

# FINAL REPORT

## MBA ENTERPRISE CORPS EVALUATION: CENTRAL ASIA REGION

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*Submitted to:*

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

*In response to:*

**The Evaluation IQC AEP-I-00-00-00023-00**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The MBA Enterprise Corps (MBAEC) “... is designed to provide technical support in business management practices to indigenous businesses and business-serving organizations.”<sup>1</sup> It operates under a cooperative agreement with USAID/CAR. Since its CAR beginning in July 2000, MBAEC has placed twenty-nine volunteers in assignments in four countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) at a three year direct USAID cost (minus cost-share) of \$2,139,303. The estimated volunteer/per year cost is \$73,769. Following a three month language training and CAR orientation, volunteers are assigned to work in one of the three components of the Pragma Enterprise Development Project (EDP). They serve for twelve months.

The purpose of this evaluation is to “...assess the value of the MBAEC Cooperative Agreement in achieving the intended results of the three projects (components) hosting volunteers.”<sup>2</sup> The evaluation SOW provided seven issues that focused the effort. The evaluation used a variety of information sources: project documents, in-person interviews, focus groups, an email survey of volunteers and site visits to client offices and local project centers. The people and organizations contacted and the data collection protocols are included in the report appendix.

Almost 50% of the volunteers have been assigned to Kazakhstan and about 35% to in Kyrgyzstan; the remaining 15% to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. BAS by far has utilized volunteers the most: 72% of the Volunteers have worked in the EDP component, mainly in BAS. About 24% of the volunteers have worked in TIP (mainly in 2001). FSI had it first (and only) volunteer in 2002; this volunteer actually worked in the BAS component.

The findings on volunteer effectiveness are unambiguous. By virtually all accounts, volunteers have been most effective in the Business Advisory Services (BAS) component. They provide business diagnostic, planning and operations improvement services to local businesses. BAS management was enthusiastic about using volunteers in the future. Pragma management, as well as some volunteers, report a poor fit of the MBAEC skills and experience to the FSI and TIP components. FSI and TIP Pragma COPs stated that they did not plan to use volunteers in the future.

Several factors were cited as important to volunteer performance. Language skills are very important in counterpart and client interactions. Volunteer personality, maturity and flexibility were also noted. Volunteers felt that the three month orientation was generally effective, but most expressed a need for in-service language training during their twelve month tenure. They also felt that there needed to more intensive mentoring by Pragma staff they worked with, especially as they began their new assignments. The need for more timely logistical support as they moved to their assignment locations was frequently mentioned.

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<sup>1</sup> Scope of Work, MBA Enterprise Corps Evaluation, mimeo, n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Scope of Work, MBA Enterprise Corps Evaluation, mimeo, n.d.

An important issue is volunteer turnover. Volunteers, local staff and Pragma management commented on the ‘costs’ of the turnover, such as discontinuities in local center operations and client relationships. A longer term of service is an option, but would require increasing the financial support to volunteers. The report makes a series of recommendations that follow from the findings on the seven issues included in the evaluation SOW.

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# **MBA ENTERPRISE CORPS EVALUATION: CENTRAL ASIA REGION**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The MBA Enterprise Corps (MBAEC) project in the Central Asian Republics (CAR) operates under a cooperative agreement with USAID/CAR.<sup>3</sup> The project began July 2000 and is in its final year of funding that ends September 2003. The MBAEC project works closely with the Pragma Corporation's Enterprise Development Project (EDP) funded under a separate USAID/CAR contract. The MBAEC project supplies Pragma recent graduates of U.S.A. MBA programs to work as volunteers in one of its three main EDP component activities. Following a three month language training and general CAR orientation, volunteers<sup>4</sup> serve for twelve months, working on a variety of assignments under Pragma supervision.

According to the Evaluation Scope of Work, the MBAEC "...is designed to provide technical support in business management and administrative practices to indigenous businesses and business-serving organizations."<sup>5</sup> The Purpose of this evaluation is to "... assess the value of the MBAEC cooperative agreement in achieving the intended results of the three projects (components) hosting volunteers."<sup>6</sup>

## **II. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY**

Data for the evaluation were collected in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. A variety of data collection approaches were used. USAID interviews at the beginning of the field data collection helped focus the evaluation on the key evaluation issues. USAID also provided budget data on the MBAEC project. These figures are presented in the appendix. In-person interviews (n=39) conducted with Pragma management and staff, some of the volunteers and local counterparts. The data collection protocols used for these interviews are in the appendix. A site visit to the Pragma Enterprise Development Project (EDP) Office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan yielded two focus groups (n=12) with Pragma local staff<sup>7</sup>, several counterparts and volunteers. The vast geographic spread of Kazakhstan prompted the use of an email survey in to obtain information from both current and former volunteers (several former volunteers now work for Pragma on the EDP project). The email survey produced a cross section of volunteers; 18 (62%) of the 29 MBAEC volunteers who have participated in the project since its beginning in the CAR responded to the survey. Finally, the Citizens Democracy Corps was very helpful in providing data and information on the project.

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<sup>3</sup> The MBA Enterprise Corps is a division of Citizens Development Corps, 1400 Eye Street, Suite 1125, Washington, DC 20005

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the term 'volunteers' in this report refers to MBAEC volunteers.

<sup>5</sup> Scope of Work, MBA Enterprise Corps Evaluation, mimeo, n.d.

<sup>6</sup> Scope of Work, MBA Enterprise Corps Evaluation, mimeo, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'local staff' refers to host country personnel working in Pragma field offices, such as RICs.

### III. STUDY FINDINGS

#### A. MBAEC BUDGETARY DATA AND COST PER VOLUNTEER

**TABLE 1**  
Summarizes MBAEC Budgetary Data and Provides an Estimate  
of the Cost Per Volunteer

	Estimated MBAEC Cost Per Volunteer*			
	2000	2001	2002	Total
<b>MBAEC Volunteers</b>	7	8	14	29
<b>Program Cost</b>				
<b>USAID Share</b>	\$557,671	\$625,673	\$955,959	\$2,139,303
<b>Cost Share</b>	\$517,758	\$157,418	\$238,990	\$914,166
<b>Total Cost</b>	\$1,075,429	\$782,091	\$1,194,949	\$3,052,469
<b>Cost per MBAEC Volunteer</b>				
<b>Include cost-share</b>	\$153,633	\$97,761	\$85,354	\$105,258
<b>Exclude cost-share</b>	\$79,667	\$78,209	\$68,283	\$73,769
Source for Budget Data: USAID/CAR Office, Almaty, Kazakhstan, , February 2003				

MBAEC has recruited, trained and placed 29 volunteers since its beginning in the CAR. The cost per volunteer is \$105,258 if the cost-share is included and \$73,769 if the cost-share is excluded.<sup>8</sup> USAID staff noted that they use the latter figure since that estimate represents the actual USAID funding commitment to the project.

#### B. VOLUNTEER UTILIZATION

**Table 2** shows volunteer deployment within the Pragma EDP project components across the CAR countries currently involved in the EDP project. 48% of the volunteers have been used in Kazakhstan; 35% in Kyrgyzstan. The use of volunteers in these two countries has been fairly steady since 2000. The use of volunteers in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (except for one in Uzbekistan) began in 2002. Each had two volunteers in 2002. The peak year for overall volunteer utilization has been 2002, with 48% of the 29 volunteers active that year.

<sup>8</sup> USAID/CAR stated that the definition of the cost-share estimate has changed since the start of the project. MBAEC volunteers receive a stipend of approximately \$400 per month. Currently the cost-share represents some proportion of the wages volunteers would earn if they had a regular, non-volunteer job that they, in effect, 'contribute' to the project by virtue of their relatively low monthly stipend. In this sense, they 'share the cost' of the project.

**TABLE 2  
CAR MBAEC Volunteer Utilization**

Country	City	EDP	FSI	TIP	Total	%
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	Almaty	2	1	3	6	21%
	Ust-Kamenogorsk	2			2	7%
	Pavlodar	1		1	2	7%
	Atyrau	1		2	3	10%
	Uralsk	1			1	3%
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	Bishkek	5		1	6	21%
	Osh	4			4	14%
<b>Tajikistan</b>	Khojand	1			1	3%
	Dushanbe	1			1	3%
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	Ferghana	2			2	7%
	Tashkent	1			1	3%
<b>Total</b>		21	1	7	29	100%
<b>%</b>		72%	3%	24%		100%

The SOW points out that MBAEC volunteers have been assigned to one of the three Pragma project components: Enterprise Development Project (EDP, with Business Advisory Services as the key activity), Financial Sector Initiative (FSI), and the Trade and Investment Project (TIP). Table 2 reveals that the EDP component by far has made the greatest use of the MBAEC: 72% of the volunteers have worked in the EDP project, which emphasizes providing Business Advisory Services (BAS) directly to enterprises of less than 500 employees. TIP had 6 volunteers in 2001 and only 1 in 2002. FSI had its first volunteer in 2002.

### C. SOW EVALUATION ISSUES AND FINDINGS

The Evaluation SOW provided a set of seven issues to focus the evaluation. This section presents the findings for each issue.

- Is the current recruitment, matching, and training process (i. e., volunteer management/administration) sufficient to ensure high quality of MBAEC volunteer assistance to the projects?***

“The Corps members have been a significant, positive, and important part of our project delivery system, and the project would have suffered if they had not been part of the implementing team...the Corps is the only avenue by which we can bring the newest business skills and techniques to the region for an extended period of time (normally one year) at a relatively low cost.”

Source: Senior Pragma Manager, email survey, February 2003

**Finding:** Yes, with regard to the Business Advisory Services (BAS) Component. The MBAEC business training and experience reportedly is most directly geared to the types of assistance needed by local enterprises. Also, providing firm-level assistance seems to match closely the expectations of the volunteers.<sup>9</sup> There was a clear expectation by Pragma management that the MBAEC would continue to play an important service delivery role in the BAS component. No so for the TIP and FSI components. Neither the TIP nor FSI COPs saw a good fit between the volunteers and their components and neither planned to use MBAEC volunteers in the future. They expressed a clear preference to hire full time staff with the specific skills and experience they needed.

**Finding:** Volunteers feel they need more language training. The initial language training was very helpful but most felt that they needed more, in-service training to become sufficiently proficient to interact effectively with their local counterparts and clients. The language skill reportedly boosted counterpart/client confidence in the volunteers.

**Finding:** Volunteers stated they need more practical, logistical help adjusting to their assignment locations — finding an apartment, where to wash clothes, where to get daily living supplies, etc. This help was cited as most necessary at the start of their assignment. Some Pragma staff mentioned this need as well. Both volunteers and Pragma staff interviewed questioned the value of the ACCELS subcontract in providing these types of services and assistance. Volunteers also wanted more information about USAID, Pragma as a corporation and how it operates, the EDP contract purpose and requirements and the experience (e.g., lessons learned) of prior volunteers, especially their immediate predecessors at their assignment locations.

**Finding:** Volunteers feel they need more mentoring (especially at the onset of their assignment) from the Pragma staff they are assigned to work with. Perhaps because it was managed by Pragma manager who was a former MBAEC volunteer and appreciated more completely the role of the volunteer, the BAS component was perceived by the volunteers as more conscientious in mentoring. Pragma managers in the other components evidenced less of a stake in volunteer mentoring. Some gave the impression that using the volunteers was not their decision. One senior Pragma manager, for example, stated (correctly or incorrectly) that the EDP Project was contractually bound to use a certain number of volunteers per year and “...had to figure out how to use them.”

## **2. *How effective are the volunteers in producing the desired results?***

**Finding:** Volunteer activity is intentionally subsumed by Pragma under the ‘EDP team’ approach. In practice, the volunteer contributes to the team and does not operate as a lone actor/consultant. The ‘volunteer’ label is dropped to boost standing. In fact, local business interviewees did not recognize the MBAEC tag but did respond to questions about the ‘Pragma project.’ Thus it is not possible to identify objectively the sole volunteer impacts other than through their individual testimonies in MBAEC reports.

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<sup>9</sup> Christine Kiely, MBAEC Executive Director, noted that intense, one-on-one firm level assistance until recently was the main MBAEC approach. Now the strategy is to cluster assistance in local centers and provide services to a broader range of clients. Personal conversation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, February 06, 2003

**Finding:** Volunteers have contributed to Pragma achievement of desired results in the BAS component and in the case of the one 2002 volunteer working in the TIP component. Interviews with both volunteers and Pragma managers revealed that the volunteers were perceived as most effective in providing firm-level consultancy services under the BAS banner.

**Finding:** This report has classified volunteer effectiveness in terms of ‘process impacts’ and ‘systemic impacts’. The former refers to potential (positive) changes in how clients do business resulting from volunteer assistance; the latter refers to actual changes in systemic factors, such as laws or regulations, resulting from volunteer assistance. Both types of impacts were observed in the field data collection, indicating that the volunteers have been effective in a variety of contexts. Illustrative examples of both types impacts, gleaned various from various MBAEC reports and interviews, are presented in the appendix.

**Finding:** Both volunteers and local staff expressed concerns about the potential ‘overusing’ or ‘misusing’ volunteers in management/administrative roles. Mainly this matter pertained to assigning new volunteers to manage/direct local centers, with local staff (many of whom had worked in the centers since they were established) reporting to them. Volunteers noted that, while the management experience was good for their career development, they initially thought they would mainly be working directly with local businesses, which they preferred. Local staff interviewed stated that usually the volunteers are ‘green’ and that therefore local staff have to spend time both smoothing their adjustment to their new environment and responsibilities *and* figure how best to work with their new ‘boss.’ Local staffs in EDC offices also feel they need more information about volunteer SOWs — what the volunteer is expected to do and wants to achieve — so they can tune their performance.

“Just having MBA doesn’t mean you are a leader or manager’ – better to have volunteers come in as consultants – providing firm level advice- rather than as managers. Don’t tie them up with administrative responsibilities, such as running offices. Focus them on direct firm level intervention. Better use of their talents is in direct firm level help.”

Source: former MBAEC volunteer working for Pragma on EDP Project, February 2003

3. ***How useful is the assistance they provide to SMEs as a whole, and particularly, under the Business Advisory Services component of the EDP?***

**Finding:** As noted, volunteers were perceived as most useful in the BAS component of the EDP. The volunteers interviewed also expressed a high comfort level in working directly with local enterprises, using their fresh MBA training to help them improve their business practices.

4. ***What is the degree of collaboration built between the volunteers and the counterparts they work with under the three projects? (BAS, FIP, TIP) How much does this collaboration depend on the personal characteristics of a given volunteer?***

“Volunteer effectiveness depends a lot on the on the personal characteristics of volunteer. Their language ability, their knowledge of business, their knowledge of the Pragma project and their personality are all important in being effective...”

Pragma Project Client, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, February 2003

**Finding:** Volunteers and the counterparts interviewed reported that the collaboration in general was very positive. Volunteers stated that they were able to work directly with the ‘decision makers’ in the firms and public organizations participating in the project. This finding was most evident in the BAS component.

“In many ways, the ...office was very well positioned to meet these goals before I arrived. In many ways however, the administrative upkeep of records, client histories and work done to increase the client base was not kept in a way that allowed for the setting of office and individual goals for 2003. I have instituted a system of breaking down larger goals into individual accomplishments and laid out detailed plans for each office employee as far as what needs to be done, what is being done and how to keep the two in line with one another.”

Source: MBAEC Volunteer, February 2003

**Finding:** Volunteer personal characteristics play a very important role in successful collaboration. Notably important were language ability (key factor), personality, flexibility and maturity. Language ability enabled direct communication with counterparts and clients, which was generally assessed as more effective than having to communicate through an interpreter. Personality and flexibility are closely aligned. Some volunteers expressed impatience in working with counterparts who exhibit a ‘Soviet Mentality’ – stubbornness, inefficient use of time, poor follow-through on volunteer advice, etc. Other volunteers seemed to accept this ‘mentality’ as to be expected, given the history of the CAR, and moved ahead to do what needed to be done. The maturity factor applied mainly to relatively young and inexperienced volunteers assuming the management leadership of local centers. Local staff and volunteers commented that some volunteers seemed lacked appropriate training and experience to step right in to a managerial leadership position that required them to direct and supervise the work of (often) older local staff who had worked in the project for two to three years.

**5. *Given the amount of resources put in place, how beneficial is this mechanism as opposed to regular instruments for technical assistance?***

**Finding:** The yearly cost of a volunteer is \$73,769 (without cost-share) and \$105,258 (including cost-share). Volunteers Corps members in CAR receive \$400/month housing allowance and \$1000/month living allowance (except for Tajikistan where the housing allowance is \$600).

**Finding:** Cost alone is an inadequate basis for comparison. This simple comparison begs the question of the purpose of the technical assistance and the types and durability of the results achieved. For example, the volunteers may be less costly but produce a narrower and less sustainable span of results than those achieved by a full time staff person or a more experienced consultant with more subject matter and country experience. One interviewee pointed out that the yearly cost of a Senior Executive Volunteer is about \$100,000.<sup>10</sup> Is this a better ‘value’ than MBAEC volunteer relative to results? Is putting the MBAEC ‘resources’ into full time hire with extensive, directly relevant experience a better value relative to results? Moreover, one Pragma manager stated to the author that there are other, less obvious costs (e.g., Pragma staff mentoring time, interpreter costs, a computer, work space, etc.) associated with turning a relatively untested MBAEC volunteer into a productive EDP team member.

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<sup>10</sup> Conversation with David Kerry, Bishkek Pragma Office, February 12, 2003

**6. Which component seems to benefit more from the cooperative agreement and why?**

**Finding:** The consensus view is that the MBAEC volunteers bring skills and experience that best fit the BAS component. As noted above, use of MBAEC volunteers in the TIP and FSI components reportedly has not been successful. Following the TIP use of five volunteers in 2001 only one volunteer (selected for his unique skill set) is being used in the most recent round; 2002 marked the assignment of the first volunteer to the FSI component and this person, who started out absent a specific work plan for her FSI assignment, has ended up working mainly in the BAS component. Neither the TIP nor FSI manager saw a future role for volunteers in their projects. Their clear preference was for full time hires with immediately applicable skills/experience.

“There is a poor fit between the MBAEC skill set and the particular skills needed for the TIP and FSI (RIC) components. Volunteers were useful in the beginning but then their value-added dropped off. And they are gone in twelve months.”

Senior Pragma Manager, Almaty, Kazakhstan,  
February 2003

**7. If the cyclic nature of MBAEC assignments (i.e., volunteer turnover) does negatively affect operations, what can be done reduce this negative impact?**

**Finding:** The cyclical use of MBAEC volunteers reportedly is a significant problem. After their initial training, most volunteers need about three months to adjust to their place of assignment and new responsibilities (e.g., managing a local center), leaving about nine months for them to add value. Then they leave.

Volunteer turnover is particularly problematic for their management/administrative responsibilities. Volunteers and local staff report that turnover requires recurrent re-adjustment as new volunteers assume local office management/administrative roles and seek to fit into established office routines. As discussed above, this issue is related to volunteer personal characteristics — maturity, management/administrative experience, language skills and personal style. Adding to the turnover problem for local staff since, as several stated, is the fact that often they are not informed about the incoming volunteer’s MBA experience, management/administrative experience, SOW and expectations for the local center. The adjustment process restarts with each new volunteer.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MBAEC IMPROVEMENT**

The recommendations are based mainly on the findings, with a couple of additions that occurred to the author during the course of the evaluation. The discussion encompasses all of the issues under four headings: volunteer management; volunteer effectiveness; volunteer turnover; and evaluation system development. The report concludes with some thoughts on how the MBAEC project should be valued.

### **1. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**

**Recommendation:** Volunteer recruitment and matching should center on placements in the BAS component providing direct consultation to local businesses. This promises the greatest payoff. In the case where a volunteer possesses a uniquely appropriate skill set that fits one of the other components, some placement flexibility is recommended.

**Recommendation:** Provide in-service (i.e., post-three month orientation and language training) training so volunteers can continue to improve their language skills. This skill ranks first for strengthening volunteer performance especially in working with counterparts and clients.

**Recommendation:** Strengthen volunteer mentoring, above all at the beginning of their assignments. Pragma staff would benefit from mentoring training so they can effectively perform this role. In turn, the volunteers need guidance on how best to access and use Pragma mentoring help. Effective mentoring will serve to smooth the adjustment period and get volunteers up to speed more quickly.

**Recommendation:** A useful mentoring tool would be an ‘electronic information exchange’ that included an email roster of past and current CAR volunteers. New volunteers could send questions/issues to the exchange and other volunteers could quickly reply to the query with suggestions, lessons learned and other useful information. The exchange would handle all types of requests, from practical living issues to proven training materials.

It could also be used to provide more detailed information to new volunteers about USAID, the Pragma Corporation and the EDP contract purpose and requirements. This will help them get an early understanding of how they fit into and can contribute to the larger purpose of the USAID/CAR strategy and the EDP project.

**Recommendation:** Strengthen the logistical support to volunteers, especially at the beginning of their assignment. Volunteers expressed a desire for more detailed guidance on who to contact for what issues. Basically this recommendation is aimed at minimizing the time volunteers have to spend figuring out (on their own) how to deal with the basic living issues they face in adjusting to an unfamiliar environment.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. VOLUNTEER EFFECTIVENESS**

**Recommendation:** Emphasize the volunteer consultant role — providing direct advice to enterprises about business development and strengthening. This means the BAS component. This role is closest to the skill set the newly minted MBAs bring to their volunteer service.

This recommendation includes reducing the reliance on volunteers to manage local centers. They can be useful in facilitating the transfer of the local center management responsibility to local staff and then serving as a consultant to the local staff on center management. The explicit goal should to achieve the transfer of management authority, which will not only free up time for the volunteers to provide more direct consultant service to local enterprises, it will also promote the sustainability of the local business improvement process. The management experience will remain with the local staff instead of leaving with the volunteers at the end of their service.

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that most of the volunteers interviewed readily accepted this adjustment process as part of the MBAEC experience. Still, the short time they serve requires that this process be minimized so they can focus on their assignments.

### 3. VOLUNTEER TURNOVER

**Recommendation:** About 40% of the volunteers contacted expressed an interest in serving for up to two years.<sup>12</sup> They felt this longer period would provide more time for them to produce lasting results. They also stated that the longer period would lessen the disruptions associated with the annual volunteer rotation and promote sustainability by providing more contact time with clients. Some would also like to spend more time in the CAR learning more about the region, the culture, etc.

The difficulty with the time extension option is the fact that most MBAEC members have large education loans and want to pay them down in the near term. They stated that their willingness to extend their service beyond one year would depend largely on the availability of additional financial help. One option mentioned was to offer them some form of 'loan forgiveness' assistance similar to that provided Peace Corps members. Another option mentioned was to increase the second year volunteer stipend to approach more of a living wage that would enable them to pay off at least part of their loan.

**Recommendation:** It was noted that the turnover problem is especially germane to local center management. The prevailing rationale for casting volunteers in center management roles is that local staffs lack the requisite management/administrative skills. But this situation needs to change for sustainability to be achieved. MBAEC should implement a management transition activity with the explicit goal of transferring local center management authority to local staff. Volunteers would then serve as consultants to local staff but would not have direct management/administrative responsibilities. They could provide some oversight reporting to Pragma, but it would clear that *de facto* center management was a local staff responsibility.

**Recommendation:** Most of the volunteers expressed a desire for some form of succession strategy that ensured a smoother transition from outgoing and incoming volunteers. Local staff shared this view. The recommended strategy would bring together departing volunteers, new volunteers and the center staffs for two to three days to review center organization and operation, discuss ongoing project activities (including key counterparts and clients) and preview the new volunteers SOW and expectations for her/his term of service. The local staff would have the opportunity to learn about the new volunteer and familiarize him/her on how the center functions. This recommendation assumes that the management transfer activity discussed above would be part of this dialogue.

### 4. EVALUATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

**Recommendation:** MBAEC needs to develop an evaluation strategy that tracks project implementation and results relative to project purpose and objectives. It currently utilizes quarterly reports that rely on volunteer testimony regarding accomplishments. A more objective and useful approach would be to install an evaluation system that monitors and reports on three types of data/information:

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<sup>12</sup> Those that who were not interested in extending their service mentioned a variety of reasons, such as wanting to return home, a full time job, family reasons etc. It should be noted that only one of eighteen volunteers contacted for the evaluation expressed a decidedly negative assessment of MBAEC as the reason for not wanting to serve longer.

- a. **Client baseline data:** business name; key business contacts; key counterparts; main products/services; production levels; operations overview; priority areas for MBAEC assistance.
- b. **MBAEC consultant services:** volunteer name; specific services provided; service delivery activities; expected service results and results indicators.
- c. **Results:** changes in results indicators attributable to MBAEC consultant services; importance of the results relative to improved business operations and processes.

## V. A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

One of the current volunteers assessed the MBAEC experience as a ‘win-win for all.’ The volunteers get to travel, learn about a new culture and apply their new MBA skills in practical business situations. The local businesses gain exposure to the latest in western business technology and practice and some hands-on assistance. Pragma gets free (or very low cost to the project) skilled labor to help it deliver EDP Project services. All of this is worthwhile, judging by the comments of most of the people interviewed. But is it enough and, moreover, what is a fair measure of the value of a project such as the MBAEC that has cost USAID a little over \$ 2 million from its CAR beginning.

Some suggested valuing the MBAEC Cooperative Agreement in terms of traditional economic development measures such as new job creation, new business starts, business expansions, etc. In other words, how many new jobs were created, what has been the rate of business expansion, and so forth. The author believes this is the wrong approach for several reasons already discussed. The MBAEC operates as a stealth component of the PRAGMA EDP project so isolating the effects solely attributable to MBAEC is unrealistic. The project is too small in cost and the number of volunteers and too short lived to expect extravagant impacts on even local or regional indicators such as employment growth. A more prudent approach is take what the MBAEC gives — exposure to new ideas and experience for the volunteers and the clients and service delivery assistance to the Pragma EDP Project – and try to improve it.

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## APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A

### CONTACTS

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#### **MBA Enterprise Corps:**

Christine Kiely, Executive Director  
Phyllis Tutora, Program Coordinator, Washington, DC

#### **USAID/CAR: Almaty, Kazakhstan**

Mary Norris, Director, Office Director, Enterprise and Finance Project  
Kimberly Rosen, CTO Enterprise Development Project  
Svetlana Golovatskaya, CTO MBAEC Project

#### **Pragma: Almaty, Kazakhstan**

Ashley Moretz, Director, Business Advisory Services  
Andrew Beklemishev, E-Commerce Consultant  
Paul Pieper, Chief of Party (COP), TIP  
John Bengel, Acting COP, EDP  
David Lukterhand – COP, FSI  
Marc Shiman – TIP project  
Gulfiya Latypova – TIP office, RIC consultant

#### **Project Clients**

Howard Burrows, VNDQ Manager, EDP Project Client (Kazakhstan)  
Asan T. Kozykeyev, Kazakhstan Association of business Incubators and Innovation Centers, EDP Project Client (Kazakhstan)  
Nurbek Alisherov, General Director, TOKTOM Company, EDP Project Client (Kyrgyzstan)

#### **Pragma: Biskek, Kyrgyzstan**

Kathleen Dunkel, Director, Business Advisory Services, Kyrgyzstan  
Rachel Jacobs Allen, MBAEC Volunteer, Kyrgyzstan  
David Kerry, CAR Regional Director, BAS and Regional Trade Promotion, Kyrgyzstan

#### **Bishkek Focus Group:**

Andres Riggioni, EDP Acting Country Representative, Kyrgyzstan  
Elena Zabiroya, Business Advisor  
Andrey Nikolaevich, Business Advisor  
Konstantin Dmitrievich, Business Advisor  
Tamara Usenova, Regional Volunteer Coordinator  
Rustambek Avtandilovich Djalbiev, Business Advisor  
Andrey Nikolaevich Davydov, Business Advisor

#### **MBAEC Volunteers (email survey):**

Terence Slywka (Kazakhstan)  
Chris Alberth (Kazakhstan)  
Jay Behringer (Kazakhstan)

Jason Bohoney (Kyrgyzstan)  
Chad Clay (Kazakhstan)  
Shaun Doherty (Uzbekistan)  
Everett Gong (Kyrgyzstan)  
Eric Lunstrum (Uzbekistan)  
Kaidra Mitchell (Tajikistan)  
Ian O'Brien (Kazakhstan)  
Terry Slywka (Kazakhstan)  
Michael J. Torreano (Tajikistan)  
Nim Wiwattarangkul (Kazakhstan)  
Patrick Deitrich (Pragma, Uzbekistan - EDP)  
Curtis Yates, Almaty, (now with Pragma, Almaty)

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

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#### **MBEAC VOLUNTEER QUESTIONNAIRE: IN-PERSON AND EMAIL SURVEY**

##### **PERSONAL INFORMATION: NAME AND WORK LOCATION(S)**

1. How long have you participated as a MBAEC volunteer?
2. What project component(s) (e.g., EDP, FSI, TIP) have you worked on?
3. Do you feel you were adequately prepared (e.g., MBA experience, MBAEC preparation) to take on your volunteer responsibilities?
4. Do you have any recommendations on how you could have been better prepared?
5. Do you feel that you received the support you needed while you were actually working as a MBAEC volunteer?
6. Do you have any suggestions for improving that support?
7. In what ways do you think you have been most effective (or useful) as an MBEAC volunteer? What do you see as your most notable contribution(s) to improving the environment for SME growth and development?
8. What (if any) have been the major obstacles you have had to deal with in your work as a volunteer?
9. How did you handle them?
10. What could have been done to help you better deal with them?
11. What changes in the implementation of the MBEAC in the field would help to improve its effectiveness?
12. Do you feel there has been effective collaboration among MBAEC volunteers and their counterparts?
13. What do you see as the key to effective collaboration?
14. Do you have any suggestions for improving collaboration?
15. Do you feel that 12 months is a long enough time period for MBEAC volunteers to be as useful or effective as they could be?
16. Do you have a recommendation on this question?
17. Finally, what do you see as the 'lasting impact' of the MBAEC project? Who benefits from the project and how?

##### **QUESTIONS FOR PRAGMA MANAGEMENT AND STAFF**

1. How has your program (e.g., EDP, TIP, FSI) used MBAEC volunteers?
2. How many in each activity?
3. Do you see a continuing (or growing) need for their involvement in your program?
4. Why or why not?
5. What are the unique skills or experiences that the volunteers provide?
6. What do you see as the major impacts resulting from the volunteer activity?
7. Short term and long term
8. Who benefits most from the volunteer participation in your program?
9. What are the concrete benefits?

10. Do you think the MBEAC are the most cost-effective means to advance certain program goals?
11. Why or why not?
12. How do you think the MBAEC project could be made useful for your program?
13. If not, why not?

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## **APPENDIX C DATA TABLES**

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### **MBA ENTERPRISE CORPS CYCLE OF VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **THE JULY GROUP**

Traditionally, Corps members begin their assignment cycle in July. This schedule was designed to adhere to an academic calendar, understanding that most Corps members would be coming directly from their graduate school experience.

The overall schedule for the July 2002 group is/was as follows:

#### **FALL RECRUITING — OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2001**

- Application deadline at schools — December/January 2002
- School selection/nomination committees interview applicants — December/January 2002
- Schools nominate candidates to the Corps — early February 2002
- Home office application processing and profile calls — February 2002
- Matching Committee meets to “match” applicants to assignments — early March 2002
- Matching (1<sup>st</sup> round, 2<sup>nd</sup> round, 3<sup>rd</sup> round, etc.) — March through May 2002
- Preparation for Corps members traveling overseas — June 2002
- US Training and Orientation — early/mid July
- Corps members depart for country of assignment — early/mid July 2002
- In-country Language and Culture Training — mid July through September 2002
- Corps members begin assignments with host organizations — October 1, 2002
- Corps members finish their assignments — September 30, 2003

#### **THE JANUARY GROUP (MID-YEAR ASSIGNMENTS)**

Because the timing of contracts and funding with USAID is unpredictable, the Corps recognized that it might need to alter its current model to accommodate off-cycle assignments. While the majority of assignments would still coincide with the academic calendar, the Corps started experimenting with off-cycle assignments in 2002. These “mid-year” volunteers would be recruited in the fall of 2001 to begin their tenure with the Corps in January 2002—the middle of the academic year.

The overall schedule for the Corps 2002 January Group is/was as follows:

#### **RECRUITING — OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2001**

- Application deadline at schools — early late November/early December 2001
- School selection/nomination committees interview applicants — early December 2001
- Schools nominate candidates to the Corps — early December 2001
- Home office application processing and profile calls — mid December 2001
- Home office/field matching to “match” applicants to assignments — mid December 2001

Matching (1<sup>st</sup> round, 2<sup>nd</sup> round, 3<sup>rd</sup> round, etc.) — late December 2001/early January 2002  
Preparation for Corps members traveling overseas — mid January 2002  
US Training and Orientation — late January 2002  
Corps members depart for country of assignment — late January 2002  
In-country Language Training — February 2002  
Corps members begin assignments with host organizations — March 1, 2002  
Corps members finish their assignments — February 28, 2003

Source: MBA Enterprise Corps, Washington, D.C., February 2003

## **MBAEC CAR Implementation Timeline**<sup>13</sup>

### **Corps 2000**

- ▶ Corps members to provide technical assistance to SMEs in support of USAID's strategic objectives in the region
- ▶ Corps members assigned to Pragma (SME Development Program) and The Services Group (Removal of Investment Constraints)
- ▶ Corps language and culture training in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine with the Ukraine volunteers
- ▶ ACCELS provides logistical support on the ground (travel, transportation, accommodations, etc)
- ▶ Target Countries — Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
- ▶ Corps members on assignment —7
- ▶ Cities of assignment — Almaty, Atyrau, Bishkek and Osh
- ▶ Some Corps member roles expanded to include general management of the offices to which they were assigned — hiring staff, program oversight, reporting responsibility, etc.
- ▶ Half way through the assignment period, expansion into Uzbekistan — Corps member moves from Osh, Kyrgyzstan to Ferghana, Uzbekistan
- ▶ 3 country directors for ACCELS — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
- ▶ Half way though the assignment period, early termination — Corps member in Atyrau, Kazakhstan leaves assignment early due to father's death
- ▶ 6 Corps members finish their assignments
- ▶ 4 Corps members offered permanent full time positions with Pragma (all accept and stay in the region)

### **Corps 2001**

- ▶ ACCELS role expanded to include better program oversight with the creation of the Language Training and Orientation program for all Central Asia volunteers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- ▶ ACCELS Regional Director appointed by the Corps to coordinate the activities of the ACCELS offices across the republics
- ▶ 3 ACCELS Country Directors still to backstop the volunteers in each individual country

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<sup>13</sup> Information for this timeline was provided by Christine Kiely, MBAEC Executive Director, email communication, October 24, 2003

- ▶ Candidates selected by the Corps were initially matched to the region until Pragma could determine the best country/city placement based on phone interviews and e-mail exchanges
- ▶ 9 Corps members assigned - all candidates initially matched to Pragma's SME project
- ▶ A few weeks before the start of the program, the Trade and Investment Project (TIP) is added to the assignment roster and 5 of the 9 Corps members are switched to TIP
- ▶ Countries of assignment - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
- ▶ Cities of assignment – Almaty, Atyrau, Pavlodar, Ust Kamenogorsk, Bishkek, Ferghana
- ▶ A one-week Pragma orientation designed to come after Corps language and culture training but before Corps members report to the permanent assignment locations
- ▶ Corps members open and manage new Enterprise Development Centers (EDCs)
- ▶ Evaluation designed to obtain feedback on Corps members' performance
- ▶ Corps member attacked in Atyrau – both Corps members removed in September – one terminated (only 3 weeks early) and the other moved to Almaty
- ▶ 1 Corps member offered permanent full time position with Pragma (accepted)

## **Corps 2002**

- ▶ Matching process redesigned to give Pragma BAS staff a hand in selecting the volunteers in addition to determining their best placement (country/city).
- ▶ TIP determined not to be the best placement for MBAs. However, TIP could still be a possibility for volunteers with the appropriate background (legal/JD, government, etc.)
- ▶ Financial Services Initiative (FSI) added to the project roster with 1 volunteer assignment as a pilot
- ▶ No placements in Atyrau, Kazakhstan
- ▶ Plan to incorporate part of Pragma's orientation into the Training program in Bishkek (did not happen as planned because Pragma had not yet been notified as to the outcome of the RFP)
- ▶ Site visits incorporated into the agreement with ACCELS whereby Corps members, accompanied by an ACCELS staff person, would visit their assignment locations prior to the actual move.
- ▶ Evaluations of Corps members by Pragma to be done twice during the assignment year (half way through and at the end) to allow the Corps to address any performance issues with its volunteers
- ▶ Project expanded to Tajikistan – Dushanbe and Khojand
- ▶ 13 Corps members assigned plus 3 spouses
- ▶ Projects assigned – EDP (11), TIP (1), FSI (1)
- ▶ Countries of assignment – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
- ▶ Cities of assignment – Almaty, Pavlodar, Ust Kamenogorsk, Uralsk, Bishkek, Osh, Dushanbe, Khojand, Ferghana, Tashkent
- ▶ Corps spouse hired by Pragma as a local hire in Uralsk
- ▶ Corps members have EDC management responsibilities in addition to building a portfolio of clients to provide consulting services

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## **APPENDIX D**

### **DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCE MATERIAL**

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MBAEC Budget (Excel) Files, Budgets for 2000 - 2002. Source: USAID/CAR, February 2003.

MBA Enterprise Corps Evaluation: Central Asia Region, Scope of Work, USAID, email file, n.d.

CORPS 2000 - 2002 - Central Asia, volunteer assignment rosters, Excel Spreadsheets. Source: Citizens Development Corps (CDC), Washington, D.C., February 2003.

Cycle of Assignments, MBAEC Volunteers. Source: CDC, Washington, D.C., February 2003.

ACTIVITIES of the MBA ENTERPRISE CORPS in CENTRAL ASIA, Quarterly Reports, 2000-2002. Source: CDC, Washington, D.C., February 2003.

Various documents on MBAEC management/administrative procedures (e.g., travel requests, close-out, volunteer evaluation). Source: CDC, Washington, D.C., February 2003.