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SKILLS TRAINING IN RURAL AREAS PROJECT STAR

AGRICULTURAL SKILLS TRAINING IN RURAL AREAS PROJECT COMPONENT (A-STAR)

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

PHASE II: 2006 – 2009



BALYKCHY, JANUARY 2009
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Our partners:

Financing:



Liechtenstein
Development
Service



The German Catholic Bishops' Organization for
Development Cooperation

Implementing:



**The State Agency for Vocational Education and Training
of the Kyrgyz Republic**

Methodological Centres, Bishkek and Naryn

Vocational School No 15, **Kochkor, Naryn;**
Vocational School No 26, **Chaek, Naryn;**
Vocational School No 32, **Atbashy, Naryn;**
Vocational School No 40, **Baetov, Naryn;**
Vocational School No 50, **Ottuk, Naryn;**
Vocational School No 86, **Kulanak, Naryn;**

Vocational School No 2, **Karakol, Yssykkol;**
Vocational School No 81, **Bokonbaevo, Yssykkol;**
Vocational School No 82, **Anan'ev, Yssykkol;**

Vocational School No 19, **Altyмыш (Kemin), Chui;**
Vocational School No 28, **Belovodsk, Chui;**
Vocational School No 43, **Sokuluk, Chui;**

Vocational School No 6, **Kok-Oi, Talas;**
Vocational School No 41, **Boo-Terek, Talas;**



Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO – Anan'ev**”;
Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO – Belovodsk**”;
Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO - Bokonbaevo**”;
Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO - Karakol**”;
Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO - Kemin**”;
Local Vocational Training Fund “**KOJO – Sokuluk**”;
Farmers' Union of Talas oblast

Collaborating



Financial Group “Kompanion”
Branch offices: Balykchy, Bishkek, Karakol, Naryn, Talas

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Abbreviations

<h>	Helvetas, Swiss Association for International Cooperation
A-STAR	Agricultural Skills Training in Rural Areas, component of STAR project
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AS	Apprenticeship System
ATC	Advisory Training Center (now ZOKI)
AVEP	Agricultural and Rural Vocational Education Project
BA	Baseline Assessment
Budget classes	School classes financed by the GoK
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CH	Confederation Helvetica, official name of Switzerland
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
EC	European Commission in KR
EED	Experience Exchange Days
ETF	European Training Foundation
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Organization
h & g formation	Swiss Training Provider in the hotel & restaurant sector
hotelleriesuisse	Swiss Hotel Association
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KOJO	Local Vocational Training Fund
KR	the Kyrgyz Republic
MinEdu	Ministry of Education and Science
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
RMC	Republican National Methodological Centre
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OMC	Oblast Methodological Center
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCD	Participatory Curriculum Development
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
RMC	Republic Methodological Center
SAVET	State Agency for Vocational Education and Training under the Government
SC	Steering Committee
SFS	Student Field School
SMQP	School Management Qualification Program
STAR	Skills Training in Rural Areas Project
T-STAR	Tourism Skills Training in Rural Areas, component of STAR project
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToT	Training of Trainers
TQM	Teaching Quality Monitoring
UCA	University of Central Asia, Aga Khan Development Foundation supported
UN	United Nations
VES	Vocational Education Scheme
VESD	Vocational Education and Skills Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VS	Vocational School
YPO	Yearly Plan of Operations
YK	Yssykkol region
ZOKI	Training, Advisory and Innovation Centre (former ATC)

1. Background and project history

In Kyrgyzstan, where most of the population still lives in the rural area, 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 to empower 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 the 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 developed and the occupational and instructional skills and knowledge of teachers upgraded. After a two years' pilot phase, the project activities were expanded in the first phase of the project under the assumption that the Government will finance the following batches of students (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. After final examinations in two schools in Naryn oblast, the first 78 graduates were released and returned to work on their farms. In the same year, so-called Student Field Schools (SFS) were launched which gave teachers and students 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.

In 2006, AVEP started its 2nd phase which was marked with the continued support in training of teachers, teaching material development (in Kyrgyz and Russian language), curriculum fine-tuning and support to SFS for the Farmer/ Woman Farmer course. While the last batch of experimental class Farmer/ Woman Farmer students graduated in Naryn, the first four groups of students started their studies in four new schools in Chui and Yssykkol region according to the newly developed course and curriculum for "Farmer Entrepreneurs". For this short course of 16-months an innovative and sustainable training governance and co-financing system was successfully launched by creating Local Vocational Training Funds (KOJO).

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

Thanks to a collaboration with a local professional micro-crediting company, students in an increasing number of schools received credits from Kompanion.

In 2007, the first students graduated from this course and the “Farmer Entrepreneur” course as well as the KOJO Training Fund approach was introduced to another two schools in Chui. As preparation for the complete handing-over of the Farmer/ Women Farmer course by the end of 2008, the support to the vocational schools in Naryn was gradually reduced.

Up to now a total of over 800 students graduated from the Farmer/ Women Farmer course and another 600 are currently in training. The new Farmer Entrepreneur course is currently attended by about 200 students and the first 60 graduates were released in 2008. Since 2001, the project trained more than 160 teachers in over 400 methodical and technical training courses.

In the second half of 2008, AVEP was re-branded into A-STAR (Agricultural Skills Training in Rural Areas) as a new co-financing scheme of the Liechtenstein Development Service (LED) which allowed to expand the project and to add another component in tourism skills training (Tourism Skills Training in Rural Areas, T-STAR)

2. Executive summary

2.1. Objectives of the A-STAR 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 13 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.

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 A-STAR focuses more on the financial and operational sustainability aspects of the delivery system and on 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 A-STAR 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. A-STAR in 2008

During its third year of Phase II, A-STAR put decreasing amounts of resources and time into consolidating the existing three years’ course for “Farmer/ Woman Farmer” in Naryn and Batken schools but stepped up the development of the new “Farmer Entrepreneur” course and appropriate co-financing mechanisms for the new partner schools in Yssykkol and Chui oblast. The support to the schools in Naryn and Batken was, with the formal ending of the Phase II at the end of 2008, completed (with only a very few limited activities continuing into the first months of 2009). However, the phase II of A-STAR was prolonged by one year as the review and planning is foreseen only in 2009.

For Naryn and Batken schools:

In 2008 all partner schools were running budget classes fully financed by the Government. The project support included:

- Facilitation of a working group for introducing profession-oriented general education subjects;
- Facilitation of the discussion between Ministry of Education, the vocational schools and Kirshelk technicum that would give access for “Farmer/ Woman Farmer” graduates to technicum courses;
- Co-funding and coaching of Student Field Schools (SFS) and their student-governed revolving funds;
- Co-funding and coaching the farmers revolving funds in Aktalaa and Atbashy regions for crediting farm investments that improve the practical training quality for the apprentices;
- Access for all teachers to two training programmes (methodology & technical subjects);
- Monitoring of teaching quality in the classroom and during apprenticeship;

For Yssykkol and Chui schools:

In 2008 the first batch of 60 graduates completed the 16-month Farmer Entrepreneur course in 4 vocational schools and went back to their farms. The groups which started their studies in 2008 in the 4 existing and 2 new vocational schools completed their 1st semester with an assessment, spent the summer period in apprenticeship and started in autumn with the 3rd semester. As a third round of students started their studies in November, currently a total of around 200 students are in training.

As the number of partner schools grew from 4 to now 8, the project supported the new and existing partners in adapting the curricula to the peculiarities of the agricultural system in each region and in further developing the modularisation and the assessment system. Two half-yearly training programmes allowed the teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills in methodology and technical subjects. The programmes were developed based on regular monitoring in the classroom and on student/ teacher enquiries.

The project covers now vocational schools in the whole North of the country. The two new partner schools in the remote Talas oblast are supported by a new model of the Vocational Training Fund KOJO as its functions were successfully integrated into the already existing Talas Farmers Union.

A-STAR continued to train and coach the KOJO executive directors but also put more focus on capacity building of the KOJO steering council members in order to strengthen the organisational development and the fundraising skills of the KOJO. Based on their achievements in local co-financing and the number of years of collaboration with the project, A-STAR multiplied the funds of the KOJO.

The financial group (micro-credit company) Kompanion continued to prove to be a reliable partner for the crediting of the project work of the students. Kompanion also offers the students the possibility to take an attractive education credit for paying the tuition fee. Both credits are offered at a low percentage and without collateral. Furthermore, Kompanion backstops the vocational schools in managing the credit portfolio. Due to the appreciation of the previous two years of collaboration between Kompanion and vocational schools in Naryn and Yssykkol, the collaboration could be extended to all new partner schools in Chui and Talas.

Project lobbying and networking

A-STAR continues to involve representatives of the State Agency for Vocational Education and Training (SAVET) in its workshops and presentations in order to keep them updated on the project progress and innovations striving to integrate the project achievements into the Government VET system. In 2008, intensive negotiations with SAVET (which continued into the current year) were held on a potential co-financing of part of the operational costs of the Farmer Entrepreneur course by the Government.

In 2008, the VESD donor roundtable, which is facilitated by A-STAR, completed a nation-wide survey to evaluate the employers' satisfaction with the current VET system. Furthermore, regular meetings of the donor round table allowed all participating donors to exchange experiences and lessons learnt.

Based on previous networking with ADB, Helvetas participated in the tender of the ADB VESD reform project and was short listed as one of the three potential contractors. A-STAR facilitated the completion of the collaboration between the Kochkor vocational school and the European Training Foundation (ETF) which lead to the development and introduction of new short-courses for farmers.

2.3. Overview of achievements in 2008

The most important achievements in the reporting period were:

- ❖ *Talas curriculum for the 1st semester was revised through participatory workshops;*
- ❖ *A total of 24 modules was developed for the third semester;*
- ❖ *26 trainers were contracted, 83 training were conducted and 706 teachers attended the training program;*
- ❖ *In two SFS in Naryn oblast 5 trainers provided 44 trainings to students and 50 students successfully graduated and received certificates;*
- ❖ *Two public unions of students and teachers on SFS are successfully operating out of the four public union which was formed in four schools in last year;*
- ❖ *Two revolving funds in Naryn oblast are successfully operating to credit apprenticeship farmers (~375 000 SOM each) in two schools were established with the support of Misereor;*
- ❖ *Continued readiness of 150 coach farmers to host apprentices;*
- ❖ *Two new partners schools in Talas oblast joined the project;*
- ❖ *5 NGOs attended in the tender and one local NGO in Talas was selected to implement the functions of local training governance fund (KOJO)*
- ❖ *395 people attended annual assemblies of six KOJOs;*
- ❖ *The project supported six KOJOs with 2'090'832 soms in total;*
- ❖ *109 students started the new "Farmer Entrepreneur" course;*
- ❖ *32 investment projects proposed by nine schools were selected and provided with a total sum of 1'733'000 KGS;*

- ❖ *Partner schools independently conducted eight student skills demonstration days with around 412 visitors;*
- ❖ *Five donor round tables with representatives of the major donors and projects in VET reform conducted;*
- ❖ *Local fundraising in six regions in 2008 amounted to 769'440 KGS for co-financing the "Farmer Entrepreneur" course.*

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 facilitates and contributes to the establishment and promotion of local vocational training funds - KOJO, which will allow training providers to become financially and operationally more independent and maintain educational quality on an appropriate level. The goal is assumed to be reached through the creation of a new educational system based on 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, Chui and Talas oblasts.

The project support its partners in providing training to the students that allow them to become successful farmers and rural entrepreneurs thus to improve their farming practice and income generation. However, this is only possible with a stable financing of the operational costs of education. Thus, the project continues to focus on ownership and local governance in order to prepare for the full responsibility of its partners for the project achievement and innovations after the phasing out.. The year 2008 was the last year for the project to finalize its activities in the Naryn region (with exception of a few tasks remaining under the Misereor funding scheme).

In its activities the project follows 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 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:

Eight partner schools in Naryn and Batken continued to provide the farmer / woman farmer education according to the system developed by AVEP.

As initiated in 2008, this year the project was more working through the methodological centres and less directly with the schools. The project applied a demand-based approach and provided mainly technical support when requested. One of the key activities working with the

schools was the complete handing-over of the 3-years curriculum and students' field schools.

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:

MoU on introduction of profession-oriented general education subjects is signed:

MoU with Kirshelk on access for farmer / woman farmer graduates is signed:

Teachers trained in new curricula:

Results

Not all schools follow the scheme, and the reasons are lack of finances and staff changes in the schools.

Despite of approved MoU with MinEdu the working group did not reach the set objectives due to low coordination and strict state standards

The topic will continue next year since the working group was lacking strong coordination and coaching. The activity was linked to the activity with MinEdu on general education

Yes, curriculum was developed and introduced to the teachers

Process:

In 2008, the function of monitoring and observation was handed over to the methodological center in Naryn. Their reports show that not all schools in Naryn follow the original scheme, e.g. practical lessons, apprenticeship, project work. Due to lacking finances; the state still does not cover all needed costs and asks schools to find own resources. Another problem is the staff fluctuation in the school, which negatively influences on the continuity of the system. Staff training and upgrading is done very rarely and with limited topics according to state regulations. The practical orientation of the curriculum is becoming more and more a report formality i.e. "the teachers and schools pretend that practical lessons are taking place, but these are limited to lecturing and sitting in classrooms". So far, neither the state nor schools themselves did invest anything in procurement of goods and equipment for schools. Like most of the schools in the country Naryn schools hope to be included in the forthcoming ADB project and thus to improve their infrastructure.

Starting from 2007 the project uses the approach to deal and cooperate with the schools in Naryn through the regional methodological center. It matches to the project vision of handing over the project assets to the state partners like SAVET, methodological centers and schools. In addition, such approach helps to increase the responsibility of the partners for achieving the results. The project was supporting the center in conducting visits and meetings at schools' level as well as backstopping them when having meetings with MinEdu. Unfortunately, the set objectives could not be reached, due to strict regulations and impossibility to make decisions at lower level, but also due to low coordination efforts of the methodological centers. Therefore, in 2009 the project will make once more a last attempt together with the partners to approach the MinEdu for the approval of the curriculum.

Having agreed on the curriculum and common plans with the Kirshelk Technicum, the working group did not follow the action plans. Unfortunately, due to high workload in the other oblasts, the project could not provide enough support and coordination input to the working group. Since the Kirshelk Technicum is managed under the MinEdu, the proposed training program was provided to the same department, which was responsible for approving the profession-oriented general education subjects. As with the introduction of profession-oriented general education, attempts to get the approval for the training program for Kirshelk Technicum were not successful. Nevertheless, the project will try once more to negotiate with the MinEdu and to facilitate strongly the process of recognition.

The introduction activities to the new curriculum took place already in 2007. However, as no agreement could be found, the curriculum is not being used. As soon as things will move the project together with the members of the working group (incl. methodological centers) will organize introduction and updating sessions for teachers and masters in the schools.

3.1.2. School performance

Refers to the expected result 1.2 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

Minimum 36 TQM days.

Recommendations of NGO team:

Three funds are liquid at end of year and function according to action plan/ proposals/ budget:

Participants are satisfied with training quality:

Minimum three trainers receive certificate and nine trainers successfully use new skills in SFS:

Results

Two monitoring teams had conducted three monitoring visits for 42 monitoring days.

Recommendations for improvement were done and written reports of monitoring teams is available

The contracts were developed and signed; six grants were transferred by AVEP to SFS account.

On the basis of winter and summer trainings the SFS were able to develop own budgets and operational plans

One monitoring visit on livestock and one monitoring visit on potato were done

The activity was very much linked with ZOKI plans in YK region, but the ZOKI did not establish ToT due to own operational reasons. The activity will be taken up in 2009

Process

The teaching quality monitoring helps the project as well the schools to define demands and expectations of teaching staff in upgrading and coaching. The results of the monitoring are used to design the training programs, with trainers trying to address and cover the expectations of the teachers. The results of the monitoring are shared with all partners. All teachers are invited to participate in the training programs. The project has contracted two monitoring teams, which used to work before with the project in Naryn, for nine monitoring visits to the schools. Results show a differing picture for each school, which can be described by different context, management and availability of resources. Besides the difficulties with teaching itself, the schools face problems with education management e.g. scheduling, human resources and planning.

Based on the successful results of the students' field schools in past years where the project was facilitating and coaching local partners, in 2008 three SFSs (Atbashy, Ottuk and Kochkor) could register themselves with the state authorities as legal entity and become formal organizations with the status of public unions. The registration and formalization are a step to become more sustainable. The project had introduced matching-grant scheme for the partners and the partners were asked to provide their shares to the funds. Unfortunately, only two SFSs (Atbashy and Ottuk) could collect input from their members and yield from last year, and continue to work. The Kochkor SFS could not collect enough funds to start despite of promising start. The rest SFS groups have received thematic support and training from the project e.g. financial management, computer skills, agronomy and etc. All inputs from the project were done through the project's regular training program. Based on their business and strategic plans as well as on their own contributions in kind, the unions were provided with small matching grants. After reviewing and approval of the requests, the project provided them with six grants in amount of 358,000 soms in total.

The project staff responsible for training and monitoring stayed in touch with the SFS groups throughout the year. The two monitoring visits show satisfaction of the participants with the training quality and the

implementation of the plans. All in all the SFSs have conducted 44 training sessions with the participation of 50 students. The SFS groups achieved a good harvest and increased their funds, which will be enough for implementing the SFSs in future without financial support from the project. Nevertheless, at the same time the SFS groups try to raise additional funds.

It was planned to implement the SFS concept also in YK and Chui region in close collaboration with the ZOKI, but due to internal operational reasons in ZOKI, this activity is postponed to 2009.

3.1.3. Practical orientation of education

*Refers to expected result 1.3 in the YPO: **Practical lessons, project work and apprenticeship practice are conducted at the minimal required level***

Indicator

Objectives in the SA reached:

OMC takes the lead in AS monitoring in Naryn:

No defaulters in pay back of interests and principle and minimum 80 % of farmers repay in time:

SC have improved capacity of revolving funds' members and staff to fulfil their functions:

NGOs are able to run their funds on their own:

65% of graduates are visited during the tracer study. Results are fed back into VES:

Credit line is successfully implemented:

Minimum one out of six schools receive performance-based support according to proposals:

Results

Only partly reached due to high workload and poor time management by the collaborators.

The project will develop time-peak management system to allocate slots for holidays and training.

Mandate with OMC on apprenticeship monitoring in Naryn was agreed and contract is available.

Two times monitoring visits were done in six schools.

Two written reports with recommendations are available.

Participation in two assembly meetings and in six steering council meetings.

100% of farmers fully repaid first credits and the fund was increased

Training needs were identified and two trainings on livestock and two trainings on agronomy were provided to farmers and SC members. Total of 60 farmers were trained

Six visits were done to revolving funds, coaching on accounting

70% experimental class graduates were visited in Kochkor and in Ottuk.

Three meetings with the credit institution

In two schools two projects each were approved

Process

With the growth of the project and the expansion of its activities, there is more necessity to make the project staff be able to coach partners and manage small projects related to their working areas. Based on the staff appraisal done in the beginning of 2008 professional objectives were developed. Those objectives included topics to be reached within the year through attending trainings and personal work. Unfortunately due to high workload and weak time management from staff and management side only some objectives could be reached. Therefore, the project management will develop a "time-peak management system" which will allow allocating priorities and giving more opportunities for the staff to take part in learning and training events. The idea is to define together high peak times in the project implementation and based on it to allocate or fix professional development activities in less busy times.

One of the project innovations is the apprenticeship system, which remains crucial for farmers' quality education. Therefore, the project still pays attention to this part of the education. As last year, the project involved more the regional methodological center for monitoring visits to the schools. This is aiming at an increased participation and involvement of the OMC in the schools' life. This year the project signed contracts with the OMC for monitoring and backstopping schools in implementing the apprenticeship system. In total six vocational schools of Naryn have been visited two times each and based on the visits reports were provided with recommendations. The results of the monitoring show that the apprenticeship system is kept by the schools formally, but does not fully fulfil all requirements e.g. not all students are sent to a farm, irregular visits of coaches, poor filling in of diaries, etc. The apprenticeship system was more or less implemented at the level of the previous years only in two schools (Atbashy and Aktalaa). These schools are still supported under the Misereor co-financing grant and thus coach farmers were supported in developing their own revolving funds. This creates ownership and makes farmer participating more actively in the education processes.

Table 1: Number of coach-farmers and students involved in the Apprenticeship system, Naryn oblast

#	School	Coach-farmers	Students	Experience exchange days held by 31.12.08.	No. of farmers participated in the EED
1	Ottuk	7	27	14	12
2	Kochkor	56	56	20	31
3	Aktalaa	14	15	15	15
4	Atbashy	33	50	12	18
5	Kulanak	14	24	13	10
Total		124	172	74	86

In 2007, the project facilitated the setting up of two revolving funds for coach farmers, who are involved in the apprenticeship system. The funds were established in two schools, Atbashy and Aktalaa, supported by Misereor and provided mini-credits to coach farmers. The credits have to be used for the improvement of their own farm in order to provide practical education. During the reporting period, two annual assemblies and six meetings of steering councils took place. The agenda was reports, approval of budgets and plans, approval of credits and operational issues. Additionally to the existing capital, the project provided grants in an amount of 4,000 EURO for both funds in 2008. The annual reports of the funds state that there are no defaulters and all payments are done according to schedules. So far, the revolving funds have 57 members, who are actively cooperating with the schools as well. Misereor will continue financing the schools for another half-year and then finalise this project.

Beside the members of the revolving funds, the responsible staff of the project make regular visits to the funds in order to support the managers and the members of the steering councils. The visits aim at supporting and coaching on different topics like operational management, financial management, planning, etc. Since the funds are operational as full legal entities there are quite a number of requirements from the state side. One of the challenges for the managers is the financial management and computer skills, as the managers are schools' coaches and did not have competencies for fulfilling such job before. That is why one of the first inputs was training and inputs on computer literacy, accounting and legislation. The project supported the funds to get small finance software, which helped them in their operational life. Such support will be continued also in future; as compared to the beginning the revolving funds made quite a big jump and have potential to become professional organisations.

In order to build capacity and develop ownership among the members the project has organized several trainings for the members. Since most of the coach-farmers are dealing with livestock and crops it was demanded to have training on those topics. In total 60 farmers took part in four trainings on livestock and crops organized by the project. The trainers were resource specialists from RAS and other national training institutions.

The planned tracer study has been conducted in December 2008 and will be processed and analyzed at the beginning of 2009.

As in the past, the cooperation with the local credit company “Kompanion” in regions where the project is working is stable and successful. The role of the project as before is to maintain a communication between schools and “Kompanion” and so far there were no complains from the partners’ side. In order to improve the collaboration and avoid potential risks in crediting, the project organized and facilitated three meetings with the participation of partner schools, training funds and “Kompanion”. During such sessions, the partners could provide a feedback to each other and agree on common action plans and principles. Such meetings are useful to maintain the partnership and develop trust, and need to be continued on a regular basis.

Despite big efforts of the project and its partners to maintain the quality at an appropriate level not all schools could meet the project’s requirements in order to receive an investment support from the project. Small investments for the improvement of the schools’ infrastructure and teaching were thus provided to only two schools, Aktalaa and Atbashy. In total four projects were approved and investments were realised.

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

4-5 schools have locally owned financing mechanism

The project is piloting a new local ownership approach in Talas region through an existing NGO (supporting two partner schools). In total now 7 schools have locally owned financing mechanisms.

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

Presentation for schools in Talas is done:

Applications of schools and visits:

Fulfilling conditionality and minimum two schools are selected:

Selected schools understand the new system:

Results

Yes, six schools were present

Four schools applied and were visited

Two schools fulfilled conditions

Active inception seminars and workshops were conducted for them together with the local NGO

Process

Thanks to additional financing from LED and gained experience of the project with the new model of education, the project has decided to expand its own activity to the Talas region. The Talas region is comparatively small in size and bordering Kazakhstan, but economically active and has a developed agriculture. In the region, there are six vocational schools, out of them one is in Talas town itself. All six vocational schools were invited to the presentation on the project and its concept of local training governance. Since the project is working for some time in Kyrgyzstan, the schools were familiar with the project and had an overview of its activities. Nevertheless, the project made a quite deep presentation on its requirements, selection procedures and other details. The start of the project in the Talas region was positively received by the schools which showed a great interest to collaborate and to introduce the new system of education.

Based on the presentation the schools were asked to apply and to provide their application forms to the project. Only four schools applied due to the following reasons: one school was located in Talas town and did not meet the requirements (non-agricultural profile), one refused to apply arguing that if they would apply for Helvetas then they cannot apply to ADB project. After receiving the applications, the team of the pro-

ject visited the schools to confirm whether they meet the requirements which remain the same as in previous years and are applied to all schools that joined so far the project: professional management, competence of teaching staff, size of school, location and distance to clients, state of infrastructure, financial prospect, potential for attraction of local sponsors, motivation and interest in curriculum development and new financing approaches. Out of four schools, only two schools fulfilled the conditions.

After the selection and confirmation of their collaboration with the project, together with the selected NGO, the project provided a number of introduction events to the schools, e.g. on the concept of local training governance and education scheme, curriculum, training concept, investment concept, etc. The information and input provided to the schools was perceived with great interest and understood. In each school small working groups were formed, which were later on responsible for the implementation of the project.

3.2.2. Local training funds

Refers to expected result 2.2 in the YPO: KOJO functions are mandated successfully to existing NGO (ex: Schools have successfully initiated the establishment of local training funds)

Indicators

Concept developed and applicable

Minimum 10 NGOs have been visited \ their potential evaluated

Applying NGOs meet requirements

Responsibilities of parties are clear

Results

The concept describing the new approach of the project working in local training governance has been developed and tested while selecting and working with existing NGO

Advertisement in national and local mass media has been announced and six NGO showed interest and applied

One NGO, Union of Talas Farmers, fully met the requirements for the selection

General agreement on collaboration was signed and the concept is clear to the NGO

Process

Since 2006, the project has gained a lot of experience with trying out the local ownership model through creating a new organisation. However, as creating new institutions is not necessarily the most efficient approach, it was decided that working with and empowering an existing NGO, which is already active in social mobilization and well present in rural areas so far, would be more sustainable. Therefore, the concept of local training governance was revised with the aim to base the project's interventions on local initiatives and to focus on institutional building and development of the present local NGOs. In addition, the new approach shall allow the project to optimize its own resources and to concentrate more on existing training funds and NGO. Basically we are talking here more about outsourcing the function of fundraising and education monitoring which will also help the concerned NGO to improve its skills and competencies. The initial concept describes the rationale, the steps for implementation and the procedures of collaboration and backstopping, monitoring and financing. The concept was piloted in the Talas region.

When the concept was ready, the project made a wide announcement in local and national mass media looking for existing NGOs working in the Talas region and having experience of community facilitation as well as dealing with training and education. Six local NGOs applied and showed their interest of collaboration. Profiles of all applicants were different and all of them were active in different fields of the society: adult training, civil rights, elections, recycling, promotion of traditions and customs, etc. The project team consisting of the manager, the technical advisor and the two community facilitators spent one week visiting the applicants and making interviews to define whether the requirements are met and to make the right selection. Based on intensive talks, visits and analysis, one NGO, the Farmers' Union of Talas, was selected as the local partner to work on community facilitation and training governance.

The selected partner is one of the oldest NGO in the Talas region and acts as a public union of Talas farmers with 2500 members. Its mission is to represent the interests and rights of the Talas farmers and to pro-

mote agricultural production via providing extension services, training and micro crediting. The NGO is very well known not only in the region, but also nation wide as an active member of the national association of NGOs and within other programs. The Union has its own annual conference, board consisting of different committees responsible for each section of activities and executive body for operational issues and business. Since the start up of the collaboration was at the beginning of the year, the project could integrate the presentation of the concept of local training governance during the union's annual conference of farmers. The conference expressed its agreement to work with the new project and approved to establish a separate steering committee, which will be responsible for the overall management and steering. As the main donor, Helvetas is a member of this committee. After that, the project could conclude the signing of the agreement on collaboration and on the mandates to the union. The agreement describes the general principles of collaboration, the tasks of the union and also the roles of each party. The Union will provide its services to two selected schools in Talas.

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

Assembly approves report of KOJO:

SC is satisfied with work of KOJO and gives feedback:

Experience exchange between executive directors:

Training needs addressed:

KOJO reaches minimum financing agreement of 14%/20%/33%

Local stakeholders are aware about functions of KOJO and show readiness to contribute:

Contracts for training delivery between KOJO & school are implemented:

Process

In order to promote schools and KOJOs activities it was agreed to combine the demonstration days with the assemblies in autumn before the education year. In the morning all invited people could attend the assembly and after that participated in the demonstration days, where students presented their skills and the course. This combination was justified with the optimization of costs since KOJOs are responsible for conducting both events. However, combined demonstration days and assemblies have taken place only in Yssykkol and Chui, while in Talas no demonstration day was yet conducted as the schools just started the courses this year. The participants approved the reports, plans and decisions of the KOJOs and conducted re-elections to the steering councils of KOJOs. Most of the members of the SCs were re-elected again and

Results

Six assemblies took place and approved reports. This year assemblies were combined with the conducting of demonstration days

The SCs are regularly conducting own meetings. In total 26 meetings were conducted where 82 different topics were discussed and decisions were made

Executive directors reduced the number of meetings in order to make them more efficient. Therefore there are only quarterly meetings, in total six regular meetings were conducted within the year

The project launched intensive qualification training program for executive directors and experience exchange programs, but based on the results it was decided to introduce a moratorium for training

The project makes grant agreement for each money transfer according to co-financing scheme

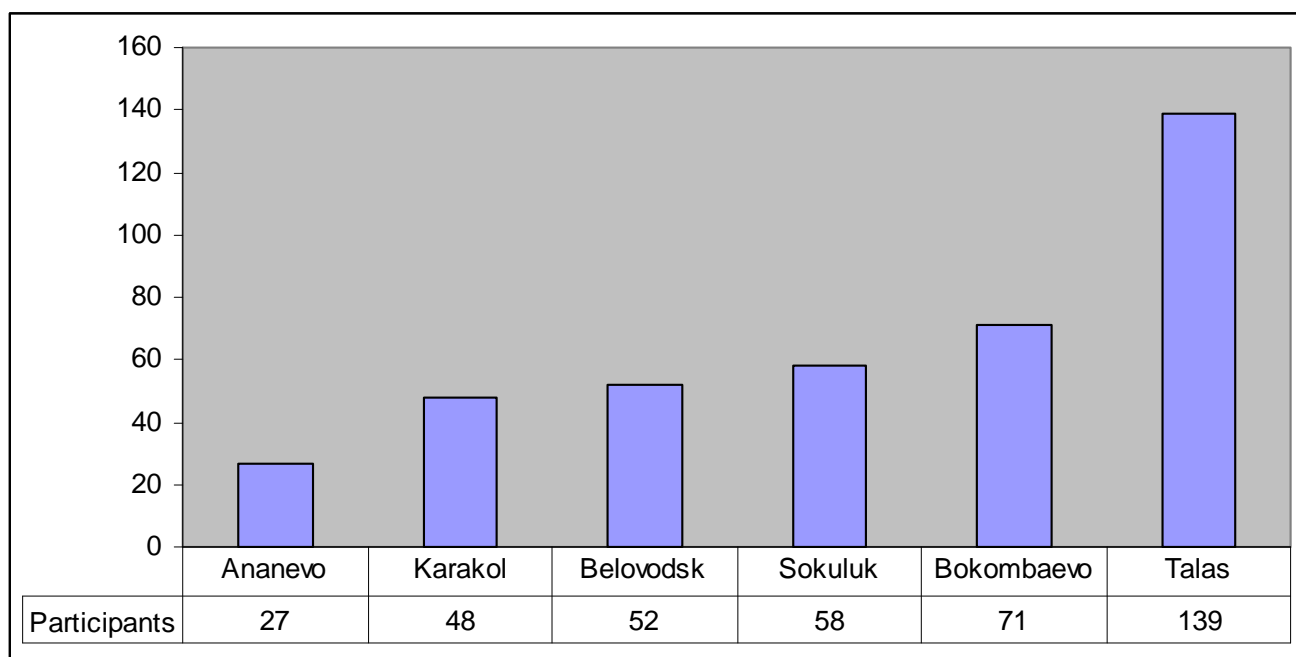
KOJOs did number of public relation campaigns and regular activities are in process

Five new contracts for the course 2008/10 were signed and under implementation

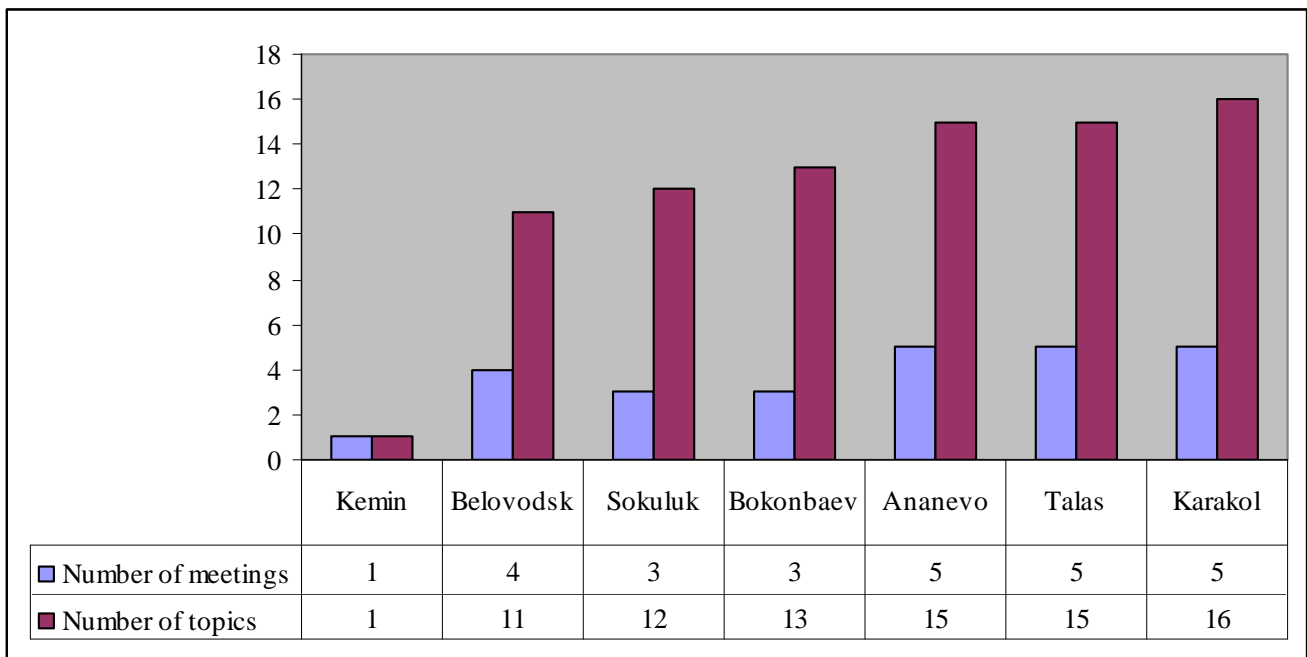
could continue to work. Still the project and KOJOs should reflect on the issue of active mobilisation of the local community since the assemblies are not widely representing local community interested in farming education. Strong community participation is vital for the success of the ownership approach. Therefore, series of sessions on development of ideas and their implementation will be conducted in 2009 together with KOJOs and their SCs. The project will facilitate the process and will coach the KOJOs in implementing the action plans.

The steering councils of KOJOs remain one of the key partners of the project. It is still a challenge for all stakeholders to develop steering councils as real tool and mechanism for organizational development and backstopping since most of the present steering councils do not show activeness and involvement in activities of the KOJOs. This issue is linked to the new topic “public management” among the community and needs to be promoted further. Capacity building and strengthening of SCs members are other activities of the project to work on more deeply in 2009. So far the project has initiated a training program for SCs members where participants could get acquainted in depth with their functions and roles, management tools, PR and communication, etc. The participants expressed their interest to continue the program and the project will continue with their input. During the reporting period the SCs conducted 26 meetings in total where 82 different topics were discussed and approved. Usually the meetings were on a quarterly basis. The topics were mostly related to operational issues of the KOJOs like budgeting, plans, coordination of various events and activities, support in fundraising, etc.

Diagram 1: Number of participants in assemblies of KOJOs in 2008



For the sake of a better information and experience exchange, the executive directors conducted their regular quarterly meetings where they discuss their activities, share views and opinions, and coordinate common activities. In previous years, it was mainly the project, which was facilitating and initiating such meetings. This year, the directors themselves became more active and took leadership in organizing and setting the agenda. Still the project staff helps and coaches them in their sessions. During the reporting period the KOJOs came together six times and dealt with 24 different topics and issues such as information campaigns, preparation for assemblies and demonstration days, budgeting and reporting, PR and communication, etc. It is expected that the executive directors will become more operational and independent, and the need to meet often will be less important. Therefore, the executive directors will conduct mainly their regional meetings and not at national level. This scheme will start to work in 2009 and will allow the executive directors to concentrate in future more on their operational activities.

Diagram 2: Number of meetings held and topics discussed by SC of KOJOs in 2008

Paying high attention to capacity building of the executive directors and considering them as vital, the project implemented a quite intensive training program for executive directors. Based on the previous experience with the School Managers' Qualification Programme (SMQP) implemented for the schools and KOJOs directors, the project has adapted the existing management-training program based on a thorough needs assessment and reflection. Within the program the participants could learn more on basics of management, communication, fundraising and PR, conflict management, working with clients, etc. The participants appreciated the content as well as the quality of the programme. However, the programme was too long and distracted executive directors quite a lot from their duties. It also created complaints among partners with whom KOJOs were working actively. Therefore, the project introduced a moratorium for further training of the executive directors for a certain period in order to intensify the activities of the executive directors more on the operational level. Probably the project will reconsider this approach in 2009 and will address the training needs more through specific sessions.

The improvement of fundraising and increasing the portfolio of funds stay important for all KOJOs. The project still keeps the co-financing scheme for all its partners and the scheme proved to be workable so far. Compared to last years some KOJOs could attract funds from international organizations and companies, but less at local level (e.g. 7'000 USD from OSCE to two KOJOs in Yssykkol, 10'000 USD from international mining company to Talas farmers' union). The skills of the KOJOs in developing proposals improved and they became more active in approaching various institutions. Unfortunately, not all KOJOs could secure enough funds to cover the costs related to the financing of student groups and because of this reason, new groups for 2008-2010 did not start in Anan'ev and Karakol. The financial relations between the project and KOJOs stay the same and follow the same rules: based on the bank statements of the KOJO the project transfers its own share. In 2008 the project provided funds for about 2'000'000 soms. Moreover, the overhead system, limiting the KOJO's own operational expenses, which was introduced in 2007 proved to be an efficient tool for managing and increasing cost efficiency.

The main activities of the KOJOs are promotion campaigns for fundraising, recognition of the local training governance mechanism and attracting new students. This year the KOJOs could try out new things for the promotion of the course like organizing an artistic performance and visits to resorts hotels during the summer attracting popular artists. This effort was appreciated, but due to low coordination and weak planning the event did not reach its goal nor brought much income. The most successful KOJO was Talas since

they could attract three groups of students for two schools. Others KOJOs could attract only one group each, except Karakol and Anan'evo as it was mentioned above. The main problem remains the low level of leadership and coordination skills of the KOJOs and their weak relations with the schools. We cannot ignore the role of the schools in their community and their supporting potential for KOJOs. Thus, only six groups could start the education in 2008 namely one in Bokonbaevo (one contract), one in Sokuluk (one contract), one in Belovodsk (one contract) and three in Talas (two contracts).

Table 2: Number of students enrolled, total (out of it women)

#	School	2006 (1 st batch)	2007 (2 nd batch)	2008 (3 rd batch)
1	Anan'evo, Yssykkol (VS #82)	12 (6)	20 (10)	
2	Bokonbaevo, Yssykkol (VS #81)	12 (4)	15 (4)	17 (3)
3	Karakol, Yssykkol (VS #2)	24 (0)	16 (0)	
4	Kemin, Chui (VS #19)	12 (4)		
5	Sokuluk, Chui (VS #43)		18 (6)	20 (7)
6	Belovodsk, Chui (VS #28)		11 (0)	16 (0)
7	Booterek, Talas (VS #41)			15 (3)
8	Kokoi, Talas (VS #6)			41 (7)
Total		60 (14)	80 (20)	109 (20)

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

Minimum twelve monitoring days:

Teachers are satisfied with quality of training:

SMQP is according to expectations of interested participants:

Demonstration days \ assemblies took place in each school:

70% of the farmers meet requirements for the apprenticeship and catalogue is accessible for students:

Farmers and students successfully implement the apprenticeship and 80% of students are actively working on their apprenticeship farm:

Schools and KOJO are confident in conducting the assessments:

Results

Monitoring visits in February and July, 20 days

Training needs assessment is done during the monitoring visits

Two training programs were developed for summer and winter;

31 trainers were contracted, 127 training were conducted and 756 participants attended the training programs

Based on the experience from the last year the project has adapted the program for needs of KOJOs executive directors but no directors/ vices from schools participated

Eight schools have conducted demo days with participation of from 27 people up to 71 people

Five training on the apprenticeship for farmers and students with involvement of five coaches in January for two days each, more then 70% of farmers met requirements

Two times monitoring visits for each school in April and September (14 days).

80% of students are working on their apprenticeship farm

Two regional training on assessment for 1st semester for schools and KOJO

Maximum 80% of students pass assessment and initial level of students is assessed:

80% of school investment proposals do not need revision and schools used finances efficiently:

In total, 100% of students passed the exams.

The assessment for 1st cycle of modules was conducted only in three schools.

The assessment for 2nd cycle of modules was conducted only in one school

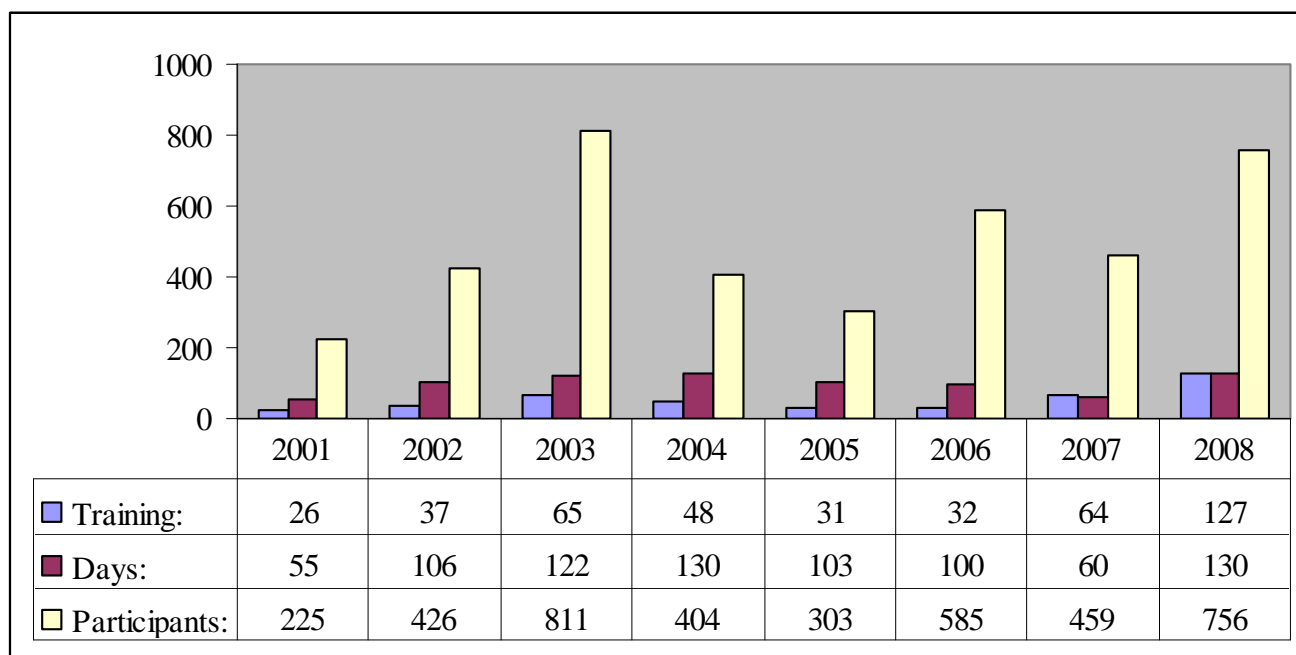
Schools apply for investment proposals often with big delays and the quality of proposals is low.

Process

As in the past, the project was responsible for monitoring the teaching quality in schools. The monitoring team remained the same as in previous years and performed up to the expectations of the project. The executive directors were acting as non-formal members of the monitoring team and joined the group in order to get an overview and to improve their monitoring skill. During the reporting period two times monitoring visits were conducted to the schools for 20 days in total. The results show some progress in teaching, but it is quite a big challenge for the schools to maintain the quality since the staff fluctuation in the schools remains high. The results of the monitoring have been used to develop the teachers' training program and to fine-tune the existing training modules. The project trainee from Switzerland used the results of the monitoring for developing the training on methodology for teachers.

One of the main activities for the development of schools is the training program for teachers whose capacity building is vital for implementing innovations and promoting the course. Therefore, the project continues to offer to the schools an ad-hoc training program including methodology and subject matter topics, and to coach them through various workshops and seminars on the spot. The project gave a quite intensive input in Talas for two new schools in order to prepare them for the new education year. In total 756 teachers of Chui, Yssykkol, Naryn and Talas regions have attended 127 trainings. For the two training programs 31 trainers have been selected and contracted.

Diagram 3: Number of training subjects/ participants/ training-days (Naryn, Yssykkol, Chui and Talas)

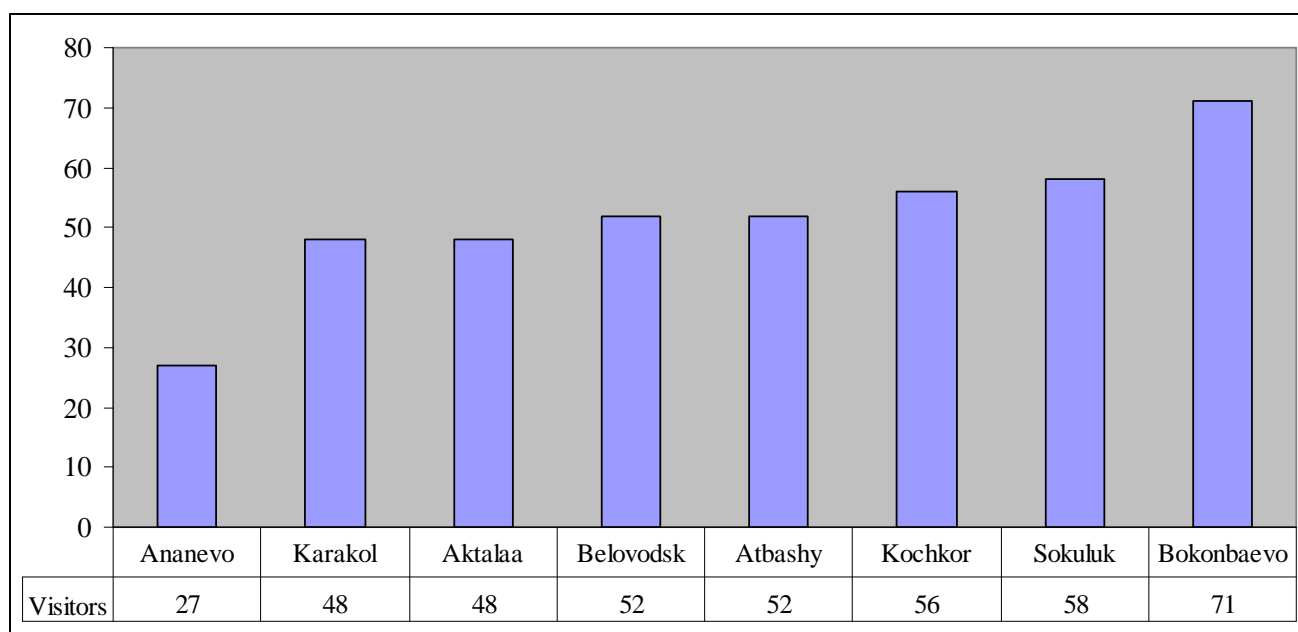


Based on the experience from the last years with implementing SMQP the project has offered such training program mainly for the KOJO executive directors. The reason is that the schools did not show any interest to participate also in 2008. Therefore, the management qualification program was adapted to the needs and

situations of the KOJOs. The training program was quite intensive and included various topics used in the work of the KOJOs: conflict management, communication and PR, fundraising and lobbying, strategic and operational management, planning, etc. The program combined theoretical and practical parts and each participant was dealing with his/her own project work like YPO development, mission and strategy formulation and analysis. All executive directors have participated in the training and were committed to learn. Despite various topics and their usefulness, the program distracted the KOJOs from their daily work a lot and created complains among the stakeholders. The project and executive directors realized that and agreed that it is needed to introduce a moratorium for training and other events, which might interfere with the work of the KOJOs. Probably in future, the program will be developed further and adapted to actual situations in the KOJOs when the KOJOs will be able to invest time for their qualification improvement.

In order to optimize the costs and to increase the attractiveness of the assemblies the project partners have decided to combine assemblies and demonstration days. Such combination would help to publicly present the advantages of the course and to increase the participation of the community in the training governance. The demonstration days were included in the agendas of the assemblies and the KOJOs members and visitors could participate later on in the event. So far, this is the second time when schools conduct demonstration days and they could gain some experience in it. The project has organized a training once more for those who were responsible for the demonstration days and provided small budgets for each school to cover the expenses related to the event. Despite the contributions from the project side and the efforts of the working groups the demonstration days as well the assemblies could not attract many people as it was expected. The reasons were the low coordination between the schools and the KOJOs, the schools did not pay attention to the preparation and did not consider it as one of the promotion tools. Furthermore, October is still high season for rural people who are still quite busy.

Diagram 4: Number of visitors to demonstration days



The apprenticeship system stays important for the schools in maintaining a practical education and linking the curriculum with the real farmers' life. As before, the project has made inputs in terms of training and backstopping of schools' coaches in implementing the apprenticeship program. The project specialists conducted an introduction training for all coaches on the system and its implementation details, and a separate training for students and coach farmers in each of the five schools which ran the apprenticeship in 2008. During the training students and farmers received the needed information and materials like diaries, contracts and schedules of experience exchange days among farmers and students. The apprenticeship system was new for the schools of West Chui and the project provided more support and attention to these new schools. In the case of the Naryn schools, the system is very well known and a big support was not required

for them. From the schools' side the catalogue of coach farmers has been updated and new farmers were included, who met the requirements. Not all students went to other farms, but preferred to stay on their own farm and received extension support from RAS. As a part of the apprenticeship the students also attended some practical lessons in schools. In order to provide support and define situations on the farms two monitoring sessions have been organized in April and September for 14 days in total and all KOJOs directors were part of the monitoring teams. The results showed that 80% of the students are regularly working on their apprenticeship farms. Unfortunately, not all schools coaches were providing support to their students and visiting them. E.g., a coach of the Karakol school has been providing reports on visits, but in fact the visits did not take place. The Karakol KOJO claimed back the money for the transport costs and terminated the contract with the coach.

Table 3: Number of coach-farmers and students involved in the Apprenticeship system

#	School	Coach-farmers	Students	Experience exchange days held by 31.12.08.	No. of farmers participated in the EED
1	Ottuk	7	27	14	12
2	Kochkor	56	56	20	31
3	Aktalaa	14	15	15	15
4	Atbashy	33	50	12	18
5	Kulanak	14	24	13	10
6	Karakol	5	16	6	5
7	Bokonbaevo	6	15	7	10
8	Anan'evo	4	20	11	4
9	Belovodsk	7	11	10	14
10	Jangyjer	4	18	7	8
Total		150	252	115	127

As in the past, the project has conducted two regional training on assessment of students' knowledge and skills: one for the Yssykkol schools and one for the Chui schools. The training was a combination of input and reflection on the experience made since all schools have gained some experience in assessment. A new topic for the schools was the assessment of modules since three schools have started to offer modules. Based on the assessment sessions 100% of the students passed and an assessment for the 1st cycle of modules was conducted in all three schools and an assessment for the 2nd cycle was conducted only in one school. The reasons were the low number of students and the weak promotion of modules among the students.

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

Curricula is adapted to the needs of students & teachers:

Students are satisfied with the practical orientation of the curricula:

A modular system adapted to the Kyrgyz VET system:

Results

All stakeholders took part in the PCD, competence profile was developed together with the new schools

The 1st sem. curricula for existing partner schools was revised and 1st sem. curricula for the new schools was developed and teachers were trained

Curricula for the 2nd semester was developed and implemented by schools; monitoring shows satisfaction

Participatory revision of the modular system together with students, schools, farmers, RMC and donors

Graduates \ students are satisfied with revised module content and set of modules is available:

Existing contents of modules were revised with the participation of stakeholders and students

Credit agency is ready to provide credits and students have access to credits:

Contracts with Kompanion for new schools were signed and credits were released to 56 students for 866000 soms

SFS livestock is integrated to modular system and trainers are available:

Due to non-funding of the key partner ZOKI, the activity did not take place

Process

With the expansion to the Talas region, the project conducted the same process of curriculum development as for the other schools and regions before. The new schools through their working groups could get acquainted with the existing competence profile and develop adaptations and suggestions. After the introduction to the competence profile idea and to the further steps of curriculum development, the schools had several sessions on curriculum development and adaptation to their needs. Both schools showed their interest and commitment to the process development and contributed a lot to the final draft version of the curriculum, which was done in Kyrgyz language. The final version will only be developed once the schools have experimented the curriculum and got some experience in using it. All teachers of the new schools passed an introductory training for applying the curriculum. Additional new teaching materials were published to support the teaching. The schools of western Chui had one-year experience of working with the curriculum developed last year and it proved to be adequate to the local needs. Based on this experience they could propose their amendments and changes to the existing curriculum and received the final version of their curriculum. Another participatory session facilitated by the project was the revision and adaptation of the 2nd semester and project work curriculum for the western Chui schools. Mainly coaches and teachers responsible for project carried out this work, and coaches and some teachers from the new schools could participate and contribute to it. In fact, there were not so big changes since all stakeholders appreciated the content and quality.

After having one year of challenges with implementing the modular system, the project together with its partners reflected on the experiences and lessons learnt. This was important in terms of fine-tuning the existing modular system and manual, and for the handing over to the state partner at a later stage. The modular system and manual were very much appreciated by local partners and stakeholders for its simplicity and easiness to use. During the process of the development, 24 modules on different topics were developed and used by the schools. Despite the big support from the project side through a training specialist and from two local consultants, only two schools (Kemin and Anan'evo) could complete two cycles of the system and the rest of the schools have passed only through the first cycle. The reasons were the low number of students and the weak promotion of the modules. Not all schools could well enough present how the system works, elaborate schedules, etc. Nevertheless, the revision of the modular system and manual was quite active and the experience helped a lot to improve the system. As the schools from western Chui participated in the modules development process together with the old schools, they could start the implementation in autumn 2008 with less difficulties than it was the case in the old schools. The revision session took place in autumn under the wide participation of the local partners and authorities from the SAVET, where everybody shared his/her own experience and made suggestions for improvement and better use. As a result, the State Agency for VET approved the manual for further use and promised to make recommendations for others to apply. One of the challenges for the project remains the improvement of the skills of teachers in conducting modules and the further strengthening of the content. Therefore, the project will continue to work on upgrading the knowledge of the teachers and on optimizing the process of introduction of the course in new schools like in the Talas region.

The previous experience of collaboration with the local credit company Kompanion proved to be a successful and reliable partnership. In total 56 students were provided with credits in amount of 866'000 soms

(~20'000 USD) in total. The project facilitated two general meetings between schools and Kompanion where each party could openly discuss and reflect on the common experience. Based on the discussion an action plan was developed which was highlighting the commitment of each party to maintain good partnership. Furthermore, Kompanion proposed to raise the maximum amount of business credit up to 20'000 soms per student and to increase the term of education credits up to 16 months. So far, there were not any defaulters or serious problems at the schools' level. Thanks to the fruitful collaboration, Kompanion agreed to extend the general Memorandum and to include the new schools of the Talas region. Kompanion will provide two types of credits, like in other schools: business and education credits. The representatives of Kompanion conducted presentations for the Talas schools and explained the conditions of crediting. The project will continue to organize such meetings and facilitate them further as it is a good opportunity for a better understanding and for the improvement of the collaboration.

Initially, the project planned to develop students' field schools in the Yssykkol and Chui regions as it was in Naryn and to integrate them into the modular system of the schools. The idea was to collaborate closely with another Swiss-supported organization ATC (now ZOKI) for the training of trainers. Since the project was very much relying on ZOKI, no preparations were started on the project side before ZOKI would provide such trainings. However, due to the delays in funding through the World Bank, ZOKI itself could not launch the planned activities in 2008. The project will take up this issue again in 2009 and implement the idea.

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:

Helvetas is a member of SC of ADB project in VET and is short listed for the ADB tender

3.3.1. Communication of A-STAR position and vision

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

Indicator

Network of donors is extended:

Results

The round table is recognized by major donors which take over an increasingly active role

Position paper is addressed to the government:

The roundtable conducted and analysed an employers' survey which shall be presented to the government

Work of Helvetas and GTZ in VET is co-ordinated:

A-STAR will in 2009 improve the assessment system through a collaboration with the GTZ-supported Chamber of Commerce

Position of A-STAR is known within ADB project:

Successful, Helvetas is a member of the SC of the ADB project and was short listed for the ADB tender

Public is informed about changes in VET:

Regular publication of "Kurak" and articles of the schools in local and national mass media; website

Environment monitoring:

Regularly done through meetings, news and laws

SC approves all documents:

Only one SC meeting in January

Process

The project plays a very active role in organizing and facilitating the round table of projects working in the VET sector. Participants appreciate the role of the project and consider it as a driving force. During the reporting period four round tables were organized with different topics e.g. information updating, preparation for employers' survey and conference of employer, etc. Most of the activities were mainly about conducting employers' survey and conference, which focused on knowing more about the positions of employers and their expectations towards the VET system. Each member has received the task to make a survey based on commonly developed template and to process the data. The results of the survey were processed and expressed in a general report on the survey with explanations. The next step was to organize a conference of employers and to present the results of the survey, with the aim to facilitate development of their position in terms of vocational training. However, due to funding problems of the main financier of the conference, the delegation of the EC in Kyrgyzstan, the workshop had to be postponed to 2009.

Several visits to the independent certification centre of the Chamber of Commerce and talks with their representatives led the project to the decision to create a new partnership. The collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce shall lead in 2009 to a complete revision of the current assessment system by involving more the employers in order to make assessments more transparent and objective. This work has been piloted with the Chamber of Commerce for other professions by GTZ. By working with the same local partner, A-STAR aims at strengthening the new role of this independent non-governmental organisation.

Helvetas became a member without voting right of the steering council of ADB project in VET in the beginning of the year. The steering council came together only twice during the year and discussed topics related to the launching of the project, to the reports of the PIU and SAVET, and their plans. Despite the official start of the project in February 2008, the tendering process is not yet complete. After the official announcement for tender, Helvetas applied for the competition and based on pre-selection was included to the shortlist. The results of the selection were supposed to be known already in 2008, but due to organizational reasons the negotiations were postponed to spring 2009.

In 2008, the project supported the publication of two newsletters "KOJO" and maintained the web site www.kojo.kg. In addition, a series of articles at local and national levels were published and communicated to the public. For this purpose during the year the project attracted two external PR specialists for running the PR component of the project. Unfortunately the attracted people left again because of better offers and family reasons. By the end of 2008, the project contracted one specialist with fixed contract for carrying out PR activities for the KOJOs and for the project.

The project makes a regular monitoring of its environment through the media, of the changes in the legislation and of the various sector meetings.

During the reporting period the project had only one meeting of its SC instead of two as planned due to high workload of the project and non-ability to produce the half-yearly report. The agenda of the meeting was the reporting for 2007, plans for 2008 and other issues to be shared with the members. At the meeting, the SC approved the plans and reports of the project.

3.3.2. Recognition of the 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:

Partners regularly receive information about project activities:

VET system integrates project innovations:

Results

No mandates, the project prefers to work directly with the respective people

Done through \ by different seminars, meetings, workshops and etc.

Special working group was formed to facilitate the process

Process

Due to structural changes in SAVET and to staff changes, the project decided to work directly with the respective units and staff without mandate system. Such relations aim at simplifying the collaboration and to access to decision-making. So far, the project is only financing the work of the working groups on different topics when needed and there were no serious difficulties from the top level of SAVET.

The project continues inviting and updating the representatives of SAVET and other stakeholders on its activities at national and partners' level. The way of communication is through project events, mails and personal meetings.

In order to lobby with SAVET for the co-financing of protected budget items (salaries, vacation payments, etc) the project initiated the establishment of a special working group on SAVET level, which will analyse in depth the advantages of the new course and develop recommendations for its approval. Two project staff are members of the group and contribute to the process of recognition by the State. The group will finish its work and produce the results in the first quarter of 2009.

4. Conclusions and outlook

Conclusions

- As outlined in the ProDoc, by the end of 2008, A-STAR completely handed over the education scheme for the Farmer/ Women Farmer course to the schools in Naryn and Batken as well as to the SAVET. The prolongation of phase II into 2009 will allow to complete some remaining activities under the Misereor project and to collect more experiences with the new scheme in the Yssykkol, Chui and Talas regions.
- In 2008, the first group of "Farmer Entrepreneurs" graduated in four schools in the Chui and Yssykkol regions. In another 2 schools in Chui oblast, the students successfully completed the 1st semester, passed their apprenticeship period and started into the 3rd and final semester. Furthermore, two more schools in the Talas region started the training of three new groups. Although student numbers reach now the level of about 200, they are still rather low. The partners explain it with the low attraction for the rural people to become farmers. However, this still contradicts with the fact that in Kyrgyzstan the majority of the population lives in rural areas where business opportunities remain generally low and generates its main income from farming. The project continues to stimulate its partners (e.g. through guaranteeing the financing of unlimited group sizes) to attract more students
- Various revisions of the curricula and intensive work on the modular system aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. In 2008, a record number of nearly 130 trainings were offered to the teachers of the partner schools. Furthermore, the schools could apply for small investments for classrooms and workshops.

- As expected, after the smooth start of the new local training governance approach, the KOJO vocational training funds developed differently in each region. Factors for success are the level of collaboration between the vocational school and the KOJO, the skills and competence of the executive director and the steering and supervision of the Steering Council. On the other hand, the KOJOs, which were less successful in 2008, were mainly fighting with fluctuations of executive directors, little leadership and self-initiative, poor accounting and non-transparent use of funds. The new approach of working with existing NGOs, which have already a good level of ownership and experience with fundraising, proves to be an interesting alternative to the difficulties of starting a KOJO as a new organisation.
- While the project seems to have found ways to stimulate ownership with working through existing NGOs, the second major function of the KOJO, to fundraise money to finance the operational costs of the course, becomes, as expected, challenging during the third year of collaboration, when partners are requested to co-finance 33% of the expenses. The main challenge consists in the local fundraising among the community, employers and businesses as they perceive this as a State role and are suspicious about the correct use of funds. The project tried to offset the limited potential for local fundraising with more capacity building in writing project proposals to international donors as well as through intensive negotiations with the government on financing cost items such as the teachers' salaries from the governmental budget.
- The approach chosen for the second phase of the project, starts to show interesting processes of benefiting active and constructive partners (schools and KOJOs) more than passive partners which are also often not ready for change. First of all, the several steps in the selection process ensure that only schools potentially ready to embark into a process of change are included in the project. However, this is not yet a guarantee for achievement of results and 2008 showed that the schools may choose themselves whether they want to step up, continue or even discontinue their collaboration with the project. Thus, so far, four partner schools perform at their best with sufficiently high student numbers and a satisfying level of own co-financing through the KOJO, one school is still trying to find the right arrangements with the project and the KOJO, while another two schools are, due to internal problems and fights, not able to attract sufficient students for the course anymore. Last but not least, one school with its KOJO opted for suspending any further continuation of the new approach for training and co-financing.
- In 2008, the VESD donor round table could be further institutionalised. Although A-STAR continues to be the motor behind the organisation of regular meetings and experience exchanges, most other relevant VESD donors and organisations (such as ADB, EC, ETF, GTZ, UN, UCA, etc.) are actively participating and show a high level of ownership and interest in the continuation of this platform. A-STAR and the Helvetas interventions in the skills sector are well known and respected among the donor community which found its expression in the so-far successful application to the ADB tender.

Outlook

The A-STAR team has decided that the additional year of phase II shall be used for improving the current processes within the partners as well as in the project. Thus, the project will for the first time in the last three years not focus on geographical (or topical) expansion but on fine-tuning the current innovations, on improving the existing curricula and modular system, on strengthening the potential integration of the new course and approaches into the existing VESD system, on motivating the existing partners to show more ownership and leadership, on stimulating a creative competition among the partners by supporting their own initiatives, and last but not least on carefully reflecting whether the project

- a) does the right things,
- b) does things right,

in order to prepare for phase III of A-STAR. Thus, as an outlook the following main issues can be highlighted:

- The Farmer Entrepreneur course will be further fine-tuned; especially through the re-designing of the current modules according to the ILO standards. Furthermore, the apprenticeship system shall be reviewed and Farmers Field Schools introduced to the curricula as additional innovative elements.

- The negotiations with the SAVET on co-financing of the so-called protected budget items like teacher salaries are on track. At the same time, the course structure and length will be reviewed in order to get a step closer to the official recognition of the course.
- The project will continue to coach and backstop the KOJOs on intensifying their fundraising by trying out new (unconventional) approaches. Furthermore, it was decided to put a moratorium on further decreasing the co-financing ratio for operational costs by the project (at 33%) in order to first critically analyse the suitability and sustainability of the co-financing approaches of phase II during the review and planning missions.
- In order to further increase the ownership within the existing KOJOs the project will aim at handing over the functions of an existing KOJO which is struggling with its sustainability to a long-standing NGO. Furthermore, the role of the Steering Councils shall be strengthened through an intensive training and coaching programme.
- In order to create more competition between training providers, the project will for the first time in its history collaborate with a non-governmental training provider. It is expected that the introduction of the short course and its co-financing scheme will be smoother and easier to facilitate as the strict governmental rules and regulations do not apply and less fights for power, control and money than in some governmental schools may develop. The latter is mainly due to the fact that it is the first time in the project history that a local partner approached the project with its own ideas (instead of the project selecting its partners).
- The planned review and planning of the third phase of A-STAR will carefully look at current processes, results and assets in order to design the approaches and interventions for a possibly considerably renewed rural VESD component. The missions shall carefully analyse the need for farmer or rural entrepreneur training among the community and relevant stakeholders as well as review a potential move from the current working approaches of active but participatory initiation of change process within partners to a pro-active facilitation role of the project where relevant and well reflected initiatives from partners concerning PRA, competence profiling, curricula development, teacher training, school management development, co-financing and ownership approaches, etc could be supported by the project with technical expertise and funding of the implementation processes on a demand basis.

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