KAZAKHSTAN

Introduction

Community learning centres are local places of learning outside the formal education system. Located in both villages and urban areas, they are usually set up and managed by local people in order to provide various learning opportunities for community development and increased quality of life. A CLC doesn't necessarily require new infrastructure, but can operate from an already existing health centre, temple, mosque, primary school or other suitable venue.

The main objective of this research study was to evaluate CLC outcomes and impacts in Kazakhstan, and then disseminate these findings to EFA stakeholders for strengthening the country's existing literacy and continuing education programmes. The research was led by a group of independent experts that included educators, sociologists and experts from a business consulting centre.

A three-member advisory panel was additionally selected on the basis of: a) professional credentials, b) understanding of organizational issues, and c) expertise in key areas. The objectives of the panel were to serve as a sounding board for the design and findings of the evaluation, and to review and comment on the final synthesis of the report.

Profile of the Research Study

The CLC research was intended to provide an objective assessment of activities in participating countries, with a focus on the diversity of CLC programmes and their specific needs. CLCs in Kazakhstan were analyzed in terms of their location, types of programmes, ownership and financial resources.

The study was undertaken both in urban and rural areas, encompassing: the towns of Karaganda and Jambul, the district centres in Almaty and Jambul (Karabulak and Kordaj), and the villages Amanbokter, Sortobe and Nogajbaj. It should be noted that the August period during which the research took place is vacation time in the region. This presented a degree of difficulty in obtaining interviews because most village inhabitants at this period are busy with seasonal work. Finally, the research was limited by the low number of CLCs functioning in Kazakhstan -- only seven of them.

In order to identify CLC effectiveness at the micro-level, the researchers undertook field surveys and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. There were focused interviews with CLC committee members, CLC facilitators, local authorities, trainers and trainees. These were supplemented by the traditional analysis of documents, SWOT* analysis, and the examination of statistical data.

Experts visited all seven CLCs. Material presented in this report was collected through conversations with CLC representatives and personal surveys.

Analysis of CLC Experiences

To assess CLC progress, it should first be stated that Kazakhstan's literacy rate is 98 percent. In comparison with other countries of the region, Kazakhstan has the most successful situation in the formal educational sector. The involvement of Kazakhstan in achieving the global goals of Education for All has led to improvements in the development of preschools and a decrease in the percentage of out-of-school, primary vocational and university training.

Nevertheless, adult education is outside the serious attention of the government, and left to international organizations and some NGOs. The idea of adult education in the country is considered only from the aspect of training registered unemployed people. The concept of training at a place of residence is not represented in legal documentation.

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5 See Kazakhstan CLC Research Report (in attached CD) for a full list of members on the research and advisory panels
6 12 SWOT stands for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.”
From this aspect, the CLC as a socially focused project provides learning opportunities throughout life to the following target groups: members of needy and large families; women and youth, including the unemployed; children with special needs for development and their mothers; widows; repatriates; and orphans. CLCs in Kazakhstan are found mainly in remote areas or micro-districts with a prevalence of socially unprotected members of the population.

According to normative legislative documents, within the nation’s education system, non-formal education consists of additional education oriented mostly towards children and teenagers who engage in out-of-school art, technical, sports and other activities.

Currently, adult access to learning at their place of residence is only supported by international organizations. The creation of necessary conditions towards equal access to educational programmes and towards the development of life skills is at an early stage of institutional development and requires a strategic approach on the part of the government.

During research, the following basic groups of CLC trainees were identified:

- unemployed (including young people 18-25 years old)
- women with many children
- repatriates
- schoolchildren and students, including the physically disabled
- retired persons

Most of the trainees were middle-aged people (46%). Added to the next largest group (youth), they constitute the majority (75%) of learners. The smallest age group of trainees is made up of children and teenagers.

As figure 8 indicates most of the CLC learners are women. Respondents believe that this is because women are more socially vulnerable and, thus, more open to training.
It became known that the problem of unemployment among CLC target groups is quite extensive. In fact, 50 percent of the interviewed CLC trainees have no steady occupation. This group of trainees is divided into:

a) those not satisfied with their current occupation and seeking better positions to suit their professional skills;
b) those seeking new opportunities to change the sphere of their professional activities; and
c) those who are unemployed.

It should be stated that among the unemployed who participated in CLC training programmes, there were also younger people under 30 years of age.

The employed respondents are workers in various fields. The fact that one of the biggest groups (20.4%) consists of workers in so-called “unqualified” occupations (technicians, merchants, etc.) demonstrates participants’ will to increase or change their own qualifications.

Programmes/Activities

Each CLC in Kazakhstan has different activities depending on the community’s needs and its socio-economic and cultural environment. The core activities of CLCs in Kazakhstan are educational. Programmes and activities generated by CLCs are identified in the following major areas.

The programmes offer training courses, organizational resources for parents, pre-professional training or so-called educational programmes “from school to job” or “from school to career,” alternative education institutions for those who are not satisfied with the formal education framework, preventive early pregnancy programmes, prevention of violence and drug abuse, care of school-age children, enrichment programmes for all members of the community, literacy programmes, foreign language study and adult education.

The main types of vocational education programmes are: computer courses, sewing, hairdressing, modeling, English language learning, electronics, and welding. Life skills programmes include: healthy lifestyle,
family planning, massage, furniture renovation, shoe repair, national crafts, carpentry, handicrafts, pickle making, patchwork, gardening, cheese making, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse prevention, cooking, agricultural processing, and other income-generating activities. Cultural activities include ecology, sports, and cultural heritage.

The programmes offered at CLCs are initiated based on the wishes of local community representatives, and are generated through community meetings and personal interviews. CLC facilitators and trainers hold community interviews on a periodic basis to find out needs and demands in regard to CLC future plans and training programmes. They take steps to activate and involve the local community in the decision-making processes.

**Structure and Management**

All CLCs in Kazakhstan have a similar structure and organizational set-up. The efficiency of CLC activities is built on a high degree of self-organization in the local community. Significant support from the local authorities to ensure effective CLC management is available.

Local authorities play a special role in the organizational structure of the centres. They function at different levels of organizational supervision and provide a certain competence in regard to the objectives of CLC activities and their regulation, solving a variety of issues to meet the needs of the local community. Almost every CLC committee in Kazakhstan is headed by a representative of the local governmental authority - the akim, or his deputy.

The CLC committee also includes representatives of district education authorities, health authorities, social protection authorities, the business community, NGOs, retired people, unions and members of local communities.

The CLC facilitator is one of the community leaders – a skilled, educated individual, willing to introduce new, useful ideas for social development.

CLC trainers consist of schoolteachers, retired people with abundant life experience, individuals from applied professions with practical experience, and other volunteers.

CLCs are established with the support of local authorities, and closely cooperate with them. This cooperation becomes the basic indicator of overall CLC performance. The teamwork is expressed in the following ways:

- **Political**
  - Dissemination of information on CLC activities
  - Involvement of businesses and other donor organizations in CLC activities
- **Material**
  - Providing premises for a CLC
  - Allocation of money in the amount of the established rate of the minimal wage
  - 7,200 Tenge from the local budget to pay the CLC’s key trainers and facilitators
  - Provision of logistics for running the office: heating, electricity, security
- **Social**
  - Inspiring a social orientation among the membership
  - Exchanging best practices in regard to CLC management and operation

Comparing the organizational structures of CLCs in Kazakhstan and CLCs of other countries, their basic difference is the presence in Kazakhstan of local authorities.

The key person in day-to-day management and general planning for CLC development is the CLC facilitator, whose basic responsibilities are as follows:

- Development and organization of training programmes and CLC activities
- Coordination of training processes
- Information campaigns on new activities within the local community
- Involving volunteers from the local community in CLC activities
- Administrative management of the office
It should be noted that members of the local community through their representatives on the CLC committee are highly motivated to initiate new activities. As a general rule, they design their CLC framework according to the needs and demands of the local community.

One of the significant issues raised during research was the lack of clarity in regard to CLC juridical status. CLCs in Taras and Karabulak, for example, have been registered as non-governmental organizations. These CLCs have experience with fundraising to expand the spectrum of their activities. Other CLCs remain as public entities whose infrastructure is supported by local akimat or educational institutions and who are dependent on the political will of certain authorities.

The facilitator of the CLC in Taras stated that there are advantages and disadvantages to the NGO juridical status. First, in respect to fundraising, a CLC with NGO status is eligible to take part in state tenders on rendering direct services to the state on account of the republican budget. Later on, it might be possible to join all CLCs in an association to embody the whole democratic sector.

Otherwise, an NGO has to submit financial reports to local tax departments and pay taxes. Therefore, this status leads to a contrary version of the CLC mission and working for profit as a registered NGO.

Some facilitators suggest elaborating regulations about CLCs and its status as a public entity, which enables it to provide paid educational services on a non-commercial basis, work without profit and, hence, not be subjected to taxes.

**Policy Linkages**

The CLC as an education institution functions first of all within the framework of the state development programmes of the Ministry of Education and Science; the nature of CLC activities reflects the goals of Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population programmeming. In neither ministry, however, do CLCs obtain any real supervision, and neither ministry provides any essential support. Given that CLCs participate in social partnership programmes to implement state social decrees, cooperation with ministerial bodies needs to be strengthened.

Decision-making at the majority of CLCs starts with facilitators and trainers tabulating the needs and demands of the community, which can be identified from interviews and questionnaires. They then submit their recommendation for CLC committee consideration. After appropriate consultation, the programmeming schedules proceeds to the regional/district level for approval. Thus, the human factor, namely the opinions and capability of members of the CLC committee and the local authorities, plays an important role during the decision-making process.

One of the main obstacles for enlarging the scope of education programmes and increasing the number of CLC trainees is the absence of state accreditation and certification. At present, only one CLC in Karaganda (due to its juridical status as an NGO) has state accreditation and is qualified to issue certificates. Such certificates are important in that they strengthen trainees’ chances of hiring and, thus, people’s interest in the training programmes. Hence, the increasing interest in awarding certificates to CLC graduates deserves mention, and further attention should be given to making such certificates equal to those which are issued by state education institutions. Certification of CLC education programmes would lead to further independent employment or moving on to other formal education programmes. In order to achieve this, however, CLC programmes would likely need to maintain a well qualified teaching staff in order to guarantee their educational quality.

At the local level, partnerships are established with local education, cultural, social, labour and health care institutions.

CLC facilitators have managed to establish cooperation and partnership with local and regional organizations, in particular, with teachers of high schools and colleges, libraries and also regional departments of labour. This linkage assists CLCs in mobilizing teachers as volunteers for computer courses and activities in cooking, sewing and national crafts. Women under the management of volunteers learn carpet-weaving skills through a similar linkage.
Table 14. CLC Relations with Partnering Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of CLCs</th>
<th>Partnership, networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Karaganda</td>
<td>akimat of Karaganda area, akimat of October area in Karaganda, School # 46, vocational school # 6, NGO, universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Taraz</td>
<td>akimat of Zhambylskii area, town and district akimats of Taraz, NGO “Taras Initiative Centre”, “School of Women’s Leadership”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Kordaj</td>
<td>akimat of Kordajskii area, akimat of Kordajskii area, Kordaj Department of Labor and Social Protection, school, hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Sortobe</td>
<td>akimat of village in Sortobe, school, branch of vocational school, local museum, hospital, Association of Business Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Nogajbaj</td>
<td>akimat of village Nogajbaj, college, school, polyclinics, Kordaj Department of Labor and Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Amanbokter</td>
<td>akimat of village Amanbokter, University of the Central Asia (UCA), Association of Initiative Schools, school, Association of Mountainous Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC- Karabulak</td>
<td>akimat of Karabulakskii area, akimat of village Karabulak, Department of Labor and Social Protection, college, vocational school, agricultural organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the essential problems of regional cooperation is communication. CLCs suffer from weak telephone communication, absence of electronic mailing and no availability of access to the Internet.

Impact/Outcomes

There are three reasons for local community members to participate in CLC programmes: (1) to receive concrete knowledge in concrete applied disciplines (computer literacy, modeling, sewing, welding, cheesemaking, mining, etc.), (2) to develop personal life skills (learning English, gardening, health care, family planning, etc.), and (3) to be involved in social and cultural programmes (environmental protection, cultural heritage, sports, etc.).

Figure 11: CLC Participant Motivation

A high rate of return among CLC trainees to CLC programmes and activities was apparent. This often means that learners are continuing in other types of training courses or are involved with CLC social and cultural events. Obviously, student achievements show that skills learned at the CLC are important in being employed and making part-time earnings.

Among programmes which the local population would like to continue, there are three main groups: professionally-oriented courses (courses for hairdressers, auto crane operators, auto mechanics, electricians, designers, etc.); programmes training vital skills (producing milk products, health care and sports, psychological training, language courses, etc.); and skills-upgrading programmes.

Improvement in the quality of life at the present stage of CLC operations is defined by the following key indicators:
Ninety-nine percent of the CLC trainees were satisfied with the quality and the contents of the education process. In personal meetings, respondents noted that attendance at CLC programmes gave them new theoretical and practical knowledge through modern information technologies. Second, most CLC trainers were experts in their relevant spheres. Moreover, they had significant teaching experience and combined their activities at the CLC with their main jobs in high schools, professional schools and institutes.

There was an increase of knowledge and learning among youth and women about health and hygiene issues, family planning, preventive measures against HIV/AIDS, smoking, drug abuse and infectious diseases.

Ninety-six percent of the CLC trainees were satisfied with the schedule of CLC activities and training. They appreciated the flexibility of the schedule, the individual approach of the teacher to trainees, the convenience of the times chosen for training, and the selection of occupations according to wishes of the trainees.
3. At least 79 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the qualitative parameters of the CLC material base. Most CLC trainees and trainers emphasized the importance of training by means of new information technologies, the high quality of computers, sewing machines produced by leading foreign companies, and other modern office equipment.

It must be noted that notwithstanding considerable governmental efforts to modernize Kazakhstani schools (in comparison with other Newly Independent State (NIS) countries, Kazakhstan has the highest student-to-computer ratio at 57 pupils for every personal computer), schools (especially in rural areas) lack computers and other new information technology. Since most CLC trainees are inhabitants of rural places and adults train by means of modern information technologies at the place of their residence, ICT is of utmost value for their further self-education and self-employment.

However, among seven CLCs in Kazakhstan, only one (Karaganda) has 10 computers, compared to 5 computers at other CLCs. In personal meetings with experts, respondents noted that the demand for CLC training is very high. However, the amount of training equipment doesn't allow for increasing the number of trainees. For some training programmes, CLC facilitators keep waiting lists. For example, some respondents informed us that they have been waiting for their turn for at least four months.

4. At least 20 percent of those completing CLC training courses have found employment or started their own businesses.

5. The majority of CLC learners have noted skills development through social, educational and multicultural activities.

**Figure 14: CLC Participant Satisfaction Levels**

![Satisfaction Levels Graph](image)

Basically, the CLC overall impact is expressed in three areas:

**Upgrading the business skills of the local population.** For example, the inhabitants of Amanbokter village were introduced to marketing in business courses and, after completing them, were able to solve common problems with the sale of self-made milk production. Due to low awareness of the principles of supply and
demand, the village inhabitants had suffered from heavy spoilage of milk products because the remote and mountainous place where they lived required that they wait for potential buyers to arrive. Nowadays, the villagers have learned to make cheese and sell it in the nearby regional markets at high prices.

Reduction in the number of unemployed people. CLCs have experience in partnership schemes with the local Labor Department to train enlisted unemployed people in CLC training programmes. They also offer seminars on skills to compose a resume, prepare for interviews, and self-employment.

Rise of social and educational activity among unemployed youth and housewives. Authorities note the increase in community participation in local activities. As research shows, better educational outcomes – as represented by trainees’ achievements – are closely related to higher incomes in life.

The purchase of personal computers by inhabitants of Sortobe increased after completing CLC computer courses. The training process at CLCs focuses not only on the transfer of certain knowledge and skills, but also on diverse development of the individual, encouraging his creativity, abilities and such personal qualities as initiative, self-management, imagination and originality.

CLC beneficiaries have noted the moral aspects of CLC programmes that help people to enrich their lives with the following abilities:

1. **Self-confidence and willingness to adapt to the demands of society.** Experts have revealed certain psychological barriers (especially among adults), the fear of a grown-up to be trained or a reluctance to admit they do not know certain things. After attending programmes at the CLC, practically 50 percent of the trainees have overcome this barrier. Some respondents answered that they have become more willing to take initiative.

2. **Coexistence, tolerance of other nationalities, cultures and traditions.** Through the joint efforts of local representative and executive bodies, one CLC sponsor seminars on cultural heritage to encourage national pride. However, this concept hasn’t become a key principle of CLC activities.

3. **Positive behavioural change of the learners in communication, critical thinking, decision-making and creativity.** Trainees defined the following CLC programmes as most effective: computer courses, health care, processing of agricultural products, massage services to disabled children, lessons for farmers, sewing, cooking, hairdressing, shoe or furniture repair, national crafts.

**Major Findings**

The research revealed that for CLCs better management priority must be given first and foremost to these aspects:

- strategic and operative planning, definition of mission
- maintenance of a database
- identifying the priority needs of the community
- self-evaluation

**Strengths**

**External factors**

- The CLC fills the gap of the national education system in guaranteeing wide access to lifelong learning for all, particularly unprotected categories of the population, including adults, the unemployed, women, youth, repatriates, the disabled and children of preschool age.

- In terms of the poorly developed non-formal education sector, the CLC is believed to be one of the effective models of non-formal education to satisfy the needs of youth and adults to acquire life skills and habits and to improve the quality of their lives.

- Through its concept of an individual approach, the CLC is suited to realize the tasks specified in state programmes on educational development, the struggle against poverty, social protection, the effective employment of a significant part of the able-bodied population, contributing to stable income and its increase.
CLC plays a growing role in the promotion of democratic procedures in society in decision-making at the local level as well as in the establishment of civil awareness, healthy lifestyles, social activity and gender equality.

Open and flexible in the organization of its activities, the CLC through the mobilization of local resources, including schools and other social organizations, is able to provide vocational training by means of modern information and communication technologies.

CLCs have already developed as multipurpose centres most needed by local communities.

**Internal factors**

- The mechanism of social partnership is developed and being implemented through volunteer involvement, trainers, and business contacts with interested organizations.
- Regular communication with members of the local community takes place for the purpose of needs analysis, monitoring, accountability and transparency.
- The management structure makes available at least two basic teachers with appropriate teaching qualifications and essential job experience, along with a high level of interest and activity among CLC managers and teachers.
- Vocational accelerated short-term training courses have been introduced in the specialties most required by the market economy.
- There is the positive experience of material and financial support for CLCs by local authorities.

**Weaknesses**

**External factors**

- Insufficient trust and support from the state, caused by the lack of disseminated information; poor acknowledgement by local authorities about the advantages of CLCs and possible benefits for the state.
- Institutional and financial instability, uncertainty of CLCs’ legal status
- Poor material and financial support from local budgets, basically consisting of wages to facilitators and teachers, the need for a real state mechanism for financial and material stability
- Weak regional CLC networking, caused by communications problems, need for access to the Internet to overcome the remoteness of CLCs scattered across Kazakhstan
- Need for regular consultation and methodical maintenance for CLC managers, weak human resources development or none at all
- Need for state accreditation of CLC training courses to bridge higher levels of formal education and certification for further employment

**Internal factors**

- Lack of CLC managers for strategic planning, fund raising, self-evaluation and self-analysis skills
- Poor material and technical support. Lack of means for replacement or repair of equipment
- Inertness in CLC activity towards expansion of the spectrum of training courses

**Opportunities**

- International exchange of best practices and their adaptation to the national situation.
- CLC lobbying at state level, introduction into national programmes of human resources development, involving different types of national authorities
- International experts consulting and support
- Wide information campaign by means of positive publication and other mass media at a national level
- Enlargement and improvement of the quality of CLC services provided to a wide range of target groups
- Promotion of regional and international partnership
**Threats**

- Lack of political support, absence of interest in CLC activities from the state; poor financing may result in CLC self-liquidation
- Absence of an effective system of planning regular training for CLC managers
- Lack of opportunities for international cooperation

Another threat is the reduction of financial support from local authorities towards a total cut-down. According to the budgetary code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, financing from budgetary funds to promote NGOs, NCOs and other public (not state) organizations is outlawed, except financing through performance of the social order in terms of participation of the given organization in state competitions to carry out state orders.

**Recommendations**

The research has identified the need for the following:

- Political will for introducing non-formal education into national legislation and state programme development to integrate into the world educational space
- Lobbying at a national level to include CLC development in national and sub-national programmes
- Regional workshop/seminar/meeting for joint training, review, evaluation, exchange of experience
- Networking with local expert agencies, such as universities, teacher skills upgrading institutes, for technical support and supervision
- Continuing support from state and sponsors to cope with changing needs
- Whenever possible, editions of teaching materials for the support of CLC trainers and facilitators
- Capacity-building of CLC personnel with regard to planning, management, teacher training, and technical expertise