



Quick Facts

ECLT project in the South of Kyrgyzstan

Implementing partner

Working Group on the Elimination of child labour in tobacco growing

Overall goal

The overall goal is to address the factors that encourage children to work: low incomes and lack of alternative activities for children.

Objectives

Specifically the project aims to support at least 2,800 vulnerable children and in so doing protect them from child labour. To achieve this, the third phase of the project will:

- Provide micro-credits to the families of 1,600 vulnerable children in 2010, 2,000 vulnerable children in 2011 and 2,300 vulnerable children in 2012;
- Organise summer health retreats for 200 most at risk children, annually;
- Provide medical assistance via rehabilitation centres to about 50 children, annually;
- Provide professional courses in schools to about 200 school children annually, from 2011;
- Provide financial assistance, in the form of milking cows, to 8-10 vulnerable families each year;
- Develop one new cooperative every year. This promotes greater efficiencies for farmers.

Location

The project is implemented in two districts in southern Kyrgyzstan: Nookat in Osh and Ala Buka in Jalalabat.

Duration

First phase: January 2005 to December 2006.

Second phase: April 2007 to December 2009.

Third phase: January 2010 to December 2012.



Project achievements

First phase: Around 900 children in 369 families were withdrawn or safeguarded from child labour (120% of original target of 750 children). 284 families have improved their living standards (76% of original target).

- More than 140 mutual aid groups (MAGs) with their own funds have been created for low-income tobacco growers. The traditional 'Ashar' method of collective work was reintroduced removing the demand for child labour. Instead of using children, farmers now help out on each others' farms.
- 52 orphans were given financial support (original target 300 orphans);
- 77 children were given medical support (original target 300 children);

Second phase: As a result of micro-credits over 2,000 children have been withdrawn or safeguarded from child labour (original target 1,200). 346 families have improved their standard of living.

- 541 vulnerable children enjoyed recreation and improved their health at summer camps;
- 15 workshops and round tables were held to strengthen capacity of health workers and farmers.
- School parliaments have been engaged in the process of eliminating child labour;
- Seven local working groups have been set up to ensure consultation and effective implementation;
- Members of the Working Group went on 10 monitoring trips to identify child labour;
- Two mutual aid groups of Ala Buka district created the agricultural cooperative “Kut keldi”;
- School attendance in the project villages has increased by 8.5% and students have improved their performance with an average increase of 5% in their marks.

Budget

The first phase: US\$170,470. The second phase (including extension): US\$ 147,610. The third and current phase: US\$ 552,909.

Steering Committee

- Unions: Agricultural Workers Union of Kyrgyzstan, Trade Union of Educators, Trade Union of Workers of Public Health Services;
- Tobacco companies: "Reemtsma-Kyrgyzstan" (Imperial Tobacco), Sunnel-tobacco;
- Government: The Ministry of Rural and Water Management, State JSC Kyrgyztamekesi, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration, Department of Ombudsman of Kyrgyzstan;
- International agencies and NGOs: ILO/IPEC, UNICEF, the Centre for the Protection of Children, Save the Children, Youth Programme, UNDP, American Center of International Solidarity.

Lessons learned

Selection of beneficiaries – microcredit applicants: In the previous phases of the project farmers in most need of micro credits were identified by social workers and Heads of Local Districts. Project staff subsequently discovered that not all the farmers selected were poor or on the lowest incomes. To address this issue, a new selection method has been devised. Meetings with village communities from each rural district have appointed a commission from the villages (including elders, teachers, representatives of women’s local committees, medical officers etc). These commissions have selected potential applicants for microcredit funds. This more inclusive method of identifying the most vulnerable has proved to be more effective and reliable.

Choice of micro-credit agency to deliver micro-credits: Finding a reliable partner for delivering preferential micro-credits has also proved to be a challenge. Large commercial companies that have authority in the market refused to work within the project’s social principles and conditions. On the other hand many small micro finance organisations were ready to cooperate with the project. Unfortunately the organisation that the project enlisted failed to return credit to the project, until legal proceedings were instigated. Now the project is working with microcredit agency that has their own credit fund of 3.2 million KGS. This organisation is also small, but its founder is a public association, a civil society support centre, implementing social projects with funding from donors such as USAID. This provides some measure of assurance. As a further precaution the Working Group has decided to visit the office, once or twice a quarter, to assure themselves that the funds are being managed properly.

Keeping funds of the project in banks: All project funds were kept in one project bank account, so when the bank went bankrupt the project lost money and project activities were frozen for three months. In future funds will be kept with at least two different banks.

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