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AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROJECT AVEP PHASE II: 2006 – 2008

ANNUAL REPORT 2006



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Our partners:

Financing:



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the Kingdom of
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**Ministry of Labour and
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the Kyrgyz Republic**

**National Methodological Centre, Bishkek
Oblast Methodological Centre, Naryn**

Vocational School No 15, **Kochkor**;
Vocational School No 50, **Ottuk**;
Vocational School No 26, **Chaek**;
Vocational School No 40, **Baetov**;
Vocational School No 30, **Dobolu** (Dostuk);
Vocational School No 32, **Atbasyh**;
Vocational School No 86, **Kulanak**;
Vocational School No 8, **Caravan**;
Vocational School No 2, **Karakol**;
Vocational School No 19, **Altymysh (Kemin)**;
Vocational School No 81, **Bokonbaevo**;
Vocational School No 82, **Anan'evo**;



Local Vocational Training Fund **“KOJO - Karakol”**;
Local Vocational Training Fund **“KOJO - Kemin”**;
Local Vocational Training Fund **“KOJO - Bokonbaevo”**;
Local Vocational Training Fund **“KOJO – Anan'evo”**;

Table of Contents

1. Background and AVEP history	4
2. Executive summary	5
2.1. Objectives of the AVEP project	5
2.2. AVEP in 2006	6
2.3. Overview of achievements in 2006	7
3. Activities and Results	8
3.1. Consolidation	8
3.1.1. Curriculum revision.....	8
3.1.2. Teaching materials	10
3.1.3. School performance.....	11
3.1.4. Practical orientation of education.....	13
3.2. Adaptation & training governance	17
3.2.1. Partners selection.....	17
3.2.2. Local training funds.....	18
3.2.3. Training delivery mechanism.....	18
3.2.4. Provision of education.....	20
3.2.5. Course development.....	21
3.3. Lobbying	23
3.3.1. Communication of AVEP position and vision	23
3.3.2. Recognition of new course	24
4. Conclusions and outlook	25
5. Bibliography	28

Note: Activities and results for Caravan school are separately described under the heading “Focus Batken”.

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AVEP	Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project
ATC	Advisory Training Center
Budget classes	School classes financed by the GoK
CIEA	International Centre for Agricultural Education
Coach	New staff introduced by AVEP to support students during project work/ apprenticeship
Coach farmer	Experienced farmer who takes students for apprenticeship
DVE	Department for Vocational Education
Experimental class	Classes in Naryn & Batken oblast mainly financed by the project
FFS	Farmer Field School
GoK	Government of the Kyrgyz Republic
GTZ	Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Development Agency)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KOJO	Local Vocational Training Fund
MinEdu	Ministry of Education
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
RMC	Republican National Methodological Centre
OMC	Oblast Methodological Centre
PCD	Participatory Curriculum Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
SC	Steering Committee
SFS	Student Field School
SMQP	School Management Qualification Program
TM	Teaching Material
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToT	Training of Trainers
VES	Vocational Education Scheme
YPO	Yearly Plan of Operations

1. Background and AVEP history

In Kyrgyzstan, an appropriate, progressive agricultural vocational education based on a range of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes that incorporates practical and theoretical elements and is oriented towards the market economy is crucial to improve rural income. The Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project (AVEP) was started in 2001 in Naryn oblast for empowering farmer and women farmer graduates from vocational schools to proactively react and adapt their farming systems to the changes in the socio-economic conditions, market demands and bioclimatic factors in order to rely on themselves for improvement of their livelihood.

In order to understand the project's rationale and what lessons were learnt, it is necessary to look back at key steps in the history of AVEP.

In 2001, the project started implementing and co-financing a three-years' formal education system for farmers by developing competence profiles, a new vocational education scheme (VES) and a new curriculum through the Participatory Curriculum Development (PCD) approach¹. For introducing the innovations, four experimental classes were started in two schools. Textbooks in Kyrgyz language were created and introduced to the schools. Moreover, the project started to upgrade both the occupational and instructional skills and knowledge of teachers. After a two years' pilot phase, the project activities were expanded under the first phase of the project as the Government committed itself to finance the following batches of students after one educational cycle of three years (budget classes).

While expanding gradually to more schools, new elements of the vocational scheme, such as student business planning and an apprenticeship practice period were developed and implemented by the schools. The training programme for teachers and the school management was expanded and additional teaching material for higher semesters developed.

By 2003, AVEP covered all seven vocational schools of Naryn Oblast and worked through a mandate system in collaboration with the Republican and Oblast Methodological Centres. AVEP elaborated and trained the schools in an assessment system, developed the curriculum for the 6th semester and established two credit agencies in order to sustain the students' business plan projects.

In 2004, a co-financing agreement with GTZ allowed the expansion of project activities to another school in Batken oblast. This entailed Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and PCD activities for adapting the curricula to the local conditions as well as changes and new developments of certain teaching materials. After final examinations in two schools, the first 78 graduates were released and returned to work on their farms. In a joint project with the Agricultural Training Centre (ATC) and the Rural Advisory Service (RAS) teachers and students had the opportunity to be trained in the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) farmers' field schools. Another two credit agencies were established and a teaching quality monitoring and coaching system introduced. As of autumn 2004, all schools in Naryn oblast were running budget classes.

In 2005, another 180 students graduated from experimental and budget classes. The project continued to provide trainings to teachers and improve the teaching material and introduced a new training programme for school managers. In spring, the first phase of AVEP was reviewed and in autumn the next phase (2006-08) planned.

¹ Taylor, P., 2001. 10 key stages towards effective Participatory Curriculum Development

2. Executive summary

2.1. Objectives of the AVEP project

The Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project (AVEP) was started in 2001 in Naryn oblast with the objective to create a vocational education in rural areas which increases the technical expertise of farming communities in Kyrgyzstan and addresses farmers as rural entrepreneurs. Following a gradual expansion process, the project currently supports 11 partner schools in Naryn, Batken, Yssykkol and Chui oblast in the implementation of a three years “farmer/ woman farmer course” and a 16 month “farmer entrepreneur” course with an outreach to the Republican Methodological Centre, in order to achieve standardisation of the innovative vocational education schemes. A total of over 1’000 students are studying in these courses and around 500 graduates have already returned to their farms.

The goal of the first phase of AVEP was to contribute to a locally adapted, effective and sustainable vocational education system for agricultural and rural development that provides graduates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to manage private farms and businesses, helping to raise the incomes of people living in the rural area. The emphasis of the project was placed on a market and practice-oriented as well as gender-balanced training. While this intention of the project remains the same, in its second phase AVEP focuses more on the financial and operational sustainability aspects of the delivery system and the adaptation of the training offer to the client’s needs.

The project goal of Phase II reads as follows:

The project contributes to rural development through the promotion of locally owned sustainable financing and delivery mechanisms for educating farmers as rural entrepreneurs, thus raising their social and economic position.

The overall goal will be pursued through three lines of action, defined as project objectives as follows:

Objective 1: Consolidation

Facilitate the absorption of the key components and assets of the farmers’ education by the State VET system in order to consolidate the achievements of the first project phase.

This objective refers to the handing-over process of the curriculum development process for the three year’s course to the eight partner schools in Naryn and Batken oblast with a specific focus on creating enhanced ownership by the stakeholders and sustainable financing mechanisms for the practical parts (apprenticeship, project work, practical lessons).

Objective 2: Adaptation & Training Governance

Initiate the creation of local ownership for the introduction of co-financing mechanisms in order to implement a modularised program to train young and potential farmers as rural entrepreneurs.

Together with the schools which will join AVEP on a competitive basis in its second phase, the project based on its Naryn experience will develop a new shorter and modularised course for “farmer entrepreneurs” alongside with creating locally owned vocational education training funds for a sustainable financing of the new course.

Objective 3: Lobbying for Systems Reform.

Promote the discussion and exchange on selected key policy and operational issues among stakeholders in order to be addressed in institutional and systems reform

The project strives for the continuous involvement of relevant Government stakeholders in order to receive official recognition of the new course and its co-financing approach. Reform issues concerning the Kyrgyz VET sector as a whole at all levels will be addressed by the project through its own lobbying as well as through seeking synergies with other donors and projects working in the reform of the Kyrgyz VET sector.

2.2. AVEP in 2006

During its first year of Phase II, AVEP put about equal amounts of resources and time into consolidating the existing three years' course for farmer/ woman farmer in Naryn and Batken schools as well as for developing a new course and appropriate co-financing mechanisms for the new partner schools in Yssykkol and Chui oblast.

For Naryn and Batken schools:

The last three partner schools finalized the educational cycle of the three years' experimental classes in spring with the successful graduation of 76 male and female students. As of this autumn all partner schools in Naryn oblast will run only government-financed budget classes. From March until November the experimental class students of Caravan school conducted their apprenticeship on farms in the whole Batken oblast.

The project facilitated participatory processes for revising the curriculum as well as the teaching materials in order to create final versions by the end of this year. A main issue still remaining is the re-introduction of the secondary education diploma by adding general education subjects without losing the overall practical orientation of the education. For Caravan school, the adaptation process for the 6th semester curricula - in order to include topics on rural advisory methodology – was conducted and will soon be completed by the publishing of the respective additional teaching materials.

As foreseen in the Project Document, AVEP expanded its training programme to all interested teachers (not only from experimental classes). A total of 104 training days for upgrading methodological skills and technical knowledge were provided by the project staff and contracted specialists from universities, research stations and RAS/ TES. Interested directors, vices and bookkeepers of the partner schools as well as representatives of the OMC and RMC attended a half-yearly School Manager Qualification Programme consisting of trainings and practical on-the-job tasks on farm economy planning, successful creation of social partnerships, knowledge management, moderation, human resource management, educational standards and psychology. In all seven Naryn schools, the establishment of student field schools for training interested students in the practical aspects of potato growing was supported by AVEP in close collaboration with ATC.

The partner schools started to introduce student fees in order to gradually increase their self-financing capacity for covering material costs for practical and theoretical lessons as well as for apprenticeship. The schools fulfilling minimal requirements regarding defined aspects of teaching quality received investment contributions of up to 50'000 KGS per school and semester based on their proposals.

Coaches, farmers and students were trained in the implementation of the apprenticeship system and coaching has been carried out through half-yearly monitoring visits. A tracer study² among the experimental and budget class graduates showed that 75 % of the graduates are working on a farm or a related business in the village and that the vast majority of them confirm the relevance and applicability of the curriculum content for the world of work. No significant difference in the (self-) employment records were found between project-supported experimental class and Government-supported budget class graduates with the exception of the latter having undergone less practical training due to insufficient financing.

For Yssykkol and Chui schools:

A competitive selection process among the vocational schools of Yssykkol and Chui led to the selection of four new partner schools. The school staff was acquainted with the new approach to co-financing through local training funds and initiated together with the project support the creation of four training funds. These were officially registered as Public Funds with a Steering Council elected by a farmers' assembly and with a contracted executive director, who is now in charge of fundraising and co-ordination of the student promotion campaign. The executive directors as well as members of the Steering Councils were trained in their functions.

² Holland, J-P, 2006. Tracer study of graduates 2005, Kochkor-Ottuk and Jumgal-Aktalaa

A whole series of participatory curriculum development workshops – partly supported by an international consultant – resulted in the timely development of the competence profile, the course structure and the curriculum. Subsequently, the teachers were trained in learner-centred methodology and in their technical knowledge and skills.

All four training funds successfully raised enough funds locally, in order to cover the training costs for the first semester. Thus, at the beginning of November, 62 students started the new “Farmer Entrepreneur” course. Monitoring visits showed on the one hand a high level of satisfaction and interest among the students but on the other hand also a continued need for teacher capacity building.

Project lobbying and networking

AVEP continues to involve representatives of DVE, RMC and OMC in its workshops and presentations in order to keep them updated on the project progress and innovations, receives their feedback and facilitates an integration of project achievements into the Government VET system. In 2006 AVEP intensified its lobbying for the reform of the Kyrgyz VET system and actively sought synergies with GTZ, ADB, ILO and other major donors and projects through initiating and facilitating round tables and inviting their representatives for project visits in Naryn. AVEP signed a letter of intent with GTZ, MoLSP, MinEdu, State Committee for Migration and the Chamber of Commerce on working collaboratively on reform issues, which lead to the development of first action plans for reforming the Kyrgyz VET system. Furthermore, three directors and four project staff members attended the CIEA seminar on «Effective learning for Sustainable Action» in Switzerland in order to learn from experiences of other countries and projects.

2.3. Overview of achievements in 2006

The most important achievements in the reporting period were:

- ❖ *Total of 76 graduates from the experimental class in Kulanak, Atbashy and Dobolu and around 150 graduates from budget classes in Kochkor, Ottuk, Jumgal and Aktalaa;*
- ❖ *Naryn curriculum was revised through participatory workshops;*
- ❖ *23 teaching materials were revised by 57 authors with the support of teachers and students;*
- ❖ *18 trainers were contracted, 124 training days were conducted and 694 teachers from 12 schools attended the training program;*
- ❖ *15 directors, vices, bookkeepers and representatives of OMC/ RMC attended half-yearly management training programme with 5 blocks, 5 practical on-the-job tasks and one final simulation exercise;*
- ❖ *14 teachers attended FFS ToT and provided practical training on integrated pest management to 56 students in 7 student field schools;*
- ❖ *7 investment projects proposed by Naryn schools were selected and provided with a total sum of 300'000 KGS;*
- ❖ *Continued readiness of 146 coach farmers to host apprentices;*
- ❖ *Implementation of 303 business plans by farmer and women farmer students with a total credit volume of 1'388'310 KGS;*
- ❖ *Partner schools independently conducted 8 student skills demonstration days with around 600 visitors;*
- ❖ *Tracer study shows that 75% of graduates work on the farm or in a related business in the village;*
- ❖ *Initiation and registration of 4 local training funds with a total of 20 steering council members, who were elected by a total of 234 farmers and local community members;*
- ❖ *Local fundraising in four regions over 3 months amounted to 89'750 KGS for co- financing the 1st semester of the “Farmer entrepreneur” course*
- ❖ *Development of competence profile, course structure and 1st semester curricula for “Farmer entrepreneur” course;*
- ❖ *62 students started the new “Farmer Entrepreneur” course;*
- ❖ *5 donor round tables with representatives of 16 major donors and projects in VET reform conducted;*
- ❖ *Letter of intent signed between Helvetas, GTZ, MoLSP, MinEdu, State Committee on Migration and Chamber of Commerce to coordinate VET system reforms.*

3. Activities and Results

Overall goal

The project contributes to rural development through the promotion of locally owned sustainable financing and delivery mechanisms for educating farmers as rural entrepreneurs, thus raising their social and economic position

Impact

The project contributes to the establishment and promotion of local training governance bodies, which will allow training providers to become financially and operationally more independent and maintain educational quality on an appropriate level. At the same time a new educational system is developed on the basis of the course structure and curriculum of the existing 3 years course, which is shortened and partly modularised as well as adapted to local conditions of Yssykkol and Chui oblasts. It is being developed and implemented through four new project partner schools and other VET and farmer stakeholders. The intention of the project remains the same as during its 1st phase: to contribute to better technical, managerial and marketing skills of future farmers, in order to enable them to increase their income and improve their living standards. But additionally the project will also contribute to the improvement of financing mechanism of education. Apart from working with new schools, the project is in a process of handing-over the full responsibility for the 3 years course and its curriculum process to the partner schools in Naryn and Batken oblast as well as creating sustainable financing mechanisms.

In order to work towards the above mentioned impact, the project pursues three lines of action, namely:

- a) **Consolidation** of the absorption of the 3-years' farmers education in the existing partner schools in Naryn oblast and in one school in Batken oblast, and completion of the initiated activities.
- b) **Adaptation** of the course in order to align the training with the users' needs and to develop a **training governance** system at local level with potentially sustainable delivery, ownership and financing mechanisms.
- c) **Lobbying** for institutional reform.

3.1. Consolidation

Refers to the objective 1: Facilitate the absorption of the key components and assets of the farmers' education by the state VET system in order to consolidate the achievements of the first project phase

Indicators

Provision of education:	8 partner schools in Naryn and Batken continued to provide the farmers education according to AVEP system. However, the problems with financing remain (low salaries, no finances for consumables in practical lessons). Involvement of one partner school in project activities was reduced after graduation of the experimental classes and due to a subsequent drop of interest from the side of the school management.
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3.1.1. Curriculum revision

Refers to the expected result 1.1 in the YPO The revised curriculum for the 3-years course is implemented

Indicators

The practical orientation of the curriculum (project work, apprenticeship, practical lessons) is retained:	Project work and apprenticeship are implemented by schools, however there are problems with practical lessons due to lack of financing
Curricula revised	Yes apart from the re-introduction of general education subjects
Teachers trained in new curricula	Yes
Compiled curricula for Caravan	Yes

Results

- The finalisation and revision of the 3-years curriculum for Naryn was done with the participation of all stakeholders through two seminars;
- An international advisor was contracted to accompany the process and to give inputs;
- How to re-introduce general education subjects without losing the practical orientation of the curriculum is being discussed with MoLSP and MinEdu (possible reduction and re-orientation of general education subjects to the profession);
- Teachers and masters have been trained based on the new revised curriculum during the summer training program;
- Final version of the curriculum is developed;
- One PCD workshop for the semester 6 for Caravan was conducted and the final version of the curriculum has been prepared.
- An agreement granting access for graduates from the farmer/ woman farmer course to the Kant agricultural technicum was signed.

Process:

In 2006, the third and last group of Naryn schools have completed the 3-years educational cycle of their experimental classes. Therefore there was a need to look once more at the curriculum and develop a final version taking into consideration the 3-years experience of each school.

An international consultant (Peter Taylor) has been contracted to provide an input in finalizing the 3-years curriculum and adding to it general education subjects (for secondary education), which would, from the schools' point of view, help to make the course more attractive. However, according to the State standards, about half of the total hours would have to be allocated for this, what would result in a considerable reduction of the share of practical and theoretical technical lessons. Therefore the project currently discusses with MoLSP and MinEdu about the reduction of general education subject hours and their re-orientation to the profession. Additionally, the project successfully facilitated an agreement between its partner schools and the Kant agricultural technicum that grants graduates from the farmer/ woman farmer course access to a higher technical education even if they do not have a secondary education diploma

During the summer training program for teachers and coaches of Naryn schools amendments and changes to the curriculum were taken into account. The partners appreciated the trainings on the curriculum, which is for the schools the only opportunity for teachers' capacity building.

Focus Batken

ER 1: The curriculum developed for "entrepreneurial farmer" are recognised by the Republican Methodological Center.

Milestone 1: 1-3. sem curriculum is certified: achieved

Milestone 2: 4.-6. sem curriculum is certified: curriculum is ready, certification in 1. half of 2007

During a workshop in spring in Batken and through subsequent revision work by the project a final version of the 1.-3. semester curriculum could be developed. In the beginning of September 2006 this version was officially approved by the Republican Methodological Centre.

Several, PCD events for developing the 6th semester curricula for Caravan took place. Since the class is financed by GTZ and in future they are expected to become rural advisors, a new curriculum for the sixth semester including topics on advisory methodology, social mobilization as well as facilitation and moderation was developed together with participation of GTZ Batken and RAS.

Based on the curriculum, new teaching materials are being developed in close collaboration with ATC, GTZ and RAS and will be published step-by-step during the first quarter of 2007.

3.1.2. Teaching materials

Refers to the expected result 1.2 in the YPO: *The teaching material is revised for multi-purpose use.*

Indicators

Teachers in different programs utilise the teaching material (TM):	Several revision workshops have been conducted with participation of teachers. They will start using them only next year
Overall strategy for revision of TMs is developed	Yes
Authors have revised TMs	Yes

Results

- The concept on the revision was developed within the team and shared with partners;
- Two revision workshops with involvement of students, authors and schools;
- 57 authors have been contracted and provided their revised materials;
- 23 teaching materials were layouted and formatted and are currently being printed.

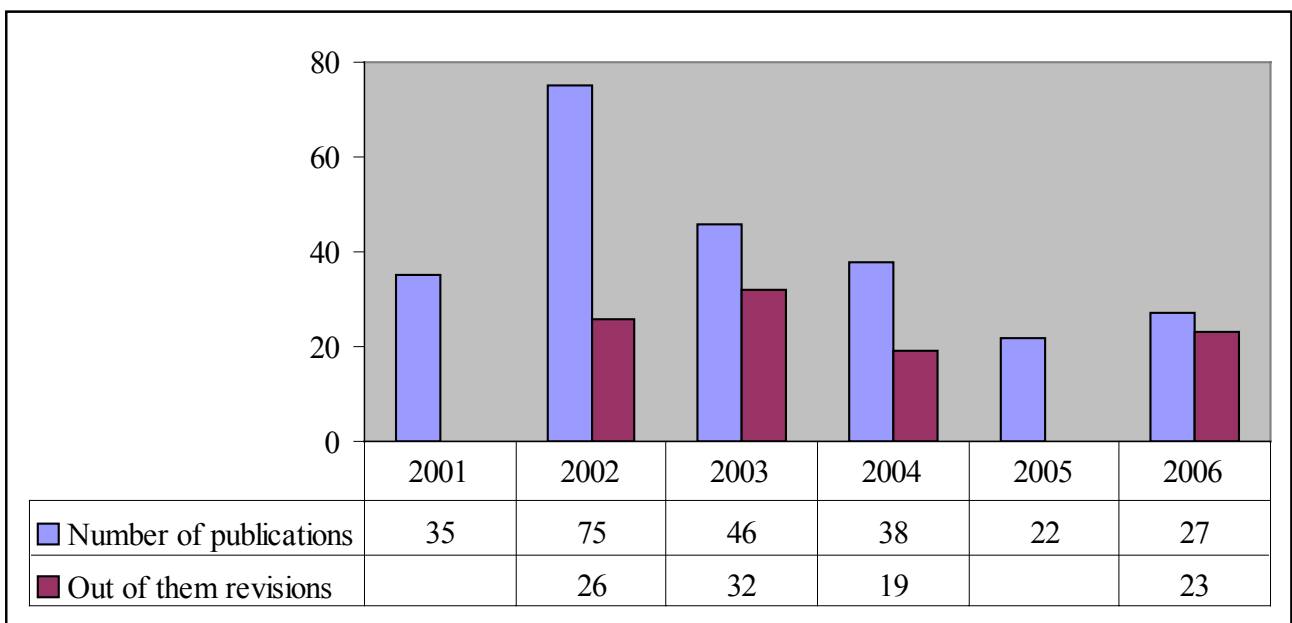
Process

The first version of the concept was developed in the project and later on shared with partners to get their feedback and comments. The idea was to merge the current semester books into one book by subjects and publish them in hardcover. Feedback from teachers and students showed that basically all schools are interested in removing repeated topics in order to include other important topics.

During the workshops, teachers, farmers, students and graduates had a chance to express their opinion and provide valuable feedback and suggestions for improvement of the TMs directly to the authors and the project. Due to the big number of participants and topics to be covered in the workshop, it was decided to conduct two workshops with roughly an equal amount of subjects.

As a result of the workshops, the project documented the feedback and comments of the participants and placed an order with the authors to re-write the TMs. All contracted authors have provided their materials, which were then formatted and layouted by the project. Currently the revised teaching materials are in print.

Diagram 1: Number of AVEP publications



Focus Batken

ER 2.1: The graduates have enough knowledge and skills to function as village advisors

Milestone 4: 60 % of graduates are able to function as village advisors: not yet measurable

Milestone 5: All 6th semester teaching material are available in library: development of TM on-going

The apprenticeship monitoring conducted in April and November showed that at large the students are learning valuable practical skills in farming. However, not all students are equally successful in acquiring skills as advisors during their apprenticeship.

In September, a tender for attracting competent authors to write the teaching materials for the 6th semester was announced. Subsequently, several authors of ATC were selected and have written the draft versions of the teaching materials which were presented to GTZ at the beginning of December. The process of finalising the teaching materials is on-going with a step-wise proof-reading and layouting process to take place during the first quarter of 2007.

3.1.3. School performance

Refers to the expected result 1.3 in the YPO: The performance of the majority of teachers is satisfactory both as regards to contents and methodology and the school administrations manage the schools professionally.

Indicators

Teaching quality monitoring and TNA conducted in all schools	Yes
Training program developed	Yes
Minimum 10 participants for the SMQP	Yes
Concept paper on SFS	Yes

Results

- 1 summer & 1 winter training program for Naryn, Batken, Yssykkol and Chui oblasts was developed;
- 18 trainers were contracted, 34 trainings were conducted and 636 participants attended the summer training program;
- All schools were visited twice by the teaching quality monitoring teams;
- SMQP with six training blocks was developed and announced to the school administrations
- Qualified trainers for SMQP were contracted and 6 training blocks implemented;
- 87,5 % of the SMQP participants successfully completed the training;
- Concept on Students' Field School was developed and trainers selected together with schools and ATC;
- 73 % of the participants in the 6 SFS successfully completed their training;

Process

Based on the teaching quality monitoring, the training needs of the teachers were analysed in order to develop the training programs for summer 2006 and winter 2007. A large range of trainings was developed in order to meet the expectations of teachers and coaches and subsequent tenders were placed for attracting trainers and specialists.

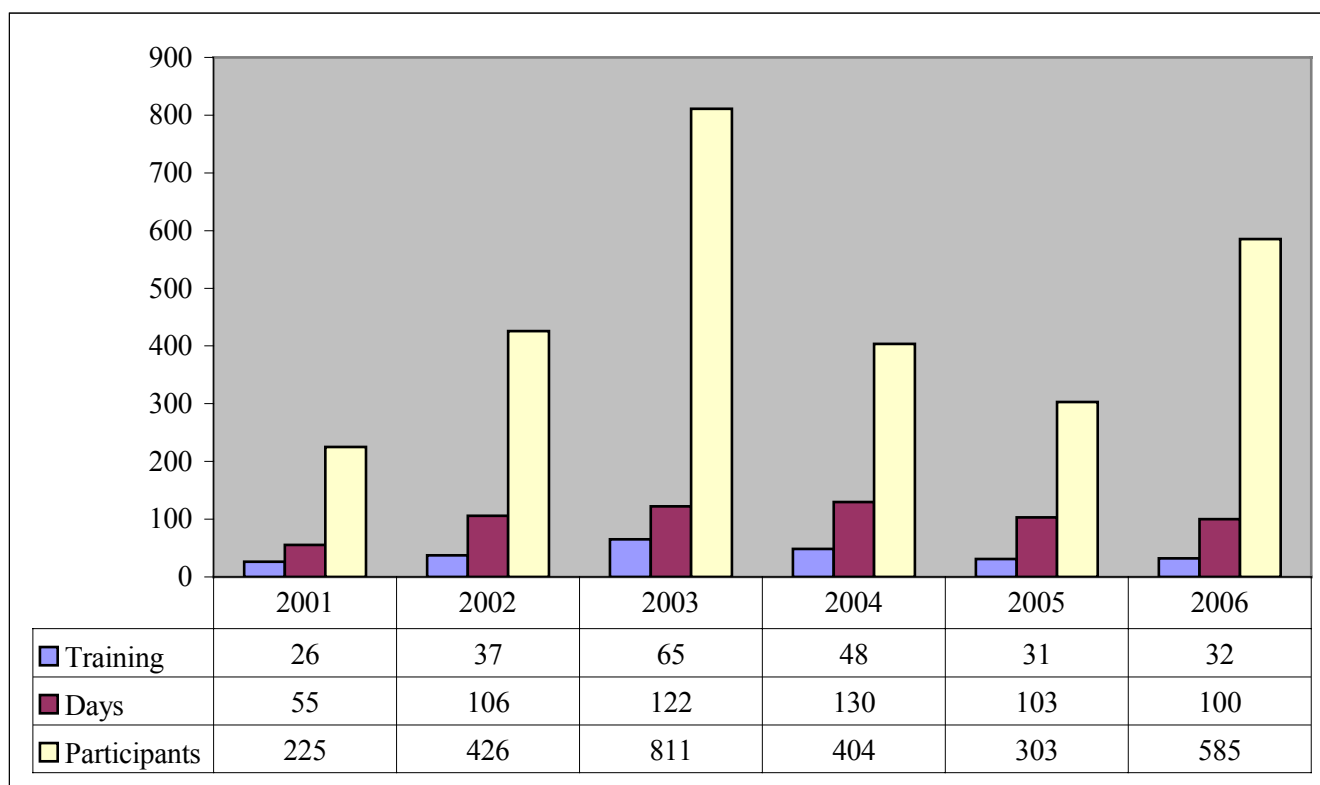
In fact the summer teacher training program consisted of two parts: 1 – subject training, 2 – methodology, reflection and experience exchange. This year for the first time, AVEP opened up its training program to all agricultural teachers of the schools without limiting it to only experimental class teachers, as during the phase planning, training was considered a crucial part for consolidating the teaching process in Naryn and Batken schools. Thus, methodology trainings were intensified in quality and quantity for all teaching staff. Subject teachers had the chance to improved their technical skills and knowledge by attending specific

trainings on their subjects. The trainers, who were contracted, are mostly working in academic institutions and NGOs.

The project continues to focus on capacity building for school managers. As the last year experience with the School Manager Qualification Program (SMQP) proved to be successful, a new round of trainings was launched this year. The topics were mainly selected on the basis of the evaluation of SMQP 2005 and a needs and preferences assessment with potential participants. The program entailed five training blocks which consisted of theoretical inputs, practical group works and on the job tasks. It was concluded with a final repetition exercise with simulated role plays. With the exception of school # 30, at least one director or vice from each partner school attended the SMQP 2006. Out of the 16 initial participants (directors, vices and representatives of RMC/ OMC), 14 completed successfully the programme and developed their personal action plans to be implemented in 2007. During evaluation, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the training content. However, participants arriving late or missing training days reduced the cost efficiency of this rather cost-intensive training program.

The last year's experience has shown benefits of integrating the concept of Student Field Schools (SFS) to the formal educational system. The SFS proves to be a good practice for teachers as well as for students. This year the project decided to continue the experiment and established a center for the training of trainers (ToT) in facilities of the vocational school in Kulanak together with ATC / RAS. The topic was the same as last year ("Integrated Pest Management in potato growing in Naryn") and the number of teachers participating in the ToT was 14. These trained teachers were implementing the Student Field Schools (SFS) in each of the six partner schools of AVEP in Naryn for giving a total of 56 students the chance to learn in a practical way about IPM and to observe the development of crops on newly installed demonstration plots. 59 students successfully passed the final examination and received a certificate. Together with this year's students, the project developed a new approach to partial self-financing out of the potato harvest for the SFS 2007.

Diagram 2: No of training subjects/ participants/ training-days (Naryn and Batken)



Focus Batken

ER 1.2: The school administration manages the educational process efficiently and effectively.

Milestone 3: School development strategy is communicated to all school staff: to be achieved by Feb. 07

ER 2.2: The graduates have enough knowledge and skills to function as village advisors

Milestone 6: Yearly monitoring results show improvement of teaching quality: yes

The school administration and teaching staff was trained in autumn on various issues of the transparent, efficient and effective management of the educational process. The staff of the school was mainly instructed on how to elaborate its own development strategy (with regards to sources of income, human resources, main educational directions and their marketing) as well as a charter, operational plans and staff terms of references. The proposals submitted by the school working groups during the last days of December will be assessed and given a feedback by AVEP.

Furthermore, the school director and two vices were attending the SMQP 2006 with the latter reaching in the overall ranking the places 3 and 4 in comparison to their peers. Based on the SMQP trainings of the last 2 years, all three participants developed their personal action plan with regards to management changes to be implemented in 2007.

Caravan teachers have attended all 34 trainings of the summer training program together with their colleagues from Naryn and a subsequent programme for winter 2007 is ready. Teachers who had participated in the upgrading training of AVEP are acting as trainers for new teachers in the school. There were 16 trainings provided for new teachers on different subjects by experienced trainers. Coaches were regularly visiting each student and successfully supported students during their apprenticeship. Teachers from Caravan school were attending the final assessments of the experimental classes as well as the subsequent graduation events in Atbashy, Kulanak and Dobolu in order to gain experiences from their colleagues in Naryn. Furthermore, an assessment concept was developed and the teachers trained in conducting assessments.

3.1.4. Practical orientation of education

*Refers to expected result 1.4 in the YPO: **Practical lessons, project work and apprenticeship practice are conducted at the minimal required level.***

Indicator

Minimum 5 out of 8 schools receive performance-based support	Yes for 1 st half of 2006: 7 schools No for 2 nd half of 2006: only 1 school
Apprenticeship corresponds to minimal standards	Partly. Schools still show poor planning, struggle with limited finances and do not properly monitor the apprentices
Tracer study: 80% of graduates are visited	60 % of graduates were visited (due to time limitations)
System for co-financing is developed (introduction of student fees)	System developed and agreed together with the schools
Micro-credit agency charter revised	No (pending)

Results

- Agreement with Naryn and Batken schools on introducing student fees & minimal requirements for continuation of AVEP investment contributions;
- Concept on apprenticeship monitoring and two monitoring visits to each school were implemented;
- Apprenticeship training was conducted for Naryn and Batken oblasts;
- Experimental classes (sem. 4 & 5 in Caravan, sem. 6 in Dobolu, Atbashy and Kulanak) are financed;
- Tracer study among graduates in Kochkor/ Ottuk and Aktalaa/ Chaek was conducted;
- Schools of Naryn and Batken oblasts were trained on introducing fees;

- Schools of Naryn and Batken oblasts were trained on proposal-based investments;

Process

The continued provision of practical lessons, project work and apprenticeship at a qualitatively good level is at the focus of consolidation in Naryn and Batken schools. Therefore, in 2006 these partner schools were required to fulfil minimal requirements defined by a set of indicators. Schools are only eligible for a continuation of investment financing by AVEP if these requirements are met. Furthermore, a new approach to investments was chosen, shifting from cost reimbursement towards proposal-based investments, which obliges the schools to propose various investment project ideas, which are evaluated and then granted by AVEP. In winter, all schools were trained on how to write proposals. For the first half of 2006, the project received about 20 proposals and 7 were financially supported for 300'000 Som (mainly small machinery, classroom and workshop repairs). 1 school did not fulfil the requirements (no participation in SMQP, classes not full) and received no investment support. For the second half of 2006, only 1 school is eligible for investment support. All other schools failed to fulfil the minimal requirements (5 schools did not have sufficient participants in demonstration days; 2 schools showed a decrease in teaching quality; in 7 schools less than 80% of the students were present on their apprenticeship farms).

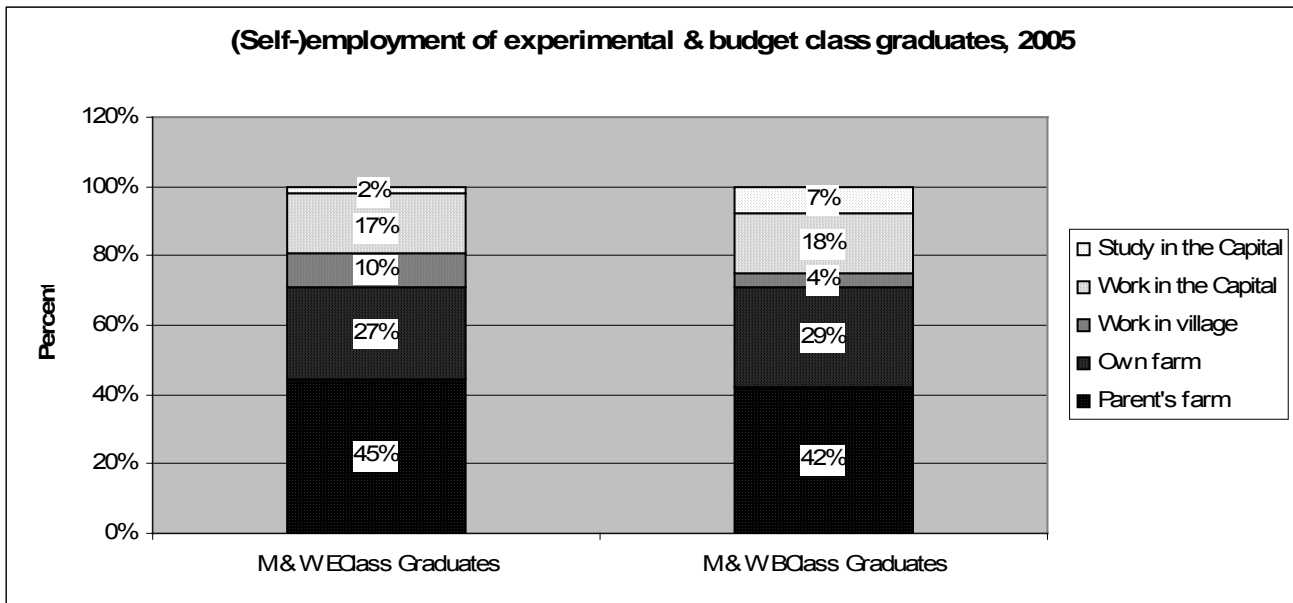
The apprenticeship remains an important part of the system. However, the schools are not yet able to conduct regular monitoring visits to the farms due to a lack of financing. Furthermore, planning of the apprenticeship (especially experience exchange days) from the school side is often done late and not clearly communicated between coaches, farmers and students. However, the overall assessment showed improvements compared to 2005. Farmers continue to be interested in hosting apprentices and were in general ready to cover costs related to salaries and travelling of students. In 2006 a total of 449 farmers were included to the eight school farmers' catalogue; out of which the students selected 146 coach-farmers for their apprenticeship. As usual, regular experience exchange days are conducted during which the students meet on one farm. (totally 70 days).

The project facilitated the link between two partner schools and the German organisation LOGO, which offers to agricultural students in the CIS countries to conduct a practical training on a farm in Germany. The students who voluntarily had attended German language lessons over the last 1,5 years were tested in their language skills as well as overall knowledge in agriculture and practical tractor driving by two independent assessors from LOGO Germany. A handful of students in two partner school passed this first examination and has a chance to be re-assessed in February 2007.

This year the schools in Kulanak, Dobolu and Atbashy have completed their education cycle. During the 6th semester the schools finalised the education and reflected on their experiences with the apprenticeship system. Apart from financing the costs of the 6th semester experimental classes, the project trained the three schools in the conduction of final assessments and supported the organisation of the graduation parties. A total of 76 students graduated from the experimental classes. Unfortunately, not all 123 students, who successfully completed their apprenticeship in winter 2006, reached graduation. The reasons were marriage, dropping-out and serving in the army.

A tracer study among the experimental class graduates of Aktalaa and Chaek as well as the budget class graduates of Kochkor and Ottuk has been implemented. The objective was to compare the situation of graduates from experimental classes one year after graduation to those of budget classes. Furthermore, the results were compared to the results of the tracer study 2005. The overall results for 2004 and 05 show that 75 % of the graduates are working in their villages on a farm or in the handicraft business. Another 5 % continue their studies in Bishkek, while the remaining 20 % have currently no access to a farm (e.g. not youngest son, not married girls) and are working in the capital for the time being. There is no significant difference in (self-) employment patterns between graduates from budget and experimental classes.

Diagram 3: Comparison between experimental and budget classes regarding the (self-) employment of graduates (all genders)



Similarly, no significant gender difference was observed. However, there is a slightly higher percentage of men working on a farm, while non-agricultural employment in the village is more frequently found with women graduates. This is mainly linked to the fact that women will only work on a farm if they marry the youngest son of a family who traditionally inherits the farm. Regarding the training content and the teaching materials, the majority of the graduates expressed their satisfaction and emphasised that they are giving advice also to their parents and other villagers. The main limitation for introducing innovations is encountered by graduates on farms still headed by their fathers, who are reluctant to change. The main weaknesses according to the graduates are the difficulty to access credits and the lack of the secondary education diploma. The practical aspects of the education (apprenticeship, practical lessons, project work) prove to be most valuable for self-employment. However, there is a considerable difference in financing between budget and experimental classes³ which has a negative impact on the quality of the practical lessons and apprenticeship in budget classes. Furthermore, the graduates emphasised that the most decisive factor for lessons to be interesting for the students is the use of a varied and creative methodology by the teachers.

Already last year the schools had been briefed about details and components of the phase II. For consolidating the project's achievements, partner-schools are required to introduce fees for the education in order to maintain the quality on an appropriate level (mainly through financing the practical part of the education). The reaction of the schools was rather positive although the idea is really challenging and new for the rural Kyrgyz VET system. As of September 1st the schools started a trial with the first classes with fee payment (with the exception of Atbashy and Aktalaa where fee payment was already introduced in 2005 under the Misereor sub-project). The project supports the introduction of student fees over a transition period by subsidising part of the student fee, which allows the schools to increase the fees gradually. The schools were trained in fee calculation and for the planned reporting in front of students and parents.

As a pilot, the project is currently on the way to outsource two of the school micro-credit agencies to a professional credit agency in order to seek a more sustainable arrangement that will last beyond the project's duration. The remaining five credit agencies are still awaiting a revision of their charter.

³ In experimental classes the overall costs are about 13 times higher than in budget classes as considerable more finances were allocated by AVEP for consumables in theoretical and practical lessons as well as for apprenticeship (travelling costs and salaries for coaches).

Focus Batken

ER 2.2: A critical mass of experienced and successful village advisors is available and ready to host apprentices in Batken Oblast

ER 2.3: Students of the agricultural and rural vocational education system are linked with agricultural services in their local areas

Milestone7 : Critical mass of farmers who are ready to host apprentices is available: all students had a place on an apprenticeship farm; coach farmer database is established

Since the apprenticeship system was a new activity for Caravan school, a special four-day training was conducted for students and the coach farmers in the regions of Leilek, Batken and Kadamjai. The training contained such topics as contracts, creating an informal atmosphere and conflict management. A special part was also allocated to principles of village advisory services, since the apprentices are expected to work also as village advisors' assistants. The apprentices were spread out all over the oblast which was rather challenging for the coaches to provide support. The apprenticeship monitoring in spring and autumn showed that the direct involvement of the apprentices in farm advisory activities was a great benefit for their practical education and brought the students into close contact with locally available rural advisory services. However, the school and in particular the coaches still need to improve their performance when it comes to organising and supporting the apprenticeship period.

AVEP initiated first steps for a memorandum of collaboration between Caravan school and Altyn Orun MCA for the continued crediting of the students business plans.

Table 1: No of coach-farmers and students involved in the Apprenticeship system

#	School	Coach-farmers	Students	Experience exchange days held by 31.12.06.	No. of farmers who participated in the EED
1	Ottuk	19	28	10	19
2	Kochkor	28	45	13	17
3	Chaek	9	30	5	13
4	Aktalaa	14	23	9	11
5	Atbashy	22	42	10	15
6	Kulanak	16	31	12	14
7	Dobolu	20	44	8	10
8	Karavan	38	44	29	36
Total		166	287	96	135

3.2. Adaptation & training governance

Refers to the objective 2: Initiate the creation of local ownership for the introduction of co-financing mechanisms in order to implement a modularised program to train young and potential farmers as rural entrepreneurs.

Indicator

1-2 schools have locally owned financing mechanism

All 4 selected partner schools have successfully initiated a local training fund. The funds have been registered and started with fund-raising and promotion of the farmer entrepreneur course

3.2.1. Partners selection

Refers to the expected result 2.1 in the YPO: Partner schools are selected on the basis of their application to participate in the scheme

Indicators

Instruments for the selection are developed:

Yes: application forms; evaluation criteria; conditionalities were developed

Presentations to schools and visits:

Yes: 12 schools had participated in the project presentation and ten schools applied and were visited

Fulfilling requirements:

Out of the schools which applied, four fulfilled the conditions and were selected

Results

- One new staff member for community facilitation was hired and joined the team;
- The respective instruments (application forms, criteria, minimal requirements etc.) for selection process were developed by the project;
- Two presentations of the new course and the training fund were conducted in Chui & Yssykkol oblasts;
- Ten out of twelve schools applied to the project and all of them were visited;
- Four out of eight schools fulfilled the requirements and were selected to join the project;
- All four schools have understood the system.

Process

Due to the regional expansion of the project and the subsequent lack of human resources a new collaborator was recruited in March, for facilitating the implementation of the new approach, coaching the schools in establishing local training funds and later on backstopping those training funds. It was also decided to open one regional office of AVEP in Balykchy (situated between Chui and Yssykkol oblasts), which will allow schools and training funds to communicate with the project easier. This one-room office is located in the premises of Balykchy vocational school and was equipped with the needed investments and repair.

With the start of the new phase a lot of attention was paid to the transparent and careful selection of the new partner schools. As a first step, all schools of Yssykkol and Eastern Chui oblast were invited to presentations of the project idea and the concept of local training governance. At the same time the schools were briefed on the selection procedure and details. Out of twelve schools participating in the presentation ten showed interest in the new project and handed in their application form.

After receiving the applications, the project visited all schools in order to visually confirm whether they meet the requirements. Based on these visits and the application forms, the project selected four schools which showed best performance with regards to factors such as professional management, competence of teaching staff, size, location and distance to clients, state of infrastructure, financial prospect, donor attraction, motivation and interest in curriculum development and new financing approaches etc. Subsequently

the staff of the selected four schools were introduced in depth with the idea of local training governance and with the structure of the planned course.

3.2.2. Local training funds

Refers to expected result 2.2 in the YPO: Schools have successfully initiated the establishment of local training funds.

Indicators

Minimum two local training funds are established:	Yes: four training funds are established
Potential members are identified:	Yes: during planning and assembly meetings potential owners and financers were identified
Necessary trainings are provided:	Yes: the schools were trained on initiating and facilitating the establishment of local training funds

Results

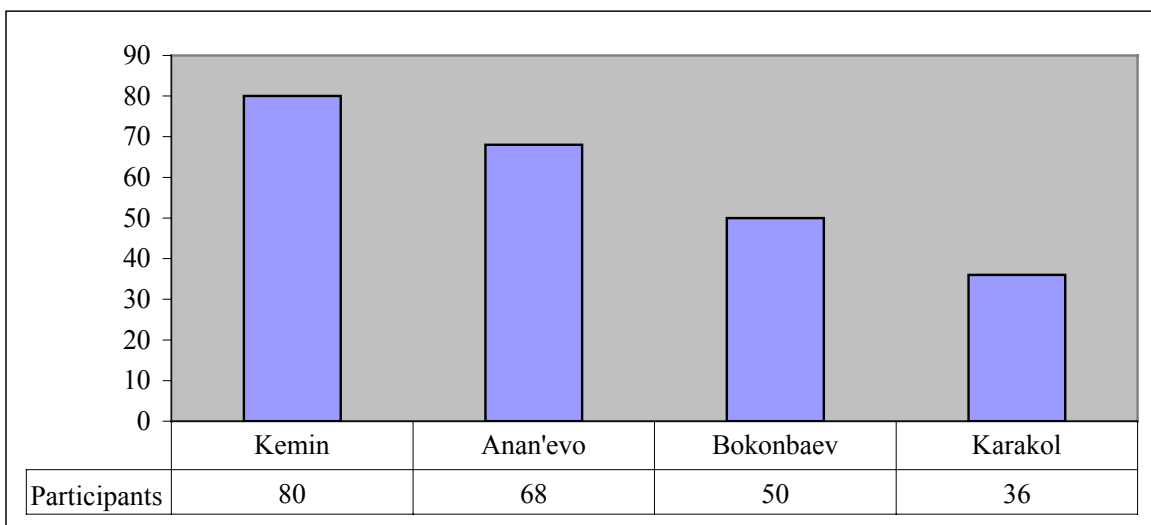
- Concept for training funds and their charter was developed;
- 4 founding assemblies were conducted with participation of 234 farmers & local community members;
- In each school one local training fund was established & is in the process of fundraising and promotion

Process

In the beginning of the year the schools were trained in the establishment of local training funds. Special working groups within the schools were established in order to facilitate the creation of the funds. The groups organized information campaigns in the catchment area of their school to explain to the public the idea of local training funds and attract potential members from Ail Okmoty, companies, co-operatives, wealthy farmers, etc. As a result in summer four founding assemblies with a total of 234 participants took place in each school, where it was decided to establish the local training funds and a steering council for each fund was elected. The project and schools facilitated the process.

After the creation of the local training funds, an announcement was made in order to recruit an executive director for each fund. All executive directors are locals and two of them are women. The directors immediately started to officially register the fund under the commonly agreed name of “KOJO” – which is the abbreviation for “Local Vocational Training Fund” in Kyrgyz.

Diagram 4: No of participants in the founding assemblies of the four KOJOs



3.2.3. Training delivery mechanism

Refers to expected result 2.3 in the YPO: Local training funds (KOJO) have contracted schools for training delivery under co-financing arrangements.

Indicators

Members of local training funds are trained:	Yes: executive directors and steering council members attended inception trainings
Local funds achieve co-financing:	Co-financing of 1 st semester secured
1-2 contracts for training delivery between KOJO & school are implemented:	4 contracts

Results

- Legal requirements for setting up fund were analysed; charter for KOJO and instruments for contracting of donors were developed;
- Inception trainings for the executive directors and steering council members conducted
- Four KOJO offices were set-up in the school premises;
- Fundraising for covering the training costs for the 1st semester resulted so far in 89'750 KGS of local co-financing
- Co-financing from Suit Bulak cheese factory was agreed and from ADB is expected

Process

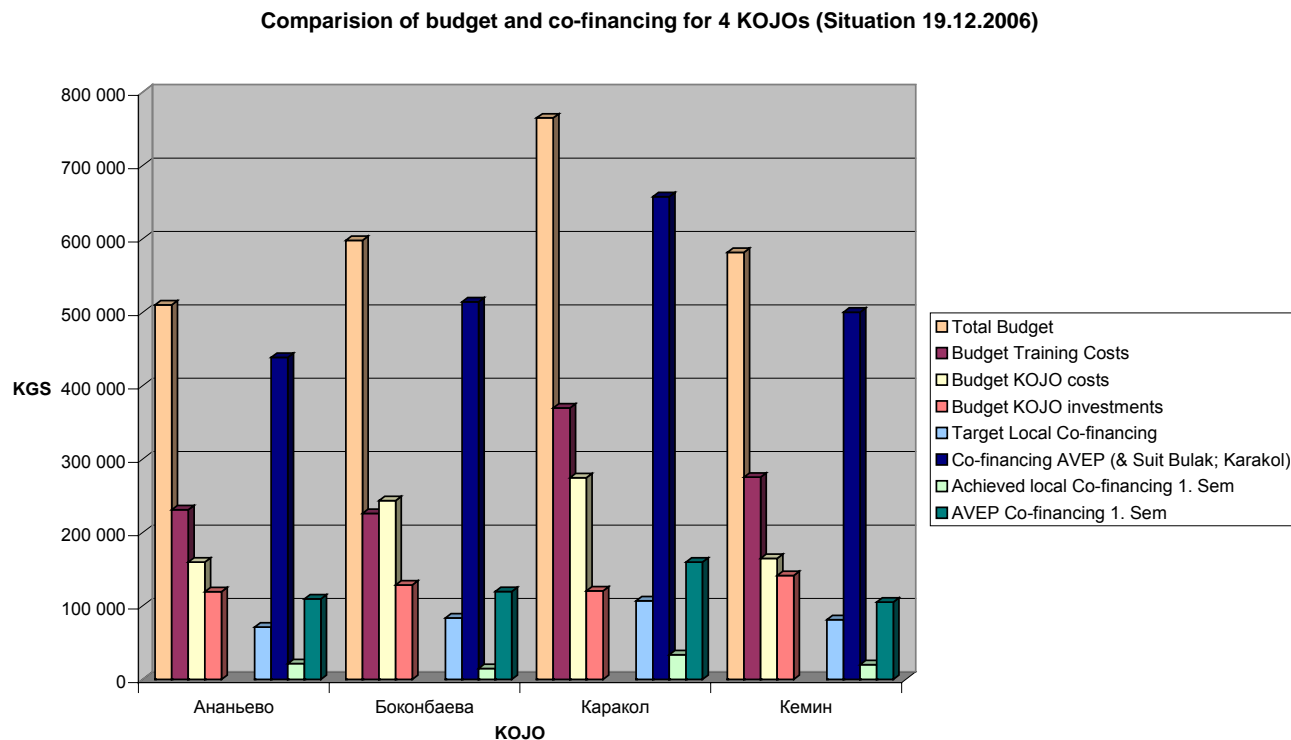
The first months of 2006 were used for finding a common agreement first within the staff and then with the staff of the new partner schools on the structures, processes and procedures needed for setting up the KOJOs. All school staff was acquainted with the idea of the KOJO and contributed to the participatory process of creating the KOJO.

Immediately after the election of the steering council and the selection of the executive director, several trainings on topics such as operational planning and budgeting, marketing, fundraising, proposal-writing, local advocacy and organisational development through capacity building were given by the project. Furthermore, the charter of the KOJO and the terms of reference for the executive directors were developed and agreed upon.

In autumn the KOJOs in close collaboration with the schools conducted promotion campaigns in all villages of the school catchment area for attracting students. At the same time they started local fundraising campaigns within the local community, among cooperatives, shops, companies and with Government offices and representatives for reaching the goal of 14 % financing from local sources. By the End of October all 4 KOJOs could secure enough finances for covering the co-financing of the 1st semester.

The project facilitated negotiations for co-financing arrangements with ADB Agricultural Area Development Project (ready for signature) and Suit Bulak cheese factory (agreed to finance the training costs of 8 students) and other donors and international companies.

In December, each of the four Steering Councils met at the respective school and received the first mid-term report from the executive directors of the KOJOs about the implementation of the first semester and the status quo with regards to fundraising.

Diagram 5: Comparison of KOJO budgets and targeted/ achieved co-financing

3.2.4. Provision of education

Refers to expected result 2.4 in the YPO: Schools provide training to the satisfaction of users and financiers.

Indicators

70% of participants are satisfied with the training:

Informal talks with students during lesson monitoring show a high level of satisfaction

Successful investment proposals:

In all four schools investment proposals were approved

Teachers apply new skills

Partly, monitoring shows need for more teacher training

Schools trained on reporting to local training funds:

School director/ vices and KOJO are in contact on a daily basis and both reported to Steering Council

Results

- A concept for proposal-based investments for school development (process, terms, conditions and forms) was elaborated and presented to the schools. The first proposals will be received on October 1;
- The schools and KOJO members have attended trainings on cost-calculation;
- Summer training program was developed for the teaching staff of four new schools, in total 109 participants took part in 24 training days of 28 training. The main topics were agronomy, livestock, processing, management and marketing, learning and teaching (how to make interesting lessons, methods of teaching), moderation and facilitation etc.
- 1 baseline assessment to evaluate the initial knowledge of students was conducted among 44 students in the farmer entrepreneur classes and 48 peers in the 3 years' farmer master course in 4 schools.

Process

Schools can apply to the project for investments that improve the teaching quality. However, these investments are only provided to schools based on clearly formulated project ideas and after fulfilling certain minimal requirements. The concept for proposal-based investments was based on the experiences collected with Naryn and Batken schools in the first half of 2006 and adapted to the conditions of the new schools. A training on this topic was conducted with participation of the management of the schools and local training funds. By the time of reporting two schools completed their investment projects (classroom improvements) whilst another two will finalize the investment in early 2007.

During several workshops the schools were trained and coached on course cost-calculation. During the trainings the schools received practical tools and means of verification for costs spent for education. In order to approach local training funds and sponsors the schools should be able to communicate their ideas through well-written proposals.

Compared to colleagues from Naryn and Batken, the teaching staff of the new schools had more intensive training this summer as a lot of upgrading in technical and methodological knowledge and skills is needed before the new course with improved teaching quality can start. The trainings especially focused on learner-centred methodology, how to develop lesson plans and working with the curriculum. The participants appreciated the trainings. However, the teaching quality monitoring in November showed that there is still a considerable gap between new methodological skills learnt during the trainings and their appropriate application during the lessons. Taking this into account, the training programme for winter 2007, which puts the emphasis apart from subject trainings on learner-centred methodology, was developed and the respective trainers contracted.

The baseline assessment conducted in November among students in the Farmer Entrepreneur course and the usual 3 year's Farmer Master course, will allow to assess the impact of the new course on the skills and knowledge of the students within 1,5 years. As a first impression, it became already clear that the average knowledge level of the students in the Farmer Entrepreneur classes is consistently higher than in the 3 year's Farmer Master classes.

Table 2: Characteristics of students in Farmer Entrepreneur classes

№	Vocational school	Education			Age			Gender		Family situation	
		higher	higher sec.	secondary	18-20	20-25	25 +	women	men	married	single
1	Bokonbaeva	-	-	12	10	1	1	4	8	-	12
2	Karakol	4	6	16	8	12	6	1	25	4	22
3	Kemin	-	1	11	2	-	10	6	6	4	8
4	Ananevo	-	1	11	2	4	6	6	6	8	4
	Total	4	8	50	22	17	23	17	45	16	46

3.2.5. Course development

Refers to expected result 2.5 in the YPO: A modularised course for training young farmers as rural entrepreneurs is developed based on the needs of the potential participants and the local community through the participatory curriculum development process

Indicators

User groups are involved in all steps of the PCD	Yes: all stakeholders took part in the PCD
Competence profile is developed:	Yes: CP for Chui and Yssykkol ready
VES is developed:	Yes: through participatory workshops
Curriculum is developed:	Yes: through PCD process

Results

- PRA for revision of competence profile has been conducted in Yssykkol and Chui oblasts;
- Competence profile was developed together with new schools;
- The overall VES for all schools has been developed together with the schools;
- Based on competence profile the schools have developed own curricula for semester 1;
- The teaching staff has been trained on the curricula;
- Curricula and teaching material for students' business planning (2. Sem) have been developed;
- Organisation of apprenticeship system and changes in respective curricula have been made.

Process

In December 2005 and January 2006 the project assistant and a former AVEP-trainee conducted a PRA⁴ survey in Yssykkol and Chui regions with the support of RAS in order to identify training needs and to collect ideas for revision of the competence profile. The PRA showed that the agricultural conditions and the demand for education partly differ from the Naryn region. Farmers are specifically interested in knowledge and skills on farm management, marketing, economy and processing. Of course, topics on livestock and agronomy also play a vital role in the life of the Chui and Issykkol farmers. Based on the results of the PRA, the competence profile for the two new regions was developed together with the school staff.

In spring several workshops for developing the course structure (VES) were conducted with the schools. First, each school provided its own proposals, which were fine-tuned into one common proposal in the course of the participatory workshops. The VES describes all parts related to the course implementation and gives guidelines for it. The course will consist of three semesters (16 months), with the 1st semester consisting of a mix of theory and practice. During the 2nd semester the students will experience farmers' work life during apprenticeship and implement their own small business plan project. The 3rd semester is modularised and gives the students the opportunity to select the topics they are most interested in. The development of the VES allowed to calculate the costs of the education to be covered through the KOJO.

After developing the competence profile and VES, the schools needed to describe in more detail how and with what means they are going to reach the learning objectives. The objective for this year was to develop the curriculum for the 1st semester and start preparing the needed teaching materials. After the development of the curriculum through workshops and school working groups, the teaching staff was trained on how to use the curriculum and participated in subject and methodological trainings. All schools were provided with the needed teaching materials.

As preparation for the 2nd semester, the new partner schools together with the project revised and adapted the Naryn curriculum for student's business planning and for apprenticeship. The feedback of the participants also lead to a revised version of the teaching material for business planning as well as - based on the Naryn apprenticeship system - to a draft version regarding organisational issues of the apprenticeship system during the 2nd semester of the Farmer Entrepreneur course.

⁴ Willen, 2006. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Eastern Chui and Yssykkol oblasts

3.3. Lobbying

Refers to the objective 3: Promote the discussion and exchange on selected key policy and operational issues among stakeholders in order to be addressed in institutional and systems reform.

Indicator

Selected issues are reflected in the reform agenda:	The technical assistance mission report of ADB VET project expressively mentions the successes and achievements of AVEP and puts forward many issues AVEP has been lobbying for in the past
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3.3.1. Communication of AVEP position and vision

Refers to the expected result 3.1 in the YPO: Positions and visions of AVEP on selected issues for the development of the VET system are well-known among stakeholders.

Indicator

Network of donors is extended:	Yes: regular round tables, letter of intent with GTZ VET project, strong interest of ADB VET project in collaboration
Public is informed about changes in VET:	Regular publication of “Kurak” and articles of the schools in local and national mass media
SC functions efficiently:	First meeting of steering council in December
Environment monitoring:	Regularly done through meetings, news and laws

Results

- Five round tables with donors, working in VET were conducted under the guidance of AVEP & GTZ;
- Regular contact with GTZ VET project for coordination of efforts
- Signing of a letter of intent with GTZ, MoLSP, MoE, State Committee on Migration and Chamber of Commerce for future co-ordination of VET reform activities and subsequent participation of AVEP in a common strategy development workshop in Germany;
- Sharing of experiences with ADB VET technical assistance mission;
- Inclusion of one AVEP partner school into regional ETF project;
- Four issues of the project newsletter “Kurak” were published (with a circulation of 1350 copies);
- Regular meeting with DVE and MoLSP are taking place, also monitoring of changes in the legislation is going on;
- First AVEP National Steering Council meeting took place;
- Article on AVEP experience published in international Journal for Vocational Education and Training

Process

In 2006 a series of round tables with all donors working in Kyrgyz VET system gained a lot of interest from ADB, ILO, GTZ, University of Central Asia, ETF, TACIS, UNDP, Eurasia Foundation and others. This resulted in the development of a draft common position paper of the donors with regards to reform needs in the VET system and allowed the project to network with relevant donors in the VET sector.

Regular formal (workshops) and informal meetings with GTZ VET project allowed the exchange of experience between these two donors with arguably the longest history of donor support to the Kyrgyz VET sector. Furthermore, a letter of intent was signed with GTZ, MoLSP, MoE, State Committee on Migration and Chamber of Commerce for future common efforts to reform the VET sector. Subsequently, all signing parties including AVEP participated in a strategic planning workshop in Germany, which allowed agreeing on common reform issues and the development of preliminary action plans.

The ADB technical mission currently developing a grant proposal for reforming the VET sector to the Kyrgyz government was supported by AVEP through sharing of experiences and organizing field visits to AVEP schools. The recommendations to the Government in the report of the ADB TA reflect many issues for which AVEP has been lobbying over the last years.

With the support of AVEP, one of the partner schools was selected together with another 3 schools in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to participate in a regional project of the European Training Foundation (ETF) with the overall goal to open up the schools to the local community. Apart from counselling this project supports the school in developing a short term farmer training course based on the AVEP farmer/woman farmer curricula.

Regular meetings with the DVE and RSMC are taking place in order to exchange opinions and information. Since the MoLSP is a partner of the project they are timely updated on changes going on in the project. In exchange the project is briefed and updated on changes and new developments in the VET system.

In December the Helvetas Programme Office invited for the first National Steering Council of AVEP. The participants approved the activities of AVEP in 2006 and were mainly interested in the development of the new training funds. No major issues of concern were raised.

The Project Manager and Technical Advisor together with the long-standing AVEP consultant Peter Taylor elaborated an article on the AVEP experience with gender-separated classes which was published in a Special Issue of the International Journal for Vocational Education and Training in order to communicate AVEP experience and lessons learnt.⁵

3.3.2. Recognition of new course

Refers to the expected result 3.2 in the YPO: The key components of the new approach (modularised approach/ ownership) are recognised by the concerned authorities.

Indicators

80% of mandates successfully fulfilled by RMC:	Yes
Partners regularly receive information about project activities:	Often information exchange meeting with partners are taking place and partners are invited to all relevant workshops
VET system integrates project innovations:	Not yet, since the pilot courses will start only in November

Results

- The mandates for the RMC concentrated in the first half-year on collecting information about on-going processes in the MoLSP, visiting budget classes for monitoring, writing articles for promoting vocational education in national newspapers and TV;
- When the project staff is in Bishkek, visits of DVE and RMC are done and information exchanges are organised on regular basis;

Process

The feedback from RMC is positive and they are interested to continue the collaboration. Representatives of RMC attended most workshops and activities in Chui and Yssykkol oblasts and thus contributed to the development of the competence profile, VES and curriculum. Furthermore, special information meetings were conducted for the heads of DVE in order to acquaint them with the new course and co-financing mechanisms and get their feedback.

⁵ Messerli, S, Abdykaporov, M and Taylor, P, 2006 Vocational education and training for women farmers in Kyrgyzstan: A case study of an innovative education programme. *In: JNET Special Issue 58/4: Gender matters. Perspectives on women, work and training*

4. Conclusions and outlook

Conclusions

- AVEP successfully started into its second phase by expanding its activities to four new partner schools in the regions of Yssykkol and Chui. A careful selection process of the best-performing schools and a wide range of trainings in methodology, subject matter, management and financial issues created strong foundations for the future project activities. The staffs of the new schools show a lot of motivation and enthusiasm which helped moving on quickly with developing the competence profile and the course structure for a new shorter and modularised “farmer entrepreneur” course and finally resulted in the curriculum for the 1. Semester.
- The idea of creating local vocational training funds – which is completely new to Kyrgyzstan and most countries of the World – was taken up by the local stakeholders (schools, farmers, Ail Okmoty, potential financiers) with a great interest and raised expectations that this could be one way out of the financing crisis at school level. All four schools successfully initiated the training funds, which immediately started its activities by elaborating a charter, proceeding with official registration and networking with potential financiers. Their active fundraising efforts gave access to enough local funds to co-finance the costs of the first semester and thus allowed the first 62 students to start their education as Farmer Entrepreneur.
- With the graduation of the experimental classes in Kulanak, Atbashy and Dobolu the educational cycle of three years was finalised for all schools in Naryn oblast. As of autumn 2006 all seven schools will run only Government-financed budget classes. However, the project continued to support all Naryn partner schools through an expansion of its teacher training programme (by including also non-experimental class teachers), by providing for the 2nd year an intensive Management Training Programme to the school administration, by revising all teaching materials and the curricula, through proposal-based investments for improving teaching quality and through overall coaching and monitoring of the teaching and learning processes. The three year course continues to prove its market and client-orientation as the results of a tracer study showed that 75 % of the graduates of 2004 and 2005 are working at a farm or in a related business in the village and the overall satisfaction of the stakeholders with the course content and its applicability in the world of work is high.
- The process of handing-over ownership and financial responsibility for the three year course to the partner schools requires sometimes tough decisions (especially with regards to financial support). However this creates healthy learning processes for the school staff about such issues as quality and sustainable financing. The switch from reimbursing school investment expenditures to proposal-based investments with minimum requirements results in not all schools having access to project finances for planned investments however creates the condition for motivating the schools to work on their own improvements of the teaching and learning. The project’s attempt to gradually introduce student fees for covering the costs of practical lessons proves to be a difficult process with the partner schools formally agreeing to the need to find additional income but in reality escaping this unpopular decision by artificially delaying the encashment of the fees
- The Department for Vocational Education and its sectors are currently faced by many changes with the ADB project setting conditions before the proposed grant agreement can be signed. The proposal to remove the DVE from the MoLSP and create an independent State Committee on Vocational Education creates hopes for an accelerated reform process in the future and more attention being paid to the VET sector. However, the risk is, that the subsequent changes in organisation and personnel may paralyze the whole VET system for several months. The proposed grant agreement is foreseen to be signed before December 31st with a subsequent immediate fielding of the project implementation unit for the detailed planning. It is expected that the ADB project will open up windows of opportunity for AVEP to mainstream its assets and experiences at a national level.

Outlook

- The year 2007 will show whether the newly established local training funds KOJO can keep up their initial fundraising success and mobilise enough local funds to cover the yet remaining costs for the 2nd and 3rd semester. For KOJOs which are successful in fundraising, the matching grant of AVEP is flexible as for each locally raised Som, AVEP will add 6 Soms to the KOJO account. Fundraising will become even more important with the proposed start of a second group of students in autumn 2007 which will be accompanied by a slight increase of the required share of local co-financing. It is foreseen to reduce the AVEP matching grant gradually over the years in order to build up the fundraising capacity of the training funds. The project may have to take unpopular decisions if the case arises that a local training fund fails to achieve the required level of local co-financing. Therefore, in 2007 a lot of project time and resources will go into building up the fundraising capacity of the KOJOs. Furthermore, through increasing the cost efficiency and the number of students, it is expected to decrease the ratio between the KOJOs own operational costs and the training costs.
- At the end of 2006, AVEP took the strategic decision to expand its activities in 2007 to another 2-4 schools in the Western Chui region by initiating additional local training funds and including the respective school staff into the participatory curriculum development processes and the training programmes. The establishment of new local training funds will allow to move the project gradually out of a piloting niche by applying sustainable financing mechanisms in differing environments and vocational schools throughout the country. It is expected that this will on the one hand increase the recognition of the new financing approach by the Government authorities, local stakeholders and last but not least by other donors and on the other hand lay the foundations for creating an association of KOJOs which will eventually take over many of the project's financing and promotion functions after its phasing out.
- The participatory curriculum development processes for elaborating the new Farmer Entrepreneur course will continue to be intensive in 2007, as the curricula for the 2nd and 3rd semesters have to be developed. Although the integration of the practical lessons and the students' business planning exercise into the apprenticeship system and first adaptations of the curricula have been implemented at the end of 2006, still many issues like the selection of skilled coach farmers, the fine-tuning of the curricula, the securing of credit provision through a micro-lending institution need to be approached before the students can leave for their practical training on March 1, 2007. In spring, the project will make an attempt to bring various VET stakeholders (education authorities, school staff, students, other donors) together in order to develop a common approach for modularising technical training courses within the Kyrgyz context. This should create the basis for developing the system and content of the planned 3rd semester modules together with the school stakeholders during summer 2007.
- In 2007, the project will increasingly allocate its human and financial resources to the development of the Farmer Entrepreneur course and its co-financing approach. Thus, the YPO 2007 foresees a significant reduction in activities with regards to the 3 years' farmer/ woman farmer course in the Naryn region. Any project activity within the old partner schools will have a strong focus on building the capacity of the schools to be ready for final handing-over in 2008. For example, instead of offering trainings within the School Manager Qualification Programme the directors and vices are individually coached and supported in their personal action plans for management change. Furthermore, the introduction of the student fees remains on top of the agenda, the responsibility for the apprenticeship monitoring will gradually be shifted to the OMC, the Student Field Schools on IPM potato growing are supported to become partially self-financing and first experiences with micro-lending through a professional micro-crediting agency will be collected and validated. The project will no more initiate any new activities apart from a beforehand planned creation of a revolving fund for apprenticeship farmers under the Misereor sub-project (which again aims at finding sustainable ways of supporting apprenticeship farmers) and the initiation of livestock student field schools (which experience may be later used in the new partner schools).
- In order to completely finalise the curriculum revision for the 3 year's course, AVEP will approach once more the issue of re-introduction of the general education subjects into the farmer/ woman farmer curriculum. This issue remains central for the schools continuing to offer this course and sufficient students being attracted once the project support has been withdrawn. The project expects to be able to sign an

Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, which would allow to join efforts for piloting a revision of general education subjects in the farmer education with the aim of reducing the overall number of hours and re-orienting their content to the specific profession. The project will actively support its partners through a fully fledged participatory curriculum development process specifically for general education subjects.

- In 2007, the students in Caravan school will start their 6th and last semester, which has – apart from the usual farmer/ woman farmer curriculum – a specific focus on building up the students' capacity to become rural advisors. With the expected graduation of the first experimental class students in the South in early summer, a long-standing and fruitful collaboration with GTZ Batken will come to an end and needs to be validated. AVEP will continue to provide support to the Caravan school under its consolidation approach up to the end of 2008.
- The on-going country programme development process of Helvetas Kyrgyzstan and project-specific feedbacks from the Zurich headquarters show a continued interest of Helvetas into rural VET issues. This and potential collaboration arrangements with other donors might create future opportunities for the project to expand its support to vocational education at a wider scale and/ or for other rural professions in Central Asia. Furthermore, with the up-coming ADB project on VET reform, the project expects that in 2007 significant changes will happen in the structure and organisation of the Kyrgyz VET system at all levels. It would be premature for the project to take actions now, however AVEP is carefully monitoring the further developments. AVEP will continue to closely collaborate with the GTZ VET project on working out a common strategy and action plans for VET reform among MoLSP, MinEdu, State Commission for Migration and the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, an agreed position paper for reforming the VET system based on the round table of the major donors and projects working in the Kyrgyz VET sector can be expected to be finalised in the first half of 2007.

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