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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

CASE STUDY

Reducing Ethnic Tension in Schools

USAID promotes training of community leaders in conflict-affected areas



Photo: Rymtal Turdumbetova

School children of mixed ethnicities are performing during the "Festival of Nations' Friendship" in trilingual; Kyrgyz-Russian-Uzbek School # 2 , Nooken District, Jalalabad Region, South Kyrgyzstan.

The revolutions of the past decade have taken their toll on many of Kyrgyzstan's schools. Interethnic conflicts in the south and the mass migration of people to cities pose new challenges for educators, parents and communities. The post-conflict zones and the new settlements around Bishkek, where migrants are concentrated, face the most critical situations: lack of documents to register children, overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of teachers, inadequate teaching facilities, and under-financed education infrastructure. The Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Science created a new job category to address issues of violence in schools and communities called the "social worker." But the state lacks the capacity and the funding to provide these school-community specialists with the necessary training to meet community needs.

USAID responded in several ways. One program assists schools by training key staff on how to create a more harmonious atmosphere during this post-conflict period. District education department specialists, school administrators, trainers and social workers were trained in two target zones: the Jalalabad region and the new settlements around Bishkek. USAID and the Kyrgyz Academy of Education jointly conducted four training sessions for about 200 social workers in Jalalabad. The focus of this training was to provide staff with the knowledge and skills to support students in dealing with the effects of interethnic conflict.

Training participants are making immediate impacts in the lives of the students they work with. For example, Gulnaz Mokishova works at Orok School near Bishkek where students from vulnerable families are enrolled. She helped students and community members organize a fund-raiser to provide children's clothes, stationery and food to students in need. Another participant, Malika Abduvahapova works at the rural Kyrgyz-Russian-Uzbek School # 2 in Jalalbad province, which used to divide students according to their ethnicities. Malika was able to organize the Festival of Nations' Friendship in which 1,000 students participated. The festival's slogan was, "We are All Together!" and students were organized into teams with members from different ethnicities, which was well received by all.

Telling Our Story

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