

DONOR INVOLVEMENT ANALYSIS IN EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN KYRGYZSTAN: ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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The mission lasted from January 8th – 21st 2008 and entailed a desk review of existing documents as well as numerous meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Ministry of Health, donor organizations in the education and health sectors, non-governmental organizations, and Kyrgyz education experts.

The following education experts arranged the programme of our mission and accompanied us, if needed, to the meetings:

- UNICEF: Nurbek Teleshaliev, Education Specialist; Saltanat Builasheva, Early Childhood Development Officer, and Larisa Miroshnichenko, consultant UNICEF.
- Ministry of Education and Science: Farida Ryskulueva, Head of the Department for Strategic and Analytical Work.

Note: The opinions expressed in this text are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of UNICEF.

We would like to thank these four colleagues for preparing our visit and spending time with us during our mission.

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1. Mission Objectives

In light of the preparation of the next Education Development Strategy by the Ministry of Education, this mission was charged with the following three objectives:

1. Updating the existing donor involvement analysis with a special emphasis on preschool and general education with particular attention on actual outcomes
2. Reviewing and analysing the current Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 with regard to under- and over-served areas of donor-support and compare it with the priorities set out in the rights-based approach
3. Making recommendations for procedural aspects of the development of the next Education Development Strategy, possibly covering the period 2010-2015.

In January 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science was charged by the Presidential Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic to conduct assessments (notably, a Functional Analysis of the MoES) and prepare documents (more specifically, a new Education Development Strategy) that are prerequisites for a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) in the education sector, planned to come into effect by January 2010. Against this background, the MoES convened a meeting of donors in December 2007 to identify donor support for developing a SWAp in education. UNICEF's offer to provide technical support to develop a donor involvement analysis and to review and analyze the Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 with regard to under- and over-served areas of donor support was received positively by the Ministry. Thus, the prospects of having a SWAp in the education sector gave this mission added relevance from the perspective of government officials. The Department for Strategic and Analytic Work at the MoES is expected to take on a major role in these endeavors as it is supposed to coordinate the preparation of the new Education Development Strategy and other assessments and reviews that are necessary in preparing the SWAp.

2. An Assessment of Related Initiatives

There exist two initiatives in the Kyrgyz context that are worth investigating in further detail as they closely relate to the plan of the MoES to implement a SWAp by the year 2010:

- The EFA Fast-Track Initiative (FTI), funded from the Catalytic Fund in the amount of US\$ 15 million. The first phase, worth US\$ 9 million, started in March 2007 and will end in August 2008. The Catalytic Fund¹ has earmarked US\$ 6 million for the second phase assuming a favourable review of the implementation of the first phase.
- The Health Ministry of the Kyrgyz Republic established the National Health Care Reform Program Manas Taalimi (2006-2010) that qualifies as a SWAp.

This report examines these two initiatives in an attempt to learn from ongoing experiences. The first initiative (Fast-Track Initiative) is implemented in peculiar ways in the Kyrgyz Republic given that the funding is secured from the Catalytic Fund, which sets stringent conditions regarding criteria for inclusion in and execution of the FTI. In effect, it is implemented like a large project, comparable to the Rural Education Project (funded by the World Bank), and has little resemblance to fast-track initiatives in other countries. Thus, an analysis of the ongoing FTI of the Kyrgyz Republic could help identify potential challenges for the next large initiative that is supposed to be aligned with the next Education Development Strategy 2010-2015. The second initiative (Manas Taalimi) is a case in point of a reform strategy that is worth emulating in the education sector.

2.1. The EFA-Fast Track Initiative in the Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz FTI is different in many regards from FTIs in other countries. More importantly, the FTI in the Kyrgyz Republic does not closely correspond to the FTI framework (EFA-FTI Secretariat 2004) or the appraisal guidelines (EFA-FTI Secretariat 2006). Furthermore, the references to the Kyrgyz experiences in the 2007 annual report (EFA-FTI Secretariat 2007) do not quite mirror the actual practices in FTI implementation in the Kyrgyz context. The main issues are the following:

1. Reform priorities on universal completion of primary education: The FTI was supposed to help reform-minded governments of ODA-recipient countries implement universal primary education by the year 2015. The Kyrgyz Republic is one of six FTI countries (together with Albania, Guyana, Kenya, Mongolia, and Tajikistan) that had already achieved a primary completion rate of 95 percent or higher in the year 2006, that is, before the first phase started (see EFA-FTI Secretariat 2007). As a corollary, the priority of the Kyrgyz FTI was not only on primary schools but also on pre-schools. The FTI Secretariat accepted this extended focus for two reasons: At the time the EFA-FTI in Moldova had already set a precedent by focusing exclusively on Early Childhood Development. Furthermore, “basic education” is broadly defined in practice to the extent that some countries include either pre-school education or lower secondary education in basic education, thereby moving beyond primary education.
2. Supporting countries’ education strategies: The FTI commitment to supporting education sector strategies has repercussions at several levels. The education sector strategy (in the Kyrgyz Republic referred to as the Education Development Strategy 2007-2010) was supposed to be used as a solid planning instrument, based on a comprehensive education sector review, and must reflect the features of evidence-based planning in the education sector with base-line data, annual targets, benchmarks, clear monitoring and an evaluation framework, data-driven mid-term and annual reviews, etc. In addition, donor support for the education strategy as the main feature of the FTI should not to be underestimated. This constitutes the fundamental principle that distinguishes the FTI from other conventional financial assistance where, more often than not, the donors establish the agenda of reform

¹ Apart from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, who contributed seventy-five percent of the total pledges to the Catalytic Fund, the enthusiasm of donors has been weak. There is a major shortfall of funds in the Catalytic Fund (EFA FTI Secretariat 2007) for the newly approved education sectors.

within a broader needs assessment. Government ownership as a key feature of the FTI has been downplayed in several ways in the Kyrgyz context.

- 2.1. The Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 was developed within a period of approximately three months. It was an agenda-driven strategy to secure FTI-funding based on a limited review of the education sector. The 2007-2010 Strategy was actively supported by UNICEF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Save the Children UK, Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, USAID etc. The Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 reflects all the major tenets of an education sector strategy without a list of priorities, benchmarks, and annual targets that would have been necessary to use it as a planning instrument. It is a 23-page document that subsequently was exclusively referenced by the World Bank to develop the Project Appraisal and Technical Proposal for the EFA-Fast Track Initiative. From the outset, the MoES considered the document to be a “FTI Strategy” rather than an Education Development Strategy. In fact, in April 2008, the line ministries, including the MoES, were charged by Presidential Order to, retroactively develop strategies for the period 2007-2010 that would be in line with the new economic and social programme, issued in January 2008.
- 2.2. The Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 was only approved by the Ministry of Education on October 19th 2006 (Order # 658/1), but was not presented to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.
- 2.3. The financial assistance constitutes project support² for the “FTI project” rather than budget support for the Kyrgyz education reform programme, outlined in the Education Development Strategy 2007-2010. Thus, the funding mechanism for the FTI is no different from other projects funded by bilateral or multilateral donors (USAID, World Bank, ADB, USAID). In addition, the scope and type of Catalytic Fund-supported projects is identical with other projects that had been previously funded from other external sources: The FTI Catalytic Fund finances a series of pilot projects for a limited time period and focuses on a few regions of the country with no plans for countrywide expansion or concrete sustainability plans.
- 2.4. There is also very little to no government ownership of FTI implementation. The FTI is implemented by the World Bank Programme Implementation Unit (PIU), which administers both the Rural School Project (funded by the World Bank) and the FTI (funded by the Catalytic Fund). We noticed that the view that PIUs are part of the Ministry of Education and Science (and thus represent government oversight of FTI implementation) is not shared by any institutional partner — neither by the MoES nor by other donors — except for the two development banks, The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank that run their PIUs out of the building of the Ministry of Education and Science. It is time to stop referring to PIUs as units of the MoES, and based on the Functional Analysis that is currently being completed, differentiate between the functions and tasks that the Ministry of Education is able to take on and those that donors should temporarily carry out. There is an urgent need for an exit strategy for the PIUs in the MoES and for mainstreaming several of their tasks into the government structure. The European Commission (EC) model used in other sectors is worth studying in greater detail, whereby the EC provides permanent in-country technical assistance (typically one international consultant and two local consultants) to the line ministries and has their technical assistance staff (maximum three individuals) seated in the line ministries. This is a good example of capacity transfer from donors to government officials. Rather than taking over all the implementation tasks of government officials, the donor provides limited technical assistance to the line ministries to implement a project or an initiative.

² It is listed in the Public Investment Programme budget line of the Ministry of Finance, which is a budget line earmarked for financial assistance by donors for donor-supported projects in the education sector

3. Strengthening partnership between donors. The FTI was established in 2002 to advance “global partnership between donors and developing countries” and assumes that the FTI is supported by all donors. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the FTI agreement was signed by eight donors. Once the agreement was signed, the implementation was carried out exclusively by the World Bank or by the World Bank PIU, respectively. At the initial stage, UNICEF was the co-lead agency vis-à-vis the Ministry of Education and Science and assisted the MoES in developing the Education Development Strategy and requesting assistance from the FTI Catalytic Fund. During the next stages of the FTI (Project Appraisal and Technical Proposal), UNICEF became relegated to serve as the co-leading agency together with the World Bank and the MoES. The established FTI Steering Committee, for example, reflects that structure in that it is co-chaired by the MoES, the World Bank and UNICEF. It is composed of government officials and several donors and yet the FTI is erroneously perceived as a World Bank project. The International Advisory Council on Education (IACE; established in 2003, composed of the MoES and donors) was reactivated at the end of 2006 and could take a more active role in donor coordination, especially for projects, such as the FTI, that are endorsed by multiple donors.

The FTI of the Kyrgyz Republic is perceived as a World Bank project rather than as a multi-donor supported fast-track initiative. This perception is also held by the FTI PIU staff. They see themselves primarily accountable to the World Bank and secondarily the MoES, with little concern given to the donor community at large. The first review of the first portion (tranche) of the EFA-FTI was prepared by the World Bank in November 2007 and is in the format of an Aide Memoire written for the Ministry of Education and Science. The Aide Memoire covers both the Rural School Project and FTI.

The importance of the FTI attached to signaling donor-wide support for it becomes immediately apparent when how the Kyrgyz FTI is represented internationally is assessed. Listed under the heading “Strengthening Partnership Toward a New International Aid Architecture for Education” (EFA-FTI Secretariat 2007, p. 35ff.), the 2007 FTI report positively comments on and highlights the FTI in the Kyrgyz Republic as one of the ten FTI countries where UNICEF acts as the lead agency. There is a need on the part of the World Bank to acknowledge this partnership in the FTI of the Kyrgyz Republic and on the part of UNICEF to assume the role and responsibilities that they have been given.

The following table provides a summary of the gaps between the FTI international framework and the FTI in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Table 1. FTI International Framework and the Kyrgyz Republic FTI (First Tranche): A Comparison

| | FTI International Framework | FTI in the Kyrgyz Republic |
|----------------------|--|--|
| 1. Reform Priorities | Universal Primary Completion: Focus on access and quality | Pre-schools and primary school completion: the focus is mostly on improving quality and only indirectly on enhancing coverage and access: In fact, only one sub-component 1.2. (preparing to renovate kindergarten buildings) targets improved access. The plan is to expand coverage (during the second phase of the FTI) in 99 preschools in the three FTI oblasts. It is planned to improve access by renovating unused space in these 99 preschools. The first portion (tranche) of the FTI earmarked \$3,000 for this sub-component (out of \$9 million) to perform a needs assessment on unused space in the 99 preschools. |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| 2. Government Ownership | Supporting Countries' Education Sector Strategies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An Agenda-driven Education Development Strategy (to secure a FTI Catalytic Fund grant) was based on a limited evidence-based education sector review. 2. Lack of public discussion or broader government support 3. External financial project support (the FTI as a "project" with features of a pilot project with limited scope and sustainability) rather than budget support 4. Very limited to no government ownership of the implementation of the FTI (implemented by the World Bank PIU). |
| 3. Multi-Donor Initiative | Strengthening Partnership between Donors | Little transparency on actual outcomes and finance towards other donors including UNICEF (pro forma acting as co-leading agency) |

Given the implementation of the EFA FTI in the Kyrgyz Republic, there is a risk that not only the second phase of the FTI but also the planned SWAp in the education sector will also (1) be implemented as yet another large pilot project with limited coverage and even less consideration for sustainability, (2) donor-driven, donor-administered, and donor-implemented, and (3) initially multi-donor supported at the approval stage, but then executed by one donor only with little reporting and transparency towards the other donors.

There seems to be agreement among the donors that the MoES lacks the capacity to financially manage and implement donor-funded projects. Rapid administrative turnover of government officials is seen as the main cause for this "institutional weakness" (Joint Country Support Strategy of the Asian Development Bank, Swiss Cooperation, UK DFID, United Nations Group, World Bank Group 2007, p. 60). As one of the donors pointedly remarked in one of our interviews, outsourcing the implementation of the donor-funded FTI or other large projects to a separate PIU, "does not help improve or resolve the lack of capacity in the MoES, but rather helps circumvent it." All interviewed representatives of donors and non-governmental organizations kept emphasizing the lack of institutional capacity as an argument for implementing and managing projects themselves. The interviewees also expect the fiduciary assessment in the education sector, currently nearing completion, to indicate the same high risks of financial management that they have been experiencing in practice. Finally, the lack of capacity, or more precisely, the lack of staff, has also been pointed out by government officials themselves in the MoES. It is noticeable that the government's official definition of "lack of capacity" is entirely different from what donors imply when they point out the lack of capacity of government officials. The MoES means the lack of staff to implement large projects, and donors mean the lack of management skills, especially with regard to financial management.

Given the donors' justification of "institutional weakness" as a panacea for implementing expensive pilot projects with little systemic impact, managing and implementing projects themselves and thereby circumventing MoES structures, and providing project rather than budget support, it is important to point out that the Kyrgyz Republic does have a SWAp in place that reflects contemporary beliefs and practices in aid effectiveness. The Manas Taalimi (2006-2010) represents the Kyrgyz Republic National Health Care Reform Programme. It was implemented in the same country and in the same context of rapid political and administrative turnover and under the same conditions of fiduciary risk. Differing from the FTI in the education sector, however, the Manas Taalimi has been driven and administered by the Ministry of Health with broad and continuous support from donors. In a proposition to donors and government officials in the MoES to learn from a similar initiative in the same context but in another sector, we present in the next section a few features that, according to our interviewees, have accounted for aid effectiveness in the health sector.

2.2. Manas Taalimi 2006-2010: The SWAp Experience

In 2006 the Ministry of Health of Kyrgyz Republic launched a new Manas Taalimi Health Care Reform Programme that defines the key priorities of development from 2006-2010. Along with the development of Manas Taalimi, new principles of the relationship between the donor community and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic were introduced. The Kyrgyz Republic was the first Central Asian republic that applied a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) when implementing a sector strategy. In reality, all the activities of the donor organizations were aligned to the sector development strategy and separate project initiatives were partially replaced by financial support to the health care budget provided by the donor community (WHO, 2006).

Background:

The Manas Taalimi represents a continuation of the first Manas Health Programme ((MHP)(1996 – 2005)), that was shaped around four main priorities: primary healthcare, family medicine, free choice of a family physician and improving access to health services. One of the important components of the reform was outcome-based financing and payment. It is important to point out that prior to the launching of the nationwide Manas Taalimi programme in 2006, all the above-mentioned reforms of the MHP were piloted in the Issyk-kul and Chui oblasts as part of USAID and World Bank funded projects (MoH, 2006).

In an effort to maintain the reform momentum of the MHP and develop a further strategy for the health sector, the Ministry of Health (MoH) turned to the World Health Organization (WHO) for technical assistance. The WHO together with the Department for International Development (DFID) gave the MoH technical support to develop the Health Sector Development Strategy for the period 2006-2010.

Despite the involvement of international organizations in developing Manas Taalimi, the programme was solely developed by local experts and consultants. Members of the working group were selected through merit-based competition. The majority of them were employees of the MoH. Whilst preparing the health programme they were given leave and later returned to their positions. All the consultants and experts were paid by the WHO, the World Bank or DFID. The working group was led by the Deputy Minister of Health. Originally it was envisaged that the working group would complete the development of the sector strategy in six months, however, the Ministry of Health, WHO, the World Bank and DFID extended the development stage to one year.

According to one of the consultants in the working group, the experts and consultants were divided into teams to work on specific components of the health reform programme. The involvement of international experts was quite insignificant and was limited to providing feedback and recommendations to the already developed draft documents.

The leadership of the working group of Manas Taalimi ensured the wide involvement of the main stakeholders in the programme development process. The draft programme was discussed in detail with the health community at all regional levels. In addition to this, roundtables were organized with the participation of the donor organizations (Kangeldieva, 2006). Recommendations and suggestions both from the health community and donor organizations were discussed and incorporated in the final version of the strategy.

As already mentioned, Manas Taalimi was heavily based on the experience and knowledge received from its precursor multi-year programme, the MHP. Lessons learned from this programme were considered fundamental in developing the Manas Taalimi and it ensured that positive experiences were further strengthened, while measures were taken to address the challenges. Some of the lessons learned from the implementation of the MHP were the importance of donor coordination

in avoiding duplication and increasing the effectiveness of the project funds and political support to the reform processes (MoH, 2006).

The Manas Taalimi programme is a very detailed and well-elaborated document, which sets specific priorities for the following five years of health sector development, mission, goals, objectives and key actions to be implemented and also provides a clear implementation strategy, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and is fully in line with the Health Sector Development Strategy 2006-2010, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the WHO objectives (MoH, 2006).

The Introduction of the SWAp in the Health Sector:

One of the six main principles of the national health policy was to implement a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) to health reforms. There is no uniform definition of a SWAp and it captures different processes depending on the context (Cassels, 1997). In the context of Kyrgyzstan, SWAp was seen as a “method of working between government and development partners, a mechanism for coordinating support to public expenditure programmes, and for improving the efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are used in the sector” (DFID, n/a).

As already mentioned donor organizations were actively involved in preparing Manas Taalimi and from the very beginning expressed a readiness to closely collaborate with the Ministry of Health. Along with the commitment to implement the objectives outlined by Manas Taalimi, donor organizations agreed to provide budget support in the health sector if the government was also willing and capable of using the funds to implement it. This was an entirely new approach by donors vis-à-vis a line ministry. Prior to 2006, the involvement of donor organizations in the development of the sector was limited to implementing separate projects by means of Project Implementation Units (PIU).

One of the important commitments made by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was to increase the share of health sector spending as a percentage of overall public spending. It was agreed that in response to the readiness of the donor community to give direct assistance to the health budget, the government would gradually increase public spending on health from 10.6% in 2006 to 13% by 2010 (Donor Working Group, 2006).

From the outset, the donors had great concerns about the government financial management system and procurement procedures (Institute for Health Sector Development, 2000). The donor organizations conducted a fiduciary assessment in order to assess the readiness and capability of the governmental structures for budget support. Although the assessment revealed high risks in many aspects of the financial and procurement systems, the decision to implement a SWAp was still taken. According to the experts in several international organizations that we interviewed, donor organizations were well aware of these risks. However, it was also a common understanding that no progress could be attempted if no risk was taken. Instead of staying away from SWAp, the leading donor organizations took the decision to mitigate the risks by introducing a series of control measures.

Budget Support versus Parallel Financing:

The SWAp in the health sector of the Kyrgyz Republic utilizes two main forms of financing: budget support and parallel financing. Budget support implies that donors put all funding in one basket, which is sent to the Ministry of Health budget via the Ministry of Finance. The largest donor organization that typically uses the mechanism of budget support is the World Bank. Since the largest portion of budget support in the health sector has been provided by the World Bank, the donor organizations agreed that the Ministry of Health would use World Bank rules and procedures for financial management and procurement. The Ministry of Health finds budget support to be a distinctive feature of the SWAp in the health sector. In the words of the Minister of Health,

Shayloobek Niayzov, budget support means that “the government’s obligations are supported by financial resources and real mechanisms to achieve set goals. This inspires and increases the responsibility of the entire health sector towards the people” (MoH, 2006, p. II).

Parallel financing or “project support” is another form of allocating international aid to the health sector that implies support via project implementation. Unlike budget support, projects funded using parallel financing are implemented by PIUs in which case the finances are managed by the donor organizations themselves, or funds are transferred directly to the Ministry of Health for specifically agreed activities not passing through the Ministry of Finance, or resources are used to procure technical support or supplies provided to the Ministry. In the health sector all donors except for the World Bank use this form of financing along with budget support. USAID favours parallel financing and all its aid is channeled through separate projects.

The volume of parallel financing has remained much larger than that of budget support when ADB and the Global Fund for TB, AIDS and Malaria (GFTAM) are considered. However, such allocation of aid funds has not created any problems for the successful and coherent implementation of Manas Taalimi. Despite parallel financing of some projects, the Ministry of Health ensures that these projects are fully in compliance with the main priorities of the health care reform programme.

Challenges to the SWAp in Health Sector:

One of the greatest challenges to SWAps in any country, including the Kyrgyz Republic, is the lack of international financial management and procurement standards at ministry level. Reportedly, it was also a challenge for the Ministry of Health to manage the budget support funds. On the one hand the Ministry of Health was in need of highly qualified professionals to perform these tasks and on the other hand it offered very low salaries to these much-needed professionals.

Given the long tradition of corruption, the possibility of misappropriation of public funds was another risk to be addressed. While parallel financing continues to exist in the form of Project Implementation Units, budget support funds are fully managed by the Ministry staff. The donor community in the Kyrgyz health sector views the obligation to use World Bank financial management and procurement procedures as an effective measure in mitigating fiduciary risks.

Explanations for the Successful Implementation of the SWAp in the Health Sector:

Although nobody questions the advantages of a SWAp, it is not easy to implement it in practice. There are several reasons why a SWAp was seen as a viable option for the health sector.

Firstly, in our interviews both local and international experts agreed that one of the main determinants of the SWAp implementation was the strong leadership of the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health was determined to implement the reform in the health sector and had a clear understating of the main priorities and objectives to be sought in the future. Despite large-scale administrative turnover at the Ministry of Health, the coherence and consistency among the leadership was sustained. In particular, the Deputy Minister Ainura Ibraimova who had been actively involved in the MHP and subsequently directed the development and implementation of Manas Taalimi was considered a reliable, constant, and competent partner both for government officials and donors. In addition, there was continuity with regard to international technical assistance. One of the international advisors, Melitta Yakab from the WHO, has been able to provide technical assistance over a long period of time.

A second factor that significantly determined the successful launch of the SWAp was the strong human capacity in the health sector administration. Officials of the sector demonstrated a high level of competence and professionalism and were reform-oriented at all governmental levels: central, oblast and rayon levels. Several experts believe that this capacity was developed during the MHP, which began in 1996.

Thirdly, although the SWAp officially only started in 2006, health sector officials had prior experience with donor coordination under the earlier MHP and the donors, in turn, also had vast experience in coordinating their efforts and avoiding replication and overlaps of their funded projects. In the words of one of the interviewed experts, the SWAp only formalized a long history of successful collaboration among the donor organizations. Instead of competing with each other and duplicating activities and projects, donor organizations clearly outlined their strengths and weaknesses and got involved in those areas of the health sector in which they had the greatest expertise.

Fourthly, the donor organizations firmly believed in the value of Manas Taalimi and viewed it as an initiative that allowed reforms that were previously piloted to be up-scaled. For instance, the family medicine and health care financing reforms were first piloted in Issyk-kul, as part of the MHP and only later were implemented nationwide as part of the Manas Taalimi reform programme.

Fifthly, there was a very strong sense of ownership of Manas Taalimi. As already mentioned, the programme was predominantly developed by Kyrgyz experts and the involvement of international parties was modest. In addition to this, the programme was truly representative of all the stakeholders across the country, as the draft versions had been actively discussed at oblast and rayon levels, so the opinions of the community were incorporated and consequently wide support for the reform programme was secured.

Finally, along with expressing trust in the Ministry of Health, donor organizations have been actively involved in the oversight and monitoring of the implementation process. They have developed joint monitoring and annual review systems and organize a twice a year health summit during which the process of Manas Taalimi implementation is discussed, challenges are identified and necessary changes are made to the programme.

3. Donor Involvement in the Education Sector

The Donor Involvement Matrix attached in Appendix 1, lists donor contributions in areas of the education sector in which UNICEF has been actively involved: pre-school education, basic education and technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science but other areas of support, notably non-formal education, vocational-technical education and higher education are not included in the matrix. Donor contributions to basic education have been further categorized along the following reform lines:

- Curricula reform, teaching materials and textbooks
- Delivery system (teachers)
- Learning assessment, monitoring and evaluation
- Governance reform
- Financial reform
- Inclusive education
- School infrastructure and development

In February and March 2008, the Donor Involvement Matrix was submitted to the donors or funding agencies with a request to note additions or corrections. This printed version has been reviewed and approved by the funding agencies.

Multilateral organizations: The Asian Development Bank was throughout the 1990s the lead donor in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Education Sector Development Programme lasted from 1997 until 2004 and represented the first loan covering the education sector and the value of the ADB's first project was \$19 million and it has continued its involvement with a series of other large loans and grants for pre-school and basic education reform listed in Appendix 1. In the new millennium, the World Bank joined the ranks of ADB as the lead donor with a similar high volume of funding and the World Bank grant for the Rural Education Project (2005-2010) was \$15 million. As mentioned before, the World Bank has also coordinated the multi-donor led EFA Fast Track Initiative. The first portion of the EFA Fast Track Initiative (2007-2008) is funded from the Catalytic Fund and amounts to \$9 million. Compared to the two development banks and the EFA-FTI, UNICEF's financial contributions are relatively small and restricted to early childhood development, global education and community management of education as well as technical assistance and capacity-building for government officials in the MoES in the areas of early childhood development, monitoring, and evaluation. The financial contributions of UNICEF Kyrgyzstan range from \$247,000 to \$730,000 per project. In contrast to UNICEF, UNESCO only operates regionally and has funded sub-regional conferences and workshops in the areas of early childhood development, professional development of teachers, and promotion of EFA goals. In 2004-2007 UNESCO allocated \$101,350 to implement these initiatives. In 2007, the European Commission established a country office and has begun to support educational reform in the Kyrgyz Republic. The first EC project (2008-2010) worth \$6.5 million supports the renovation of rural schools and the establishment of social infrastructure in the Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan. The EC has also financed technical assistance for the MoES with capacity-building of government officials to develop the new Education Development Strategy 2010-2015 as part of a larger sector policy support programme. The EC grant is worth \$242,000 and will last from March 2008 until January 2009.

Bilateral organizations: The only bilateral donor with a priority in education sector support is USAID. To date, USAID has funded two multi-year projects: PEAKS from 2003 to 2007 (\$4.26 million) and the Quality Learning Programme from 2007 to 2010 (\$4.2 million).

Non-governmental organizations: The Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan, established in 1993, was one of the first and most influential donors in educational reform in the early transition period

of the 1990s. Over the last few years, however, it has continuously spun off its various network programmes (English language programme, Step by Step, Debating, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking) and helped establish other local NGOs (e.g., Education Initiatives Support) that continue to be influential in Kyrgyz educational reform. In education, the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan moved from being a donor to being an implementer of externally funded projects. Currently, the Aga Khan Foundation is the largest donor among the NGOs. Their Early Childhood Development Initiative (\$2 million, 2005-2012) attempts to increase the coverage and quality of kindergartens in selected mountainous rayons of Osh oblast. Like the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan and the Aga Khan Foundation, the International Save the Children Alliance is, despite its low level of overall funding, a significant player in in-service teacher training. It generated awareness among teachers in two oblasts (Osh, Naryn) and in Bishkek of the need for inclusive education.

3.1. Donor Involvement Analysis by Geographic Coverage

The following Table 2 lists donor support for ongoing projects in 2008 by province (oblast).

Table 2. Geographic Coverage of Donor Support

| | Batken | Chui | Issyk-kul | Jalal-Abad | Naryn | Osh | Talas |
|---|-------------|--------|-----------|------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Aga Khan Found. | | | | | | x | |
| ADB: > Com-Based ECD > 2nd Ed Project > Improving Access (n/a) | x | | | x x | x | x x | |
| EC: School Renovation | x | | | x | | x | |
| EFA FTI | x | x | | | x | | |
| Save the Children | | x | | | x | x | |
| UNICEF: > ECD > Global Education > Com Management | x x x | x x | | | x x | | |
| USAID: PEAKS | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| World Bank: Rural School Project | | | x | | | | x |

Most donor-funded projects are, with the exception of textbook publishing and curricula reform, regionally concentrated. The major bulk of funding for the World Bank's Rural School Project, for example, has been disbursed for activities in two oblasts: Talas and Issyk-kul. Similarly, the \$13.47 million of ADB's first Community-based Early Childhood Development project is being spent in 12 rayons of the three oblasts of Naryn, Jalal-Abad and Osh. The rationale for donors only selecting a few provinces in which a project is implemented varies. ADB, for example, identified the poorest districts in its three pilot oblasts as ECD project sites. The World Bank, in turn, selected for its Rural School Project two oblasts — Talas and Issyk-kul — that had received little attention in the past. Besides considering need (poverty) and current/past external funding support, the donors highlight the fact that their projects are pilots. The international donors operate, with the exception of the Aga Khan Foundation, from Bishkek. They have neither set up regional offices nor have they used government channels at regional level to implement and monitor their projects. To ensure the manageability of their centrally planned and administered projects, they therefore have to focus their operations in a few selected regions. In this regard, the donors and NGOs replicate government-run projects and initiatives that are also planned, administered and monitored from Bishkek.

3.2. Donor Involvement Analysis by Reform Areas and Outcomes

An examination of the Donor Involvement Matrix (Appendix 1) with regard to various reform areas (curriculum reform, teaching materials and textbooks; delivery system/teachers; educational finance reform; inclusive education; school infrastructure) reveals several underserved areas:

- Except for two small projects — ADB’s Improving Access to Quality Basic Education for Children with Special Needs (\$1 million, 2007-2010) and Save the Children’s Inclusive Education project (\$220,000, 1999-2007), little attention has been given to pupils with special needs.
- The reform of educational governance or administration in the form of capacity-building of administrators and government officials and/or in the form of community participation is not systematically pursued but only marginally integrated in existing projects for the purpose of ensuring government support for a project.. Policy support at central level (EC, UNICEF, World Bank) is more visible, but often reduced to short-term technical assistance rather than comprehensive capacity-building of government officials.
- Compared to other areas, support for reforming pre-service teacher education is being implemented at a relatively late stage. ADB’s Second Education Project (\$15.5 million, 2006-2010) and USAID’s Quality Learning Programme (\$4.2 million, 2007-2012) have only started operating last year or in the last few months, respectively. This constitutes one of the reform areas that until recently has been least donor-supported.

The Donor Involvement Matrix, however, also reveals one particular area that is potentially “over-served” or rather, uncoordinated: on paper, reforms that address the content of education (curricula/standards, teaching materials, textbooks) seem to be over-represented. Each and every donor attempts to address curricular issues and develop additional teaching material, mostly in the form of teachers’ manuals and guides distributed during in-service training workshops, and to a lesser extent reading material for pupils. From an organizational perspective, there exist compelling reasons why donor-supported initiatives such as, for example, civic, health and ecological education, should be integrated into the regular curriculum and accompanying material disseminated to all teachers in the country. Such strategies and the integration into the curriculum and dissemination of teaching material, ensure the sustainability of donor-supported initiatives beyond the duration of a project. In this particular area, however, the policy perspective clashes with the organizational endeavour to have a lasting impact. Like curricula in other Central Asian countries, the curricula in the Kyrgyz Republic are crowded with many different subjects, each with little time allocated for teaching. The school day in Classes 6 to 9 in the Kyrgyz Republic is very long compared to the schools in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and radically different from schools in Tajikistan (with extremely low annual teaching hours) and is only surpassed by the length of the school day in Turkmenistan.

Table 3 shows the annual teaching hours in the five Central Asian countries.

Table 3. Teaching Hours in Central Asia, The Caucasus and Mongolia: Classes 1-9

| Country | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th | 1 to 9 |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Turkmenistan | 630 | 630 | 630 | 735 | 814 | 840 | 971 | 998 | 971 | 7,219 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 545 | 612 | 714 | 740 | 765 | 816 | 867 | 893 | 918 | 6,870 |
| Uzbekistan | 495 | 561 | 612 | 612 | 765 | 816 | 842 | 867 | 893 | 6,463 |
| Kazakhstan | 545 | 619 | 644 | 668 | 791 | 791 | 765 | 714 | 714 | 6,251 |
| Tajikistan | 376 | 560 | 612 | 637 | 637 | 714 | 765 | 765 | 816 | 5,882 |
| Average teaching hours (N=5) | 518 | 596 | 642 | 678 | 754 | 795 | 842 | 847 | 862 | |

Sources: UNESCO-IBE (2007)³

³ UNESCO-IBE. (2007) Recent estimates of planned teaching hours over the first nine years of schooling (prepared by Massimo Amadio). Background paper for 2008 Global Monitoring Report: Education for All by 2015: Will we Make it? Geneva: UNESCO-IBE. Note that we have supplemented his list with information on the official curriculum in Tajikistan (prepared by Gita Steiner-Khamsi for the World Bank study on the Stavka system in Tajikistan). For a more detailed description of the methodology to examine planned teaching hours see Aaron Benavot (2005). A global study of planned teaching hours and official school curricula, 1980-2000. Background paper for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, The Quality Imperative. UNESCO: Paris.

Government officials, Kyrgyz experts and other international consultants have also commented on the relatively high teaching hours in Classes 6 to 9. However, a broader international comparison is necessary to put teaching time in Kyrgyz schools in perspective. An international comparison, shown in Table 4, reveals that the teaching hours in the Central Asia region are lower overall (with Tajikistan at the bottom) than in the other EFA world regions. Central and Eastern European educational systems also used to have low teaching hours, but have gradually increased them over the past 15 years.

Table 4. Teaching Hours by Selected EFA World Regions: Grades 1-9

| EFA Region | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | 9th | 1 to 9 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Western Europe & North America (N=22) | 765 | 784 | 802 | 802 | 840 | 840 | 900 | 915 | 925 | 7,751 |
| East Asia & the Pacific (N=15) | 765 | 791 | 816 | 840 | 840 | 842 | 933 | 944 | 933 | 7,620 |
| South & West Asia (N=6) | 675 | 675 | 734 | 750 | 750 | 879 | 882 | 882 | 900 | 7,296 |
| Central & Eastern Europe (N=19) | 545 | 569 | 604 | 630 | 720 | 788 | 788 | 816 | 850 | 6,379 |
| Central Asia, The Caucasus and Mongolia (N=8) | 536 | 587 | 630 | 668 | 765 | 791 | 816 | 816 | 842 | 6,270 |

Sources: UNESCO-IBE. (2007)⁴

Thus, the relatively high teaching hours in the Kyrgyz Republic (compared to the Central Asian region) should not be regarded as the main issue, as it is still below the average of educational systems in other EFA regions. Instead, the incoherence of the curriculum should be the object of scrutiny: over the past decade, new subjects have been continuously added to curricula that have traditionally been crowded with a multitude of subjects; all with few teaching hours allocated. The MoES seems to have applied an “additive approach” to curricula reform in that it has merely added rather than revised or replaced learning content. As a result, donor-supported initiatives have merely been added rather than fully integrated (or possibly omitted) in a comprehensive curricula reform. The Asian Development Bank has been the lead donor in advancing curricula reform. It advanced free textbook publishing in the first education loan (1997-2004) and published thousands of textbook titles. Yet, the curricula (both curriculum framework and standards) have not undergone comprehensive reforms. The incremental changes advanced in donor-supported curricula reform — referred to as “cosmetic changes” by Kyrgyz experts — reflect to some extent the rapid administrative turn-over among high-level decision-makers in government, which makes it difficult to implement a thorough, comprehensive, systemic reform that would take several years to design, pilot and implement. In addition, it is also indicative of the lack of donor coordination in the areas of curriculum reform, textbook publishing, standards development and pupil assessment.

3.3. Donor Involvement and the Rights-Based Approach

Both UNESCO and UNICEF pursue a rights-based approach to education that entails universal access to quality education with special emphasis on a quality environment, effective learning, child protection, gender sensitivity and parental/community participation⁵, whereas other international organizations also regard creating an environment that is conducive to learning (quality environment), effective learning and gender sensitivity as guiding principles for their work and the two UN organizations are particularly known for their commitment to

- Cross-sectoral reforms that intersect the education, health and social protection sectors

⁴ See previous footnote

⁵ UNICEF (2008). Child-friendly schools. Available from http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_focus_schools.html.

- Including parents and communities in the education process (including non-formal and adult education)
- Improving both quality and access/coverage

Keeping this added emphasis of the two UN organizations in mind, we propose to analyze the Donor Involvement Matrix (Appendix 1) against a more comprehensive framework. We offer several observations based on a review of donor involvement in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Firstly, the cross-sectoral approach is pursued in several projects at pre-school level but ceases to exist (except for pupils with special needs⁶) at basic education level. Both the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey for the Kyrgyz Republic (MICS 2006) and the Drop-Out study, conducted by the El-Pikir Public Opinion Studies Centre on behalf of the MoES (El-Pikir 2008), shed light on the relation between poverty, drop-out and school absenteeism. Late enrollment in school (at the age of 8 and older), absenteeism during the months of intensive agricultural labour (September and October and April and May), and drop-out in lower secondary education, reflect the high opportunity cost associated with schooling for children from poor families. The drop-out study compared class registers with the number of students that were actually present on a given school day (in early October). Conducted in a hundred randomly selected schools, the study found that fourteen percent of students were absent from school. There is a scarcity of donor-funded projects that specifically target the rural and urban poor pupils that have to work (agriculture, trade) either throughout the entire year or during specific months of the year. Although pupils with special needs are increasingly being addressed in donor-funded projects (even though a greater coverage of such projects would be needed), the group of poor and disadvantaged pupils that requires additional health and social services is not explicitly targeted. The Community Management of Education project (CME) of UNICEF is a notable exception in that it targets poor and disadvantaged pupils in Naryn oblast and selected rayons of Batken oblast.

Secondly, as with the previous observation, donor support for parental and community participation seems to be discontinued at basic education level. Again, apart from the small UNICEF CME Project (\$247,000), there are no externally funded projects in the Kyrgyz Republic that explicitly address the participation of parents or communities. It is important to point out though that non-formal education, life-skills teaching, and other related initiatives (advanced by UNESCO) are not listed in the Donor Involvement Matrix, because our analyses exclusively deal with formal schooling.

Finally, most donor-supported initiatives strengthen quality improvement and tend to reduce access to a matter of quality, thereby assuming that the lack of quality is the main factor for non-enrollment and drop-out. While there is evidence to suggest that drop-out directly or indirectly relates to low-quality education, it would be a far-stretched argument to make that if the quality of education were better, students would enroll in school or pre-school. In general, the “left-out” child population deserves far greater attention and their reasons for non-enrollment must be examined in greater detail. Besides poverty and special needs that are not accounted for in regular schools and distance to the next pre-school or school is likely to be a contributing factor in non-enrollment. It is noticeable that the large projects in pre-school and basic education, funded by ADB, the World Bank, and the EFA Fast-Track-Initiative, do not directly tackle the issue of coverage or access, but rather deal with renovating existing facilities to improve the quality of education and only secondarily, improve coverage. At some sites, these large projects intend to increase usage by renovating unused or unusable rooms, but coverage is not a primary objective. School and pre-school mapping would be an appropriate tool to investigate whether access to education has indeed been universally secured. There is yet another, more subtle coverage issue that is under-reported in technical reports and reviews: access to the full curriculum. Strikingly,

⁶ The following organizations target pupils with special needs at basic education level: ADB’s small project on Improving Access to Quality Basic Education for Children with Special Needs (2007-2011) and Save the Children’s project on Inclusive Education.

there is no data available on the impact of teacher shortages on pupils' learning. We only have anecdotal evidence from previous school visits and interviews in the Kyrgyz Republic that pupils in some rural areas do not receive the full curriculum due to teacher shortage or absenteeism. There is a large gap that yawns between the officially prescribed curriculum and the actual curriculum at school level that deserves far greater scrutiny.

Applying such a broader perspective, which includes the considerations of a rights-based approach to education, proves useful to identify reform gaps.

4. Aid Effectiveness in the Education Sector

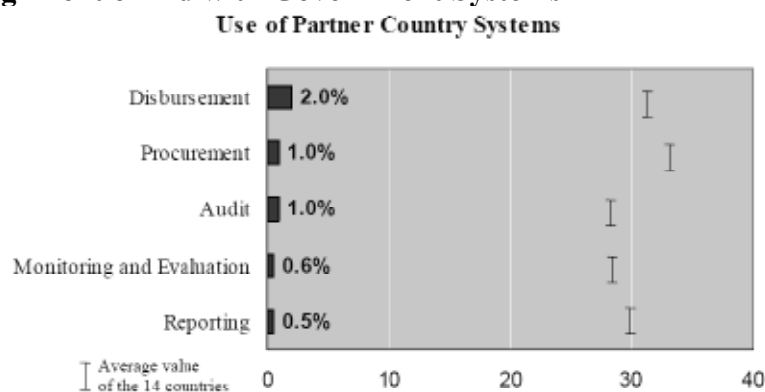
The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was signed in March 2005 by over one hundred ministers from ODA countries⁷ (including the Kyrgyz Republic) as well as the donors operating in these aid-recipient countries. The Paris Declaration enforces five principles — ownership, alignment (donors support for government and sector strategies), harmonization (donor coordination), managing for results and mutual accountability. It provides a set of twelve indicators as well as standardized tools for data collection, analyses and interpretation. To date, only two principles of aid effectiveness — aid harmonization and alignment — have been reviewed for the Kyrgyz Republic and made publicly available (see Appendix 2)⁸. It is likely that the remaining three principles (ownership, managing for results, and mutual accountability) will also be assessed in the Kyrgyz Republic in the not too distant future.

The report on the Kyrgyz Republic emphasizes the need to improve government ownership of reforms and donor coordination. It starts out by explaining why harmonization and alignment have been difficult to achieve in the Kyrgyz Republic:

Clear government ownership of the co-ordination process is obscured, however, by the lack of a clear distinction between the roles of the Ministry of Finance, the Presidential Administration and the Prime Minister’s Office. The donor community feels that there is a need for greater leadership on the part of the government to formulate a national aid coordination policy. [...] However, [donor] support would be more effective with a clearer articulation of government needs (excerpt from the DAC-OECD report, p. 71).

The report reviews harmonization and alignment in five sectors: health, education, water, transport and agriculture, and compares its assessment of the Kyrgyz context with fourteen other ODA countries. Compared to these other ODA countries, donors use the government system the least for their projects. In other words, more than in any other of the reviewed countries, the donor community in Kyrgyzstan has set up its own infrastructure for disbursement, procurement, audit, monitoring and evaluation and reporting and avoids using the government systems. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison between the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic and that in the other reviewed countries (marked as “average value in the 14 countries”).

Figure 1. Alignment of Aid with Government Systems



Source: DAC-OECD, p. 74.

From all government structures that donors use to operate in the country, the government disbursement system is relatively the most popular among donors, but is still far below the average value in the other reviewed countries.

⁷ The text of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness can be found on the following website: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>.

⁸ The assessment of aid harmonization and alignment in the Kyrgyz Republic is attached to this report (Appendix 2), and can be downloaded from the following website of DAC-OECD: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/59/33813508.pdf>.

A breakdown into the five reviewed sectors reveals a slightly better assessment of the health sector than for the other sectors when alignment is reviewed. The report says of the education sector,

A donor coordination process has been formalized through the International Education Advisory Council. The Ministry of Education's capacity for coordinating donor activities is still weak, which explains why the process is donor-led. (DAC-OECD, p.75)

The two greatest differences between the health and education sectors are, according to the Development Assistance Committee of OECD (see figure 2), the following: In contrast to the education sector, the health sector has a clear sector policy and a sector monitoring system.

Figure 2. Alignment with Programmes by Sector

| Alignment with Sector Programmes | | | | | |
|--|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------------|
| | Health | Education | Water | Transport | Agriculture |
| Are sector systems in place? | | | | | |
| Is government leading in the sector? | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Does a clear sector policy exist? | YES! | NO | NO! | NO! | NO |
| Is the sector medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) in place? | YES | YES | NO | NO | YES |
| Is there sector co-ordination? | NO! | NO | NO! | NO! | NO! |
| Is a sector monitoring system in place? | YES! | NO | NO! | NO! | NO! |
| Are systems being harmonised? | YES | NO | NO! | NO! | NO! |
| Are donors supporting the sector systems? | | | | | |
| Are the systems aligned with government policies? | YES! | YES | NO | NO | YES |
| Are funds integrated into the MTEF? | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO |
| Are donors using the government monitoring system? | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO |

Legend: YES! Yes, without reservations, YES Yes, with reservations, NO No, with reservations, NO! No, without reservations.

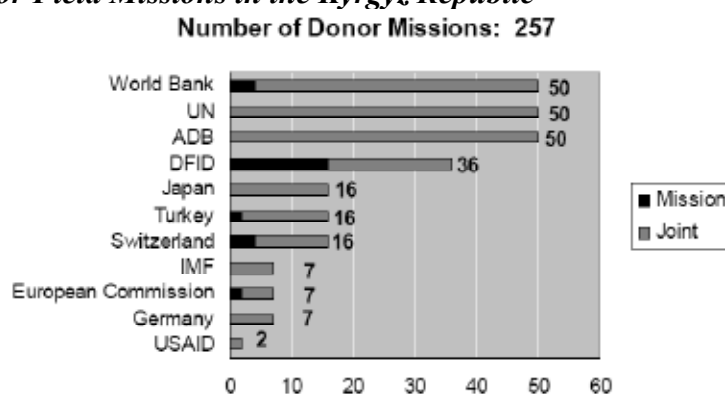
Source: Source: DAC-OECD, p. 75.

Finally, the last excerpt from the report relates to harmonization among donors. The 2005 Paris Declaration uses two indicators for measuring harmonization:

- Use of common arrangements or procedures
- Encourage shared analysis, measured in terms of (a) field missions and/or (b) country analytic work, including joint diagnostic reviews.

The Paris Declaration lists the following targets for the year 2010: (a) 40% of donor field missions are joint, (b) 66% of country analytic work is joint (2005 Paris Declaration, section III, Indicators of Progress). As figure 3 shows, in the Kyrgyz Republic only 10% of all missions (in all five reviewed sectors) have been undertaken jointly between donors.

Figure 3. Donor Field Missions in the Kyrgyz Republic



Source: Source: DAC-OECD, p. 77.

The numbers provided in figure 3 are dated (from 2003) and are aggregated for all five reviewed sectors, and there is a need to examine whether harmonization among donors has improved over the past five years.

While a study on aid alignment and harmonization in the Kyrgyz Republic is useful at an institutional level for it enables donors to make decisions on where to allocate their financial assistance and what mechanisms to use to avoid wastage, there is little in the way of understanding how aid effectiveness or ineffectiveness plays out within a sector. It is necessary to systematically evaluate the donor-supported projects of the past ten years and assess what lasting impact they have had or failed to have, respectively, on educational reform in the Kyrgyz Republic. Which donor-supported reform initiatives were subsequently institutionalized across the country and sustained, which initiatives were suspended, and which ones were partially implemented beyond the duration of the project? In a second step, it would be useful to identify factors that accounted for the success or failure of donor-supported initiatives in having a systemic impact. Since our analysis of donor involvement is closely related to aid effectiveness, we cursorily address in the following several of the questions that we listed above. Our observations are exclusively based on a review of documents as well as interviews with government officials and representatives of international organizations. They need to be viewed as preliminary observations that deserve a more thorough empirical investigation, preferably mandated by the Ministry of Education and Society with the support of donors in the Kyrgyz Republic. We have grouped our observations into eight points.

4.1. Piloting without Scaling-Up

Apart from textbook publishing and other central-level regulations (including curricular issues), there is not one single donor-funded project that is being carried out nationwide. All donor-funded projects, including the multi-million dollar loans and grants by the multilateral and bilateral organizations are considered pilot projects, concentrated in a particular geographic region and targeting a relatively small number of institutions or individuals. In some other countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Mongolia, the role of funding incubator projects or pilot projects with innovative practices is typically reserved for NGOs, UNICEF, and UNESCO that are influential but have to operate with limited funds. It is typical of these organizations to pilot innovative practices in the expectation that the Government or larger donors carry on with institutionalizing or funding their incubator projects. In the Kyrgyz Republic, in contrast, the two development banks pursue the same project implementation strategy that typically smaller organizations with limited funding pursue. ADB, the World Bank, and now also the EFA Fast-Track Initiative merely fund pilot projects for a limited time period with little attention given to how their projects will be scaled up nationwide. The World Bank's Rural School Project, for example, initially considered Talas and Issyk-kul oblasts as two "pilot" provinces; teaching methods, teacher training, teaching material and other innovative practices that were piloted in these two pilot provinces were supposed to be disseminated to the other provinces of the country. It appears that the initial scaling-up plan for nationwide teacher training, for example, had already been dropped during the second year of the project. There are several factors that account for the limited reach of donor-funded projects. As shown in Figure 1 and mentioned throughout this report, non-alignment between donor and government structures should be seen as one of the main causes for the lack of systemic, comprehensive and nationwide reform. It would be unmanageable to coordinate a project that is nationwide rather than concentrated in a particular region from PIUs based in Bishkek, that operate outside the government systems both in Bishkek and throughout the country.

4.2. Institutionalization without Implementation

A good case in point of donor-supported practices that are subsequently institutionalized and announced as a policy, but yet lack sustained implementation, is the first ADB loan. The Programme

Completion Report (ADB 2005, Appendix 1) lists 32 policy actions that were taken as a result of the project over the period 1997-2004. Several of the policies that were introduced as part of the ADB-funded project dealt with the controversial practice of requesting user-fees for textbooks, laboratory use, special classes, etc. More often than not, introduced policies are annulled after donor support or donor attention for a particular area reform has shifted to other areas. Similarly short-lived was the decision to introduce multi-subject teaching in pre-service teacher education to combat teacher shortages in selected subjects. The decision was not carried out because of the lack of capacity and funding to revise the teacher training curriculum in ways that would accommodate the training of multi-subject teachers (USAID 2007).

4.3. Superficial Capacity-Building

Capacity-building is commonly viewed as a prerequisite for knowledge-transfer from international agencies to national government agencies, from central to regional level institutions and individuals and from government officials to a greater group of stakeholders (including practitioners and communities). This transfer is not systematically pursued in the Kyrgyz Republic. The capacity-building components of the large donor-funded projects are, with the notable exception of USAID's PEAKS project, rather small compared to the overall project budget and rather short on actual training days. This observation applies to various groups (teachers/practitioners, community leaders, administrators, government officials, etc.) at various institutions (schools, teacher training institutions, government offices) and at the different levels of the educational system (central, province, district). Even though all the projects include at least one capacity-building component, the scope of the component(s) only allows the target groups of a project to be minimally trained. The capacity-building workshops typically last 2-4 days and it is questionable whether such a short exposure to new content and skills will have a lasting impact.

4.4. Parallel Implementation Structures of Donors

The point has been sufficiently made in this report as well as in the review of the DAC-OECD study that donors in the Kyrgyz Republic, for a variety of reasons, have set up parallel implementation structures including parallel financial management and monitoring structures.

4.5. Limited Coordination between Donors

It needs to be positively noted that the donor-community readily shares their project documents, technical reports, and in some cases, also the Terms of References of their consultants. Thus, sharing "country analytic work" (one of the sub-indicators for harmonization as defined by the 2005 Declaration) is to a great extent achieved in the Kyrgyz Republic. In contrast, it is extremely difficult to access government-issued documents. These documents are not widely disseminated and it is a matter of finding the office or person in charge that more often than not, only possesses a few copies of the document and naturally is reluctant to let go of his/her copies. There is also a forum in place — the International Advisory Council on Education (IACE) — that has been revitalized and meets regularly. Nevertheless, there is a need for the MoES to become more actively involved in donor coordination. In addition, donor coordination is least pronounced at project level. This applies, as mentioned before, especially to the areas of curricula, textbook and student assessment reform where there seems to be little coordination between the two lead-donors, the ADB and the World Bank, and more recently with the second USAID educational project Quality Learning Programme, which also includes a component on pupil assessment.

4.6. Reliance on International Technical Assistance

A recurring criticism, put forward by government officials and Kyrgyz experts is that the large donors spend too much on hiring international consulting firms at the expense of including more Kyrgyz NGOs and experts. We were not able to assess the validity of that claim or the most recent criticism whereby the World Bank's Rural School Project reduced the initially planned project activities (including scaling-up) in order to pay international consulting firms. Government

officials and experts with access to budget information are in a better position to evaluate the validity of that claim.

4.7. Lack of Practitioner Input

Part of the reason for the ineffectiveness of some donor-funded projects such as, for example, curricula and standards reform, is the exclusion of practitioners. As a result, the centrally developed materials are abstract, in parts outdated and have barely made it into schools, let alone affect educational practice. NGOs, UN organizations and also USAID, have set a positive example in that they include government officials (Kyrgyz Academy of Education) and experienced practitioners or teachers.

4.8. Information Barriers

Even though there is a great willingness among the donors to share analytical work and project documentation, there are three features of the Kyrgyz cooperation context that are striking: Firstly, the technical reports produced by international organizations are rarely translated into Russian thereby excluding government officials and civil society organizations from an informed dialogue. Secondly, the range of available written project documentation varies widely among donors. At one end of the spectrum is the Asian Development Bank that openly disseminates its project documents, including project reviews and at the other end of the spectrum is the World Bank's Rural School Project which, in its third year of operation, does not possess a clear, detailed and updated project description. Finally, as mentioned before, official documents issued by government offices are difficult to obtain.

5. Recommendations: The Next Education Development Strategy and the SWAp

This report concludes with a series of recommendation with regard to the next education development strategy. We will also address related issues that are currently discussed in the Kyrgyz Republic: the education sector review and the feasibility of a SWAp in the education sector. In offering our recommendation, we use the criteria for effective aid, outlined in the 2005 Paris Declaration.

1. Ownership

There is agreement between the donor community and the MoES that it does not sufficiently exert ownership of educational reform in the Kyrgyz Republic. Projects and reform initiatives are approved wherever opportunities for external funding arise. Even though there is an Education Development Strategy 2007-2010 that prioritizes reform areas, the strategy has been merely used as a document to attract external funding and not as a planning instrument. There is agreement that ideally the MoES and the Government formulate priorities for reform that are nationally pursued, if needed, with international financial support. The new Education Development Strategy 2010-2015 is an opportunity to assume this leadership and ownership role by distinguishing between primary and secondary reform areas. A few underserved areas have been mentioned in this report (coverage/access to pre-school and basic education in rural areas, pupils with special needs, poor and disadvantaged pupils, systematic and comprehensive curricula reform, strategies for attracting and retaining teachers, community/parental involvement and cross-sectoral initiatives), but additional areas and target groups might emerge upon completion of an empirical education sector review. As part of the unsystematic and disengaged “open handed policy” of the MoES any externally financed project is approved; pilot projects are not scaled-up, and best practices are not institutionalized or mainstreamed. It is important that the MoES formulates reform priorities for the entire country and insists that the donor community scale-up necessary and successful project initiatives.

2. Alignment

There is agreement between the MoES and the donor community that in the long-term, alignment with government structures accounts for more effective and sustainable aid than parallel project implementation, financial management and monitoring. There is, however, disagreement on the pace of replacing the current, non-aligned with an aligned system of cooperation. The existing fiduciary and capacity assessments caution against a rapid move towards aligned aid. Besides massive capacity-building measures strengthening the management capacities of government officials, the donor community should also provide technical assistance to the MoES in formulating a strategy on how to implement donor-funded projects within its government structures. Such a strategy for aligned cooperation in education needs to include a thorough analysis of available human resources (their capacities in terms of management), structures (departments, units), and accountability systems within the MoES where it is expected that structural changes need to be made and capacity needs to be enhanced (both in terms of numbers and skills). The strategy should therefore also include a road map that lays out the milestones towards achieving the goal of aligned aid over the next two years. Critical initiatives or measures to achieve these milestones should be defined and budgeted for. The Department for Strategic and Analytical Work was in the process of developing a functional analysis of the MoES at the time this mission took place. The functional analysis should be seen as a first step for the MoES towards developing a strategy for more aligned external assistance and such a strategy will enable it to engage in a dialogue with the donor community on the feasibility of introducing a SWAp in the education sector by the year 2010.

3. Harmonization

In the short term, the next portion (second tranche) of the EFA-FTI needs to be carried out as a multi-donor initiative with two co-leading agencies, the World Bank and UNICEF. In addition, the IACE needs to formulate both short-term and long-term goals for its donor coordination. One short-term goal could be public access (website) to decrees, documents and technical reports generated by government offices, international organizations, and NGOs in the education sector.

4. Managing for Results

Ideally, the new Education Development Strategy 2010-2015 should be based on a comprehensive review of the education sector. It appears, however, that the two products — strategy and review — are being developed in reverse order; first the strategy (with financial support from the European Commission) and then the review (funded by the World Bank). It is necessary to discuss how the development of these two important documents, funded by different international agencies, could be linked more closely, otherwise, the strategy risks being devoid of empirical evidence and failing to produce meaningful and realistic benchmarks and targets.

5. Mutual Accountability

There is currently an asymmetry in assessing progress with regard to agreed commitments and projects: it is more common for the donor community to evaluate government structures and to evaluate their own projects than for the MoES to systematically evaluate donor structures and donor-funded projects. It is essential to train selected MoES government officials in monitoring and evaluation. The efforts of UNICEF to provide training on monitoring and evaluation for MoES officials is a first step towards a more equitable relation between the MoES and donors in the Kyrgyz Republic.

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