Brief report on the current activities in NFE and Literacy through CLCs in Kazakhstan

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The successful national and international practice has shown that the social role of TVET best of all is demonstrated in the ability of the system to develop and harness new skills and competences with learners enabling them to adequately and efficiently act on the changing labour market, thus improving their wellbeing and quality of life.

The practical implementation of this statement requires that TVET institutions have to embed innovative components into curricula, teaching and learning methods, forms of cooperation with partners, have an in-depth understanding of the social and economic mission of education. This involves innovations both on the local and national levels through making political decisions. Very slowly, but the understanding of the necessity of implementing these ideas in practice is visible in the policy documents and a number of documents have been adopted in Kazakhstan recently.

The strategic development plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until the year 2020 defines the priority objective for the education system as expanding access to quality education of different levels and types of education. The Strategy stipulates that before 2020 conditions will be created for learning throughout life irrelevant of age, level of education and qualification. All population will have opportunity to acquire and improve skills through making available a variety of education and training opportunities – distance education, short-term courses, formal, non-formal, inclusive). Individuals will be able to select the type, pace and duration of training. Thus the education system is viewed not as an autonomous structure, but as a part of the socio-economic system capable of addressing issues of human resources development in the context of economic growth. There is clear orientation towards increasing the role and importance of NFE though the emphasis on formal TVET still is strong.

One of the efficient tools to address the mentioned goal, in particular, in rural and remote areas, are Community Learning Centres – both community and government supported.

In 2002 Association “Education for All in Kazakhstan/UNEVOC Centre” launched a project supported by UNESCO, Bangkok “Establishing Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in Kazakhstan”. The main objective of the project – facilitating the development of skills among vulnerable groups of people to better adapt to the new social and economic conditions.

With the support of UNESCO, Bangkok there were established 7 CLCs in three regions of Kazakhstan – two in cities and 5 in rural communities. In 2010 a new CLC was established in the Ili raion. It was initiated by Director of “Progress” college with the support of “Philippe Morris International”(PMI) company.1 All CLCs were equipped with computers, office equipment, sewing machines, furniture. Local administration provided premises, covered the cost of electricity, heating, salaries for staff. Internet connection enabled community people have access to information and networking with other partner CLCs and wider world.

The principal target groups of CLCs are mainly disadvantaged people – disabled, orphans, unemployed women and youth, pensioners and similar. This number is increasing due to the involvement of other new groups in various programmes – school and college graduates, repatriates, local administration, and other employed and unemployed individuals.

A number of training activities were organized for CLC facilitators (ToT) who further acted as trainers for other groups of community people. CLC facilitators also mobilized community members involving them in diverse training activities – from computer literacy, foreign languages, sewing to entrepreneurial skills. One of the key components – psychological

1 For more details please see Annex 1.
adaptation of community people to the changing environment, encouraging them to mobilize and be able to enhance their employability or get self-employed, start own small business.

**Training programmes** offered by CLCs are funded from two different sources: some of them are free of charge. The cost is covered by local authorities (departments of employment and social programmes, health and education authorities, international organisations, national NGOs, companies, etc.). Others are chargeable, but the cost is lower than the cost of similar programmes provided by other organisations.

One of the main achievements of CLCs – overcoming psychological barriers and willingness to continue their education or improve their skills among adult population, in particular, among rural women and disabled people. Among other effects can be mentioned increased employability of unemployed people: from 40% to 80% of course graduates find a job or start own small business. As a result of training courses and communication with peers and teachers many young people and adults have a different view to life – they are more optimistic as regards their present and future.

**Issues and concerns.**

Our pilot initiatives have shown that along with the overall improvement of the economic situation and increase of income the problem of marginalization and poverty among for specific groups of population still persists, in particular, in rural regions. In the education policy the approach based on increasing access of various groups of population to education and training programmes to enhance their skills is not sufficiently emphasized and funded. In the ongoing reforms the role and potential of TVET are limited to training qualified specialists for economy and mainly through formal TVET. TVET institutions are not ready either to offer a variety of training services both for the “principal” target community as well as for consumers of non-formal TVET services.

The existing CLCs have gained recognition of local authorities and their services are demanded among community members. Though the number of community based organizations named CLC have not increased considerably during the last years (only two new CLCs have been established) there are a number of other organizations whose concept is similar to the concept of CLCs. Some of the initiatives are initiated and managed by grassroots and local NGOs, others initiated and steered by central government agencies and donors. They can bear the name of Employment Centres, Community Education Centres, Community Oriented Schools, Schools as Centres of Community Life, Community Foundations, etc. Nevertheless they have much in common and are doing a good job. Unfortunately there is no umbrella organization to coordinate the activities of such numerous organizations, disseminate the achievements, attract attention to the needs of community people and facilitate partnership and networking between them.

There is lack of potential to provide quality needs based non-formal training for adults. TVET schools are not ready yet to “turn” to training needs of population based on efficient social partnership. And this niche could be successfully “filled in” by CLCs.

To facilitate policy dialogue discussions could be initiated on the national and sub-regional levels on the social and economic role of education, to raise awareness of policy makers and wider community on the role and potential of NFE, to promote the culture of community development through community based organizations. Further capacity building activities should be organized for education administrators, specialists and experts on the implementation of NFE.

**Proposed action plan of ARTC for 2011-2016**

Sub-regional (International) event could become a catalyst of the process of strengthening the role of non-formal education through a variety of community based and government supported organizations. It could become a driving engine to advocate inter-sectoral policy of NFE with the involvement of the society at large (government agencies, parliament members, communities, training institutions, non-governmental organizations, experts) could be advocated.
ANNEX 1.

A pilot initiative «TVET for disabled people in the Ili raion» implemented by polytechnic college “Progress” with the support of “Philippe Morris International”(PMI) company.

The amount of grant is 6 608 241 tenge (45 000 USD).

Objective: facilitating social and professional rehabilitation of representatives of socially vulnerable groups (disabled people).

There are over 3000 disabled people living in the Ili raion. The majority of them are unemployed and get only the public pension which is very small. Because of disabilities there are only a limited range of occupations they can be involved in, sewing being one of these. PMI company provided support to the college in organising sewing courses for hearing-impaired people in the Otegen batir village which is located in the same area as the PMI is. After the completion of the courses the people have good chances to get employed. There are several private sewing companies and shops (5 big and a number of smaller ones) where the trainees will have their practical part of training and further can get employed. “Progress” college and the local public department of employment (PDE) have signed an agreement on the practical job placement and further employment of graduates in the mentioned enterprises. The experience of Almaty city has shown that small private companies are quite positive towards employing disabled people, in particular, in small shops for repairing footwear and clothes.

Along with training programmes the project includes vocational guidance and consultancy activities, equipping the training workshop, adapting the teaching and learning process to the needs of trainees, social and psychological support and adaptation, fairs to sell the goods produced, support in establishing own business, etc. As a result of the project first 30 disabled people have acquired knowledge and skills needed to start own small business or get employed. Well equipped training laboratory is available in the college premises to ensure sustainable continuation of training for vulnerable groups of people in the future. All 30 trainees are working in a sewing shop. Contribution of each member of the group is accurately registered. The goods produced by them are sold and people get remuneration.

Based on the success the project partners – PMI and college “Progress” - as continuation of the project have started the next phase. They reoriented the training content to develop new income generation skills with a group of disabled people in the same raion through growing mushrooms.