PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
IDENTIFICATION/CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: PIDC61899

Project Name	Engaging Communities for Better Schools in the Kyrgyz Republic
Region	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
Country	Kyrgyz Republic
Sector(s)	Primary education (50%), Secondary education (50%)
Theme(s)	Decentralization (10%), Participation and civic engagement (50%), Education for all (40%)
Lending Instrument	IPF
Project ID	P159699
Borrower Name	Aga Khan Foundation - the Kyrgyz Republic
Implementing Agency	Aga Khan Foundation - Kyrgyz Republic
Environment Category	C - Not Required
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Initiation Note Review Decision	The review did authorize the preparation to continue

I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

The Kyrgyz Republic is a landlocked, mountainous country in Central Asia with a multi- ethnic population of 5.4 million. With an estimated per capita GDP of $US1047 in 2015, it is one of the poorest economies in the Europe and Central Asia region. An estimated 37% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2013, while 3% lived in extreme poverty. The incidence of poverty in rural areas (41%) was far higher than in urban areas (28%). Economic growth in the country has been quite volatile. GDP growth was 6% in 2011, contracted to 0.9% in 2012, grew to 10.9% in 2013, and slowed to 3.6% in 2014. The economy is highly vulnerable to external shocks, with many households dependent on remittances from the energy-based economies of Russia and Kazakhstan.

Since independence in 1991, the country has undergone political turmoil that has not only affected economic growth but slowed the development of institutional systems. The ➢(Tulip Revolution➢(in 2005 resulted in the ousting of President Akaev, a fate shared in the spring of 2010 by his successor, President Bakiyev. Moreover, in the summer of 2010, violent and widespread riots in the south of the country resulted in numerous casualties and economic losses. In the wake of the 2010 events, a new constitution was adopted by popular referendum and the country shifted from a presidential system to a parliamentary republic.

While the Kyrgyz Republic gives men and women equal status and protection under the law, and sector-based regulatory and legal acts promote gender mainstreaming in government activities in various fields, in practice, Kyrgyz women remain disadvantaged in a number of ways. Women

suffer disproportionately from poverty, have less access to paid employment (the labor force participation rate is 56% for females compared to 79.5% for males), work longer hours than men (on average, approx.. 7.5 hours of paid and unpaid labor per day versus 6 hours for men) and earn less money (GNI per capita is USD 2,122 per year (women), compared to USD 3,992 (men).

Corruption in the public sector is reported to be one of the major obstacles for development and one of the most problematic factors in doing business. Modest progress on key governance indicators, such as World Governance Indicators (WGI) and Transparency International➢(s Corruption Perception Index (TI CPI), have been made, albeit from low levels. Kyrgyz Republic➢(s TI CPI ranking in 2014 was 136th out of 175 countries, compared to 164th out of 183 in 2011. The medium-term anti-corruption program (2012-2015) ended in 2015 but was reportedly ineffective in removing ➢(corruption schemes➢(in the public sector or modernizing and reforming public administration. Notably the program included the fostering of civil society as an anti-corruption measure.

Civil society in the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the most vibrant and active in Central Asia, with a focus on human rights, health, environment, youth and sport, education and advocacy. They are registered as noncommercial organizations (NCOs) under a civil law. Interaction between CSOs and government is not always effective however. On one hand, the state appears committed to enabling the growth and strengthening of CSOs through the adoption of enabling legislation (and a recent effort to introduce a constraining NGO law was thwarted); on the other hand, state authorities have a limited understanding of the nature and role of CSOs as partners in development. As the institutional mechanisms for co-operation are not yet well developed, relations between state authorities and civil society actors are often personalized. CSOs, especially in rural areas, face significant operational challenges, including limited access to financial resources, training and networking opportunities.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

In the Kyrgyz Republic, basic mandatory education starts at age seven and lasts nine years: four primary and five lower secondary grades. In 2015, there were approximately 1 million students in the system, of which about 450,000 were in primary grades. 98% of students attend public schools, and over two-thirds of these students are in rural areas. The net enrollment rate in lower secondary is about 86% for lower secondary (grade 5-9) and about 73.1% for higher secondary (grade 10-11). Gender parity in enrollment has been achieved at the system level, as measured by the gender parity index. This achievement is partially due to the endowment from the soviet legacy and to households' commitment to girl's education. The net primary enrollment rates for girls and boys were 89 percent and 91 percent, respectively (which is slightly higher than in other lower middle income countries). There is no disparity at the secondary level, with net enrollment rates at 82.6% and 82.3% respectively for girls and boys (significantly above the average of LMICs). Mean years of schooling is 10.5 for females and 10.6 for males. The percentage of the population with at least some secondary education is 94.5 for women and 96.8 for men.   Further, the average number of years of schooling among 15-19 year old females is slightly higher than males, at 10.05 years compared to 9.89 years for males. These high enrolment rates at all levels demonstrate the Kyrgyz commitment to achieving the benefits of a well-educated society.

However, despite efforts and considerable spending since independence, the basic education system has produced mixed results - while coverage is good, quality remains a challenge. Only 47% of

students report being satisfied with the quality of their education. National student assessments in 2009 showed that approximately two-thirds of grade four students did not master the essentials in mother tongue, mathematics and science; at grade eight, the proportion was greater than three quarters.

Public spending on basic education is among the highest in the region, at 4% of GDP, and is widely considered inefficient. This is partially explained by the large network of schools scattered across the country. Nonetheless, the quality of education in Kyrgyzstan lies much below what it should be given what the country is spending per student. The country's participation in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that, while Kyrgyz students' performance improved between 2006 and 2009, 15 year olds lag an approximate four and a half grade levels behind the OECD average. Large differences in education are observed across the geographic areas of the Kyrgyz Republic with Osh, Jalalabad, Batken and Talas having the lowest PISA scores. In terms of gender, girls performed consistently better than boys in all three core subjects (reading, math and science).

There are many contributing factors to Kyrgyz's poor performance in the education sector:
➢(¢   Outdated curriculum - The curriculum tends to be academic, difficult and theoretical, with little focus on developing competencies, context or practical applications. Students have little choice in subjects and must take a large number of courses, encouraging superficial learning. Curriculum revisions are underway, but substantial work is needed to train teachers in the new approaches.
➢(¢   Lack of resources - Teachers lack the resources and equipment to enable practical student-centered learning. Adequate heating, indoor toilets and washing facilities, scientific and technical equipment are lacking in many schools. There is a shortage of textbooks, with less than half of students having access to a serviceable textbook.
➢(¢   Ineffective teaching-learning practices - There is substantial room to make teaching-learning practices more effective. Further, professional development opportunities to support student learning strategies are limited in number and quality. There are national in-service teacher training norms every five years, but in practice, it is estimated that only 10 to 20 percent of eligible teachers are covered.
➢(¢   Teacher shortages - Teacher strikes in 2010-2011 led to significant salary increases and salaries are now considered competitive at 123 percent of GDP per capita. However, there are still teacher sho   rtages in certain subjects, particularly in rural and remote areas.
➢(¢   School management and accountability ➢(Utilization of available funds is inefficient. School directors are not well informed as to their annual budget, and not interested in saving orcompetent financial management. Increases are not bring anticipated benefits without improved accountability. Significant levels of community finance are handled without transparency of expenditure. A lack of teacher accountability (absenteeism, communication and reporting to parents, teaching the curriculum) is highly prevalent and exacerbates teacher shortages.

Government strategy and program. The Government's 2020 Education Sector Strategy aimed to ensure equal access to education, update the content of educational and learning technologies, improve education quality, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of resource use, and decentralize school management. There are four main pillars for the basic education system: (i) governance, management and accountability (including the increased involvement of community oversight bodies in budget formation, expenditures monitoring and school performance

monitoring); (ii) incentives and opportunities for teachers and school management to improve performance; (iii) educational standards and materials; and (iv) management information systems including recording data on results. The Bank supports this key reform through the Sector Support for Education Reform Project (P113350). The Government is currently rolling out per capita financing to all schools. Under this scheme, municipalities receive Republican budget funds based on a formula that considers the number of students and a set of common standards. The transfer will include all recurrent costs including non-wage items. Municipalities are to transparently agree with local schools the financing standard for that category of school and enrollment numbers. Schools for the first time will have powers and responsibilities for budget formation and financial management, particularly for non-protected budget items (e.g. updating libraries, computer equipment) making community involvement in the school-level needs assessment, planning and budget formulation (decision-making) process, all the more important.

Community engagement and social accountability. Given the high degree of autonomy of schools and the current disparities in resources and performance, ensuring regular data collection, and releasing to the public comparable information about school resources and performance are necessary to support stronger accountability. Under the Bank financed Sector Support for Education Reform Program (SSERP), key players at the local and central level, particularly the management of Aiyl Okmotus (AOs), Rayon Education Department (RED) staff and school administrators receive training and technical assistance on budget formulation, accounting and expenditures monitoring and reporting. The MOES has acknowledged the need for enhanced community participation in school planning and budgeting and the monitoring of school performance and expenditures. As a result, MOES has mandated school-level Boards of Trustees to ensure the transparent management of informal payments by parents, promote more effective engagement of parents into school management (e.g. to counter the practice of informal payments), and improve school infrastructure, equipment and learning materials. BoTs are a step towards some level of public oversight, but further efforts to promote and support broader and more meaningful community engagement and social accountability mechanisms are required.

The link between community engagement, teacher accountability and management in the use of resources in schools, and improved education is now well made. Evidence from India and Nepal where school accountability has improved significantly through long term programs have assessed the impacts of social accountability interventions and illustrate the results chain from behavioral change to education outcomes as follows: Accountability interventions trigger behavior changes the practices of individuals and the community that include: information-seeking behavior (community members ask about the availability of resources for education, seeking out information that they normally would not), accountability-seeking behavior (individuals begin to question and challenge information, school administrators, and government abo ut suboptimal education), outcomes-seeking behavior (students begin to attend classes more regularly or teachers regularly arrive to school on time). Behavior changes iterated over a period then inform the practices of local government and service providers, b ecome internalized as norms, and established as institutional changes. Institutional changes include process changes (shift s in the functioning of management systems, including how data are received and how decision making takes place) as well as policy chang es (changes in budget allocations and legislation). These institutional changes then lead to outcomes, such as an increase in enrollment or a decrease in teacher absenteeism.

In practice this means that by improving community, especially parent, participation and access to information, parents become more aware of the standards that should be met in schools and demand

higher levels of performance from teachers and administrators. By becoming more aware of budgets and expenditures, they apply pressure for more efficient use of their and other funding sources which results in students having more access to textbooks and learning resources When teachers teach more hours/days in each school year, with more textbooks and more resources (e.g. access to the internet), both the quantity and quality of learning improves. For instance, in the Kyrgyz Republic school system, students should receive 150 days primary tuition per year, but it is estimated they receive about 70% of those teaching days, i.e. for about 45 days per year teachers are not present or not teaching. Improvements in teacher presence in schools, due to parent oversight and teacher accountability, can thus be anywhere between 1-69 more teaching days per year. If 30 teachers are present in one school an additional 20 days per year as found by CSOs working on school accountability in Kyrgyz Republic, this increased presence results in 600 more teaching days per year. Spread across the country, this can have significant impact in the time students are taught, and has knock on effects on improved commitment, improved enrollment, quality of teaching and labor market outcomes.

Relationship to CAS/CPS/CPF

The proposed project is consistent with the Bank Country Partnership Strategy objective of promoting more efficient public administration and public service delivery as a pre-condition for effective public expenditure and human capital formation. It creates a demand-side mechanism in the education sector to speed up improvements in the performance of public service providers, as well as institutional and policy change. The project is also consistent with the sector specific priorities established by the Government in its 2020 Education Development Strategy and Medium-term Action Plan. In particular, it directly supports the key action area of increasing accountability at the school level by developing bottom-up capacity and vehicles to create demand for accountability. The Performance Learning Review, completed in 2016, includes the Education sector as a priority sector for the development of citizen engagement, and specifically refers to the proposal for a JSDF grant.

II. Project Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Development Objective for this grant is to support improvement in the performance of teachers and management of primary and secondary schools in the poorest districts of Kyrgyz Republic through enhanced community engagement, transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

Key Results

i.   % of parents in target districts who report that teacher performance has improved as a result of project-supported community engagement processes.
[Measured through a basket (3-5) of pre-agreed characteristics of teacher performance that reflect level of accountability (e.g. teacher presence, better communication with parents, less informal payments), with respondents scoring on a 1-5 scale. Disaggregated male/female.]

ii.   % of parents in target districts who report that school management responsiveness has improved as a result of project-supported community engagement processes. [Measured through a basket (3-5) of pre-agreed characteristics of school management that reflect level of responsiveness (e.g. openness to parent participation, school expenditures aligned to school needs, transparency of budgets), with respondents scoring on a 1-5 scale. Disaggregated male/female.]

iii.   % of parents in target districts who report that they are more empowered to influence improvements in schools services as a result of project-supported community engagement processes. [Measured through a basket (3-5) of pre-agreed school management 3-5 characteristics that reflect level of empowerment (e.g. willingness to voice needs, preference reflected in joint action plans, willingness to contribute), with respondents scoring on a 1-5 scale. Disaggregated male/female.]

iv.   % of students in target districts who report that teacher performance has improved as a result of project-supported community engagement processes.
[Measured through a basket (3-5) of pre-agreed school management 3-5 characteristics that reflect level of teacher performance in classroom which can be evaluated by students (e.g. teacher presence, teacher effort/communication, treat all students equally), with respondents scoring on a 1-5 scale. Disaggregated male/female.]

III. Preliminary Description
Concept Description
The project is comprised of three components:

A.   Community Engagement Processes and Capacity-Building to support schools in developing the mechanisms and skills they need to meaningfully engage with communities.
B.   Small Grants for Priority Investments in Underprivileged Schools to provide matching funds to schools for the implementation of collectively identified school improvement projects.
C.   Project Management, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Communication to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of project activities, to monitor progress and share lessons.

Summary of Project Coverage: 9 Districts in 9 oblasts, with 349 villages, 183,300 HHs, 830,000 people. 61% or 507,000 are living in poverty. The target area includes 350 schools and 170,000 students.

Component A.
Community Engagement Processes and Capacity-Building ($US 1.70 million)

Component A, composed of three sub-components, (i) develops and strengthens school-level Boards of Trustees as a platform for citizen engagement; (ii) provides citizens with the (budget and performance) information they need to engage effectively, and (iii) introduces a mechanism for ongoing citizen feedback and joint action (community scorecards) at school level. This component

supports capacity building for both local officials/service providers and community members. Through joint training events, multi-stakeholder reflection and learning forums, the component introduces a collaborative approach, whereby both sets of actors work in partnership according to a set of clearly defined and jointly agreed roles and responsibilities. In support of this component, MOES will approve and ratify operational guidelines and training modules for BoTs; school administrators will generate and post budget and performance information that will be disseminated and explained by AKFK in public hearings. In addition, the recommended actions resulting from the community scorecard process are jointly agreed by both service users and providers and are timed to feed into the existing school development planning cycle.

Component A1: Development and Strengthening of Boards of Trustees.

To assist with the improvements of financial management of schools, in 2014 the MOES issued a decree instructing all schools to create a Board of Trustees (BoT). Currently however the formation and functioning of BoTs is incomplete. Official provisions for BoTs have been drafted and are currently in the process of ministerial verification, prior to approval. However, these provisions are not accompanied by operational guidance or capacity development (on formation, roles and responsibilities) to guide the creation and functioning of Boards of Trustees. Ensuring the transparent and effective management of parental financial contributions is one of the key motivating factors behind the creation of BoTs, which represent a critical platform for potential citizen engagement, participatory governance and social accountability at school level.

Component A.1 will improve the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of target schools by supporting the implementation of the BoTs decree in 9 target districts. The project will support the establishment or strengthening of BoTs in 350 target schools through: (i) a stock-taking of BoTs in target districts; (ii) the preparation of draft operational guidelines and training modules for BoTs, approved by MOES and ratified by a ministerial order and capacity building in each target school, and (iii) establishing and/or strengthening the BoTs in target schools, including skills development; and (iv) development of BoT networks at rayon (and ultimately at national) level.

Component A2: Access to Information and Awareness Building on Performance and Budgets

The MOES currently compiles and publishes comparative data regarding learning outcomes in schools across the country. The extent to which local-level stakeholders in practice are: aware of the existence of this data (on the MOES website), able to access it, and equipped to make use of it, however, remains unknown. At the same time, schools have multiple revenue sources, and these revenues and expenditures are not captured in a single transparent statement. Comprehensive information about the school budget (including parent contributions) is held by the school director and is often not known by staff, parents, students or other community members.

In order for students, parents, and other community members to interact constructively with school management (including BoTs) and contribute to improvements in the performance of schools, all stakeholders, be they users or providers of services, need to be aware of rights and entitlements to schooling, the standards and targets set at the national level, and how the performance of their school compares to other schools at district and national level. In order to seek accountability, it is also important for local stakeholders to have information about their own school➢(s budget, revenues and expenditures i.e. how school finances are spent to improve standards. Accordingly,

Component A.2 will improve the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of 350 target schools through activities which support: (i) the public posting of school rights, national standards and targets, school performance and budget information (revenues and expenditures); and (ii) proactive reporting by school administrators and BoTs of key information related to school budgets and performance and awareness building to improve citizen understanding of financial and performance information and how they can use it.

Component A3: Citizen Feedback and Joint Action

While the preparation of school development plans (SDPs) is described in ➢(Guidance on SDP➢(as a participatory process, in most cases, plans are prepared by school directors and, at best, presented for cursory validation in parent assemblies. School users and community members do not have the platform to provide feedback on the strengths and weakness of school services, to express concerns, or propose recommendations for improvement. Yet it is recognized by MOES that mechanisms for parent/student/community involvement are essential to better address the needs and priorities of service users.

This component aims to improve the responsiveness and performance of target schools by developing processes and introducing regular community activities for multi-stakeholder feedback and joint action planning that will feed into the SDP. The project will support three sets of community activities in 350 target schools (i) the identification and training of facilitators in each target school to facilitate two tried and tested citizen engagement processes at school level: (ii) the collective development of a ➢(social contract➢(between service users and providers, and (iii) a ➢(community scorecard and joint action plan➢(which allows parents/students/community members to provide feedback on school services and collectively identify actions for improvement. A subcommittee of the BoT which ensures community participation (Joint Action Committee)) will coordinate, support and oversee the implementation of the annual JAP and absorption into the SDP. Social contracts, community scorecards/JAPs are integrated into the annual school cycle, directly involve all concerned actors and feed into existing processes of school planning, budgeting and management.

Component B.
Small Grants for Priority Investments in Underprivileged Schools ($US0.80 million)

The objective of Component B is to provide matching funds to underprivileged target schools for the implementation of community-managed micro-projects that have been collectively identified through the community scorecard and joint action planning processes, and integrated into the SDP. This component will provide schools with the opportunity to jointly implement a specific investment of their choosing, testing the systems put in place to improve transparency, accountability and responsiveness.

This component will: (i) provide support and assistance to BoTs in their efforts to support, oversee and mobilize local community resources for the implementation of priority school improvement actions identified in the JAP. (ii) support schools to prepare a funding proposal; (iii) provide schools the opportunity to apply for matching funds for the implementation of one priority action through a competitive, community-managed micro grants program; and, (iv) support and monitor the implementation of funded actions. Schools will be encouraged to (v) incorporate any outstanding priority JAP actions (i.e. those that require longer-term effort, larger-scale investment or broader

collaboration) into their school development plan (SDP).

This series of actions will promote an active ➢(learning by doing➢(approach for BoTs, school administrators and communities working together on micro investments in schools. Examples of actions supported by micro-grants could include: the purchase of new classroom, sports or teaching equipment, small school renovations or repairs, or support for teacher training/upgrading. The project will include a negative list to guide project investment, which will ensure that the funds provided are utilized on actions that generate human or physical assets (and that any small-scale construction occurs within the school compounds).

District-level review panels (composed of a mix of district-level education officials and community representatives) will be created to review funding proposals and select successful schools based on available funds. Funds will flow to school-level BoT bank accounts. BoTs will manage the funds and monitor and report on expenditures according to agreed guidelines and timelines, and be provided with capacity building for this purpose. The grant program will support no more than 50% of total micro-project cost, up to a maximum of $1,500. The remainder will be mobilized by the school community.   The upper and lower limits of this micro-grant will be determined during preparation, but is anticipated to be $3-5000 for about 180-200 schools.

Component C.
Project Management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning ($US 0.50 million)

Component C1: Project Management.

The project will be managed and implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation Kyrgyzstan (AK K) (the grant recipient) working with its subnational offices in Osh, Bishkek and Naryn. AKFK will be responsible for management, coordination and implementation of the program, including procurement, disbursement and financial management, as well as the capacity building and oversight of any local partners. This sub-component will support the recruitment of staff (managers, coordinators and trainer/mentors), operational support mechanisms, financial management at the national, oblast and district levels, travel, telecommunications, printing and other office expenses, as well as managerial oversight and internal and external audits. The project will not purchase new vehicles, but will provide travel allowances and/or apportion costs for the use of existing vehicles.

This sub-component will also support the establishment of a Project Coordination Committee (PCC) to guide the strategic direction and activities of the project under this component. It will consist of key stakeholders from the MOES, AKFK, SALGIR (State Agency for Local Governance and Interethnic Relations), and the World Bank (phasing out after year 1), and will coordinate with other relevant local and international organizations with similar programming interventions.

Component C2: Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Communication.

A comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning plan will measure impacts and outcomes and monitor ongoing progress of project implementation as follows:
a.   An independent impact evaluation (IE) will generate data for the PDO level indicators. It will document changes to service performance and empowerment resulting from project activities and seek to determine the extent to which outcomes are attributable to the project. A ➢(difference-

of-differences➤((DD) approach will be adopted, i.e. results indicators will be compared between a base-line and end-line, and between a treatment group (schools that have participated in the project) and a control group (schools that have not), according to best practice. Results will be disaggregated by gender, language group and between rural and urban schools.

b.   The regular monitoring and reporting system for the project will leverage AKFK➤(s existing mechanisms, adapted to meet the calendar reporting requirements of the project. Participatory M&E approaches will be used to inform, engage and empower primary stakeholders. AKFK will report information and data obtained from community visits, meetings, attendance records, participant evaluations of trainings, interviews with project stakeholders, and will provide semi-annual progress reports, and a mid-term and end-term project reports.

c.   Project activities will include a system of process learning: ongoing reflection and learning by project stakeholders to review processes and results, strengths and weaknesses, distill lessons, and propose improvements and next steps. Regional coordinators will monitor the implementation of key activities and conduct reflection meetings with local staff after each major event (e.g. training, social contract and community scorecard activities). The project will also support periodic multi-stakeholder learning forums and the production of learning notes.

IV.   Safeguard Policies that Might Apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01		✘	
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		✘	
Forests OP/BP 4.36		✘	
Pest Management OP 4.09		✘	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		✘	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10		✘	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		✘	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		✘	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		✘	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		✘	

V.   Financing *(in USD Million)*

Total Project Cost:	0.000003	Total Bank Financing:	0
Financing Gap:	0		

Financing Source	Amount
Japan Social Development Fund	0.000003

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