



McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Childhood Nutrition Program: Success Stories

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Lessons learned: Increasing feeding budgets in Ala-Buka

The early years of a child's life are a period of rapid growth, development and change and are critical for a child's physical, cognitive and social development. In the Kyrgyz Republic, 18 percent of children under-five years old are stunted and, only 16 percent of children from 6 to 23 months of age are receiving the minimum acceptable diet according to the World Health Organization Standards (DHS 2012). Throughout the country, kindergartens provide nutrition, socialization opportunities, and education to children before they begin primary school that help them develop and meet their potential.



Since 1994, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Mercy Corps have provided essential support to kindergartens to help them achieve this mission. Since 2003, this support has come through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. The most recent McGovern-Dole program began in 2012 and has provided daily school meals for approximately 60,000 kindergarten and primary school students each month. The program also has improved the learning environments in kindergartens and primary schools through nearly 900 small grant projects and trained over 12,000 parents, school administrators and staff, and local government officials on practical ways to improve childhood nutrition. The current McGovern-Dole program is the final support that kindergartens will receive from USDA and has focused on building local ownership of feeding programs and the capacity of school administrators and local government officials to ensure that hot, diverse and nutritious meals continue to be available at all primary schools and kindergartens in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In Ala-Buka rayon (district) of Jalal-Abad oblast (region), the lessons learned through the McGovern-Dole program have enabled the local community to increase funding to kindergarten feeding programs, ensuring they are able to continue providing diverse meals throughout the district. In the Kyrgyz Republic, national regulations established the standard budget of 36 Kyrgyz Soms (KGS) (\$0.55) per child per day for meals in kindergartens, with 18 KGS (\$0.27) contributed by parents and 18 KGS (\$0.27) contributed by the government. However, in many parts of the country, the actual contributions from both sources are much

less. The overall average at kindergartens currently supported by Mercy Corps through the McGovern-Dole program is 30 KGS (\$0.46) per day.



Atyrgul Almatova has worked in education since 1991 and remembers the challenges faced by the Kyrgyz education system in the years after independence from the Soviet Union. Under Soviet rule there was a well organized system of schools and pre-schools but after independence the new government was not able to fund these institutions and many of the preschools closed. In rural areas, similar to where she works now as an officer of the Ala-Buka rayon Department of Education in Jalal-Abad oblast, the educational system faced additional pressures. Rural households lost their source of income and parents were not able to make payments to their children's kindergartens. Government funding, when allocated, often came late and the kindergartens did not have the resources to cover expenses while they were waiting. Kindergartens were unable to pay salaries to their staff or provide meals for students and in many cases children would

bring bread from home so they could eat during the school day.

*“Undoubtedly, today the situation has changed significantly, of course, due to the growth of Kyrgyz economy and welfare of its citizens, but we never forget how necessary and always timely has been food aid from the USDA provided by Mercy Corps since early 1995. By that time 18 operating kindergartens remained in Ala-Buka District, and all of them were provided with flour, rice and oil. This was an essential complement to the scarce stock purchased for the funds allocated from the local budget and parental contributions”, Atyrgul Almatova recalls. “On a large scale, kindergartens have acquired the opportunity to use the funds of their own budget to ensure the diversity of children's food, as required by the preschool nutrition system. This gave hope that the difficulties will be overcome sooner or later. **It is no exaggeration to say that annual food aid from Mercy Corps has prevented many rural kindergartens from closing.**”*

The 2012 McGovern-Dole program's commodity distributions reached 20 kindergartens in Ala-Buka District through the 2013 and 2014 distributions. In the first year, kindergartens received a nine-month portion of commodities to supplement their feeding programs. In the second year, the kindergartens ration was reduced to a six-month portion of commodities to prepare them for graduation from the program. In 2015, as a result of the funding level analysis, all of the kindergartens in Ala-Buka were graduated from the program, due to an increase in the nutrition funding contributed by parents from 360 (\$5.54) to 500 KGS (\$7.70) per month. This increase offsets the value of the McGovern-Dole commodities and allows the kindergartens to serve diverse meals without external support.

How did Mercy Corps promote this increase in funding? All activities in the program have been designed to promote sustainable, diverse meals without USDA support. One that has been particularly successful is conducting trainings for parents, who then serve more diverse meals at home and increase their willingness to pay for better meals in the schools. In Ala-Buka, Mercy Corps conducted trainings for parents in eight communities and held ten short information meetings for local leaders, government officials, parents, and elders in all eight village districts on the topic “Family budget planning is the basis of a healthy diet.” Mercy Corps also held foundational trainings for the staff of the kindergartens and brought 17 cooks from kindergartens in the district to vocational training courses in Bishkek to learn about child nutrition and safe food preparation.

Mercy Corps held meetings in each kindergarten in Ala-Buka during February 2015 with the participation of parents and staff. The main purpose of the meetings was to inform participants that the program was ending, to congratulate them on their successes, and to discuss their vision of how to ensure sustainable diverse meals for kindergarten children without support from the McGovern-Dole program.

These issues were also discussed during monthly monitoring of the kindergartens conducted by Mercy Corps training and field officers. Atyrgul Almatova participated in the majority of the events. “At District Education Department meetings the issues of ensuring quality and rational nutrition in kindergartens are periodically considered”, Atyrgul Akmatova says. **“At the meeting in March 2015 preschool institution directors raised the issue of forthcoming completion of Mercy Corps’ Food for Education Program in Ala-Buka district and the urgent need to increase funding for meals provision in kindergartens. Preschool institution directors informed the District Education Department management about the fact that during parental meetings the majority of participants express the willingness to increase monthly payments for**



children’s stay in kindergartens to the level necessary to provide full-value meals for children in kindergartens.”

After this meeting, Atyrgul Almatova met with the deputy head of the district administration, Kalchagul Satimbaevna Usonbaeva, to discuss other social issues. During a lengthy conversation, the deputy was informed about the status of kindergartens in the district, efforts taken to serve diverse meals, cooperation with Mercy Corps' Food for Education program, its upcoming completion, and the consequent need to increase and sustain funding for meals preparation in the kindergartens of the district. After some discussion, they decided to appeal directly to the district administration head Alymkul Raimkulovich Kuluev, since the resolution of this important issue at the district level demanded his direct participation and support. In mid-March of 2015, the need to increase funding for children’s meals in pre-school institutions was raised for discussion at the district meeting with the participation of all ayil okmotu (village council) heads and district level officials. Having listened to the report of the District Education Department and having discussed the state of preschool institutions funding, the meeting participants made a unanimous decision to include the issue into the agenda of upcoming sessions of deputies of the 8 village councils located in Ala-Buka District.

In April 2015, all village councils in Ala-Buka agreed to increase the parental fee for kindergarten services from 360 KGS (\$5.54) up to 500 KGS (\$9.26) per child per month. The decision came into effect in May 2015. The size of funding for child’s meals from the local budget has remained at the level of 360 KGS (\$5.54). Thus, funding for child’s nutrition in all kindergartens of Ala-Buka District has reached a total of 860 KGS (\$13.23) per child per month.

“This was a very timely decision, since the food commodities provided by the Food for Education Program in 2014 had been partially or fully consumed by the majority of kindergartens by the described period. The initiative was successful and was supported by parents, state administration, and village council deputies largely due to the fact that they were prepared for the decision. This was made possible as a result of our joint efforts. An important role was played by meetings and trainings conducted by Mercy Corps staff on the organization of healthy nutrition and capacity building of preschool institutions and schools in the



organization of children's meals with the participation of parents, institutions heads and representatives of local self-governance bodies; awareness and involvement of parents in decision-making processes; willingness of managers at various levels to provide immediate support to children's institutions,” said Atyrgul Akmatova.

“Ala-Buka District Department of Education conducts annual planned seminars for nurses with the participation of village district specialists, district Sanitary Epidemiological Station and a pediatrician; winners of district competitions among pre-school institution chefs have become winners of regional and national competitions in different years; our nearest plans include conducting a workshop for medical workers on the basis of kindergarten #1, as well as conducting master classes by those kindergarten chefs who have attended the refresher course organized by Mercy Corps in Bishkek for the other kindergarten chefs of the district. Undoubtedly, all of this will promote consolidation of the efforts of all stakeholders to improve conditions for children in kindergartens of the district and their nutrition”.

Advocacy in action: A new kindergarten in Naryn

Mercy Corps' training team organized trainings on "Capacity building of preschool educational organizations/schools to improve children's diets" through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) supported 2012 McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, which has provided daily school meals for approximately 60,000 kindergarten and primary school students. The program also has improved the learning environments in kindergartens and primary schools through nearly 900 small grant projects and trained over 12,000 parents, school administrators and staff, and local government officials on practical ways to improve childhood nutrition. The capacity-building sessions reached 442 educational institutions and more than 1,700 people participating in 105 training sessions across all Kyrgyzstan.



During the capacity-building workshops, kindergarten and school administrators discuss the specific problems that their institutions are struggling with. Then, throughout the workshop, each institution and their local government representatives prioritize problems and develop action plans to solve the problem using the advocacy skills that are practiced throughout the two-day workshop.

After the workshop, Mercy Corps' commodity monitors and training officers provide coaching to the kindergartens and schools during monthly visits to make sure they are on track to complete their action plans. **To date, about 40% of educational institutions have completed their action plans with the support of parents and the local government.**

This story is about the kindergarten Tereke-Bereke, which attended to the training on "Capacity building of preschool educational organizations/schools to improve children's diets" in November 2014.

The kindergarten is located in Terek village of the Ak-Talaa rayon of Naryn oblast. Terek is a very small village with a population of 1,338 people. In the village there are only three government institutions: the aiyi okmotu (village council), a school and the kindergarten. These three institutions are also the only source of salaried employment in the village, with wages ranging from 2000 KGS (\$31) to 15,000 KGS (\$231). The residents who don't work for the government support themselves as small farmers.

The kindergarten building was built in 1936 and has previously been used as a school, library, and a workshop. For many years the building was abandoned before reopening in 2009 as the kindergarten. Forty children are enrolled at Tereke-Bereke kindergarten and 14 staff members care for them during the day. An additional 35 children are on the waiting list.



During Mercy Corps' capacity-building workshops, the director, nurse, a teacher and a parent represented the kindergarten. They identified one problem, but it was a big one. To build a new kindergarten building that met all the current standards and regulations. The old building did not have enough room to enroll the children from the waiting list, didn't have a playground space for children to play outdoors, and had old latrines that needed to be renovated.



During the capacity-building workshops, one module is focused on how to effectively communicate needs to the right stakeholders who can help you address those needs. After the workshop, Tereke-Bereke kindergarten representatives realized that they needed to work on their communication skills. They prepared and sent a letter to the local government authority (aiyl okmotu and aiyl kenesh) requesting them to build a new kindergarten building that could serve 75 children.

After eight months, when no progress had been made, the kindergarten prepared a second letter and sent it to the local government authorities and the national Ministry of Education and Sciences. This time they made progress. Several meetings were held to investigate the possibility and the cost of building a new kindergarten and **in September 2015, they received an official letter informing them that 17 million KGS (\$261,500) has been allocated for the construction of their new kindergarten.**



Currently, Tereke-Bereke's director is preparing all of the necessary documentation and approvals so that construction of the new kindergarten can begin.

During a coaching visit after learning of their success, the director said: *"On behalf of me, and our staff and parents, I would like to say thanks for all staff, Mercy Corps and USDA. This training is very useful. Most of the information from training we knew but we do not know how to use it correct. And now we try to use advocacy tools. For instance, at present time we are searching for donors to equip new groups in new kindergarten with furniture.*

Unfortunately, I was not able to apply and work with grant component as I became director in September 2014, but we closely work with food component as received rice, flour, peas and oil."

Increased support: Better meals in Nooken Rayon

Nooken rayon is located in Jalal-Abad oblast, about two hours drive from the southern city of Osh. Approximately 120,000 people live in Nooken and they are served by 32 kindergartens, including seven new kindergartens that have opened in the past three years alone. This mirrors the national trend where the number of kindergartens and the number of kindergarten children has continuously increased since 2005.



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The kindergarten Nariste is located in Mombekov village in Nooken rayon and was built in 1963 to serve 90 children. Nariste received commodities, training and grant component support from the 2012 McGovern-Dole project implemented by Mercy Corps in Kyrgyzstan. As part of the program, the kindergarten's staff and parents of children who attend the kindergarten participated in a series of nutrition trainings, the cook attended an 18-day course on preparing healthy meals for children at a Bishkek vocational schools, and the kindergarten received matching funds from the grant component to purchase classroom furniture.

At the beginning of the McGovern-Dole program in 2012, the parents of children attending Nariste each contributed 18 Kyrgyz Soms (\$0.25) per day for the two meals and one snack that their child would receive at kindergarten. The government matches these funds, leaving the kindergarten with 36 Kyrgyz Soms per child to spend on food each day. Through the McGovern-Dole program Mercy Corps provided Nariste with flour, sunflower oil, rice and split peas to help diversify their meals and as a result of this aid the diversity of the kindergarten's meals has expanded. Foods such as cheese curds, sour cream, yogurt, tomatoes, cucumbers, and cabbage were added to the menu.

The newly trained staff and parents from the school quickly saw the benefit of the improved meals. Through the director's initiative, and active cooperation with local self-governance bodies and parents, the parental contribution was increased to 30 Kyrgyz Soms (\$0.46) per day, for a total feeding budget of 48



Kyrgyz Soms (\$0.74) per day. Due to their success at improving the quality of the meals served and raising additional funding from the community, Nariste was graduated from the program in the spring of 2015. Parents recognize the value of the improved meals, and despite the increased fees, demand for space in the kindergarten are high. They recently opened a new classroom and the total enrollment has increased to 145 children.

"And it is not a single example", the inspector of Nooken District Education Department, Gulmira Andarova, said. The ***"monthly parents' kindergarten fee in Mombekov and Sakaldy villages increased to***

600 KGS, in Shaidan, Massy, Nooken, Burgundu, Dostuk village districts - up to 400 KGS, in Aral village district - up to 450 KGS, and in Kochkor-Ata town – up to 750 KGS. At the same time, in less than three years seven new kindergartens have been opened and one kindergarten has been rehabilitated.”

“In the past, Mercy Corps always supported us during difficult periods when it wasn’t certain the kindergarten would be able to stay open”, said Nariste kindergarten director, Mavlyuda Zhunusova. “And now the skills we learned at the trainings have lead to visible changes in the work of the kindergarten. The trainings have also made it easier for us to organize meetings with parents and they have become much more active. Interaction with the local self-governance head Daniyar Torokhanov has improved, and he readily solves the issues that require his involvement.”

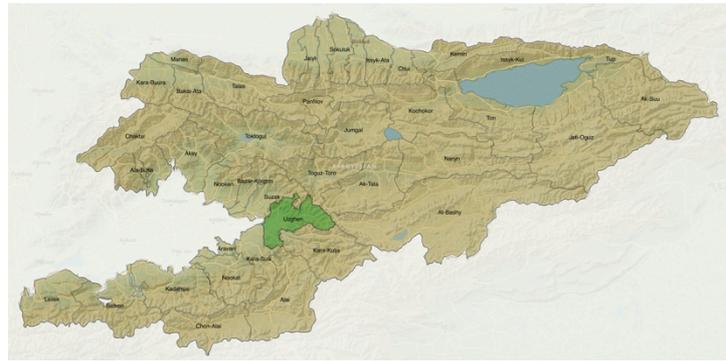


“For example, Mercy Corps trained us to plan, collaborate and prepare applications to key stakeholders for help solving problems at our kindergarten. We were quick to take advantage of the acquired skills, and even a little unexpectedly, our efforts were rewarded: Mombekov village district funded the construction of a new summer kitchen, which is planned to be completed by 15 November of the current year - this issue has been one of the most important ones for our kindergarten recently. There is a hope that the task of ensuring healthy diet in the kindergarten will be solved successfully. We have all the necessary conditions for this.”



Primary school meals in Uzgen Rayon: *“We like it”*

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Kyzyl-Abad School #44 began serving hot meals in September 2014 and since then the 120 primary school students have enjoyed daily hot meals at school. *“In the past we were given only tea and buns, and it was not very tasty to eat them every day. Now we eat noodle soup and other soups, pilaf, and drink compote. We like it,”* said a class of second grade students when questioned about the change in their meals.

“Yes, this is the second year that we have included hot meals in the daily diet of primary school students. As you know, previously, children's diet at school consisted only of cookies or buns with a cup of tea. Since the beginning of the hot meals project implementation everything has changed fundamentally,” says Jyldyz Aranova, the school's cook.

Kyzyl-Abad Secondary School #44 is located in Iyrek village of Uzgen rayon in Osh oblast. The school opened in 1934 as a primary school, then it was converted into an eight-year education school, and in 1971 it was transformed into a full secondary school. Currently 430 students from Iyrek village and nearby Unkur, Yntymak, and Korgon villages attend the school.

Iyrek is a small, mountain village, located 70 kilometers from the rayon center. Like most mountain villages it has many problems such as unemployment, remoteness from markets, poor infrastructure, and problems with water and electricity.



“Summer is brief here. In October and November it becomes cold until next April. Children have to walk 3-4 kilometers to school in rain and snow,” said the school director Adilbek Janibekov. *“Children come to school cold, sometimes wet. It is important for the school to be always warm, and it was just necessary to provide hot meals for primary school children. The problem of student attendance, especially junior grade students, always worries teachers and the parental committee of the school.”*

Before the McGovern-Dole project provided support for kitchen construction, the school

did not have any kitchen facilities. Instead, a classroom was used as a cafeteria where primary students were served buns and tea that were prepared offsite. The school only had a refrigerator, some dishes and teacups. Even the water they used for washing dishes was brought from outside and heated in a makeshift heater the school constructed.

“School meals are not just hot tea or soup. It is also the availability of a normal water supply system, sewage system, heat and good electric wiring. Kitchen space and dining area must comply with all the requirements of sanitary norms and rules, which rural schools often simply lack”, says Adylbek. ***“When school teachers and parents discussed the project proposal to Mercy Corps for the kitchen repair and equipment grant at the general meeting, we were all well aware of the difficulties to expect in order to achieve this goal.”***

Before they could begin serving hot meals, the school undertook extensive renovations. First, as their contribution to the project, the schools converted their storage room into a kitchen and an adjacent classroom into the dining room. Water supply issues also had to be addressed and the school was connected to the village’s water supply line, which was 120 meters away from the school. To complete the water supply, a septic system was installed. Finally, kitchen utensils and equipment were purchased.

“We bought necessary building materials and with the help of builders we made good repair of the kitchen, covered the kitchen floor and walls with tiles, whitewashed and painted the kitchen, changed electric wiring,” the school director says, ***“We installed water supply system and sewage system. The school’s cost share of the project was 100,450 KGS, half of which was paid by parents in the form of cash, building materials, and labor. For the Mercy Corps’ grant, a 4-burner electric stove with an oven, a cabinet oven, an electric water heater, a 2-section bath for washing dishes, dish racks and 2 preparation tables were provided to Kyzyl-Abad school. At the beginning of the school year, the school received the most necessary in our opinion food commodities: enriched wheat flour, oil, peas and rice the second year in a row.”***

The state allocates 10 Kyrgyz Soms (\$0.15) for the food of one primary school student per day. It can seem the amount is small, for example, the average price of biscuits, pies and buns is 10-15 soms. But with proper infrastructure and a little financial support from parents and local self-governance bodies, the feeding system can be radically changed, and it is possible to serve the children with hot soups and porridges.

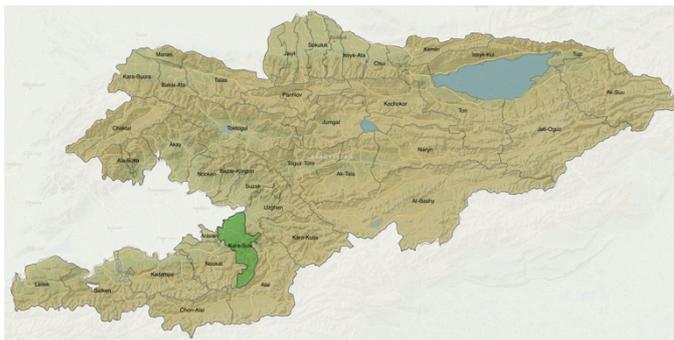
“Before the school could not greatly affect the quality and sufficiency of food provided to children. We received what was brought by suppliers, who were selected by higher authorities. Now we jointly develop a menu consisting of hot meals. The task of food provision at the school is solved comprehensively”, says the school director Adil Zhanibekov. ***“Thanks to collaboration with Mercy Corps, the school is provided with supplementary food commodities for the second time; and training for the school staff and parents on topics of rational children’s nutrition was conducted in the school; Jyldyz Aranova, the school chef was trained in Bishkek at an 18-day course “Technology of children’s meals preparation”. As a result of the trainings, today children regularly receive healthy and delicious hot meals. Undoubtedly, it affects their well-being, performance and mood. Children are looking forward to a long break between classes to have a tasty meal.”***



Kyrgyzstan's school feeding program, consisting of a bun and a cup of tea, has existed since 2006, but at the national level the question of its effectiveness has been periodically raised. The McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program funded by the USDA has made a significant contribution to the improvement of school feeding and has shown local and national government officials what it is possible to achieve. In the cafeteria of each school where Mercy Corps' program is implemented we can confidently say that children of junior classes have a new menu with delicious, hot meals.

Effective advocacy has raised \$26,000 in one year

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The kindergarten “Kyzyl Kyzgaldak,” located in the Monok village of Kara-Suu district in Osh region was built in 1964. In early 1990s, like many other rural kindergartens, was closed and the building was privatized because the government could not afford to keep it open. Only several years later, in 2000, was the kindergarten able to reopen due to the initiative of the community led by Busara Kenzhabaeva. When the kindergarten reopened it served 52 children and employed six staff members.

“Everything was so abandoned, the property was lost and we had to restore the building and solve many problems associated with the complete set of equipment and furniture. One of the most serious problems faced by kindergartens in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan is the access to potable water. Before 1990, the rural water supply systems were property of the collective farms, with their disbandment the rural water supply systems also disbanded. The staff of kindergarten had to bring water from the yard of school-gymnasium named after D. Sultanov and for household use they used water from the irrigation canals”- says Busara Kenzhebaeva.

The lack of potable water in the village and inadequate sanitation periodically causes the occurrence of the infectious diseases. In the autumn of 2013 an outbreak of viral hepatitis took place in the village. SES had raised the question about the possible closure of the kindergarten.

“In the past I had repeatedly appealed to the executives of the village administration with the question regarding the need of the construction of water supply system for the kindergarten. However, due to the lack of funds in the local budget, the issue remained unresolved. Multiple appeals with the project applications to the international organizations didn’t bring any results, too. In October 2014 we were invited to 2-day training on the theme “Strengthening the capacity of educational institutions to improve the nutritional status of children” held by Mercy Corps. Since then there have been changes in the life of our kindergarten,” says Busara.

The training was organized as part of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The participants of the training were not only kindergarten directors, but also nurses, parents, representatives of the district education department and local administration.

The goal of the training was to develop action plans to address priority issues of educational institutions through the involvement and cooperation of stakeholders and decision-makers. There were many existing problems discussed during the training that Busara attended. *“Of course, our team immediately mentioned the problem of absence of potable water in the kindergarten. After the problem was named and the goal*

was put forward, our team had identified and analyzed stakeholders and decision-makers. Then we learned to write appeals to the key person and in the example of a game we acted out how we appeal to them and try to influence and address our problems,” remembers Busara.

*“After the training, as it was mentioned in the action plan, we sent a letter to the deputies of the local council and held a parents’ meeting, where we invited the newly elected head of the village administration of Kashkar-Kyshtak, Mr. Mukhidin Nasirdinov, as well as community leader Mr. Aslbek Baimyrzaev, who is also the chair person of the parents’ committee. During the meeting I showed the document sent by Ms. Toktayim Razykova, the main doctor of SES, about closing the kindergarten due to absence of potted water and proper sanitation system in the building of the kindergarten, as well as possible consequences in the case of the reemergence of infectious diseases. With the same document, I appealed to the head of the Education Department of Kara-Suu district Mr. R. N. Nazarov. After that, the specialist on kindergartens of Education Department of Kara-Suu district Ms. Kulpunai Kamilova visited the kindergarten and studied the issue in detail. **Then, together with the District Department of Education and district SES we wrote a letter to the head of the village council again. Thus, all the key people, whom our success was dependent on, were involved in addressing the problem,”** said Busara.*

After reviewing the situation, the head of the village administration said that it would not be possible for the village administration to fund the whole project because they did not have sufficient funds. Support from the parents would be needed. The Village administration could cover 70% of the total amount needed and the parents’ would need to cover the remaining 30%.

At the next parents’ committee meeting, the parents agreed to donate 340 Kyrgyz Soms (\$5.23) each for the project. In total, 51,000 KGS (\$749) were collected. The village administration allocated 294,000 KGS (\$4,523) and the construction of the water supply system and indoor sewage system began. As a result, a potable water system was installed within two classrooms, special mini-sinks and mini toilets were installed, two kitchen sinks were installed in the kitchen, and one sink and bathtub in the laundry room. Because the water supply lines may freeze in winter there were two water tanks with the capacity of 2 tons each for clean water installed as well as a water heater.

Encouraged by their success, in November 2014 the kindergarten sent a letter to the head of the village council with a new idea: to install the heating system in the kindergarten. The building was currently heated by small coal stoves in the classrooms; however, the stoves were in poor condition and the kindergarten had been warned by the fire service that the children may be poisoned by carbon monoxide. For this reason, the head of the kindergarten B. Kenzhebayeva have had to pay fines many times.

The plan for a new heating system was supported and the village council has allocated the necessary funds. As a result, since the beginning of 2015 the modern heating system that meets all sanitary-epidemiological norms and fire safety requirements operates in the two-storied building of kindergarten “Kyzyl-Kyzgaldak”. At the same time, in December 2014 another important problem was solved with the help of village administration: old wooden window frames were replaced.

Thus, in less than a year, the kindergarten was able to solve three major problems with the support of the local government and parents. The local government allocated a total of 1,720,242 KGS (\$26,465) and parents contributed an additional 51,000 KGS (\$749) to ensure the problems were addressed.

“After attending the training, we realized that a lack of finance is not always the main barrier for solving many problems. In order to achieve our goal and climb up to the top of the “Success ladder” we usually just lack of knowledge, experience and confidence in ourselves and in that together we can successfully and quickly solve existing problems”, says Busara Kenzhebaeva.