.
- Repair of secondary school facilities (windows, floors) for the beginning of the academic year was undertaken with the support of the joint-stock company of Jolchu, joint-stock company of the

Mechanical Industry, as well as the Talas City Council and the City Administration.

- A mosque was also built with their help and was opened on October 23, 2002.

Sports complex opens and is a catalyst for future partnership

Deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) including the Chief of the Tourism, Sports Committee, and Youth Policy, the Vice-Chairman of the Talas Rayon Administration, Representatives of the Oblast, national mass media, and sportsmen and women of the Kyrgyz Republic participated in the opening ceremony of the sports complex, which was called Kelechek, on October 26, 2002. In total 870 people participated.

During the opening ceremony **Manas 1000** organized a fundraising activity to cover the future development of the complex. In addition to participants' contributions, one deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh contributed 10,000 som for development of the complex. Another helped to resolve a land issue with the Talas State Property Registration Board over the allocation of 2.5 hectares of land to **Manas 1000**, and gave 5,000 som to cover registration expenses. The Jolchu Joint-stock company supplied technical services and a grader, in total worth 80,000 soms. Even with the fundraising success, activists of **Manas 1000** did not think that it would be possible to reach their objectives on the basis of one-time donations and support. They believed that it is necessary to run the sports complex so that state funding is efficiently and effectively used and the only way to do that is to effectively manage the budget.

A budget group was formed in Talas to set up and organize a system of the city's annual budget hearings. Under a partnership agreement between the city authorities and **Manas 1000** it was envisioned that the cost of organizing the city's budget hearings would be covered by the partners. **Manas 1000** is responsible for 2006 and the City Administration and the City Council for 2007. The basis of the partnership is an obligatory and transparent contribution of resources based on trust between the partners. It is also envisioned that the population will be involved in the discussion of the budget, including both its formulation and its execution, and that this will also cover alternative financial sources and how effectively they are used. By this time, the mechanism of a two level budget should be worked out between the City Administration and the city council.

The experience of Manas 1000 is being extended throughout the Republic

Recently, **Manas 1000** signed a Collaboration Memorandum not only with the Governor of the Talas Oblast, the Talas Oblast State Administration and the Rayon Akims, but also with the Governor of the Jalal Abad Oblast, the Jalal Abad Oblast State Administration and the Rayon Akims.

Mr. Aidaraliev, Governor of the Jalal-Abad Oblast (and former Governor of the Talas Oblast) contributed 110,000 soms to cover the cost of an event called “Messengers of good will”. This was undertaken in the expectation that new mechanisms of partnership will be developed between CSOs and state administrations in every oblast of the country. The event aimed to launch the establishment of coordination councils that link up local authorities and civil society across the country. The idea is that the councils will work full time within the state administrations in each rayon to support partnership and collaboration. This commitment to partnership and collaboration is seen as a more efficient and effective process than political debate and radical confrontation.

What has been achieved through the partnership activities of Manas 1000?

1. Community participation in city management has been improved and a sense of public ownership has been cultivated, based on increased public awareness of decision making processes and procedures.
2. A real connection has been established between the electors and deputies, and the work of local self government has become more transparent through public access to LSG hearings and meetings.
3. Before 2003, Talas City was thought of as a “lifeless city” and today this image has been replaced by a perception that it is a city of positive changes.
4. Before the partnership initiatives people worked alone. Now the CSO and LSG bodies work together and are fully involved in the management of the city’s economy. People are no longer seen as consumers by the authorities, and the population is more involved in the planning and setting priorities.

Partnership changes perspectives

“Before the partnership I thought that CSO’s interfere in everything. Now everybody has access to the authorities, which is very useful for the authority itself. For one thing corruption is being reduced”.

R.K. Osmonaliev the first Vice-Mayor of Talas City.

5. During the elections for deputies to join the Talas City Council, Seren Sheishenov, head of the Manas 1000 did not get the 12 votes needed to be the deputy in 2005, although his popularity among the electorate was high. However in September, 2006 when one of the other deputies moved away from Talas, Seren Sheishenov became a deputy of the Talas City Council.

What are the key success factors in the partnership?

- ☐ A well organized approach to finding potential partners and involving them in possible partnership activities by inviting them to presentations and project launches and by providing them with reports;
- ☐ Clear demonstration of the benefits that can be gained from mobilizing resources from potential and existing partners;
- ☐ Joint assessments of need, joint planning, joint activities, joint fundraising, and a joint approach to monitoring and evaluation.
- ☐ Establishing the interests of every partner and agreeing to the benefits for each;

What lessons have been learned from this partnership experience?

There have been opponents to the partnership approach. **Manas 1000** is in favor of dialogue, and dialogue takes time, so it is important to allot the time that is needed for effective dialogue to take place. For this reason it is important to attract resources to help with pursuing partnership initiatives. Up to now most partnership initiatives have been of limited duration, but ideally they should be sustainable.

Manas 1000 has acquired good practical partnership and institutionalization experience. However, it now needs to expand this experience to other oblasts in Kyrgyzstan so that the network of possible partner organizations is strengthened. Right now **Manas 1000** is doing a lot to sustain its partnerships through the formation of the Association **Manas 1000**.

Information sources

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CSO Aikol, Talas Oblast

Aikol changes the perspective of the government through hard work

Summary

This case study is about the experience of the Civil Initiatives and Development Center, **Aikol**, and its search for ways to develop mutual understanding between all stakeholders and find qualitative solutions to socio-economic problems in its community. **Aikol** has worked collaboratively for several years with different levels of government in the Talas Oblast. This case study reports on the practical solutions and the lessons learned by **Aikol** and its governmental partners in establishing and achieving effective and sustainable collaboration. In addition, the case mentions some of the existing challenges that partnerships between CSOs and the government face and includes suggestions for the mechanisms that are needed to strengthen collaboration between the government and civil society.

Background

Civil Initiatives Development Center (CIDC), **Aikol**, was initially set up as a “Civil Society Support Center” in 2001 in Talas City and in 2002 it was re-registered as a Public Association. Its mission is to create favorable working conditions for non-governmental organizations, initiative groups, and community based organizations which are engaged in the development of democracy and civil society. It does this by helping to build organizational capacity and strengthen their financial sustainability through training. This allows their clients, mainly CSOs, to learn about a specific topic and then offer the same high quality services or trainings to other clients in more remote areas.

Very few public organizations in the Talas Oblast have as much potential for influencing community development as **Aikol** because of its partnership and collaboration and its regularly contact with the leaders of local CSOs, representatives of state bodies and local self governments, international donors, and everyday citizens.

Context of the situation

During the 2000 presidential elections many Kyrgyz CSOs became involved in civic activism for the first time. The civic initiatives conducted by CSOs often produced unexpected results and this created some serious confrontations between CSOs and local and state authorities, and led to the conclusion by the authorities that all CSOs were “opposed to government” and were “useless”. After the elections, the majority of officials saw CSOs in the Talas Oblast as “enemies.” Many myths began to appear about CSOs, for instance CSOs were only “grant recipients for their own personal benefit,” CSOs were “conspirators carrying out someone else’s orders.” It was in this climate of public opinion that **Aikol** was established and became legally registered. Activists from **Aikol** understood that despite pressure at the time from government authorities, there were laws in place and official declarations that confirmed that Kyrgyzstan was pursuing a democratic course in its development. They also recognized that any confrontation between CSOs and government would not be helpful if they wanted to achieve their mission and have successful projects. Even if there was pressure or enquiries by the government about CSO activity they would remain patient and try to work with the government authorities and show them what CSOs do and why they are important for the development of the Talas Oblast.

Stages in the development of Aikol – government collaboration and partnership

From the start **Aikol** began to develop a strategy for social partnership in consultation with local governmental officials. Three forums were conducted to discuss what type of joint initiatives could be undertaken by CSOs along with state bodies in order to strengthen the role of CSOs in the socio-economic development of Talas Oblast. Many participants representing state bodies participated in the first forum, including the Governor of the Talas Oblast; Akims (Directors) of four rayons; the Mayor of Talas City; head of oblast, rayon, city departments, and school directors. All participants felt confident that through open and public dialogue they could find a positive way to work together and utilize each others talents. Many representatives

from state bodies decided to join the initiative as a result of the trouble surrounding the 2000 election.

The Akim of the Talas Rayon requested that **Aikol** consult with, monitor, and coordinate activities taking place in the region funded by donor organizations such as UNDP, Counterpart International, and DFID. After several roundtable discussions and meetings were held with community representatives from the rayon, communities began to understand the need to work together to try and solve the problems facing the region. As a result, a joint action plan was created and integrated into the regional development strategy of the Talas Oblast.

Partnership is not easy

"I would like to point out that social partnership requires a slow and profoundly analytical approach which takes into account all the different situations and stakeholders who are involved in the partnership process."

(Source: INTRAC "Practice and lessons learned from the partnership building of **Aikol** in Talas Oblast)."

Fortunately, in 2002, I.R. Aidaraliev the previous Akim from Talas rayon replaced the governor of the Talas Oblast and his positive experience with **Aikol** allowed for the expansion of the collaboration between the government and **Aikol** from the rayon to oblast level.

On January 26, 2003 a Memorandum was signed between **Aikol** and the Talas State Administration establishing collaboration and joint work on the following issues:

- ☐ Conducting joint activities:
 - Negotiating agreements with the ayil okmot;
 - Conducting budget hearings;
 - Organization and development of work with condominium associations;
 - Technical support of the development strategy of Talas;
 - Opening the Ombudsmen Institute of Young People under the auspices of Talas State University;
 - Joint work with professional unions;
- ☐ Improving the status of the Oblast Council;
- ☐ Participation in the organization of joint roundtable discussions, seminars, workshops, meetings and conferences;
- ☐ Promotion of conducting activities and campaigns on social mobilization and the involvement and role of community organizations in helping to solve the social and economic problems of the oblast.

Another key thing that helped improve **Aikol**'s status in the community was the production of a public report on its activity from 2002-2004. The report provided information on fundraising and taxation as well as project work undertaken during the reporting period. The report improved the image of the CSO, broke the previous stereotypes and opinions about CSOs, and created a sense of trust that allowed



Aikol to continue effectively collaborating with the authorities. Work to build partnership relationships on the village level began in January, 2004 with a roundtable in which Deputies of the Oblast Council and 37 Directors of ayil okmots (village administration) participated. It was conducted within the framework of a strategy designed to build vertical and horizontal dialogue between all partners and stakeholders working towards the development of the region.

Participation in the city development planning process

Starting in May 2004 the Talas City Administration together with the Urban Institute began working on a city strategy and action plan as part of a "Development of Small Cities" program. The aim was to work out a policy for the development of Talas City until 2012.

The Talas City development strategy covers all important aspects of the city and its inhabitants. Mobilizing the community to participate in

Pride for your community aids partnership

K. Osmonov, Chief of the City Council, who has been working with the local self government bodies since 2003 and was first vice-mayor of Talas City (a post he held for more than a year) described his experience during the planning process:

"I was eager to work hard on the city plan and participated in a training program conducted by the Urban Institute in Balykchy. People at the time described Talas as a lifeless city. I was very upset. Later on, based on the planning initiative of the Oblast State Administration, we began to work together on the strategic development of Talas City. The results we came up with proved that this description was false. After 4 months we produced a well documented report that highlighted all the problems and all the opportunities available in the city of Talas."

the planning process was a difficult task, which required much effort on the part of all key stakeholders. The Urban Institute officially asked **Aikol** for help with this. An agreement on technical assistance was signed and **Aikol** agreed to undertake the following:

- To set up a consultative process in the community both to gather suggestions on what should be included in the city development strategy and to collect opinions on what community investments should be made;
- To distribute information and promotional material about the process through mass media;
- To assist in organizing a Kurultai (mass meeting or conference initiated on behalf of the population or government)

An organizing committee of 11 people was set up to create the development strategy for Talas City. This included representatives of the State City Administration, Local Councils, Directors of City Community Services, CSO's and the business sector. The State City Administration gathered together all project ideas. The initial strategy produced by the organizing committee was then examined by experts. They included the First Vice Minister of Local Self Government and Local Development, the Chief Architect of Balykchy City, the Manager **Aikol**, an Inspector from the Prime-Minister's Office, and the Executive Director of the Association of Cities in Kyrgyzstan. The Talas City Development Strategy and Action Plan were accepted at the Kurultai (conference) of the local community after some additions and amendments from the expert group.

A key factor in the process of preparing "the Development Strategy for Talas City" was that all partners participated in an open and honest dialogue and met all of their responsibilities. Partners' contributions toward the process included the provision of resources, facilities, and transport costs.

On the basis of this experience a Memorandum of Collaboration between the City State Administration and City Council is now being prepared for future working arrangements. This will cover all the steps needed to meet and represent different interests, procedures, formats and changes in Talas City and ensure that all sectors have a voice and will continue to positively collaborate with one another.

What was achieved through this partnership?

1. Positive re-assessment of CSOs, especially the growth in trust both by government authorities and by the population in general towards the activities of CSOs.
2. Social and economic achievements in the development of Talas City and Talas Oblast;
3. Integration and increased cohesion of CSO activities documented in official government strategic planning documents.
4. Growing desire to learn and work in “market” conditions with diverse sources of revenue across the board
5. In addition:

According to K. Osmonov, Chief of the City Council:

“Because of the partnership approach adopted to work on the city development strategy in autumn of 2004 Talas was chosen as one of seven cities (selected out of 23 in total) to participate in the “Development of small cities” project. As a result of this 18.14 million som (around \$450,000 was invested in the city, and city inhabitants benefited through this investment in refurbishing various local infrastructures.”

R.K. Osmonaliev, first vice-mayor of Talas city, said of the partnership approach:

“The population of Talas City and Talas Oblast began to get actively involved in the decision making process. Public awareness has grown. Local self governance bodies have also benefited because of the transparency this approach has brought to the development planning process. The work initiated through the partnership agreement is still being implemented even though we have changed Mayors three times during the period.

The stereotype of “Talas as a lifeless city” has also been overcome. Before 2003 each community sector worked separately. Today, representatives of all sectors are involved in managing the city and the attitude that saw households as clients has been overcome by involving people in the planning process. Bureaucracy will also be contained. Before this entire people thought that CSOs were just prying into other’s affairs. Today, CSOs have access to many places in governmental organizations and this is beneficial, especially in the context of public authorities, because corruption has been identified and reduced. “

Key factors in building successful partnership

1. Successful partnership in part depends on state bodies learning more about, and how best to collaborate with CSOs and vice-versa. In

order to encourage this mutual understanding, key stakeholders were involved in building the partnership through participating forums designed to strengthen partnership. All sectors were included in the participant list including representatives of community based organizations, CSOs, ayil okmots, oblast and rayon administrations, international organizations working in Talas Oblast, and representatives from other oblasts of the Republic.

Mutual understanding and common goals are essential ingredients for partnership

"Participants in the Forums agreed that it is important to engage legal and executive authorities in the Kyrgyz Republic, local self government organizations and community representatives in supporting and increasing the roles of CSOs in improving the social economic life of villages."

Press release: **Aikol**, 11/03/04

2. A number of tools and working agreements were developed to build and maintain these partnerships. These tools and agreements significantly helped to achieve success through partnership and include:

I.R. Aidaraliev, governor of the Talas Oblast

"The uniqueness of the forums was that all participating organizations were committed to improving the social and economic development of the oblast and the well-being of local inhabitants by increasing the potential contributions and roles of local communities in civil society."

- ☐ Procedures for public accountability;
- ☐ Memorandum of Agreement;
- ☐ Conducting joint events, forums;
- ☐ Working on joint activities;
- ☐ Being facilitators;
- ☐ Creating a culture that encouraged dialogue;
- ☐ Focusing on joint approaches to Strategic planning;

3. Systematic exchange of opinions between partners at all stages of project implementation and flexible responses to possible changes in priorities and separate structures paved the way for effective dialogue. Here are some examples where this happened:

- ☐ Negotiating and coming to an agreement with ayil okmots;
- ☐ Jointly conducting Budget hearings;
- ☐ Organization and development of work on condominiums;

- Technical support for the development strategy of Talas City;
 - Support for the Sports Committee and organization of a children's football competition;
 - Creation of a Young People's Ombudsman Institute at Talas State University;
 - Creating partnership work with professional unions.
4. A representative of **Aikol** was an active and purposeful member of the working group set up to control the management of resources for the "Development of small cities" initiative.
5. Changes in the awareness of people will slowly bring new ideas to the leaders in power, i.e. new ideas which are better suited to real partnership relations and can help to overcome such problems as that of the "Lifeless City".

G. Temirbekova, Chair of the Board, CIDC Aikol

"Being a member of various commissions as a CSO representative I had access to government bodies. I saw their work and had the possibility of influencing them and encouraging them to promote democratic principles."

What Lessons have been learned?

Experience suggests that that if partnership relationships are to be effective the basis should shift from the allocation of resources to relationships based on values. In Kyrgyzstan, as in other post Soviet countries, the concept of governance does not exist, and the assertion of authority often rests with one person. When decision makers change existing agreements fall into disarray and that is why it is important to anticipate and foresee possible difficulties and agree to procedures and rules for dealing with them in advance.

In 2002-2003 three golden rules were established in Talas Oblast that must be followed by all partners:

1. If you talk about problems, talk about solutions as well
2. When discussing a problem avoid making personal attacks; talk accurately about the problem, but not about the person.
3. Everybody has right to express an opinion and to use opportunities available to do this. It is important to build feedback into any partnership activity so that information and knowledge can be shared.

The challenge of the kind of collaboration described in this case study is that it calls for a complex internal review and re-thinking on all sides of the partnership. Working with local self government should be based on more than a desire to access new grants or improve the social infrastructure as neither of these is sufficient to continue or sustain partnership relations on a long term basis. Rather it is a much better idea if all parties agree to the principle that collaborative work and sustainable partnership is a way to make progress in improving our lives and communities.

Partnership between the community and the government is a delicate process, which must be fostered and carefully developed. Last year progress was made through the work undertaken by **Aikol**. However, at the same time all of **Aikol**'s goals were not achieved. It takes time to build understanding and trust and time for preparation. In the future **Aikol** will need to continue to work hard to develop sustainable partnership approaches, procedures, and ensure their application in order to assist in the development of Talas Oblast, society and its members.

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Interviews with:

Gulmira Temirkeova, Leader, Civil Initiatives Development Center “**Aikol**”,

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Gulmira Temirkeova

Leader, Civil Initiatives Development Center **Aikol**

Naryn Oblast

CSO Bayastan, Naryn City

Helping disabled children

Summary

This case study is about the partnership experiences of CSO **Bayastan** with the educational departments of Naryn City and the social department of Naryn Oblast State Administration. The partnership focused on solving the problems of disabled children by creating educational programs that integrated both disabled and ordinary children.

Background

Bayastan was registered on May 29, 1997 and is located in Naryn City, Naryn Oblast. The mission of **Bayastan** is to: protect children's rights, support disabled children, and women who have disabled children.

The main directions of the organization's activities are:

- ☐ Educational activities
- ☐ Integration of disabled children into general education
- ☐ Protection of children's rights
- ☐ Charity

Turdububu Shamuratova, Leader of the CSO Bayastan *"The Civil Society Support Center in Naryn played a key role in establishing our CSO from the start and we were trained how to write projects and about social partnership and teamwork."*

How did the partnership start?

There are 800 children with physical disabilities living in Naryn Oblast and more than 150 of these children live in the Naryn City. A problem of isolation exists because disabled children do not have access to general or specialized education. The terms and conditions of special schools for disabled children, together with their remoteness from Naryn City significantly narrowed the opportunities available to disabled children and their parents. **Bayastan** wanted to collaborate and engage local governmental officials in solving the real problems of disabled children and providing the

*"The development of disabled children is impossible in isolation; we therefore came up with the idea of integrating disabled children with those who do not have disabilities." - Turdububu Shamuratova, Leader of **Bayastan***

conditions necessary for their development. In order to foster collaboration they decided to initiate a roundtable discussion focusing on the integration of disabled children into the school system.

With the active support of the Educational Department of Naryn City and the Social Services Department of the Oblast State Administration, **Bayastan** began work on the integration of disabled and ordinary children at secondary school # 2.

Lessons learnt abroad applied at home

"By participating in this conference I came to understand that teaching 12 disabled children in one class was very difficult, first of all, for the teacher, but even more difficult for the child. When we came back home we therefore decided to distribute the 12 children to other mainstream schools in the area."

Tyrdububu Shamuratova

In 1998, the British CSO, Save the Children, came to Naryn for a familiarization visit to see the activities of **Bayastan**. Terry Jails, Head of the SC at the time was invited to the celebration of this integration after the completion of its first year and was very touched by the talented children and by the results of integrated education project. As a result in March 1999, **Bayastan** was invited to a practical research conference in India to discuss the issues of disabled children.

In 1999, **Bayastan**, arranged a meeting to lobby with experts from the city educational department to discuss the possibilities of placing younger disabled children into mainstream kindergartens. As a result, since 1999 disabled children have been educated at the mainstream kindergartens in Naryn City. The kindergartens participating in the program are: №15, №14, and the kindergarten "Cheburashka".

In 2001, the education of disabled children of pre-school age was completely handed over to the City Department of Education in Naryn. The Department continued to take the integrated approach to the education of disabled children forward and has now worked out a full scale program of integrated education for children of all ages.

Progress is made: *"At the beginning all of the children were constrained and shy, but when they saw that they could do something, they were stimulated, and realized that they had power and energy. Initially we had used a separate approach to work with each group of the children and had worked with them separately. At the beginning we did not have any specialists and worked with parents and children together. After a year, we saw progress in development and the attitude of ordinary children towards their physically disabled classmates. They became more attentive, kind."*

Tyrdububu Shamuratova

Bayastan was encouraged by the support and understanding of school authorities and the Oblast State Administration and began to do increasing work along these lines with disabled children.

How did the partnership develop?

In 2001 **Bayastan** began to implement its project on children's rights with financial support from Counterpart International under its "Institutional Development" Program. This funding provided essential equipment; simultaneously **Bayastan** worked with the US Embassy on the educational aspects of the program. A course entitled 'Children's Rights' was introduced and taught as a subject in a pilot school in the city, with support from City Department of Education. By the time the project ended, the administration of Chkalov school and the project team from **Bayastan** decided to create a proposal for a parent teacher meeting about the continuation of education on children's rights. Parents agreed to pay 10 som monthly per child, and the system is still fully functioning at Chkalov six years later. Because of the success at Chkalov, the City Department of Education signed an agreement about teaching the subject of Children's Rights on the basis of co-payment and was able to assist in financing for a short time; within the framework of this project children studying at school № 2, 4, 5, 1, 10, 9 were taught about children's rights; however, unfortunately the program eventually declined because of a lack of resources and it only remains at Chkalov..

Partnership achievements Bayastan, Chkalov School and Naryn State Oblast Administration

Within the framework of the project "Integrating disabled children in society" the Naryn State Oblast Administration made financial contributions of 10,000 soms for educational materials needed for 12 disabled children, plus the salaries for one teacher and one assistant. In addition the Director of Chkalov School allocated one class room with furniture for up to 25 school children to the project.

As a result of the project, Children's rights have been included in the academic curriculum of Chkalov, and the potential contributions from teachers increased and the opportunities and scope of activities for all children in the school were broadened.

The partnership between **Bayastan**, Chkalov, and Naryn Oblast State Administration resulted in the formation of a class of 25 pupils, integrating

the disabled and non-disabled pupils. Before this, the 12 disabled children were isolated, did not attend school, and were staying at home. This system of integrated education for disabled children has now been tested and because of its success, the system of integrated education at Chkalov is still functioning today.

Within this partnership, **Bayastan** gained support and trust from the Naryn City Department of Education. The Department also benefited from the partnership through 15 teachers from secondary schools in Naryn City being trained in interactive teaching methodologies, through teaching about children's rights, and in conflict resolution between teachers and pupils. Thanks to the skills they acquired in conflict resolution trainings, conflict situations at secondary schools in Naryn City have been reduced. "Partnership between educational bodies and the school parliaments in Naryn City helped to solve not only the problems of disabled children, but it also reduced the conflict level for for all children," notes Tyrdububu Shamuratova.

How did the partnership develop and work?

The roles and functions of **Bayastan** and the Naryn City Education Department were discussed and clarified during a meeting to consider possible partnership projects and agreements. In this case, the partners agreed to the following roles and functions for working together on integrated education and education of children's rights projects:

1. The City Department of Education agreed to search for specialists and to provide facilities. They also gave permission to carry out work with disabled children at city schools and a formal agreement was reached. Since its inception the agreement has been kept.
2. The Social Services Department of Oblast State Administration helped with organizational arrangements.
3. Educational institutions including schools and kindergartens in Naryn City signed an agreement to jointly work to promote and realize the project "Children's Rights

"The problems facing people in society are often common ones, and finding solutions together increases the efficiency and effectiveness of those solutions. It can also contribute to sustainability. Local government officials can understand and support non-governmental organizations only if they know about and participate in the public activities of CSOs," said Tyrdububu Shamuratova.

Protection”

A Consultative Council of 7 people including a member of **Bayastan**, Representatives of the City Department of Education, Oblast State Administration and the Social Fund actively participated in finding suitable project beneficiaries, in defining the action plans, in identifying problems and finding solutions, and in searching for partners to tackle different aspects of the project.

What are the main lessons learned through this partnership?

During implementation of its partnership project with the educational department of the Naryn City, **Bayastan**, noted that initially collaboration had only a short term possibility; however, it was possible to go beyond this because of agreements in the partnership charter and because the approach to solving problems engaged people at local level. **Bayastan's** experience in working on this partnership project has had a significant effect on its thinking and future plans, which now includes in its strategic plan a strategy targeting the development of long-term partnership with local governmental officials and other potential partners.

Sharing their experience

“In order for **Bayastan** to have further productive and mutually beneficial collaboration with local governmental authorities at various levels and for different groups of beneficiaries, it is important to share our experiences of joint problem solving to wider groups in society” – said Turdububu Shamuratova in concluding her story of partnership experience.

During its work in Naryn, **Bayastan** demonstrated that it is possible to achieve success and improve the social and physical activeness of beneficiaries (disabled children) through joint activities.

Bayastan's nine years of experience demonstrates that one CSO, whatever resources, potential, material and technical ground it may have, cannot solve all problems existing in the society without support, without united power, and without adequate resources and potential.

An efficient partnership between CSOs and the government can bring sustainability to project and increase the efficient use of financial resources provided for CSOs through international donor organizations.

However, it is important to note that efficient partnership only grows and creates sustainability long-term. Currently, typical partnerships between CSOs and the government are one time activities, and the work of the **Bayastan** is no exception. For sustainability it is necessary to establish a long-term partnership with local governmental officials. In **Bayastan**'s case, the experience of temporary collaboration with City Department of Education and social department of Naryn Oblast State Administration has provided the basis for setting up a long-term partnership.

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Osh Oblast

CSO Interbilim, Osh Oblast

***CSO Partnership with State authorities is fighting corruption in
Osh Oblast***

Summary

The government of the Kyrgyz Republic sees civil society and CSOs as having a key role in the implementation of its policy, “State strategy of fighting against corruption in the Kyrgyz Republic”, which was signed in summer, 2005. In responding to this mandate, Osh Resource Center, **Interbilim**, together with TV Company EITR, and the national corruption prevention agency organized a number of television programs and dialogues to discuss corruption. The main goal was to improve the dialogue between the population and state bodies on this topic and focus on developing solutions to one of Kyrgyzstan’s more acute problems.

Information about the project partners

Osh Resource Center, **Interbilim**, was founded in 1997 as a branch of the Public Association, International Center of Interbilim located in Bishkek. Before creating the regional office, **Interbilim’s** experts had come south in order to train local NGOs about community organizations. At that time, the NGOs were just being organized and many of them did not possess the appropriate skills or know-how required for work in civil society organisations. By 1997, the necessity of training had increase and this led to the establishment of a branch office in Osh Oblast. Since its existence, **Interbilim’s** focus has been on enhancing the organizational development of NGOs and creating a favorable environment to lobby for the interests of civil society. The organization has significant experience in developing local communities through initiative groups, NGOs, and building effective partnership and communicating with the government.

Interbilim targeted communities in Osh Oblast and implemented 21 social projects with support from ayil okmots. A total contribution of \$7,120 was given by local ayil okmots to support the community projects. However, most of the contributions were one-time deals and subsequently a need arose for a more sustainable partnership.

Interbilim wanted to improve its relationship with state bodies and so it participated in the project “Management Based on Results” supported by the Association of Civil Society Support Centers. In 2004 trainings targeting improving services delivered by the Local Self Government were conducted

in Uchar Village of the Karasuu Rayon and Gulcha Village of the Alai Rayon together with the ayil okmot and communities. As a result, the activity of the Local Self Government regarding wetland issues improved in Gulcha village and the service delivery on the provision of drinking water improved in Uchar village. Special mechanisms for improving the social partnership between the ayil okmot of Gulcha Village and Public Association of Alay Ata Jurt were used during the repairs of the drainage system in Gulcha Village. Social partnership was enhanced through organizing and participating in forums, roundtable discussions, and the creation of working groups.

Interbilim took the initiative to establish partnerships. In addition, the CSO realized that through implementing successful program activities state bodies begin to notice CSOs and increase their interest in civil society organizations.

Since 2005 **Interbilim**'s branch in Osh has been implementing the program "Trust, Interaction, Collaboration" directed at improving the partnership between the ayil okmot, population, and deputies of the local council. The peculiarity of this program was that it incorporated all stakeholders in the process including the community, representatives of the LSG, and deputies of the local council.

Activities of the organization on improving the quality of services by LSG bodies showed that real results in improving the quality of services can reduce corruption, and this improvement can be a preventive tool and lessen the chance of corruption in the future. The local office of the OSCE, which was interested in the activities of the Osh branch office of **Interbilim** expressed willingness to collaborate with **Interbilim** to help stop corruption.

In 2005, the OSCE organized trainings for the staff of **Interbilim** on the theme: "Development of a prevention system for corruption and the development of anti-corruption education". ElTR TV and the National Corruption Prevention Agency worked with **Interbilim** in partnership to implement the anti-corruption project "Increasing the public awareness of problems related with corruption in southern Kyrgyzstan and their involvement in reducing corruption. Local CSOs that were actively defending the consumers' rights and lobbying the interests of civil society representatives participated in the project.

The National Corruption Prevention Agency was established by the Kyrgyz Government in 2005 aiming to realize the state's strategic goals against fighting corruption. The main objective of the agency is to research the level

of corruption in oblasts, monitoring activities against corruption, and free legal consultations for citizens.

Background

Local CSOs and CSOs were aware of the positive partnership experiences **Interbilim** has had with local authorities and asked for **Interbilim**'s assistance in trying to reduce corruption.

Corruption touches all

"Every year my wife prepares the documents to get allowances for children. We do not work in the village and the pension and family allowances are the only revenue for our family. Fulfilling and completion of documents take a long time, almost three months, but we only receive money after the registration date. In order to not lose these months she must give a monthly allowance to those people from the social protection office, who can register it quickly..."

K. Polotova, Arbin village, Kenesh LSG, Nookat Rayon.

As a result, **Interbilim**, along with journalists from EITR TV conducted monitoring of the social services being delivered by the governmental organizations throughout Osh Oblast, and asked residents of the local communities if they were having any problems with services or corruption. The following information was given during the meeting with residents in Arbin village of the Nookat Rayon.

On the way back, the monitoring group visited the Social Fund, which is located in the center of Nookat Rayon, in order to get additional information related to some complaints, unfortunately it was lunch time. About 40-50 people were waiting to get the social insurance card and having this card is obligatory for getting a passport. The same long line was found in the rayon center of the Uzgen city, where people wanted to get their passports.

Video information was made regarding the collected materials during the trips. Apart from the trips, meetings were conducted

Citizens voice their concerns

"I came here the third day. Today I was waiting here since 7 o'clock and I was the 28th person in line. My documents were sent back, they were filled in incorrectly. Why don't they check it at once and tell you. I have collected the documents for half a month; I was told several times that I do not have one document or another... Why do not they hang the list of needed documents on the wall? I had to go to Russia quickly so I gave 2,000 soms to one of the workers of the passport department, who promised to prepare the passport within 2 days." A. Surkeeva, the Mirza-Aka village, Usken Rayon.

with focus groups aiming to distinguish the reasons for corruption and identifying the governmental officials, who were responsible to deliver qualified services.

How did the partnership begin?

Certainly, to solve the above mentioned issues it was important to hear the opinions of the representatives of the governmental officials, who delivered these services. **Interbilim** decided to pave the way for negotiations and conduct a dialogue between the executive bodies and service consumers. It was important to have negotiations that were open enough and accessible for the community. A meeting on local TV was organized to achieve this.

The local office of the OSCE supported this idea and contributed €7506. ElTR TV provided journalists and aired six programs at their own expense, totaling US \$1,230 on the local TV channel. **Interbilim** contributed US \$1,300. The local state administration and the National Corruption Prevention Agency had assisted in involving state institutions in the dialogue, by ensuring that the environment would not be hostile but a true dialogue. The National Corruption Prevention Agency also contributed in the form of legal consultations and expert evaluation. Directors of the social provision, education, custom and tax inspections participated in the dialogues on corruption prevention.

Steps toward effective partnership

The first step was an appeal to the governor of the Osh Oblast to provide the participation of the directors of the governmental organizations at the TV meetings because they rarely take part in the activities organized by CSOs. After getting the approval of the governor, **Interbilim** visited the directors of the social provision, tax inspection, educational and law enforcement bodies in order to invite them to the TV discussions. During the individual visits, the representatives of **Interbilim**



explained the main goals, list of debatable questions, and information that they had to share. Through the influence of the governor all of the government officials agreed to participate. The willingness of the governor to get them involved in the discussions played a pivotal role in their participation. Six TV discussions were conducted on preventing corruption, 3 were devoted to corruption in the sphere of social provision and 3 covered small and medium entrepreneurship development. Representatives of the community and government discussed the situations entailing corruption and possible prevention mechanisms. Discussions were conducted about the video materials that were shot earlier. Governmental officials spoke about how they deal with such kind of situations. They stressed that they have only received few written complaints. Unfortunately, they found out about these violations only during the TV discussions. The participants were directors of the obligatory medical insurance fund, chiefs of the oblast and city tax inspections and customs, rectors of 3 universities in Osh City and the chief of the city Department of Internal Affairs. “The facts that were shown during the TV discussions we heard for the first time and we will take measures as a result. Certainly, many people trust the CSO and tell them about their problems, but the government has found a good resource in community mobilization, which will definitely help us to work in rayons,” said R. Temirov, Chief of the Social protection administration in the Osh Oblast.

Organizing the TV discussions had improved the communication between the population and governmental officials. The audience asked many questions. Before the beginning of the discussion the representatives of CSOs and citizens consulted the lawyer of the National Agency and **Interbilim** how to formulate questions. Some questions were not asked, but in the end everybody was satisfied with each stakeholder’s participation.

United efforts pay off

“Our task is to unite the efforts of the government, civil society and population in researching corruption, monitoring, and its prevention. We aim to raise the accountability of each person in fighting against this harm”

J. Aidaraliev, Chief of the National Corruption Prevention Agency

Roundtable discussions were conducted in 6 rayons of the Osh Oblast in order to distribute the results of the TV discussions. The TV debate shown by the local TV channels was discussed during the roundtables and some TV programs were shown. Based on the programs, representatives of the local state organizations, CSOs and the community developed proposals and recommendations on improving corruption prevention tools. The experts of **Interbilim** were the

organizers of these activities and conducted preparatory work among the discussion participants and facilitated the round tables.

In the future it is planned to make more copies of the TV materials and distribute them among the state organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders. The OSCE wants to keep on collaborating with the **Interbilim** on corruption prevention.

This was the first experience of a National Agency and CSO collaboratively working on the prevention of corruption. The positive results led to the signing of a memorandum between the National Corruption Prevention Agency in South “About the further partnership between **Interbilim** and National Agency”. According to the Memorandum, **Interbilim** will systematically be involved in the activities of the agency, including developing strategy and decision making on anti-corruption measures, and participate in educating the local community. The National agency will provide the CSO with the information about their activities and monitoring. Also the agency will promote anti-corruption projects by delivering free consultations and expert evaluation. The memorandum is a document regulating the relationship between the partners and unites the powers in solving the corruption issues.

What were the main partnership results and impacts?

- ☐ 369 people involved in the project activities, including the representatives of governmental officials, civil society and local community, were aware of the fight against the corruption through the handbooks, published by the support of the OSCE and local legal norms and acts. They have improved their skills for defining the reasons and conditions for corruption, skills in collaborative dialogue, the collaborative development of tools, and recommendations for reducing corruption.
- ☐ Civil society together with the community and local authorities has proposed 11 suggestions and recommendations on reducing the corruption level during the roundtable discussions.
- ☐ This project promoted to improve the accountability of governmental bodies to the population, government officials began to visit more villages to conduct explanatory works among the population, the information about the order of getting social allowances, tax and custom deductions was properly distributed, and the relations between the high educational institutions and its directors have been improved.

- Preventive measures against corruption were undertaken including: staff rotation, discharges, arranging meetings, the creation of such independent supervisory bodies in state institutions as the Ombudsman under the Osh Technical University and coordination council in the custom service. They provided better access to directors.
- Activeness of the population and representatives of civil society increased civic participation through citizens demanding high quality service delivery from the governmental bodies, the number of visitors, and phone calls on corruption increased.
- The skills and culture of establishing and conducting dialogue on TV between the population and executive bodies improved.
- Communication between Mass Media, NGOs, government and business improved.
- Interbilim has gained trust of the governmental structures. The partnership experience of the National Agency and EITR, TV on conducting anti-corruption activities was enhanced.

"I thought that prevention of corruption is the only deed for law enforcement bodies. Now I understand that everybody must do it. We must educate to fight with this from the school."
T. Murzakulova, the community leader, the Gulcha village, Alai Rayon.

A commission including the representatives of the Oblast Social Protection Department and local CSOs was organized and sent to Nookat Rayon after the inhabitants' complaints about extortion. As a result, two employees of the social protection department in Nookat Rayon were discharged. Also after the TV program on "Corruption during the registration of legal entities, and while getting patents and licenses, a comprehensive investigation was conducted in the Kara-Suu market and during the checking of several containers, the containers without patents were closed by the tax inspectors. Participants of the last TV debates demanded that the Chief of the Tax Inspectorate of the Osh Oblast give information about the results.

What were the key factors for effective partnership?

- Availability of government support, and having a national strategy against corruption; in this strategy, the roles and participation of governmental officials and representatives of Civil Defense were defined.
- The participation of decision making people in the TV discussions. Government officials were open and ready to discuss the questions.

During all stages of project activities government officials had good relationships with the project implementers.

- By conducting the TV discussions, some governmental officials showed their openness and transparency of their activities to the population. If the dialogue was not on TV, there is doubt that the chiefs of the governmental organizations would have personally participated in the discussions. The personal participation of chiefs of governmental organizations (chiefs of the social fund, tax inspection, custom, i.e. all stakeholders) stressed once again the importance of the problem.

What lessons were learned from the partnership?

There were cases when participants had directly blamed governmental officials for the corruption, although both sides knew the agreed upon format of conducting the TV discussion. The weak culture of dialogue on TV was noticeable. The public did not have enough experience in conducting dialogues on live broadcast. **Interbilim** made a conclusion that it was important to conduct not only preliminary explanatory works but also special trainings before the broadcasts for participants.

The activity of **Interbilim** in partnership with the National Corruption Prevention Agency was aimed at concrete individuals, who had power and authority to change the policy. All arranged activities were conducted by the governmental organizations after the TV discussions. The opinions and attitudes of participants about corruption significantly changed. As a result, the responsibility for reducing the corruption was not only entrusted to governmental officials but all of civil society. The role of CSOs was to enlighten and protect human rights, and the role of the governmental bodies was to deliver high quality services, and the role of community was to help reveal the corrupt actions.

So, **Interbilim** together with the National Corruption Prevention Agency and EITR TV channel improved the dialogue between the population and governmental organizations on joint measures focusing on reducing and combating corruption. The organization of this dialogue and the use of communities and governmental institutions was an example of a new course for partnership. It proved that through dialogue and partnership everyone can work together to find solutions to problems and improve the quality of life.

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CSO Mehr Shafkat, Osh Oblast, Aravan Rayon

Self Help Groups work to tackle community problems

Summary

Public Fund, Mehr-Shafkat, is located in the Aravan Rayon of the Osh Oblast and aims to solve the social economic problems collaboratively with

the *ayil okmot* and the local self government through creating village committees. The village committees identify village problems and define possible solutions. Village committees became an important link between the community and government.

Background

Public Fund **Mehr-Shafkat** was created in 1996. The mission is to strengthen and mobilize socially vulnerable and poor people, reduce poverty, and improve their quality of life through public awareness, self help groups, lobbying, defending the rights of needy people, and integrated community development. The main focus of the CSO is to eradicate rural poverty. The Aravan Rayon where the CSO is located is 25 km from the center of the Osh Oblast. Over 1 million people live in the 47 villages, and most are relatively poor.

Mehr-Shafkat is an Uzbek word that means ‘help from the heart’. **Mehr-Shafkat** helps groups of women by conducting trainings and consultations. The activities of **Mehr-Shafkat** cover 12 villages of the Aravan Rayon. Since 2002, **Mehr-Shafkat** has been actively developing self help groups (SHG’s). The aim of creating the SHGs is to encourage and support members to take practical steps to tackle their poverty and improve their economic well being through regular saving, the establishment of group savings funds, and by working together to address the social and economic problems they face.

Today 105 SHG’s covering 1,750 people have been set up and in total the groups have raised 2,800,000 soms (around \$70,000) over three years, about 25-30,000 soms per group. The money raised is good evidence the SHG tool is functioning well. However, as the groups grew and flourished **Mehr-Shafkat** found that members of single self help groups could only tackle small problems. It therefore encouraged clusters of SHG’s to form themselves into village based SHG Federations. It also approached local self government bodies (*ayil okmots*) in each village to provide facilities where members of each federation could meet and work together in considering problems and needs in their community.

The initiative of creating SHG Federations came from the SHG. Federations could take a more comprehensive look at the socio-economic and related problems of their localities. From the start SHG Federations began to identify community problems and agree on priorities. These have included the need to undertake road reconstruction, to improve First Aid Centers, and

to refurbish schools. With needs identified and clear community backing, members of a federation began to work out how these problems could best be solved- by themselves or with the help of the local ayil okmot (local government body). In reality, it was determined that a SHG could not function well enough without the support of the LSG.

How did the partnerships between SHG Federations and governmental agencies develop?



SHG Federations, supported by **Mehr-Shafkat** and working with the local ayil okmot have taken the lead and played an active part in creating village committees, each of which includes representatives of the local self government body, and the various government departments which work in

the area and influence people's lives. These include the Rayon Department of Domestic Affairs, the Family Medicine Center, the Rayon Electric Power Station, the water supplies agency, and local committees using the irrigation. There are 10-12 people on each committee and their working arrangements were defined in a collaborative memorandum which defined functions, responsibilities and decision making procedures of the committee and its members.

Once established each committee was responsible to undertake a PCA to define and prioritize local problems, and decide which problems could be resolved by the community and which needed public expenditure. The committees then developed 3 to 6 month action plans and allocated responsibilities for different activities in accordance with the functional responsibilities of the agencies represented.

“Medical institutions conduct medical examinations for free to reduce the health problems of the poor population. The village committees helped to define their poverty level by conducting questionnaire and individual interviews. This way the ayil okmot can give allowances to the needy population by listening to decisions made by the village committee,” noted M.H. Tilevaldieva, leader of the **Mehr-Shafkat**.

Mehr-Shafkat is a consultant and conducts regular monitoring of the village committee activities, which helps to improve the village committee.

Activities of the Village Committee and roles and obligations of each side were highlighted in the Collaboration Memorandum. The memorandum was signed by SHG, LSG bodies, the Family Medicine Center, the Rayon Electric Power Station, group of family doctors and water committee. Each ayil okmot has signed a collaborative memorandum. According to the memorandum the ayil okmot is responsible for assisting the village committee's work and giving it a space to meet for free and co-financing projects. For example, the Chek-Abad Ayil Okmot has contributed 10,000 som for solving the problems of its local kindergarten.

Here is an example of how one of these initiatives developed and a problem that was tackled.

SHG Success Story

The SHG Federation in Kizirabad village in the Chek-Abad Ayil Okmot became a village committee. The committee was faced with resolving a difficult problem over villagers' refusal to make payments to the ayil okmot for publicly provided water supplies. Inhabitants of the village had rejected all explanations and attempts to persuade them that payment for clean drinking water was necessary. The committee, working with the ayil okmot, therefore made a tough decision which was to cut off supplies of drinking water to the village.

This left the population with two choices - to use dirty water from the street side channels with all the associated health consequences, or to buy water transported in by a water carrier at 2 soms per bucket. Most families used up to 5 buckets a day and were spending at least 10 soms a day. When they compared this to a payment of 12 soms per month for access to water from public sources they realized that this was much better value and then agreed to start paying their water bills! So a sound decision was taken by the village committee, and a difficult problem was resolved.

The spin off benefit of this experiment was that word got around to surrounding villages and since then the need to make payments toward regular drinking water supplies has increased without objections or resistance.

What has been achieved through this partnership initiative?

- 13 Rural Committees have been set up, which has developed ways for collaboration and accepted decision making procedures. The functional obligations of each side were reinforced in a collaborative memorandum.
- Mehr-Shafkat has demonstrated to the Osh Local Self Government and to the various ayil okmots in the area that the SHG's and SHG Federations that it has established provide a sound basis for actively engaging people from the community in local decision making and action planning. As a result, it has gained credibility and the confidence of the ayil okmots and other state agencies in the area.
- Members of the SHG's have discovered how to collaborate, work with and influence representatives of both the ayil okmot and other government bodies that deliver services to their localities
- Specifically, public health services have been improved through collaboration between the committees and local health and medical agencies; education services have been improved by work done with teachers; and work is underway on reducing the crime rate through collaboration with the Ministry of Domestic Affairs.

I think that the Village Committees have rescued the communities they serve by helping the ayil okmot to identify and solve social and economic problems," says H Holmatov, Village headman, Pahtaaral Village and Deputy in the Jusupov Ayil Okmot.

What are the main factors underpinning the successes that have been achieved?

1. Mehr-Shafkat had a great deal of practical and grassroots based experience in community development before it began to explore working in direct partnership with official bodies. Through this it had gained the respect and confidence of village inhabitants. The NGO had gained

Residents Trust the Committee

"I am very glad that villagers have trust in the Village Committee. It has meant that they often apply to us for assistance, and shows that our effectiveness in tackling local problems has been recognized. I am proud to be a member of my Village Committee." N Saidahmatov, Member of the Village Committee

the authority to ‘push’ them to not only support but also to join its efforts to find ways of working collaboratively with the public sector.

This began when Mehr-Shafkat reviewed its approach to its mission of tackling poverty and decided to shift the focus from direct action at the grassroots level to lobbying and negotiating with those bodies which directly affected both conditions in the villages and the livelihoods and wellbeing of village dwellers. Its experience since then has been that problem solving based on consultation and face to face discussion with those who have direct responsibility for making practical changes is more effective!

2. The initial experiences of the various public sector representatives on the newly formed village committees were that the Mehr-Shafkat SHG Federations and their member SHG’s, which were also part of the committee, were a good resource for gaining community based information and advice, as well as for mobilising the community or taking action themselves.
3. By registering the membership, the roles and relationships and the working arrangements of the village committees, their processes for decision making became transparent, thus building trust with the community. Registration established the committees as sustainable entities. In addition, representation of public sector bodies on the committees indicated to people from local communities that the committees would have access to administrative, technical, medical, social, educational and legal resources.
4. Improvements in quality of services experienced in the villages are among the benefits gained through the village committees, their membership, and the way they work. Each representative on a committee is clear about his or her responsibilities in solving the problems identified by the committee, and has access to feedback from community representatives about the nature of the problem and how the solutions proposed are progressing.

What are the main lessons from this partnership experience?

It took 6 years for **Mehr-Shafkat** to build the kind of relationship and the level of communication that led to it being taken seriously by government bodies. According to **Mehr-Shafkat** this was fundamental to it being able to conduct negotiations with them on equal footing and was crucial to the effectiveness of the partnership with these bodies.

Mehr-Shafkat also observed that in order to achieve this kind of relationship and recognition by public sector bodies it had to put in a lot of work to improve the skills and potential of its own members and members of the SHG's and SHG Federations which have direct contact with members of local communities. This paid off to the extent that in some places the SHG



Federations are trusted even more than the government bodies.

Before the village committees were formed, the ayil okmots (local self government bodies) were only engaged in one-time or short term partnership activities with local communities. As a result the investment in such projects and their impact was often not sustainable and deep rooted problems were not resolved. The creation of the village committees has meant that use of resources from the state is much more efficient. Even better, the existence of a village committee has led to increases in the amount of investment in the community and has improved the way such investment has been used.

The village committee was a link between the local self government and government bodies and civil society for solving local problems, mobilizing resources, and gaining the respect of the inhabitants. The community began to change attitudes and took responsibility for solving the local problems. The population saw the value through practice and realized that being united is power.

Information sources

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CSO Baktynur-Osh, Osh city

Partnership for a clean city

Summary

Public Fund, **Baktynur-Osh**, the Osh city Territorial Council¹ #10 and city administration collaboratively made a number of changes to the present system of gathering and transporting garbage in order to clean the city. City residents also took an active part in this process. This case study describes what social partnership methods the Osh City Territorial Council used to clean the city and change the situation.

Background

The mission of **Baktynur Osh** is to create sustainable development in the community by promoting social interests and defending city inhabitants' human rights. Since it was founded in 2003, the organization began increasing its potential by participating in trainings and workshops for CSOs held by the Osh resource center of **Interbilim**.



Public Fund, **Baktynur-Osh** is located in the territorial council of Kurmanjan Datka #10 in Osh city. The

population is 42,000. In all 5 quarter committees, 72 blocks of flats, and 31 streets are covered by this Territorial Council. People were very upset about the unsanitary condition of the territory and they applied to **Baktynur Osh** several times to assist in solving this problem. This initiative was also supported by the head of the Territorial Council, which was also concerned about the cleanliness of this territory. The Territorial Council Kurmanjan Datka is a municipal organization of the city council; therefore they get their salary from the city budget; there are 10 territorial councils registered in Osh city.

The head of **Baktynur Osh** and the chairman of Territorial Council #10 thought a lot about improving the cleaning system in the territory. Quarter subbotniks (volunteer cleanups), held by local residents, school children, and students provided only temporary cleanliness. As a result, the CSO and territorial council decided to increase the level of public awareness by holding informational campaigns that would publicize the trash problem. In January 2004, **Baktynur Osh** asked **Interbilim** to consult them how to solve the garbage problem. There they were told about a program supported by the ACSSC which supports community participation in decision making process of the local authorities.

This program could help to solve the problem of cleaning up the city and getting rid of the trash, but before the CSO decided to clean up the trash they needed to make sure this was a priority problem for the majority of people in this area. In early 2004, **Baktynur Osh** conducted a PCA, which showed that 80 percent of the 60 participants chose the trash problem as the primary priority. Residents, representatives of the territorial council and quarter committee, schools and universities of this district pointed out that the increased pollution was threatening the health of the local population through the increasing number of rats and flies leading to more and more viral infections, people throwing trash into the Ak Buura river, and people living near the river using the contaminated water for drinking water.

During the PCA, residents of this area criticized the Tazalyk Joint Stock Company and Sanitary Epidemic Station for the inefficient removal of trash. The house management committee blamed the residents for untimely payment for the trash collecting service. This conflict led to a public hearing that focused on the work of the Tazalyk Joint Stock Company and how they utilize the money paid by people for the trash service.

How did the collaboration start?

In the beginning, **Baktynur Osh** held trainings for the community, the house management committee, and for representatives of quarter committees about how to effectively carry on negotiations. Together with these parties they finalized a strategy for promoting the public interest. A working group was organized during the training in order to coordinate further actions and it included representatives of **Baktynur Osh**, the house management committee, quarter committees, and the administration of the territorial council.

Within the project framework, it was planned to conduct an opinion poll for data collection concerning the trash- how often the trash is collected and removed, how often people pay for this service, if they are satisfied by the work of Tazalyk Joint Stock Company, etc. This information was needed to confirm that trash pickup was a problem during the negotiations with Tazalyk Joint Stock Company and with the city council administration. The result of the poll showed that only 60 per cent of people pay systematically for the trash removal service and the trash was collected once every 20 days; 80 percent of people wanted to know how their money was being used. This opinion poll was held twice, first at the beginning of the project and four months after the project finished. The representatives of the house management committee and quarter committees took an active part in the questionnaire. Many residents did not open their doors to the volunteers or gave incomplete answers.

How did the partnership develop?



According to the results of the opinion poll, the working group organized public hearings about trash removal. **Baktynur-Osh** together with the deputies of the city council persuaded Tazalyk Joint Stock Company to report to the people. According to the

data Tazalyk gave, only 55% of population paid for the service, however Tazalyk removes trash according to their schedule, but not in the areas where payment is not regularly given. At the end of public hearings the city dwellers

decided to reject the service of Tazalyk and made a decision to remove the trash by hiring special machine drivers.

This decision was brought up for discussion during a roundtable discussion. Two roundtables were organized regarding community mobilization for improving hygienic conditions and about giving the cleaning service of Tazalyk to the territorial councils. Representatives of the city council, 2 deputies of the city council, CSOs, the territorial council, quarter committees, the house management committee, and also representatives of the sanitary epidemic station participated in the roundtables. After the roundtables the participants decided to address a letter to the city council with a request of giving the cleaning service and money collecting obligations to the territorial council instead of Tazalyk. The city council decided to satisfy this request hoping the dwellers could improve the money collecting system for the trash removal service. This task was given to the working group and quarter committee #2 was chosen as a pilot area.

Around, 2,500 thousand people live in quarter committee #2. Community mobilization was very difficult because there were a lot of students renting the apartments and it was difficult to influence them to participate even with the University or Institute authorities. The head of the house management committee conducted explanatory works among the people. During the meetings with dwellers, one person was appointed to take the responsibility for collecting money for ten houses. This responsible person distributed information papers door-to-door and collected money for the trash removal service. The city council paid for the work of such activists for two months, during the mobilization process and 8 thousand soms were paid to the responsible people for two months service.

All this work was coordinated by the working group, which had been organized at the beginning of the training. Heads of the house management committee and the representatives of the quarter committees identified the exact number of people, made census of enumeration, and made a list of people actually living in this district.

So the payment system began improving and by the end of the month 80 per cent of people had paid for the trash removal services. The city administration brought up the request of dwellers of territorial council # 10 for discussion to the city council and deputies supported this initiative. Consequently, the city administration issued a decree "About payment and collecting money for trash removal service", and the responsibility was given to the territorial council.

The task of community mobilization and introduction of the payment system for the trash removal service started in April, 2004 and took seven months. Now the working group keeps on collecting money for trash removal and does it twice per week. From February 2005 until now, the quarter committee has collected over 10,000 soms.

This project was also financially supported by the ACSSC through a grant of \$1,396. The grant was spent for gaining lobbying and negotiation skills. This project was realized in partnership between **Baktynur-Osh** and the territorial council. The territorial council contributed technical and human resources equal to \$285.

Baktynur Osh contributed \$75 and salary for the accountant. Other works were done on the voluntary basis.

City Council Deputy sounds off

*"If **Baktynur Osh** did not raise this problem we would never know who cleans the territory of Osh and how. They helped to prevent infringement of the law. We must encourage such kind of initiatives and support them."*

A working group, created at the beginning of the project by the regulation of the city administration still keeps in contact with **Baktynur Osh** and the Territorial Council #10. This group conducts monitoring of the money usage and also reports its findings to the city dwellers. Together they continue to conduct meetings on improving the cleaning system in the territory.

Baktynur Osh held a press conference to distribute their positive partnership experience with residents of territorial council #10.

This opinion shows that deputies recognize the importance of CSOs and their activities.

What are the partnership results and impacts?

The collaborative work between **Baktynur Osh** and the administration of the territorial council has improved the payment system for trash removal. The result of another opinion poll held in territorial council #10 showed the increased number of containers and reduced

A. Nurmatova, head of the quarter committee # 2

"4 containers were established at 3 sites. Every site is responsible for keeping the area clean and pays for the garbage-collector. Now the majority of people are ashamed to throw trash where it is clean."

level of garbage. The city administration also became more active in its role in solving this problem. They have distributed 4 more trash containers in the neighborhood.

If before the trash was removed one time every 15-20 days, now it is being cleaned twice a week. The territorial council had made an agreement with the motor-depot, which is responsible for trash collecting machines. The territorial council is responsible to report to the community once in a quarter about money expenditures.

Residents have also become more active; often instructing one another not to litter or leave trash on the ground around their households and put the trash into the special boxes.

Baktynur-Osh is frequently invited as an expert by the state organizations in different projects related to city cleaning issues.

The result of this partnership raised other donor organizations' interest. Further partnership activity on city cleanliness was supported by the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan. According to the partnership a "Transparent accounting" system was improved, and the city administration had installed a concrete basement for the trash container, and a system of trash pressing was introduced. In addition, 3 trash squeezing machines were purchased from the grant from Soros-Foundation Kyrgyzstan for \$9,060. Trash pressing decreases the weight of the trash and makes it easier to transport. At this time the project is only being implemented in quarter committee#2, but in the future the authorities plan to use it in other areas of the city.

What were the key success factors?

- The essential support of the city administration. The regulation from January 25, 2005 "About payment and collecting money for trash removal service" underpinned the money collection and trash removal by the territorial council.
- Active participation by the deputies of the city council in all

J.I. Isakov, Mayor of the Osh City

"We support sustainable partnership with civil society organizations. They assist us in having feedback from the population. We spend money from the budget for repairing the roads, street lighting etc, however, we are not always aware of the real needs of the population. Next time for the trash removal project, we are planning to co-finance 50%. We are also ready to support other beneficial projects of civil society organizations."

activities had a positive influence on the city administration. They told the needs and problems of the city dwellers to the competent bodies. During the roundtable discussions they insisted on checking the activities of Tazalyk. The director of Tazalyk was discharged. At present the city administration cleans the city collaboratively with the Osh City Motor-Depot. Without the help of the deputies of the city council the CSO could not make Tazalyk report to local population. The strategy of influencing on the authority through deputies is one of the most successful factors in building the communication between the population and government.

- Using individual approaches to the population and opinion polls was very effective.

Lessons learned

During project realization there was also some difficulties with governmental officials. They thought that the project activity itself would install some containers and cleaning equipment. When **Baktynur-Osh** explained that the project was aimed to mobilize the community they began passive involvement. Only with the commitment of territorial councils and deputies of the Osh City Council it was possible to persuade the experts of the city administration the project was beneficial.

Conclusion

Baktynur-Osh and the territorial council Kurmanjan Datka have improved the skills of building cooperation between governmental bodies, assertion of interests, and they learned to monitor joint expenditures.

Baktynur Osh worked with local authorities through partnership to satisfy the interests of “consumers” and this gave residents an opportunity to select service providers themselves. **Baktynur Osh** is glad that the city administration and deputies of the city council listened to the results of the public hearings and opinion polls, which later helped to improve the

“We support sustainable partnership with civil society organizations. They assist us in having feedback from the population. We spend money from the budget for repairing the roads, street lighting etc, however, we are not always aware of the real needs of the population. Next time for the trash removal project, we are planning to co-finance 50%. We are also ready to support other beneficial projects of civil society organizations.”

collaboration. All stakeholders, partners and the population saw the efficiency of the partnership project and benefitted.

Information sources

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2. Individual interviews of the J. Isakov, (mayor of the Osh city), T. Asanov (leader, **Baktynur-Osh**),
3. A. Nurmatova (head of the quarter committee # 2) and inhabitants of the territorial council, Kurmanjan Datka

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CSO Soop Kochu, Osh Oblast, Kuu-Maidan village

Legal awareness is the core of efficient partnership

“Strong democracy is characterized by a policy of participation; otherwise, it is self government,

But not a government in the name of citizens”

Benjamin Barber

Summary

The population of Kuu-Maidan village in the Nookat Rayon was suffering from frequent power outages and did not understand the reason. They were told that the power outages took place because of unpaid debts by the

population to the rayon power station. However, during a community meeting it became clear that majority of people paid their electricity bills in time. Many of them were members of the Public Association, **Soop Kochu**. Because **Soop Kochu** has done a lot of work in partnership with local governmental officials, its members decided to arrange a dialogue with the staff of the rayon power station to clarify the situation. This case study describes how the unpaid debts and the power supply problem were resolved.

Background information about partners

Soop Kochu was registered as an CSO in 2003. Before that it was a community initiative group in Kuu-Maidan village. In 2001 the initiative group was selected as a target group for the Osh CSSC under the “Community Mobilization” program of Counterpart International. Members of the Kuu Maidan village initiative group had appreciated the help they had received under this program because it had given them an opportunity to develop their group into a sustainable CSO.

From its inception **Soop-Kochu** conducted a large amount of work with the local population, starting with the provision of training, and more recently working on advocacy issues. Six community projects were implemented with the help of the Local Self Government (LSG) and the local community. The total value of the all the projects undertaken amounted to more than \$21,000, with contributions of \$6,894.28 from the community and \$2,264.80 from the LSG.

Thanks to the efforts of PA, **Soop-Kochu** the community of Kuu-Maidan village was recognized by the local government as one of the most effective in solving local problems, to the extent that the oblast administration decided to arrange a conference on social mobilization in the village in 2004.



Soop-Kochu's partner in all of this was the Kenesh LSG. This long standing partnership was known to be reliable. The Chief of the LSG personally helped **Soop-Kochu** make contact with the directors of the rayon power

station.

Context of the Partnership Agreement

During a PCA conducted in 2004, electricity problems were prioritized as an acute problem in the community. The population of 3 villages covered by the Kenesh LSG took part in the PCA. Through it an action plan was drawn up and some ways of resolving the electrical problem were identified.

The government of the Kyrgyz Republic had also been working on regulating relationships between rayon power stations and local inhabitants: in January 1997 the President of Kyrgyz Republic signed a Regulation designed to “Improve the electric power system”. At the time the government said that electricity would be a cheap source of household fuel. Unfortunately, the reality turned out to be the opposite: regulations were not implemented in some places local populations were not informed about them, or about their rights.

Although the price for electricity had been rising for 10 years, salary levels and the revenues of the local population had not improved, especially in rural areas. The high price of electricity led to strained relations between the rayon electric power station and consumers. Almost 50% of population could not afford to pay for the electricity they used; at the same time the workers of the rayon electric power station began to put pressure on the local population by using power outages which affected even those who had paid for the service.

Some of the staff of the rayon electric power station, knowing that the population did not know their rights and that some were unable to pay on time began taking bribes for providing power and did not pass the money to the government. This was despite the fact that 80% of bills had been paid. The resulting situation was that those who had paid for their electricity suffered along with those who could not pay. Members of **Soop-Kochu** thought about solutions to this problem for a long time and eventually decided to conduct a survey of individual households to establish the real rate of debt and report it to the rayon power electric station as a basis for negotiating an end to the regular power outages.

How did the partnership develop?

Conducting a house to house survey proved to be difficult. So **Soop-Kochu** decided to work with local leaders and activists. It provided training for 20 of

them. The training was entitled “Rights and obligations of the organizations (meaning the power electric station) and electricity consumers”, and covered peoples’ rights to receive electricity services and the best ways of working with the population on this issue.



Next, roundtable discussions were arranged in 3 villages with the participation of **Soop-Kochu**, deputies of village councils, representatives of the rayon electric power station, and LSG bodies. During the discussions representatives of

the power station explained that the reasons for frequent power cuts were high levels of unpaid debt by the population. In response to the question “Why not only cut the power of those who do not pay?” they said that their rationale was that those who paid for the service would influence those in debts by blaming them or making them ashamed of the situation. They also said that some members of the population were adding to the problem because they were illegally using electricity.

The results of the regional roundtables were brought together at a concluding roundtable where it was decided to set up a working group with a two part brief: to ensure transparency in the activities of the rayon electric power station, and to educate the local inhabitants on rational usage of electricity and timely payment of their electricity bills. Working groups, including the representatives of the community, the rayon electric power station, and a member of the **Soop-Kochu** were appointed to cover each street of the Kenesh LSG. These groups visited all the houses on the street and kept a record of payments for electric power. Copies of these records were registered in a computer provided by **Soop-Kochu**, which meant there was an accurate picture of the situation.

Collaboration yields results

“This project was important because it enabled us and citizens to find out about benefits available for the use of electricity. Such benefits can be given to needy people through the rayon electric power station, however until now we have not been able to check if they have received them. Now we know our rights so we can demand that these discounts for electricity are paid.” Z. Osmonov, social worker of the ayil okmot

The first investigation by the working groups came up with the following results:

- ☐ 23 households used more electricity, than they actually paid for, which meant they were illegally using electricity;
- ☐ 38 households showed receipts for payment for their electricity usage, but were not registered in the records;

On the basis of the results of the house to house surveys **Soop-Kochu** conducted a final roundtable to discuss and regulate relations between the rayon electric power station and electricity consumers. Community members of the Kenesh LSG together with deputies of the local council and representatives of the ayil okmot according to the results of the roundtables decided to look over all the suggestions proposed by participants.

What were the outcomes of this partnership?

- ☐ On the basis of the findings of the house to house investigations, those electricity consumers who used electricity illegally were fined, and two electricity inspectors were discharged as they had not handed over the money they had collected from population.
- ☐ The payment record system for electricity was improved.
- ☐ The relationship between the rayon electric power station and the population has improved. The power station now tells the population about power outages in advance.
- ☐ Some inhabitants are now aware of their rights and allowances for electricity.
- ☐ With the help of Soop-Kochu three information committees, one in each village, have been created to keep electronic records of payments. These committees distribute information to households on their rate of use of electricity and their debts.

K. Samidinov, Expert from the rayon electric power station:

“Now it has become easier to work with the population. Before we had to persuade people to pay for the electricity they used. Representatives of the ayil okmot are also helping us. They tell us when pensions and allowances will be paid, so on that day we can deduct their electricity payments. It has also been very helpful carrying out the house to house investigations together with the working groups because in our experience it has been difficult for one inspector to collect the data and to serve the population. It is now much easier for the working groups to track the use of electricity.”

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- ☐ A constructive partnership has been built between representatives of the community and the rayon electric power station. Electricity supplies and payments for electricity services improved. Local activists have become a valuable resource to the power station and the effectiveness of its service provision.

What have the key success factors been?

- ☐ The training helped to set up the efficient dialogue;
- ☐ Local moderators from Soop-Kochu helped conduct roundtables;
- ☐ The previous partnership experience between Soop-Kochu and the local LSG played an important role. LSG bodies have enormous influence on the rayon electric power station and they recommended Soop-Kochu as a partner in the problem solving process. The local governmental officials knew the members of Soop-Kochu well and had previously collaborated with them on developing a number of projects for investment.
- ☐ There was a well established information distribution strategy. Three information leaflets about the project activities were published, and these helped to build up the trust of population in the Rayon electric power station.

What could have made things easier?

It was difficult to make direct contact with the administration of rayon electric power station. This body is based in the center of the Nookat Rayon. Sometimes its representatives did not attend meetings or other activities. The schedule of the house to house investigation had to fit in with the inspectors' timetable. Eventually it was the chief of the Kenesh LSG who helped set up effective dialogue between the power station and the community.

Initially letters to get things started should have been sent to the Osh Electric Power Network so that it could directly influence the administration of the rayon electric power station. These difficulties came up in the first stages of the partnership. Later the aims of the partnership were clarified during the roundtables and meetings and misunderstandings were resolved.

Conclusion

This example of good partnership between an CSO, the community, and a rayon electric power station is based on the delegation of functions and

division of activities between the partners; together with equal participation in actions and through mobilizing the community the payment system was improved. Representatives of the CSO and the community knew of the difficulties around collecting payments for electricity and were able to take these up with the power station and local authorities. During the partnership the transparency and accountability of the rayon electric power station were improved. This was a result of the effective work of **Soop-Kochu**.

Information sources

1. Materials of Kuu-Maidan project, ACSSC.
2. Individual interviews of K. Osmonaliev, leader of the **Soop-Kochu**, local inhabitants of the Kuu-Maidan and Kenesh villages of the Nookat Rayon, K. Samidiniov, expert of the Rayon electric power station

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CSO Araket Case Study

Irrigation management – a partnership approach

Summary

This case study describes the characteristics of a partnership relationship between the **Araket Initiative Group**, Local Self Government, and the inhabitants of Sai village working together to improve irrigation water management. It focuses on the partnership and collaboration of all parties before, during and after the project, especially the partnership activities and

outcomes and the tools used to support the collaboration which have helped to maintain relationships.

Background

Araket Initiative Group in Sai village in the Kara-Kulja Rayon has been engaged in mobilizing the population of the Ilaytalaa Ayil Okmot since 2001. Its mission is to improve the social and economic conditions of Sai village residents by increasing their involvement in activities that benefit the community, through social mobilization, and by improving relationships with local government bodies

Araket acquired knowledge and skills for social mobilization, team building, and working with the population on a participative basis through educational programs provided by the **Interbilim** Center in Osh city. Since 2002, the **Araket Initiative Group** has been working in partnership with the Local Self Government (LSG) to find solutions to community problems through joint assessment of population needs, joint assessment of local resources; joint definition of the goals and targets of future activities, and through the implementation of joint fundraising initiatives, among other things. Local problems are being solved with the support of donor agencies, and in all cases local governmental officials have been partners.

The Ilaytalaa Ayil Okmot (municipality) was founded in 1996 based on the former Karl Marx kolkhoz in the Karakulja Rayon. It is located in the Karakulja Rayon of the Osh Oblast and covers five villages, including Ilaytalaa and Sai villages. Sai village is 15 km from the center of the rayon and 125 km to the south-west of the oblast center in Osh city. It is located in the valley of the Tar River. The LSG and the local council in Ilayatala are both supported by the state. However, local taxes cannot cover the full range of services needed by the population in the area. As a result many unresolved social and economic problems have accumulated.

About the area

Stock-breeding and field husbandry are the main sources of income in Sai village with livestock and sunflowers being the main products. However, as some village inhabitants have pointed out, sunflowers are becoming increasingly unprofitable, and wheat has not been profitable for more than three years. People have practically stopped growing tobacco since 2000 when the price fell significantly. Nevertheless a continuous supply of

irrigation water for farming is an acute problem and a priority in the community.

Every year the river changes its course destroying the previous year's irrigation systems. As result, after the water level has fallen in autumn, the new supply of water that comes in winter and spring often does not flow into the previous irrigation ditches. As a consequence local community and governmental officials have to undertake annual work to re-establish dams and channels in order to re-supply irrigation waters. Even so there has often been insufficient water to meet irrigation needs during the important planting season. This affects the size of the harvest, so people's income levels suffer because they have to buy supplies in the markets. This particularly affects the income and expenditure of poor families.

How did the Initiative Group strengthen its partnership with Local Self Government?

To find a solution to the water problem **Araket** decided to approach international and local organizations which provided services that might be of help. Resource Center **Interbilim** recommended that they submit a project proposal to the program "Trust and partnership" being implemented by the **Interbilim** Center and Allavida (Great Britain). This program had been set up to improve opportunities for partnership and to support partnership initiatives.

Drawing on its previous experience, **Araket** applied and its application was accepted by the consultation council. One component of the activities was the provision of education to promote and increase participation in partnership building.

At the very beginning of the project the staffing of the initiative group was



reviewed, and deputies and representatives of the ayil okmot were selected to participate in the future project. Training was also conducted for community representatives, for representatives of the ayil okmot and for deputies of the local council. This was designed to strengthen team spirit and pave

the way for building a joint vision and finding shared solutions to local problems. During the training, participants also set out their different interests and allocated responsibilities.

Initially a needs assessment was conducted in Sai village in which civil society and representatives of the LSG participated. Representatives of the ayil okmot took an active part in assessing local resources as they had first hand information on what was available at a municipal level.

The aim of ensuring that the farmlands of Sai village received a constant supply of irrigation water was jointly agreed as a priority. Information campaigns about the goals and tasks of the project were launched to advise the inhabitants of Sai village and set out the overall project framework. The Initiative Group together with local government officials developed an action plan and appointed people to implement it. The population of Sai village was then mobilized to work on reconstruction of the water facilities and on cleaning the main water ditch. Reconstruction work to divert water from the Tar River through a water scoop to the main ditch in Sai village was also undertaken.

Kanatbek Idrisov, the leader of Araket notes:

"In the case of this work the main contributors were workers from local government organizations and we had only a letter of guarantee as assurance. In other cases if other people had been involved, we would have reached a more formal arrangement."



A Working Group was set up to oversee implementation of the project. This consisted of active farmers, irrigation specialists, and deputies from the local council. The administration of the ayil okmot helped them to work out how much of the previously irrigated land was left without water and what financial contributions were required to pay for water usage.

The community contributed to the project by providing human, technical and financial resources. The contribution of the local community was worth 19,844 som and the grant from donors came to 46,750 som. In total the project costs were in the region of

76,344 som (around \$2,000).

During the project, training on monitoring and evaluation was conducted. Through this representatives of the ayil okmot, especially deputies of the local council learned that monitoring and evaluation are not only about financial control, but are tools for measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of project activities and outcomes. They learned that the process of monitoring demands sound knowledge of the project and good assessment skills. Officials from local government were also members of the monitoring and evaluation committee. In this role they tried out the evaluation methods which are used by civil society organizations and noted the usefulness and efficiency of the tools, which include not only check lists but real indicators for measuring the results.

What was achieved through the partnership and what impact did it have?

1. Through these partnership activities the community achieved the following outcomes in improving its social and economic status:
 - ☐ A dam has been constructed;
 - ☐ Inhabitants of Sai village have year-round access to irrigation of their farmlands;
 - ☐ There are reduced costs to farmers for keeping their lands irrigated;
 - ☐ The inhabitants of Sai village maintain the main ditch and side ditches.
2. Apart from the practical outcomes, there were also important long-term achievements and impacts arising from the process of partnership itself. The ayil okmot now trusts Araket. In the words of Jyldyz Omurkulova, the leader of the Kenen bai bol Public Fund, “Despite delays in implementing the project, the fact that the grant was not lost made a positive impression on government officials and gave credibility to members of the Initiative Group.” The ayil okmot is now planning to delegate more powers and responsibilities to communities or local organizations. Kanibek Baatirov, Head of the Ayil Okmot sees Araket as a partner in more future plans. He has said: “The ayil okmot found an office for Araket in Sai village and has delegated some of its powers and functions to Araket. He has also said “In order to sustain the outcomes of the project, we now plan to include a new line in the budget for maintenance of the irrigation system.” As further evidence of the increased trust between the partners, a deputy from the local council asked to discuss the local budget with the Working Group so it could check the sum that had been allocated for improvements to the water system.

3. New knowledge, skills and, especially, practical experience gained during this partnership and collaboration program have changed the old decision making methods into more efficient ones, with the help of new tools. As Tengdik Namashamov, member of the Initiative Group has observed: “Clarity and simplicity in using the PCA tools leave no room for uncertainty and doubt. Previous decision making processes during our meetings and those of the Kurultais (assembly) meant that the majority of participants could not understand how priorities had been identified, and this gave rise to doubts about the decisions. Currently, compared to that situation, the community takes an active part in defining their own problems.” As a result many significant changes have occurred in the ways that local government officials work and behave. Members of **Araket** have noted the following: “As of late, the Head of the Ayil Okmot has become more interested in solving community problems through mobilization of the population and working in partnership with NGOs” What are the key success factors in this partnership?

What are the key success factors in this partnership?

Sustainable collaboration between the **Araket** and LSG has been achieved because:

- There has been a joint training program involving representatives of the Initiative Group, deputies of local council and LSG. During the training team spirit was generated, including the growth of mutual support which paved the way for strengthening trust and increasing transparency within the group. During group work participants began to work out the some solutions to problems in the community. At the same time the potential contribution of each participating group was revealed, and it became clear who understood what aspects of the problem best - the ayil okmot or the community. As a result the roles of the deputies were clearly defined, and common ground and mutual understanding between the Initiative Group, local government organizations and the community was established.
- Deputies on the local council have participated in training and joint decision making. The knowledge they acquired helped them to clarify their powers and direct their officials to work in partnership with civil society organizations. According to local laws, deputies on the local council are elected by the population and are responsible for developing and signing off on the budget, developing the strategic plan for the area,

and making decisions about the effective use of local resources. Usually, they are elected from among the activists in the community. However in remote areas it is unfortunately very difficult to find competent people to stand for election because so many skilled citizens have left the country to find better jobs. Newly elected deputies cannot always get training and so do not know how to protect the best interests of the population. Under such circumstances the Head of the Ayil Okmot, who by law is also Chief of the Local Council can assert a lot of influence over the decision making process during council sessions. However after the training provided through these programs the deputies who participated understood much more clearly that they have to make decisions for the benefit of population.

- There has been a clear division of responsibilities to ensure sustainability of the project outcomes. In addition a Water Committee has been set up, consisting of six members representing Initiative Groups, deputies of local council and specialists in irrigation systems. The population who were mobilized by the Initiative Group now makes a monthly monetary contribution of 10 som per household to pay for their use of water. Deputies on the local council have agreed to support maintenance of irrigation system out of the local budget. An ayil okmot expert will give an annual assessment of the state of the irrigation system. The Chairperson of the Committee is paid 400 som from the payments made by the population.

Abdimalik Karabashev, trainer consultant of the “Trust and Partnership” Program says,
“The grant made to set up the “Trust and Partnership” Program has provided not only the solution of a specific problem, as it seemed at first, but it has also created the conditions needed to build collaboration and positive relationships between the community and local government organizations in solving community problems.”

What has been learned from this partnership project?

The commitments of all parties to the partnership were jointly defined at the start and then confirmed in action plans and letters of guarantee. These letters included what measures that would be taken if obligations were not fulfilled. During the implementation stages sometimes one party did not keep to schedule or did not do the agreed work. Such problems were solved as they emerged.

Eleven brigades, each made up of 10 households, were set up, each with an elected leader, an inner hierarchy and clearly defined goals. The main task of the brigades was to clean up the irrigation ditches. Each was provided with clear terms of agreement and the scope of the work to be done was defined. Participants in each brigade were also allocated their own specific responsibilities. One deputy was attached to each of the brigades. It was decided during a village meeting that the allocated work would remain unchanged regardless of the quantity and members of brigades.

Under this system people who did not join in the work of their brigade were expected to pay non-participation costs in the form of a fine. The level of the fine was decided within each group and ranged from 200 som to 500 som.

Conclusion

Through this project the population was gradually activated and became involved in the local self governing process. **Araket** and Water Committees, were founded within this particular project framework, and are still a link between the ayil okmot, deputies of the local council, and community. Mechanisms for sustainable maintenance of the irrigation system and hydraulic works were jointly developed and should provide a long-term solution which will be an incentive for further partnership initiatives. In this community, mobilization of the population grew into a sustainable and long-term partnership as a result of the specifically targeted project activities set up to meet the problem of ensuring a sustainable supply of irrigation water for the whole community.

Information sources

1. Report materials of the training program: “Interbilim” Center & Allavida “Trust and Partnership”, Osh, 2006.
2. Interviews: Head of the Ayil Okmot, members of the Initiative Group and the local inhabitants of the Sai village, Karakulja Rayon, Osh Oblast.

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Jalal-Abad Oblast

Public Association Altius, Jalal-Abad city

Volunteers - an important link in partnership and collaboration

Summary

In Kyrgyzstan, children are our future and what happens in the future depends on the way their potential is being developed today. However, it seemed that school children in Jalal-Abad were more interested in computer games than attending school and attendance was suffering. With this in mind, Altius a volunteer center in Jalal Abad decided to ensure children were attending school and getting the education they deserved by investigating the reason for low attendance at school, coming up with a solution and hopefully limiting youth's access to computer games during the process. In order to achieve a favorable result, Altius turned the Jalal Abad State Administration and city council.

Background

Public Association **Altius** (means “higher or stronger” in Latin) is a volunteer center. It was registered in 2004 to support and promote volunteering in Kyrgyzstan. Before its official registration volunteers had actively participated in activities of other CSOs in Jalal-Abad including the Jalal-Abad CSSC, and as a result of the demand for their work the volunteers and CSSC decided to set up **Altius**.

The Jalal-Abad CSSCs aim is to promote the participation of citizens in decision making through the development of civil society organizations. Since its inception, the center has been able to establish good relationships with local government officials and it is now a member of the Coordination Council of the Jalal-Abad State Administration. Since 2004 it has been working to improve services delivered by government agencies to local communities. More recently, it has worked in partnership with the government officials of Akman village to improve access to pre school education

What problem did Altius decide to address through partnership?

The Jalal-Abad CSSC has been recruiting and training volunteers and involving them in its activities since 1998. One of the trainings focused on improving the partnership relations with governmental officials. As part of

this, participants targeted the improvement of the educational system as a focus for joint activities between CSOs and government.

At first, it was necessary to identify why the quality of education in the area was so low. The answer to this question was discovered during a Participatory Community Assessment (PCA). During the PCA both teachers and representatives of the City Department of Education asked for assistance with improving the school children's attendance. It emerged that absenteeism was one of the reasons for the poor quality of education. Many of the school children who were interviewed said that they were busy during school hours, not because they were doing homework or because they were working somewhere else, but because they wanted to play computer games! Owners of an internet café confirmed school children's frequent attendance.



Millions of people all over the world are interested and play computer games; however it seemed that in Jalal-Abad, many school children were giving the games more time than their education and families. More than 20 computer game halls operate in Jalal-Abad, and schoolchildren were their main clients.

Statistics provided by the City Department of Education concluded that there are 17, 440 school children in the area, and to their surprise it was discovered that everyday at least 150-200 children attended the computer game halls rather than going to school. Mostly the children went to play computer games during lessons or late in the evening because there was a discount. The main reason for the children going so frequently and freely was that there were no rules against children playing the games during school hours and no time limit for using the computers. In order to play the computer games the children either asked for money from their parents (at least 30 som) or sometimes stole it. Relationships between parents and children were deteriorating and growing into family conflict. This situation had contributed to the decline in the quality in education, and for some school children it had also led to a psychological dependence on computer games and, in some extreme cases, a "bifurcation" of the personality, into "I am virtual" and "I am not real". One serious incident that illustrated the problem was an accident when a first year student killed a security guard at

the computer center so that he could steal the computer equipment and install it in his house in order to continue to live in his virtual world. As a consequence not only the student, but also his parents, teachers and the entire community suffered.

It was this kind of problem that led to a partnership between the key stakeholders and decision-makers which began after the PCA held in March, 2005. As a first step, the City Department of Education provided statistics on school children absenteeism and the City Administration helped **Altius** arrange meetings with school directors and Internet owners.

What was achieved through partnership?

Within the framework of this project, Volunteer Center **Altius** started from the premise that only those state organizations responsible for education would have a direct impact on the efforts to improve attendance at schools. So it approached the Jalal-Abad State Administration, the City Department of Education and the administrations of secondary schools in the city and asked them to join the initiative as key partners. Preliminary discussions were held with each agency on how the problem could be solved and what part they could play in finding a solution. The positive negotiations and future collaboration would help to achieve a positive result.

The aim of the project was to organize parents and teachers to lobby higher authorities such as the State Administration and City Department of Education to take action, and to make sure the problem was understood by all key government officials. All institutions that were approached became key partners in solving the problem. During project implementation government agencies and CSOs made equal contributions, and since that

time government authorities have seen benefits from their support of the project.



Altius set up two roundtable discussions with all stakeholders with the financial support of the Association of Civil Society Support Centers. Stakeholder participants included representatives from the

State Administration, the City Council, Youth Inspector, the City Education Department, school administrators, the Oblast Administration of Justice, and parents. At the end of the roundtable participants prepared a letter addressed to the State Administration and to Deputies of the City Council asking them to introduce measures that would regulate and limit admittance to the computer game halls to 2 hours a day and forbid the attendance of school children after 9.00 p.m. It was very encouraging that many governmental officials supported the organizers' idea and expressed their willingness to help find a solution to this problem. It meant that everyone understood the problem and worked together in finding a way to solve it.

The letter was discussed in a session of City Council, and members agreed to the proposed regulation. However, the regulation approval was delayed by the Oblast Administration of Justice because it still needed some more work before it could be finalized. As a result, a second roundtable was held to make some amendments, to discuss further steps of action, and to define the roles and responsibilities of all partners. In an act of good faith from the government side, the second roundtable was given space and facilitated by the State Administration. Deputies on the City Council were responsible for preparing and presenting the proposed regulation to the Oblast Administration of Justice. The Education Department of the City Administration provided statistical data on attendance and monitored progress during project implementation. The Youth Inspector and law enforcement bodies were responsible for monitoring internet cafes and playing halls and kept records of how many teenagers attended during forbidden times. Schools worked directly with children to inform them of the new regulations and **Altius** and Jalal-Abad CSSC were to be available for consultations from all parties.

In addition, at the second roundtable participants agreed to set up a working group to coordinate all activities during the project. One representative from each interested agency became a member. The working group conducted an information campaign, published leaflets, and organized meetings not only with school children and teachers but also with parents to disseminate the information and new regulations. Through their collaborative work, members of the working group learned how to adjust their partnership arrangements so that they were effective in joint decision making and joint planning, and successfully shared the roles and responsibilities during implementation. The working group has also monitored the activities of each partner agency and discussed the results.

Before this project was implemented, prior partnership activities between the organizations were limited to single projects or one time contributions by the governmental officials. In tackling this problem the groundwork has been laid for new sustainable partnership.

Plans for future

Currently, modern information technologies are increasingly reaching deep into communities in rural areas. With this comes a threat of the spread of absenteeism due to computer game abuse. In the future there are plans to expand the experience of this project to more rural areas where computer game halls and internet cafés are new or are getting set up.

What was achieved through this partnership project?

Collaboration between **Altius** and government officials was productive and produced the following results:

- ☐ The proposed regulation was accepted and given a registration number and a registration certificate. On the basis of the statutory act, access to computer game halls for children under 16 years old was limited to two hours during day time and prohibited after 9.00 p.m.
- ☐ In addition the City Department of Education, Youth Inspector, together with the social and territorial city administrations of Jalal-Abad were tasked to inform teenagers and their parents about the new regulation and to explain the reasons for it.
- ☐ School attendance improved and the education quality improved.

In addition a group from the representatives of **Altius** and the State Administration worked together to conduct unannounced checks into the execution of the regulation in computer game halls. The cost of such investigations was reimbursed by the Jalal-Abad Oblast State Administration.

The partnership skills of members of the participating organizations and the trust developed between the governmental officials, the Jalal-Abad CSSC, **Altius**, and other CSOs have grown. Government bodies have gained a better understanding of activities undertaken by CSOs and why they are important. They have also gained facilitation and moderation skills in conducting roundtables and meetings with many different stakeholders. In addition, the deputies of city council improved their lobbying skills.

Many internet cafes in the city are now functioning within the framework of the regulation. For example, the internet café 'Titan', located in the center of the city, made a decision to prohibit teenagers from playing computer games altogether, but allowed them access to other services such as use of the Internet. However access to Internet has also been prohibited after 7.00 p.m.

Success factors

- The working group of government officials and CSOs are still monitoring execution of the regulation in Jalal-Abad's computer game halls.
- The partnership was successfully set up because the Jalal-Abad CSSC is well known and is one of the most dynamic and well established CSOs in the region. The manager of the center has been appointed as a member of Coordination Council set up by the Oblast and City State Administrations. This is a good indication that governmental officials recognize the potential contributions of CSOs like the CSSC and Altius and have begun to trust them. The CSSC is also respected because it frequently attracts help from experts in decision making and joint planning processes.
- The unique way of building communication between the many key stakeholders involved in finding a solution to this problem was important. The State Administration managed and administered the work while the City Department of Education delivered educational services.

What lessons have been learned through this partnership?

During the foundation of the partnership it was difficult for **Altius** to distinguish between the functions and credentials of the State Administration and the City Council because of their lack of experience in this field. To help them with this, a relevant training was given to volunteers that explained each government agencies roles and responsibilities.

During the project the mayor of Jalal-Abad changed twice and consequently also 2 new vice-mayors. On both occasions it was necessary to start work on the project from the beginning. High government personnel changeover is a problem all over Kyrgyzstan, not just in Jalal-Abad. Project progress was also hindered because of bureaucracy and red tape. For example, the date for considering and agreeing on the regulation did not match the planned

schedule of the meetings of the City Council. The Oblast Administration of Justice sent the regulation back for further revision by City Council because it lacked a legal conclusion.

A document, which regulates the partners' relations, is needed to establish sustainable partnership. "People come and go to organizations, but we need to be able to rely on such a document. When relationships are properly documented, the responsibilities of all parties will also be clear," emphasized E. Mavlyanova, manager of the Jalal-Abad CSSC. The new regulation took a long time to be approved as the meeting of deputies of the city council is often held irregularly. CSOs should consider this factor while creating potential action plans. Involvement of journalists in project activities is needed for broadening the partners' support and informing the population about the intermediate results of the project activities.

Conclusion

Altius, as a result of their activities, came to the conclusion that it is much more efficient to solve problems through partnership and conducting negotiations during roundtables helps to involve all stakeholders and establish an interrelation between them.

It is rare when young people initiate any project. This successful example of joint activities led to enhanced civic activism by young people and let people know that the youth have a future and a voice. Volunteerism should be an important link in the establishment of partnership between CSOs and governmental organizations.

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***Public Association Development of Suzak villages, Jalal-Abad
Oblast, Suzak Ayil Okmot***

***Partnership is a key to community based organization's
sustainability***

Summary

CSOs in Suzak AO operate in the sphere of income-generation activity and receiving financial support from a local development foundation. Development activity of the development foundation has been improved due to partnership between community-based organizations and LSG bodies of regional and district state administrations. The result of this collaboration was the increase of households' income and creation of jobs. At present, residents have their own local fund for supporting small projects and improving social and economic development.

Suzak Aiyl Okmot(AO) is located 15 km from the regional center of Jalal-Abad City. The population is 34,000. In 2000, residents heard about community based organizations¹ for the first time, when the UNDP Decentralization program started. As a result of this program there were more than 60 CSOs established on the territory of Suzak aiyl okmot. In 2001 these civil society organizations united into an informal network called **Development of Suzak villages**. At present the informal network of CSOs is registered as local Public Association **Development of Suzak villages**. Not only community representatives, but local and district administration representatives have become members of this organization. The development of Suzak district communities and the solving of local problems occurred as a direct result of partnership between CSOs and Suzak Aiyl Okmot representatives.

UNDP's program in the region aimed at supporting decentralization and the development of self-governance through strengthening local communities. The program activity has been extended since its inception and the example of the interaction mechanism between CSOs and local self-governance bodies, which works in Suzak district, is the most successful case according to many local residents.

Background

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan inherited many problems from the socialistic epoch. Forming a democratic state after the command centralized system proved to not be an easy task; however, the young independent republic did not have any other choice. Suzak AO was not an exception. Citizens' passivity was a huge barrier in strengthening local democracy and the development of civil society. All communities are rich with human resources and can achieve real progress when residents take the initiative and start developing new and constructive ways of thinking and realizing initiatives. For this reason, the most important way to catalyze development in the AO was to build the communities' capacity so that citizens could undertake local development initiatives themselves and resolve problems without assistance.

Through the UNDP Decentralization Program villagers were mobilized and motivated to form CSOs in 2001. These organizations demonstrated their independent operation and management, participation in decision-making, and understanding the role and responsibility CSOs have in improving the social status of population.

What is the essence of partnership?

Suzak Aiyl Okmot residents united and joined community-based organizations of 10-20 people on a voluntary basis. Their members participated in a series of trainings in the development and realization of social projects, joint planning, leadership, book-keeping, and accounting for community-based organizations.

During their public meetings community-based organization members discussed all village problems. Together with LSG body representatives they selected

Yunusov L., Head of Suzak AO:
"Joint planning is needed; first of all for me, the head of AO, if we together with people make common decisions, then we split the trust."

the most pressing problems and discussed their solutions. “It was wonderful that we could unite into community-based organizations. It has become considerably easier to solve our problems; previously we were not able to reach consensus. Meaningless conversations and hopes that someone will do everything for us has stopped,” said Turdukulov K., leader of public organization International, Jany-Dyikan village, Suzak AO.

Results of CSO meetings with suggestions on village development were considered at the aiyl okmot and aiyl kenesh level, and the proposed solutions to the selected problems were included in the annual strategic development plan. Thus, CSOs took an active part in the process of joint strategic planning and decision-making. Direct participation of CSOs in LSG activity brought about a culture of sharing the most active strengths of the local community and mobilizing local resources.

In 2000, the UNDP started to give financial support to CSOs in the form of provision of micro-capital-grants (abbr. MCG). The purpose of the program was providing micro-capital-grants to support the collaboration of CSOs with local self-governance bodies in solving local social problems. At the initial stage MCG served as a stimulator used to realize ideas by strengthening the capacity of CSOs, and promoting the local community acquisition of valuable experience in mobilizing internal resources. During the realization of social projects CSOs and the LSG acquired skills of effective management of financial assets and partnership. Funding for the social projects was divided in this way in order to ensure community buy in: UNDP – 48%, aiyl okmot, CSOs, and other local sponsor assets – 52%. While providing communities with micro-capital-grants aiyl okmot involvement was not limited to cash contribution. Aiyl okmot representatives were members of a grant committee and took an active part in the decision-making process. The grant committee consisted of representatives and leaders of CSOs, local CBOs, and aiyl okmot.

In 2001 more than 50 CSOs of Suzak AO united into an informal network of CSOs named **Development of Suzak villages**. The organization received legal status and is still working today. Members of the public organization are both representatives of aiyl okmot and deputies of local councils. This association gives an opportunity to expand the sphere of activity in terms of attracting resources and expanding opportunities to solve problems in field. It is remarkable that LSG bodies provide rooms for the organization’s office in the aiyl okmot building free of charge, which demonstrates the effective partnership activity between **Development of Suzak villages** and aiyl okmot.

As time has gone by, more and more of CBO funds were contributed towards the realization of social projects; as a result, CBO chances for sustainability began to go down. At the end of 2001 there was an additional partnership mechanism introduced with the purpose of maintaining CBO sustainability. UNDP Local Self-Governance Program allocated assets in the amount of 400, 000 soms in the form of a grant to fund income-generation projects of CBOs. Grant assets were transferred to the PA, Development of Suzak villages' account. At the same time initial contributions from all parties were: UNDP – 80%, AO – 10%, PA – 10%. This money formed a portfolio for a local development fund (abbr. LDF). Each year the amount of LDF started increasing because of accumulated interest, especially from CBOs.

The main purpose of LDF was to increase access of jamaats (communities) and their unions to financial resources to improve welfare, employment and income of households through the realization of income-generation business projects planned by jamaats, their unions, and local CBOs.

Community Testimonial

“Earlier we did not believe that some day we would be able to organize our development fund and moreover, we did not know that at the cost of our contributions its credit portfolio would be replenished. Now we believe that life can be changed and it does not require vast sums of money”, - says Tashtemirova T., community-based organization Ai-Danek

Development of Suzak villages manages LDF cash assets with a Board of Directors, which consists of a chairperson: the head of AO, a vice-chairperson – the leader of **Development of Suzak villages**, representatives of the state district administration, government institutions, and public organizations. The Board of Directors members are elected in a transparent way during the general meeting of PA, **Development of Suzak villages**, including the voting of both organization members and LSG representatives. Such cooperation has allowed the LDF to be

managed transparently by identifying and funding the most efficient and priority projects. In the process of supporting business projects the PA and AO provided advisory and technical assistance in identifying the priority for this territory (processing of agricultural production, development of cattle-breeding and plant cultivation, etc).

The process of considering, approving and providing funding for business projects to CSOs has been effective because of the supervision provided by the Board of Directors of PA **Development of Suzak villages**. It also monitors the realization of business projects, determines the interest rate, and the decisions of the Board of Directors are approved at the general

meeting by members. The Board of Directors chairperson and members work on a voluntary basis.

Community representatives say that initially each community organization

CSOs make a difference

“As it turned out almost all villages of the republic encounter many similar problems. These are potable and irrigation water problems, lack of sewage and irrigation systems, lack of schools, public bath-houses, roads, medical centers. Taking into consideration the gravity of a problem, community-based organizations prioritize the realization of projects and receive approval from authorities. It becomes an axiom: all difficulties can be overcome only due to cooperation and mutual understanding between communities and local self-governance bodies,” - says Jusupova Ch., PA Shirin.

worked independently and the aiyl okmot provided advisory support. Then, gradually AO started participating in activities of community organizations. Local authorities delegate such responsibilities to community organizations as maintenance of the moral and psychological climate in the corresponding territory and the upbringing of citizens with public influence (aksakals courts, parents' committees).

Through continued partnership and collaboration the cost share for projects now looks like this: CSOs – 42%, UNDP – 30 %, LSG – 17%,

state district administration – 5%, state regional administration – 1%, business structures – 5%. This picture demonstrates that through cooperation and partnership all sectors will participate and assist in the realization of local community development projects.

Outcomes and Impact

- Initially LDF funds made up 480,000 soms (of which 20 % is from AO and CBO contributions); at present the amount equals 800,000 soms.
- People started changing their attitude toward the present situation in communities. People know about the real ability and limitations of aiyl okmot in terms of solving local problems, so sometimes they take responsibility to solve some local problems themselves.
- By means of collaboration between CBOs and the LSG, a wider community was involved in the management of local activities; people's sense of dependence was subdued; hidden resources were identified to solve local problems.
- LSG bodies treat CBOs as partners, their cooperation only strengthens self-governance. Participants of CBOs sensed the possibilities and

strengths, realized the necessity of putting forward their own initiatives and participate in local actions.

- CBO members realized that they directly participate in the village development process and in the future with an increase of savings they will be able to solve not only local infrastructure problems, but also economic problems.
- The successful experience of the association's work has cultivated and improved donor and stakeholder interest in the program and attracted even more investments to solve village problems. Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan supported the program in the amount of \$7,511.

Key Success Factors

- Effective cooperation was promoted by creating a mechanism, Board of Directors, which is comprised of LSG bodies and representatives of community-based organizations. The PA itself was an outcome of a joint initiative by aiyl okmot and communities.
- Trainings and technical assistance of the local UNDP office improved the capacity of residents and local authorities in social partnership. This organization forms part of a supervisory board for **PA Development of Suzak villages**, which helps ensure effective management of the organization.

Lessons Learned

It was difficult to establish partnership relations at times due to the low capacity of community-based organization members; that is why it is necessary to concentrate special attention on their education. In addition, it was difficult to create a mechanism to ensure timely payments of LDF cash assets by CSOs. PA Development of Suzak villages was incapable of solving this problem without assistance; only due to partnership with LSG the association resolved this problem. The head of aiyl okmot together with CSO leaders and authoritative aksakals visited debtors and discussed ways out of crisis and assisted them in developing an action plan with specified deadlines. Then members of the managing committee, aksakals, and CSO leaders monitored action plan accomplishment.

Conclusion/Findings

The most important conclusion was that residents realized the importance and usefulness of cooperation and partnership between CSOs and LSG;

there is a local fund of cash assets in the region that supports the realization of income-generation projects developed by residents themselves. This fund has helped alleviate the problem of searching for donors to support projects. Members of Suzak district CSOs are fully confident that development initiatives can be achieved with community participation and the effective utilization of local resources.

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Batken Oblast

CSO Foundation for Tolerance International, Batken Oblast

Inter-state collaboration building peace in border communities

Summary

Batken Oblast in Kyrgyzstan has disputed border regions with Tajikistan. In 1999-2000 the presence of IMU terrorists in the border regions created trouble for local inhabitants who still shudder when they recall those times. Several years later residents are still working hard to defy the terrorist influences which undermine and endanger the peaceful lives of citizens on both sides of the border. This case study describes a peace initiative based on partnership between the Batken Rayon of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Isfara Rayon of Tajikistan. The partnership was set up to reduce conflict in the border area. The Public Foundation For Tolerance International's branch office located in Batken was a mediator between the two sides and facilitated their discussions towards a solution based on collaboration.

Foundation For Tolerance International is a CSO working in Central Asia. It was launched by the UNHCR in March 1998 and locally registered in April, 1998. This UN sponsored initiative was established to find ways of preventing violent conflict in the area. By the time the initial project was due to end, many local CSOs and state authorities called for an extension of its work. The project team therefore set up the Public Foundation for Tolerance International (**FTI**) to continue its activities at the local level. Today **FTI** is one of the largest and most well known CSOs not only in Kyrgyzstan, but in Central Asia. Currently, a multinational team of 40 people is working hard to fulfill its mission. The mission of Foundation For Tolerance International is to promote a culture of non-violence and tolerance, to prevent violence, and to find nonviolent solutions to conflict in Central Asia.

The office of **FTI** in Batken has been in operation since the end of 1998 and has been working on two programs:

1. Preventing and finding non-violent solutions to the interethnic conflicts in the Fergana Valley.
2. Expanding dialogue and promoting a culture of non-violence between civil society and the Kyrgyz institutions of authority.

As part of this, **FTI** has had to establish contact with various government bodies in order to build the partnerships needed to implement its "Peaceful

initiatives for the community” project. As part of this initiative it also set up an CSO network to support the “Ferghana valley is a valley of peace” project. In addition it established a Civil Society Support Center which helped to improve partnership between **FTI**, the ayil okmot, and local communities.

This case study focuses in particular on collaboration between the Administration of the Batken Rayon of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Administration of Isfara Rayon of the Tajik Republic, and **FTI** in Batken city focusing on the management of water resources in the two adjoining countries.

Background

The area served by the project is Samarkandek – Chorku. It is in the foothills of the Pamir-Alai mountain range in the valley of the Isfarinka River. Within the area there are enclaves and quasi-enclaves of neighboring countries which makes it politically unique. To deal with this in a practical way, many resources in the region are provided for use by all residents whether they live in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan. Because of its geographic characteristics and the dry climate, agriculture and cattle breeding are the main occupations available in the area, which lacks natural resources, fertile land and pastures; it also lacks drinking water and water for irrigation. At the time when this project began water that did pass through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan did not always reach the residents of Tajikistan, and this was a source of frequent dissatisfaction. The reason for this had to be clarified with the participation of inhabitants of communities in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The history of water developments in the area

In 1965 a protocol between the Kolkhoz of “Ravat” and “Shurab” mining administration was drawn up to solve the issues on access to and use of the water resources between the two countries. This covered “The allocation of irrigation and dry lands following the construction of drinking water pipe “Voruh - Shurab” As a result of this agreement the Kyrgyz authorities had allocated 14.4 hectares of land for construction, 2 hectares of which was to be irrigated land and 11.9 hectares of dry land. According to the agreement the authorities had permission to sink 5 shafts for drinking water which would provide 10 liters of water per second to Kyrgyzstan.

In 1969 the water pipe “Voruh-Shurab” was extended by 32 km and its capacity increased to 210 l/s (liters per second), 12 km of the extension goes through Kapchigai, Uch-Dobo, Ak-Tatir, Jany Bak and Samarkendek, which are populated areas in Kyrgyzstan. The remaining 20 km goes through Voruh, Hodja Ailo, Lyakkan, Karabog and Charbog which are populated areas in Tajikistan. The source of the water comes from Kyrgyzstan, and the canal provides the only drinking water in the area.



However over time people from Kyrgyz and Tajik settlements living alongside the canal began to make unauthorized water withdrawals by cutting new channels for irrigation. As a result out of the 210 liters per second available during summer, Shurab city was

only able to draw 10-15 liters per second – too little to provide the city with the water it needed. This lack of water, both for irrigation and for drinking, led to a series of protests by the inhabitants of the city. In 2000 these protests culminated in community conflicts between Tajik and Kyrgyz citizens and led to prosecutions.

What was done to deal with this situation?

FTI in Batken took various initiatives to regulate the problem of the water usage. First of all, it needed to clarify who managed the intake dam, who was responsible for its maintenance, why the water had begun to reduce, and how to provide equal access to water resources to both residents of Kyrgyzstan and residents of Tajikistan. It was impossible to find answers to these questions without the participation of government bodies and water

specialists.



Therefore, **FTI** arranged meetings with community leaders and representatives of ayil okmots of the border regions. As a result, an initiative group of community leaders and representatives of local

authorities was set up. Its purpose was to agree to the amount of water to be made available to the villages along the canal and to identify people who could be responsible for ensuring a peaceful solution to the problem. At the time the initiative group had no idea what hard work they would have to do! **FTI** coordinated the activities of the initiative group. Today members of the initiative group are very proud of their work, because they achieved real and positive results, but when they look back they remember the mixed feelings of joy as well as disappointment and dissatisfaction which they had while carrying out this huge undertaking, which at times seemed impossible to resolve.

Early stages of work

During the early analysis stage 110 outlets were found along the length of the canal. Next, joint technical research was undertaken by specialists who worked out the technical aspects of the situation. This was agreed upon by the representatives of two countries during a series of negotiations. In total three cross-state negotiations took place, each with participation from the state administrations of Batken Rayon, Kyrgyzstan and Isfara Rayon, Tajikistan. During the first meeting they discussed the problem itself and possible solutions; in the second meeting the two sides reached an agreement to increase the number of outlets in Kyrgyzstan, because so many ethnic Kyrgyz people had migrated to Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan. The negotiations were backed by village meetings in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan where the **FTI** led initiative group explained the situation to the inhabitants using the accurate technical data that had been gathered. On the basis of the negotiated agreement, 4 outlets were agreed upon for Uch-Dobo village (Kyrgyzstan), 4 for Ak-Tatir village (Kyrgyzstan), 7 for Jani-Bak village (Kyrgyzstan) and 4 for Jamoau Voruh (Tajikistan).

Next steps

The third negotiation meeting made history for water users of the Voruh-Shurab canal. At this meeting an agreement was reached on the shared use of the Voruh-Shurab canal and was signed by all four sides: the State Administrations of Batken Rayon of the Kyrgyz Republic and Isfara Rayon of the Tajik Republic, **FTI** from the Kyrgyz Republic and CSO Ittifok from Tajikistan. This was documented and regulates how water use will be managed in accordance with the legal requirements set out in the agreement. It also covers how compliance will be achieved and how rayon and state claims will be handled. The agreement was signed on December 9, 2001.

Besides this document, an additional agreement on use of the Voruh-Shurab canal was reached. This covered the responsibilities for the effective functioning of the Voruh-Shurab canal. In Tajikistan this responsibility was given to the supplier of utilities in Shurab city. In the canal side areas of Kyrgyzstan the Water Committee of Andigen Suu took responsibility. This second agreement was signed on October 8, 2002.

Abdikadir Kudayarov, leader of the Andigen Suu Public Association observed:

“The negotiation process between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan took a year at the inter-oblast level and it was not always easy. Elders, from the local villages who were trusted, representatives of local institutions, of the Administrations of two rayons (Batken and Isfara Rayons) and of local self governments from the two countries took part in negotiations. There were only 4 changes in the original draft agreement, and by the end of the year only one issue was unresolved. Reaching a final agreement took three days, from October 5 to October 8 of 2002.”

It is now 4 years since the people of the border regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan lacked drinking water, and today conflicts around the Voruh-Shurab canal have been minimized. All disputes are resolved by the Public Association Andigen Suu of Kyrgyzstan in partnership with CSO Ittifok from Tajikistan.

All the negotiations were undertaken under the framework of the “Regional Dialogue and Development” project of **FTI** in Batken. The aim of the project was to contribute to reducing the tension, arguments and conflicts in the border areas and in the multinational communities of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was successfully achieved.

The following tools were used as part of the partnership process:

- ☐ 14 meetings of stakeholders were conducted;
- ☐ Meetings were arranged with village inhabitants who were involved in conflicts over use of the Voruh - Shurab canal;
- ☐ A series of meetings was conducted with stakeholders to discuss the situation and develop action plans, which were facilitated by the project mediators.

What was achieved?

- ☐ 91 illegal cuttings into the Voruh-Shurab canal were closed, which brought to an end the uncontrolled withdrawal of water from the canal;
- ☐ An Observation Commission of 15 people was set up to control exploitation of water use from the Voruh-Shurab canal. The Observation Commission consisted of equal numbers of representatives of the two countries;
- ☐ In the border area of Batken Rayon, the water committee of Andigen Su” was set up to bring together three different associations of water users. The organization is responsible for ensuring fair and sustainable use of the water pipes of the Voruh-Shurab canal in Kyrgyzstan;
- ☐ A Joint Council of elders in the area is now responsible for dealing with disputes based on local traditional practices;
- ☐ Experience of cross-sectoral and inter-state relationships was acquired at the local level where local communities and NGOs acted as initiators and experts;
- ☐ Conflicts on allocation of drinking water have been reduced in the border villages of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

What were the key success factors?

The following conditions played an important part in establishing partnership relations in this project:

- ☐ Undertaking a technical project in the communities located in an area of conflict. By addressing the problem of water supply for irrigation this has reduced tension in the area;
- ☐ The existence of friendly relationships between the representatives of the border communities plus their direct participation, along with participation of community leaders in informal negotiations;
- ☐ The participation of local deputies and chiefs of ayil okmots and jamaats (community groups) and the commitment of Batken and Isfara local state administrations to finding solutions to the problems without resorting to the use of the armed forces.
- ☐ The interest of inhabitants in the border communities in finding solutions to their own problems by themselves;
- ☐ The targeted activity of the mediators from the Regional Dialogue and Development Project, who continuously worked at explaining the need

to close the illegal water cuttings and reach local decisions on solutions to the irrigation problem using outside sources of help;

- The training provided to the mediators and the representatives of the local authority bodies on conflict management and mediation.

What lessons have been learned?

R. Avazbekova, Director of the local FTI office in Batken has said:

“Before only one time events were held and that was often the end of partnership. During such events people would forget their problems for a while, but after the project ended people found that they were left with their problems unsolved. The results of this project are different. In this case the problems that were discussed were backed up with agreements on practical arrangements and supported by responsible people.”

As with most partnership projects some difficulties in partnership building occurred. During the negotiations some issues on distribution of different parties' responsibilities were not discussed initially, which meant there had to be a meeting to sort them out the following year. **FTI** in particular learned the following lesson - it is vital to adopt a systematic and comprehensive approach to finding solutions to problems like this one, with mandatory involvement of all stakeholders and clear definition of the roles and responsibilities in the partnership.

Conclusion

It is clear from the partnership experiences of the state bodies and the CSOs from the two countries that inter-state arrangements and political negotiations are important. It was very satisfactory and helpful that people from the Tajikistan expressed their trust in the contribution made to resolving the problems in the border area by the **FTI**. It is also clear that resolving border problems calls for serious intervention at the government level from the countries involved in the conflict.

“There is still no law regulating the disputed territories. Only after the governments solve the problem of disputed territories will it be possible to discuss and find solutions to other local problems”

**R. Avazbekova,
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CSO Insan Leilek, Batken Oblast, Leilek Rayon

Budget Partnership Initiative (BPI)

Summary

The implementation of the Budget Partnership Initiative Project in Leilek rayon allowed the population to understand which categories the local budget is formed from; why the government lacks funds to create adequate living conditions and to improve local infrastructure. Through the joint efforts of the rayon financial department, LSG bodies, and local citizens' initiative groups residing in three rural councils of Leilek rayon, Batken Oblast, the conditions were created for the transparent allocation of local

budget, and mechanisms were developed for LSG bodies and rayon financial departments to report about revenues and expenditures of local budget to the population. This was all possible due to Public Fund **Insan-Leilek**.

General Information

Batken region in Kyrgyzstan is famous both for its peculiar apricot plantations and its multinational population where such nationalities as Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Turks, Mecetins and others live in friendship and harmony. Local CSOs are also special in this region; they work in a sphere of community development that consists of many different ethnic groups. Public Fund **Insan-Leilek** was established in 2000 with the purpose of encouraging civic participation and involving local community, youth, and women in democratic processes. All CSO activities are realized in close collaboration with the local community and local authorities. Since 2002 until the present, a close relationship with government authorities has been established in regards to rural youth development. Youth Information Resource Centers and local governments operate in close collaboration with each other.

Another example of cooperation between Insan-Leilak and the government is the Public Policy Formats and Procedures Introduction and Development Program. An Interethnic Cooperation Council was established in 2005 in Isfana City, and the council actively promotes the prevention of interethnic conflicts in the region. Local people trust the Council activity more than other local organizations. Problems appeared to be solved faster through the council. Public Fund **Insan-Leilek** employees noticed the efficiency of the Councils work and thought: “Why can’t we use this model of cooperation to solve not only interethnic but other problems?” In 2006, **Insan-Leilek** in collaboration with Batken Regional Administration, aiyl okmot and the Mayor’s Offices of Sulyukta and Isfana cities conducted public hearings devoted to the problems of ill people, use of potable and irrigation water, rural youth, and gender problems in the regions. This initiative was realized due to the own funds of Insan-Leilak and local authority support.

Many times people discuss a problem and find solutions, but often financial resources are necessary to realize the accepted solutions. People can use their own money (contribution) in solving a problem once, maybe twice, but not regularly. The only sustainable decision that would allow for the villagers to solve their problems was to improve revenues of local budgets.

As a result of this idea, work on building partnership between *aiyl okmot* and community in the budget processes has begun. The Budget Partnership Initiative (BPI) is a new undertaking which organizes the discussion of budget issues to a wider population; the local budget is analyzed and alternatives are developed with local council deputies' participation. This activity is then implemented in three demonstration areas – Leilek Rayon of the Batken Oblast, Kara-Buura Rayon of the Talas Oblast, and Kochkor Rayon of the Naryn Oblast.

The project activity of the Budget Partnership Initiative in Leilek rayon was implemented within the framework of the program of the technical assistance provision to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and CSOs, which is funded by the DFID of Great Britain.

Background

Money spent by local self-government bodies is the people's money. Therefore, local authorities should ask advice from people regarding how funds should be spent and report to their citizens on a regular basis. Unfortunately, people still do not know how expenditures and revenues of the local budget are planned, how much money is spent on the social needs of people, especially socially marginalized groups of people, and how much money is spent to maintain municipal property. Each citizen residing in this or that community must ask him/herself a simple question: *“Are the needs and interests of ordinary citizens being met and taken into consideration?”*

To a certain extent the legal base determining civic participation in decision-making on budget issues is not obligatory for all government bodies, which allows them to manipulate citizens' opinions freely using them selectively or ignoring them all. For example, in Leilek Rayon people are offered to participate in forming the budget through organizing Public Budget



Hearings. However, these processes do not permit people to find out how their requests influenced the final variant of the budget. Correspondingly, in a transparency lacking environment there is no possibility to conduct monitoring of budget hearings efficiently. At the same time, government bodies regularly

report to the Government and international donors about the effective use of public budget hearings as a tool of increasing transparency and accountability of LSG to people.

Public hearings are only an episode in a long and logical budget process. That is why within the framework of the given initiative the main goals were aimed at conducting a needs assessment of a certain village and select priorities on the basis of which expenditure policy should be identified; redistribution or legalization of the interests of residents and LSG in the process of budget discussion, monitoring budget execution, and evaluation of outcomes.

The present situation with the budget process, problems of local people's lack of information about budgeting, opportunity for the local community to influence forming the local budget and its spending, and many other questions were discussed at the Budget Partnership Conference which was attended by DFID project representatives, the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, Rayon Administration, delegations of three pilot Aiyl Okmot, and staff members of **Insan-Leilek**. The conference results proved the urgency of the set questions and the necessity of partnership during the realization of the activity on improving local budgets.

How did partnership come about?

The active participants in forming and using local budgets are the rayon financial department, heads of aiyl okmot, and local community. Therefore, partnership was consolidated between the above-mentioned actors. Three pilot aiyl okmot were selected to realize the initiative. These aiyl okmot in Leilek rayon were subsidized and both heads of aiyl okmot and the head of rayon administration are very interested in increasing revenues of local budgets through the effective use of acres from the Fund of Agricultural

Land and Municipal Property Redistribution, but not everyone knows how to do that.



At the first stage of BPI from April to June 2006 there were trainings for employees of pilot aiyl okmot taking into account community needs. There were more than 40 one-

day trainings conducted on the following topics: “Community Needs Assessment”, “Local budgets”, “Status and credentials of local councils deputies”, “Partnership building”, “The Fund of Agricultural land and municipal property administration”, “Business plan development”, “Strategic planning in view of local budget development”, “People’s Lawmaking Initiative”. Skills obtained at the trainings facilitated more effective joint activities, partnership, and cooperation on local budgeting.

One of the formats for general discussion and participatory decision-making was conducting roundtables in three villages. Akim of Leilek rayon, Jogorku



Kenesh deputy, CSOs, leaders and active residents took part in the roundtables, where they discussed issues of fiscal decentralization, problems of the transition to a two-level budget, and issues of increasing the revenue part of local budgets.

Decisions at the roundtable were used to activate the process of involving CSOs in developing local budgets and local development plans, and to introduce an independent way to analyze the local budget. These decisions have become the basis for conducting joint budget processes locally.

There were 12 discussion clubs conducted in three pilot aiyl okmot: Jany-Jer, Toguz Bulak and Katran of the Leilek Rayon. Joint participation of aiyl okmot employees, active citizens, and local councils’ deputies in discussions improved the knowledge about the role of each actor in the partnership initiative. During discussion clubs they identified and prioritized village problems, developed Village Development Plans and considered expenditure and revenue parts of the budget together. These were not one-time discussions, but consequent discussions with local citizens focusing on a

“Previously, I thought that a budget is so complicated, incomprehensible document and I, a medical attendant and local council deputy, would never understand the language of figures and terms. However, after the training ‘Local Budgets’, communication with financiers and accountants, discussion of status and authorities of local councils deputies at discussion clubs, I began to orient myself in this and ask questions – why and how much?”-Asyral Ernazarov, Jashtyk village resident, Jany-Jer rural council.

prioritized problem that should be discussed and solved by the next discussion.

Who would implement these decisions and solve the problems locally? The answer was - no one knew. The same question was left without an answer during the work of discussion club members. The solution was to create budget initiative groups (BIG) at the local level, i.e. in three pilot villages. This suggestion was given by the discussion club participants. Residents independently formed budget groups consisting of those people they trust. Members of BIG are village leaders and active residents, representatives of women's committees and aksakals committees, leaders of jamaats and community organizations, members of Mutual Help and Self-Help Groups, volunteers and mobilizers of international projects (the UNDP, the European Union) and local non-government organizations. These groups conduct analysis of local budgets, create various budget committees, develop business-plans together with local deputies and *aiyl okmot* and consider alternative variants of local budget.

Trainings, roundtables and discussion clubs were organized by **Insan-Leilek** within the framework of the Budget Partnership Initiative project; LSG bodies of three pilot villages provided rooms for conducting trainings.

Further Activities

In the future information from BIG activities will be disseminated to other rayons in Batken. At the second stage of the BPI project from October, 2006 to September, 2007 it is planned to implement a small grants program for budget initiative groups (BIG) organized upon the completion of the first stage. At present, Budget Initiative Groups leaders decided to unite and



register as a Public Association of active citizens "Rural Initiative". The association will be a membership organization, fees of which will be used for achieving charter goals. Now they are in the process of developing By-laws of the Public Association. They will become local public institutions which will have a good technical base (computer, printer, photocopying machine), strong trained team consisting of local active residents, local council deputies, and local CSO leaders upon project completion. These groups will ensure the

sustainable participation of the community in budget processes and future continuation of partnership.

Partnership Outcomes

According to the results of the first stage no less than 30 people were trained in each pilot aiyl okmot who then united into Budget initiative groups. Correspondingly, 90 people were trained in three pilot aiyl okmot. Budget initiative groups identified budget priorities on the basis of participatory local community appraisal results and developed passports of pilot AO to register all available resources. BIGs are a motivating force in local budgeting; they activate people's participation and conduct monitoring of the purposeful use of budgetary funds. Before some BPI project heads of AO, aiyl kenesh deputies, were not interested in increasing revenues of the local budget, then after the seminars they started finding additional reserves for budget renewal.

In Katran a/o the head of a/o, chief accountant, and deputies under proposal of BIG included funds for municipal market improvement (installation of gates and counters) in the budget project, which would allow the community to significantly increase revenue at the expense of levying payment from transport for entering the market territory and increasing dues from merchants for more developed sites.

In Jany-Jer a/o local deputies together with BIG audited acres of the Fund of Agricultural Land Redistribution and revealed an additional 150 hectares of ineffectively used land allocated at understated prices to successful local businessmen who paid a scanty rental fee to the local budget.

In Toguzbulak aiyl okmot the head of AO initiated a door-to-door inventory of automobile ownership to increase the collection of the transport tax. This activity is implemented together with BIG.

The most important achievement according to **Insan-Leilek** employees' opinion is a change of attitude of seminar participants in terms of the main purpose for the budget. If previously they thought that budgetary funds are the government's money, that only officials have the right to command finances, now they understand that these funds are people's money, money raised at the expense of tax-payers. The local community has the right to influence budget priority selection and to know how budgetary funds are spent.

Success Factors

- Successful cooperation came about due to the special interest of local authorities. The rayon financial department has become interested in education; from the standpoint of the planned transition to the two-level budget, the training of aiyl okmot accountants was greatly contributing to local financiers' capacity building.
- Availability of rayon administration and LSG bodies to support stakeholders in the form of providing premises for conducting events. At present heads of rural councils offer a room for BIG activities, in the future they would like to make this body a Budget Information Center in a village.
- Participation of such high-rank people as the Ministry of Finance representative and Jogorku Kenesh deputy in some activities attached significance to the discussed question and increased participation of local authorities.

Lessons Learned

During BPI project realization there were certain difficulties:

- Difficulties occurred due to the ultimate scantiness of budgetary funds and lack of resources to solve priorities identified by seminar participants during participatory local community needs appraisal. Solution: allocation of minimum funds out of item "Other" and search for donors to fund income-generation projects to increase revenues of local budget.
- Obstacles from officials in receiving certain budget information. Solutions: they were informed according to the law this information is accessible and the rejection of providing requested information is considered as an abuse of the law.

Akim of Leilek district – Shainazarov Kubanychbek Tolonovich: "It has always seemed to me that district and aiyl okmot budgets serve for state bodies' personnel as the main document according to which we should strictly control figures that are given from above. Within the framework of partnership with PF "Insan-Leilek" and the Budget Partnership Initiative project I realized that local budgets first of all are 'budgets for the people.'"

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- Uncertainty of government bodies particularly the Ministry of Economics and Finance regarding issues about transition to the two-level budget.

Conclusions

The analysis of requests and opinions conducted in three pilot aiyl okmot helped develop alternative budgets taking into account residents' needs, not as it was previously done when the budget was imposed 'from the top'. Sustainable and long-term partnership has been established between communities, CSOs, and local authorities to improve local budgets.

Information Sources

1. The Budget Partnership Initiative in Leilek rayon project materials, PF "Insan Leilek", 2006.
2. Quotations are taken from interviews with Gulnara Derbisheva, PF "**Insan-Leilek**"; residents, local authorities, BIG members involved in partnership initiative on local budget improvement.

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