

Helvetas – Swiss Association for International Cooperation in Kyrgyzstan

Helvetas was founded in 1955 as the first private development organisation in Switzerland. Helvetas is today an independent and non-profit organisation with more than 100,000 members and contributors, and 15 program offices abroad. It actively works to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged people in 22 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The overall goal of Helvetas Kyrgyzstan is to increase the capacity of the rural population to initiate and sustain its development towards improved living conditions.

In Kyrgyzstan, Helvetas started its activities in November 1994 with the Agroproject – restructured as the Kyrgyz–Swiss Agricultural Programme (KSAP), operating in close cooperation with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Today, Helvetas runs six projects in Kyrgyzstan:

- *KSAP, the Kyrgyz Swiss Agricultural Programme*, which supports the nation-wide Rural Advisory Service (RAS) and the Policy Support Project;
- *AVEP, the Agricultural Vocational Education Project* in Naryn oblast, which runs a farmers' education programme in Naryn and Batken Oblasts.
- *CBTSP, the Community Based Tourism Support Project*, which helps local communities market cultural and adventure tourism.
- *LARC, the Legal Assistance to Rural Citizens Project*, which assists the Public Association LARC in providing legal assistance and representation to the rural population helping them to realize their rights and decision makers apply the law accurately, consistently and impartially;
- *BioCotton Project: Organic Cotton Production and Trade Promotion*, which aims at developing and supporting the production and export of organic cotton;
- *Tourism Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)* aims at marketing Kyrgyzstan as a tourism destination by means of professional marketing activities; and
- *Local Market Development Project (LMD)*, which improves market access for local agricultural producers through strengthening the product-value chain.
- All of these projects aim to support rural people through the transition period from a socialist system to a market economy.

More information can be found at:

www.helvetas.kg

AVEP in brief

Project duration:

Pilot phase: - 2001-2002

I phase: - 2003-2005

II phase: - 2006-2008

Partner schools:

7 schools in Naryn Oblast,
1 school in Batken Oblast

Beneficiaries:

Students of Agriculture Vocational schools

School teachers \ management

Financial commitment: USD 430'000 p.a.

Co-financed by:



German Development Cooperation



The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Almaty



Bischoefliches Hilfswerk, Germany



Counterpart:

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Kyrgyz Republic

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Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project



Financed and Implemented by:

◀ **helvetas** Kyrgyzstan ▶

The Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project started in January 2001 as the Agricultural Vocational Education Project in Naryn oblast, to support Kyrgyz partners in adapting the agricultural vocational education system to the new situation of the private market economy. Today, the project is helping rural development in general, by contributing to an effective and sustainable vocational education system that will provide graduates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to manage private farms, as well as other businesses, helping to raise the incomes in rural areas.

Background

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, state-employed farm & factory workers suddenly became private farmers, and narrow specialists suddenly became generalists, faced with the challenge of winning their sustenance from plots of land in order to succeed in the market economy. That is especially critical in regions where a large part of the population depends, in some areas, even exclusively, on their natural resources. In those areas, extreme poverty is widespread, even though the natural resources are not scarce. This has created an urgent demand for agricultural advisory services, a need filled by the Rural Advisory Services, supported by the Helvetas-sponsored Kyrgyz Swiss Agricultural Project. While the advisory service has been active and successful in re-training the farmers, very little could be done for the younger generation in basic subject-oriented training, to help them succeed as farmer-entrepreneurs. Hence, in 2001, Helvetas began the pilot phase of the AVEP with a completely new education system: - in terms of content, teaching and learning approach.

Approach and Implementation

The project creates and implements a new form of education enabling farmers to gain relevant and applicable experience from teaching, which is adapted to local conditions, in experimental classes in 8 pilot partner schools. The curriculum, teaching and learning approach are based on the reality of Kyrgyz farming life. This participatory innovation starts from the vocational schools and involves farmers, students, parents, teachers and school administrators, as well as, local and national authorities.

AVEP started in January 2001, with 100 students in two schools in Naryn Oblast.

Today the project covers the whole Naryn Oblast (all 7 vocational schools) and one school in Batken Oblast with more than 1000 students and already over 250 graduates - with an outreach to the national methodological centre, in order to standardise the innovative vocational education system and allow for a geographical and/or professional expansion. The farmer education is developed in a participatory way together with the stakeholders of the schools and the farming community and consists of both theory and practical training, provided at the vocational schools, using their own facilities and natural resources. Additionally, the students receive a micro-credit for implementing their own business project and learn practical tasks during a farm apprenticeship.

Project objectives

In its second phase the project concentrates on three objectives:

- 1.** Consolidation of the profession of the 3 years' education of "farmer" and "women farmer" through:
 - fine-tuning the curricula \ textbooks developed over the last 5 years;
 - capacity building of teachers and school administration;
 - introducing cost sharing approaches for sustaining the innovative vocational education system beyond the project duration.
- 2.** Development a new shorter, modularized course for farmer entrepreneurs and provide it in new partner schools under a local training governance approach and with multi-source financing. Adapting and widening the farmer profession in order to overcome the deficiencies of the project from the phase I and sustain the achievements and innovations.
- 3.** Lobbying for reforming in VET system by:
 - promoting the discussion and exchange on selected key policy and operational issues among stakeholders;
 - getting official recognition of key components of the project.

In order to make well-known approaches and get recognition of key components of the project.

Activities:

- Management training and support to schools;
- Establishment and backstopping of local training ownership;
- Participatory development of new innovations (vocational education system, apprenticeship, curricula) and Development of training materials.

The project creates challenges for the parties, making students learn how to acquire a business-oriented and problem-solving approach, which is also new for many teachers; teachers to adapt to new roles – as fellow learners, as coaches, and as facilitators of the learning processes; and school managers to administer new systems and seek ways of improving existing systems and structures within their institutions.

Project structure

AVEP is a joint project by <h> and the MoLSP. It has a small implementation and co-ordination unit in the premises of the Oblast Methodological Centre, which in cooperation with the National Methodological Centre and other partners, are mandated to promote AVEP activities and the new Vocational Education System. The project operates through working groups in the partner schools, involves authors to develop training materials, uses the support of local and international consultants.

Partners

In Kyrgyzstan:

- All seven agricultural vocational schools in Naryn Oblast and one school in Batken oblast;
- Methodical centers of the MoLSP in Naryn and Bishkek;
- Rural Advisory Service, RAS, Naryn and nation-wide;
- GTZ Batken (Promotion of food security, regional cooperation and stability in the Batken region);
- LESIC project (Vocational Education component for carpenters);
- Misereor (German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation)
- Agricultural Universities of Naryn and Bishkek

Abroad:

- Swiss College of Agriculture in Zollikofen, Switzerland;
- CIEA seminar: a worldwide seminar and knowledge network for agricultural vocational and university education;
- Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, England
- KEK/ CDC consultants, Switzerland.

