

**Evaluation of USAID Basic Education Program and  
Assessment of Future Programming Priorities in  
Education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan**

**Contract No. EDH-I-00-03-00002-00**

**Submitted to:  
USAID Central Asia Regional Office**

**Submitted by:  
DevTech Systems, Inc.**

**June 27, 2005**



*Dedication to Development since 1984*  
*economics • education • environment • gender • governance*

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Almaty, Kazakhstan**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

Abt	Abt Associates
ACCELS	American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AED	Academy for Educational Development
AIP	Association of Independent Providers – Novel School
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AKHP	Aga Khan Humanities Project
ALM	Active Learning Materials
ALPG	Active Learning for Primary Grades (Save the Children Tajikistan)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CEC	Community Education Committee
C-EMIS	Community Education Management and Information System
CLO	Child-led organizations (including Children’s Clubs)
DED	District Education Departments
EFA	Education For All
EFWG	Education Finance Working Group
EMP	Education Modernization Project (World Bank)
ESDP	Education Sector Development Project
EU	European Union/European Commission
FEIS	Foundation for Support of Educational Initiatives
HRD	Human Resource Development
IBET	Improving Basic Education in Tajikistan (USAID/AKF)
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technologies
IE	Inclusive Education
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IPD	Institute for Professional Development
ISSA	International Step-by-Step Association
ITLM	Interactive Teaching Learning Materials
KAE	Kyrgyz Academy of Education
KIPD	Khorog Institute for Professional Development
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude
KSPU	Kyrgyz State Pedagogical University
LCMD	Low Cost Materials Development
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSDSP	Mountain Society Development Support Program
NERA	National Education Reform Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Oblano	Oblast (Provincial) Educational Department
OSI	Open Society Institute
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PC	Parents Committee
PDS	Professional Development School

PEAKS	Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening in CA
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
Raiono	Raion (District) Education Department
REP	Rural Education Project (World Bank)
RWCT	Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking
SBC	School-Based Curriculum
SbS	Step-by-Step program
SCUK	Save the Children, United Kingdom
SCUS	Save the Children, United States
SFF	Student Friendly Furniture
SI	School Improvement
SP	School Parliament
SP	Social Partnership
SRC	School Rehabilitation Committee
START	Strategic Technical Assistance for Results with Training (USAID)
TAR	Technical Assistance Report
TOT	Training of Trainers (Training of Facilitators/Mentors)
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	U.S. Dollar
VWG	Voucher Working Group
VS	Voucher System
WB	World Bank
WG	Working Group
WFP	World Food Program (UN)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

USAID/Almaty contracted DevTech Systems to conduct a mid-term evaluation of its basic education programs in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- 1) Assess the effectiveness and sustainability of USAID-assisted approaches to improving quality and increasing access to primary and secondary education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and make recommendations for possible program adjustments.
- 2) Review USAID's basic education assistance strategy and make recommendations on future assistance priorities in the education sector.

The USAID Basic Education program seeks to address major challenges in Central Asian education systems through two cooperative agreements: The Participation, Education, And Knowledge Strengthening Project (PEAKS) implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), and the Improvement of Basic Education in Tajikistan (IBET) project, a Tajikistan-only activity implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). The program was started with post-9/11 supplementary funding, initially for three years (calendar years 2003-2005). Subsequently, the PEAKS agreement was extended for another year-and-a-half, through June 2007.

The main project under the Basic Education Strategic Objective, **PEAKS**, technically operates in four countries of the region: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The program in Turkmenistan, however, has been very limited. Therefore, the evaluation focused on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Though PEAKS was discussed at length in advance with the three countries, received their official approval, and the ministries of education are represented on the Project Advisory Committees (PACs), the relationship of the project to the respective national education systems has been limited. The main responsibility for the project is in the hands of a consortium of international and local NGOs and international consulting firms, which, for the most part, have worked directly with the pilot schools and communities. Consortium members included an umbrella organization (AED, and four partners: The Open Society Institute (OSI), Save the Children United Kingdom (SCUK), Save the Children United States (SCUS), and Abt Associates (Abt).

The other project in USAID's basic education program, **IBET**, is a Tajikistan only project. It is also a consortium-run project, including the Mountain Society Development Support Program (MSDSP), the Khorog Institute for Professional Development (KIPD), and the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP). Prior to the initiation of IBET, AKF assistance had focused on strengthening key existing government education resources in the original project area, notably the KIPD but also the local education departments, and only subsequently began to introduce modern methods, strengthened subject matter curricula, and innovative, low-cost materials into pilot primary schools. IBET built on this earlier work by giving support and direction to the latter activities and expanding the project area to include schools in two other provinces (Khatlon and

Rasht). The basic IBET model is a triangle - a Core School and two nearby Satellite Schools, with all three sharing a common Resource Center. The training, monitoring, and follow up work is done, in coordinated fashion, by a combination of the IPD staff, district officials, and the main teacher trainers from the core schools.

## **Methodology**

The team employed a range of data collection methods. The primary tool was a structured data collection effort designed to identify and rate the level of usage of best practices, distilled from experiences in other countries, by key school and community stakeholders. The instruments which formed part of the research project were administered during a matrix of site visits to PDS and cluster schools and their respective communities. School visits included interviews with teachers, school administrators, students, parents, and representatives of community education committees and parent-teacher associations. In addition, teacher questionnaires were administered and classroom observations were conducted. Action plans and parent committee meeting minutes were also reviewed. (See Appendices A and B for further details.)

Additional data was collected through meetings with a wide range of other key stakeholders, including leaders and staff of the three Ministries of education, regional and district education departments, teacher training institutions, AED and the other implementing partners, the World and Asian Development Banks, NGOs, other education donors, and USAID staff in Almaty, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Tashkent, and Washington. In addition, the team reviewed an extensive list of background documents.

## **II. EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM**

### **A. Validity of the pilot school/cluster model - provision of in-service training to a greater number of teachers:**

The center-piece of the PEAKS program is the Professional Development School (PDS)-Cluster School model. Under this model, teachers are selected from the PDS schools to receive training as teacher trainers, who then return to “cascade” their training to other teachers at the PDS and to teachers in the cluster schools. The team’s research indicated that the majority of the PDS schools score from moderate to high in the cascading of training to other PDS teachers, but that there is currently a significant drop-off in cascading between the PDSs and the cluster schools.

To a large extent this is due to the relatively short time that most of the cluster schools have been involved in the project. (See Section II.) But, other constraints were noted that are more challenging to the ultimate success of the model. One is the heavy regular load carried by PDS trainers, especially in schools with multiple shifts, which limits their ability to find time to provide training and also to get out to the cluster schools on a regular basis for follow up and mentoring. Other constraints include the lack of arrangements for substitute teachers to enable some of the training to take place on regular school days, the absence of travel funds to enable PDS and cluster teachers to move back and forth within the cluster, the often large distances

between PDSs and cluster schools; and the inability of many rural cluster teachers, due to a variety of cultural and family pressures, to be away from home for extended periods of training.

Another major constraint is that the training provided by PDS trainers to cluster teachers or others is not currently recognized by the governments as meeting official teacher retraining requirements and, thus, does not offer any extra compensation to the trainer or lead to promotions or salary increases for the trainees. Efforts to overcome this last problem are reportedly underway in all three countries.

## **B. Sustainability of the Teacher Training Programs**

While the situation is likely to improve with time, the team found that there are built-in sustainability and replication issues with a model which relies exclusively on the PDS schools for training, monitoring, and mentoring services. Had the strengthening of the district education offices to assist them to provide these services – their assigned job – been included in the project design, in effect combining their resources with those of the PDSs and giving them a sense of ownership, the prospects for sustainability and replication would be much greater. The district offices, moreover, are empowered to certify training in which they participate as eligible for teacher retraining benefits.

Another long-term sustainability issue is the fact that the SbS and RWCT training packages and materials are copyrighted. While this is not a major problem while OSI, and the local foundations spun off by the Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation Network, are delivering services under a sub-agreement with PEAKS, it has the potential to be a major issue when the project reaches the replication phase. It is likely that at that point, the PEAKS model, to make it affordable, would be stripped down to its basics, with costs, including training and materials, being a large factor. The requirement to purchase training services and materials exclusively from the local SbS and RWCT foundations or licensed affiliates could well be unaffordable and would certainly restrict options. The situation would change dramatically, if the courses were officially recognized by the three governments and if the PDSs, TTIs, and other official teacher training institutions were in effect “licensed” to provide the services, without having to pay royalties.

### **Uzbekistan Program Redesign**

For reasons unrelated to PEAKS, in the first half of 2004, OSI was denied re-registration in Uzbekistan, resulting in the need for AED to take responsibility for OSI’s functions and to redesign the IR-1 and IR-2 programs in that country. The opportunity was taken to redesign key aspects of the program, some of which had already been identified as needing revision, notably the need to take greater advantage of the Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs), which in Uzbekistan, in contrast to the other two countries, continued to enjoy strong government support. Additionally, arrangements were made with a local foundation, Ziyu, and SCUS to implement IR-3 community work, alongside similar IR-5 being conducted by SCUS.

The redesign included greater involvement and ownership by government education bodies, including the TTIs and district education offices, to supplement, but not replace, the PDSs. Also

included was the development, in association with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), of a distance learning component, accompanied by a network of resource centers, to take both TTI and PDS training and follow up services to outlying schools, rather than rely on extensive traveling back and forth within the clusters. An additional component was the development of new, interactive training programs and materials to replace the OSI products.

The team was impressed with the strategic nature of the redesign and considers it to be well adapted to Uzbekistan conditions. While it is unlikely the Uzbekistan redesign will turn out to be fully applicable elsewhere – the situation in each country is different – the direction of change, especially towards greater integration of the project into the national education system, relating it to other key donors, and experimenting with new combinations of PDS and other teacher training and support activities, strikes the team as being on target not only for Uzbekistan but the other countries as well.

### **C. Effectiveness of School Management Training in Changing Organization Behavior in Schools**

The team's research showed that there has been considerable positive change in organizational behavior, which can be attributed at least in part to the project, including school management training. Included are more participatory management, greater openness and sharing of information within the school and with the community, greater readiness to take initiative in developing local school improvement projects, and fund raising. While further progress is still needed, improved transparency in budgetary and financial matters is occurring. Again, a difference was noted between PDS and cluster schools, probably due mainly to the relatively short time the latter have been involved in the project.

In general, the role of the school director was found to be critical to the success of the project, corroborating experience in similar projects elsewhere. The team believes that additional, focused training of school administrators, especially in the substantive details of the new teaching and learning methods, as well as financial management, would be a good investment. The team was pleased to see that some of this training is part of the Uzbekistan redesign and is also part of school improvement training.

Regular follow up on management issues by the district inspectors would be helpful in sustaining behavior changes.

### **D. Gender**

In general, the team observed positive gender-related behavior on the part of students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and community organizations supporting the schools. In the absence of baseline data, it was difficult to measure change, per se, but it is likely that the project has had an effect, especially in the SbS classes and to a lesser extent in upper grades in schools where RWCT has been introduced. Again, the role of the School Director was found to be important for setting the general tone.

Not surprisingly with respect to a variable as socially important and powerful as gender, the school environment is only one factor influencing gender behavior. But, the project's impact has clearly been positive.

#### **E. Effectiveness and Sustainability of Community Involvement Approaches**

The team observed sizable, sustained interactions between the schools and the communities. In general, community organizations called for in the project design were present and functioning. Parents were clearly more involved with the schools, particularly participation of SbS parents in their children's classes, and a clear increase in school visits and conferences with teachers. Many of the interactions have focused on the identification and execution of school projects, in which the community played a significant role in planning, fund raising and monitoring. This may reflect the emphasis placed on projects by the implementers, SCUK and SCUS, and in the training provided.

#### **F. Complementarity of Inputs in Pilot Schools under the Different Components and Program Cohesion**

Unlike integrated basic education projects in many other countries, which have sought to demonstrate the efficacy of a uniform package of inputs, PEAKS was designed to simultaneously test a number of different models, within a single project. In addition, there was no clear pattern of uniform inputs provided more or less simultaneously across the entire project, even where OSI was the principal teaching and learning provider and SCUK the primary community development provider. The geographic coverage and experience of implementing partners varied, e.g. OSI in Tajikistan. Schools came into the program at different times and benefited from project inputs accordingly, making comparisons difficult. As noted, the cluster schools, are still quite new to the project, and to date have only received partial inputs.

The complexity of the project placed an unusual burden on AED to develop mechanisms for tracking and measuring progress on such a large number of variables, as well as coordinating the day-to-day activities of the various partners.

#### **G. Advocacy and Association Development**

The original project design included plans to promote the establishment of professional associations among PEAKS teachers, administrators, and school-related community leaders. At some point, these plans were dropped. In the team's view, it would be important to reinstate them. First of all, the proposed associations would be very helpful for the continued professional development of their members - a key to sustainability. The associations would also empower these central actors in the project to take their professional futures in their own hands, promoting their professional interests and joining with others to advocate for educational development, reforms, including more adequate funding.

## **H. Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

The team reviewed partner collection plans, the appropriateness and reliability of indicators for assessing progress, methods for assessing student outcomes, and the impact of teacher training on attendance and school completion.

In general, it found the M&E design to be satisfactory in establishing a baseline in 2003 and in measuring the inputs and outputs of the project design focus in the 2004 data collection. For the remaining project time frame, more effort should be made to assess project impact, and in areas where C-EMIS is functioning, to set up several tracking programs. The development of fully adequate methods for assessing student outcomes is still a work in progress, and may not be attainable in the time frame and with the resources available.

The team believes that PEAKS teacher training has had a positive impact on school attendance and retention, by removing many of the school-based factors that lead to non/poor attendance. Clearly the total SbS package has positive effects on both, and it is likely that the combined effect of all project components will improve both. At the same time, it should be recognized that school attendance and retention are heavily influenced by economic pressures, which are beyond the school's control, particularly in rural areas or poor urban neighborhoods.

## **I. USAID Comparative Advantage in Current Assistance Areas**

USAID/CAR, like USAID missions elsewhere, have inherent advantages, and occasional disadvantages, that derive from the power and influence of the U.S. This is true in CAR education, even with the relatively small education budget and USAID/CAR's recent entry into the sector.

The Mission's decision to focus on basic education automatically created other kinds of comparative advantage, resulting from the fact that world-wide, basic education is USAID's top priority in the sector. For example, the Mission benefits from the comparatively large technical resources available within the Agency in this area, the availability of a well-developed and flexible range of basic education procurement mechanisms, the existence of numerous USAID projects in basic education elsewhere to draw upon for lessons learned and best practices, and the ability to tap a large, national and international pool of technical expertise. It also benefits from close and long-standing working relations in basic education with other donors, notably the World Bank.

Another advantage is the way USAID operates, i.e. with but not through government, as the WB and ADB must do. This enables USAID to be more flexible and responsive and have better control over the quality of the work and the usage of its funds. It also puts USAID in a unique position to provide long term, objective technical assistance, as opposed to the Banks, which have a tendency to provide advice but little sustained assistance in defining and implementing solutions to problems.

## **J. Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Models for Quality Improvement**

The full report includes tables for each country comparing the different models.

The team was impressed with the IBET model, especially its careful and sustained integration of the project with local education institutions. The latter, in the team's view, is a weakness of the PEAKS model. The OSI/Soros focus on developing and sustaining independent, national organizations to work on behalf of the schools is a sound, long-term strategy for society as a whole. But, in the PEAKS context, where scaling up and replication of the project through the national education systems must be the ultimate goal, there is some conflict between the two approaches.

The team is critical of SCUUK's rural cluster model in Tajikistan, at least as it has operated under PEAKS. It is recognized that the model focuses on fostering self-help among some of the poorest schools in a poor country, which is a commendable objective. But, in practice, few positive results were observed. The reasons are unclear and may have more to do with management than the model per se. Nevertheless, at this point, it would be hard to justify recommending making a new start at developing and testing it.

## **K. Policy Initiatives**

While it was not an integral part of the original design, PEAKS has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the testing of two educational finance pilot initiatives. The first is a per capita school funding scheme, which addresses both equity in school finance and decentralized, transparent management of school budgets. As a result, the first major experiment with decentralization of school governance to local boards is now underway in pilot areas in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The second initiative, which is philosophically quite different, is a pilot test in one district in Kyrgyzstan of a training voucher scheme. The goal of the pilot is to test whether the introduction of competition into teacher retraining systems can simultaneously promote the entry into the system of new, private training providers, while encouraging current providers, especially the TTIs, to upgrade the quality and relevance of their offerings.

The team supports the first initiative wholeheartedly and believes the second can be useful, so long as it does not, de facto, lead to the decimation of training capacity in the national education system which is often the only viable option for many teachers and schools. Both kinds of training sources are going to be needed in the years ahead.

## **L. Summary Comments on PEAKS and IBET**

PEAKS overall is an excellent project and by the end of the current agreement will have left significant marks in the great majority of the schools and communities in which it operates. The team has been critical of some aspects of the project, but that has strictly been with the goal of helping it become even stronger and in ways that will increase the likelihood that it will be institutionalized into national education systems and widely replicated, as it deserves to be.

The team was only able to study two IBET schools; thus, is limited in the findings and recommendations that it can make concerning IBET. In the team's view, the IBET model is attractive and the project seems to be on a sound course. The next logical step would be to move the reform process into the upper grades, through the introduction of something along the lines of RWCT. If resources are available, the team believes an extension through June 2007 to support such an effort would be appropriate. If this were done, it would put IBET on the same time table as PEAKS and open the option in Tajikistan of integrating AKF/IBET into the proposed PEAKS replication project.

#### **M. PEAKS Program Management**

AED's management of the PEAKS program has been generally strong. Its primary role at the outset was to coordinate and bring cohesion to an unusually complicated mix of goals, models, and implementers in three countries. This did not happen overnight, but the evidence is that the issues were identified and dealt with in a reasonably sound and timely way. During this initial period, AED relied primarily on the implementers for their special expertise in each of the components for which they were assigned lead roles.

The situation was altered significantly with the changes in Uzbekistan in the first half of 2004. At this stage, de facto, AED began to play a much larger conceptual and technical role. Today, as the project is challenged to define and work towards its ultimate objectives in a number of areas, the need for AED leadership is further increased. In the team's opinion, in order to do this, AED should consider augmenting its project-specific technical expertise, both in-region and via consultants on regular visit schedules, particularly in relevant methodologies, materials development, and related training.

Throughout the project, AED has worked closely and effectively with the governments and key donors, especially the World Bank, in order to coordinate the project's work with them and to seek their understanding and support.

### **III. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL FUTURE INVOLVEMENT**

#### **A. The Original and Current Validity of USAID's Education Sector Strategy and Approach**

The team believes USAID's original assumptions were and remain valid but also sees the case for basic education as even greater than suggested.

The number of beneficiaries is indeed high at this level of education in all three countries and improvements in access and the quality and efficiency of education are badly needed. But, in addition to these traditional arguments, there is the fact that targeted, effective interventions in primary and basic education can help accomplish other things critical to nation-building besides education per se, including:

- The gradual creation of a pool of well-educated, thinking and self-learning future citizens and engines of social and economic development.
- The impact of this kind of modern education in the schools on older children, parents, families, teachers, and school and community leaders should not be discounted. If they can be brought into the process, they themselves can be energized and converted into change agents, with immediate payoffs not only in education but also other sectors. Modern basic education approaches also contribute to development of capability to organize and implement a wide range of local self-help initiatives.
- Evidence in a developing country that a failing education system can be and is being turned around, can have profound impacts on matters as diverse as the investment climate, brain drain, social and gender equality, recruitment of talent to the education sector, retention of girls and other potential dropouts in school, and a general public perception that an improved future is possible.

## **B. The Policy, Capacity, and Donor Environment**

Education policies in the CAR region are generally quite good and are improving, but good policies only create the potential for reform. In general, implementation has been weak. The main problem is not generally lack of political will, but rather capacity. Skilled education professionals are scarce in all three countries, and the ability of the ministries of education, universities, and schools to attract the talent that exists is severely limited by their inability to pay high enough salaries to compete with opportunities in the private and NGO sectors. The role of the donors in bidding up the prices also has to be recognized.

On the supply side, the prevalence of low salaries in the education sector acts as a deterrent to competent young people to specialize in the field.

The donor environment is complex. The collapse of the Soviet Union devastated the economies of Central Asian republics and eliminated the large subsidies underpinning education, health, and other social services. International assistance, de facto, is helping to fill some of the resulting gaps, but that is not and cannot be its goal. Rather, it is to help create new, affordable economic and social solutions appropriate to the changed national circumstances. Unquestionably, success in these tasks will depend, in large measure, on success in rebuilding the education systems, without which, it is hard to imagine that new economic and social programs can be sustained.

## **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Short-Term Recommendations for PEAKS**

A strategic consensus should be reached that the ultimate goal of PEAKS is to become institutionalized to the maximum extent possible, within the national education systems.

Sharp focus should be maintained during the remaining two plus years of the current agreement on developing additional project activities and capacities that will be critical to long-term sustainability and replication, including:

- Strengthening PEAKS/AED's technical capacity, both in-region and via consultants on regular visit schedules, to meet new training requirements, as well as to develop new teaching and materials packages, as needed.
- Building much stronger links between the project and the education establishments of the three countries, especially the local district education departments and their urban counterparts and give them a real sense of ownership. The main need is to expand the DED's role and help equip them to perform it.
- Providing in-depth training to selected district (and city and town) inspectors and methods staffs in the pilot areas to demonstrate that, by equipping them to provide more and better professional support to the schools and communities, they can be an integral part of long-term sustainability and replications efforts. (See Section IV.)
- Assigning priority to building long-term, sustainable support strategies for the trained teachers, school directors, and parent and community leaders, through a combination of district, TTI, and PDS mentoring and assistance, and the development of membership associations to support the continued professional development of these key project-assisted groups and advocate for their interests and education reform.
- Incorporating the SCUK rural clusters in Tajikistan, to the extent possible, into the normal PEAKS model, beginning with the identification of PDS candidate schools.
- Resolving the SbS and RWCT copyright issue to either remove it as a barrier to replication or to have low-cost PEAKS-developed modules ready for inclusion in the replication design.
- Executing the re-designed program for Uzbekistan, and carefully assessing the results for possible application elsewhere.
- Finally, towards the end of the agreement, conducting an intensive internal evaluation, with the focus on identifying and documenting lessons learned and best practices, to lay the basis for replication.

## **B. Recommendations for the Next Strategy Period, 2007-2011**

### **1. Adoption of a three-part strategy**

- a. A concentrated five year effort, including a broad consultation and planning phase, to demonstrate the reliability of the PEAKS integrated school development approach in the three countries.
- b. While maintaining a tight focus on basic education, structuring the remainder of the education program around the search for solutions to critical education reform issues. Top priority should be given to taking the ongoing educational finance reforms to completion. After a priority setting exercise, other critical basic education reform issues should be explored for similar treatment. Among the other priority areas to be considered are: Pre-service teacher education; school governance; introducing

modern methodologies into selected curriculum reform areas and textbooks; assessment; wider use of appropriate educational technologies; and building a national constituency for education reform. Activities would include appropriate packages of policy studies, technical assistance, training, and advocacy. The role of the universities and possible university partnerships in addressing selected issues should be explored.

- c. The development of strategic relationships between USAID and the World Bank and, if possible, the Asian Development Bank, to maximize the value of USAID's limited education budget by focusing on strengthening the policy and regulatory environment for reform and testing new ideas, while looking to the Banks for the major investments.

## **2. PEAKS Replication Project**

During the first year, a cooperative effort would be undertaken in each country, including the MOE, MOF, PEAKS, USAID, and possibly other donors to design a feasible, affordable, demand-driven replication model and strategy, based on core elements of the PEAKS experience. In Tajikistan, AKF/IBET should be invited to participate. The main drivers of the replication and sustainability effort would be teams seconded from the stronger PDSs, district offices, and TTIs. Initial priority would be given to adding school clusters in current PEAKS districts, neighboring districts, and areas of special interest to USAID.

Beginning in year two, districts, schools, and communities in the replication areas would be offered a chance to compete for a limited number of replication opportunities. The governments and the replication beneficiaries would be required to provide cost sharing, as well as meeting other selection criteria. USAID would fund the planning phase and provide matching support for an initial replication phase, estimated at four years. An information and advocacy campaign would accompany the effort to publicize it and lay the groundwork for obtaining government, other donor and local sponsor support for subsequent phases, with USAID assistance limited to supporting technical and quality control and evaluation.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background**

USAID/Almaty contracted DevTech Systems, to conduct a mid-term evaluation of its basic education programs in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- 1) Assess the effectiveness and sustainability of USAID-assisted approaches to improving quality and increasing access to primary and secondary education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and make recommendations for possible program adjustments.
- 2) Review USAID's basic education assistance strategy and make recommendations on future assistance priorities in the education sector.

The USAID Basic Education program seeks to address major challenges in Central Asian education systems through two cooperative agreements: The Participation, Education, And Knowledge Strengthening Project (PEAKS) implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), and the Improvement of Basic Education in Tajikistan (IBET) project, a Tajikistan-only activity implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Both implementers have teams of sub-grantees in charge of specific program components. The program was started with post-9/11 supplementary funding, initially for three years. Subsequently, the PEAKS agreement was extended for another year-and-a-half, through June 2007.

The main project under the Basic Education Strategic Objective, PEAKS, works in four countries of the region: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The evaluation focused on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

In each of the three countries, the project works through a network of Professional Development Schools (PDS), eleven in Kyrgyzstan, nine in Uzbekistan, and five in Tajikistan. These schools were selected among stronger schools with a demonstrated potential to reach out to surrounding schools and spread the model of teacher professional development, good management, and parent/community participation to the widest extent possible. Over the course of 2000-2004, 198 cluster schools were selected to become the recipients of training and capacity building from the PDSs (84 in Kyrgyzstan, 43 in Tajikistan, and 71 in Uzbekistan).

Training is provided in internationally recognized interactive early childhood and critical thinking methodologies, such as the Open Society Institute's Step-By-Step (SbS) Program, Save the Children's Active Learning in Primary Grades (ALPG) program in Tajikistan, and Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT), another OSI methodology for secondary grades. All of the methodologies promoted under the USAID program are aimed at switching the focus of attention in the classroom from the teacher to the student, introducing group work, comparison, analysis, creativity and self expression among students. The methodologies require a major professional change on the part of the teachers, who were trained to teach students through memorization of large quantities of factual information and to use lecture as the main teaching method. USAID believes that training teachers to use new learner-centered and interactive methodologies that emphasize analytical thinking in their classrooms will not only improve

learning outcomes for the students, contribute to development of attitudes based on inquiry that are more likely to promote civic engagement, and increase students' interest in learning and education overall. Besides the teachers, school directors and deputy directors are trained in the principles of effective management, such as strategic planning, participatory decision making, creating sustainable partnerships beneficial for their school, and financial management.

In IBET, which only works in Tajikistan, 13 core schools received training from a local partner of AKF, the Institute for Professional Development (IPD) in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan. An initial fourteen satellite schools were selected in mid-2004 and began to receive assistance in the fall of that year. IBET also promotes the use of interactive methods in the classroom; however, IBET places more emphasis than PEAKS on subject-specific methodologies, and has focused on providing intensive training to a small number of key teachers in each school.

Parent and community involvement in education is another important area of the Basic Education program. Community participation in education is a new concept in the CAR region. During the Soviet period, parents largely left education to the teacher and as long as funding was sufficient and quality was generally good, there was little need for continuous parental support. Both PEAKS and IBET promote parent and community participation through the creation of school-community partnership groups that encourage parental support to improve quality and access issues at the local level. These groups, among other things, address issues of non-attendance resulting from poverty or disability through joint action, as well as to help repair vital school infrastructure, such as classrooms, heating and water supply that influence attendance. Communities were provided with the materials, skilled labor and engineering oversight, and were asked to contribute logistical support and unskilled labor as their cost share.

Another form of school-community collaboration, Social Partnership (SP), is also implemented by OSI under PEAKS in Kyrgyzstan. The SP groups have a mandate to address school and community learning and development needs through joint action.

## **B. Methodology**

The team employed a range of data collection methods. The primary tool was a structured data collection effort designed to identify and rate the level of usage of internationally recognized best practices by key school and community stakeholders. The justification for this approach can be found on P.1 of Appendix A. The instruments which formed part of the research project were administered during sampling matrices of site visits to PDS and cluster schools and their respective communities and local education and training institutions. The matrices are included in Appendix B. School/community site visits included interviews with teachers, school administrators, students, children's clubs, parents, and representatives of community education committees and parent-teacher associations. In addition, teacher questionnaires were administered, classroom observations were conducted, and action plans and parent committee meetings minutes were reviewed. For this core data collection, the team divided into two sub-teams, each of which conducted evaluation site visits to approximately half of the schools/communities in the sample. Cross validations were made between groups, followed up by review of action plans, minutes of meetings, and observations. Comparisons among the three countries are presented, as required by the team's Scope of Work (SOW).

In all cases, the best practice results presented in the report were obtained on-site, based on interviews, observations, and cross-validation with available documentation of school and community activities. A high plus rating indicates that it was observed in 80% or more of the cases, a high rating in 60-80% of the cases, a moderate rating in 40-60% of the cases, and a low rating in under 40% of the cases.

Additional data was collected through meetings with a wide range of other key stakeholders, including leaders and staff of the three ministries of education, regional and district education departments, a variety of teacher training institutions, AED, AKF, and the other implementing partners, the World and Asian Development Banks, other education donors, NGOs, and USAID staff in Almaty, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Tashkent, and Washington. In addition, the team reviewed an extensive list of background documents.

The team's schedule, research instruments, list of persons contacted, and documents consulted are among the appendices to the report. (See Appendices.)

## **II. EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CURRENT PROGRAMS**

Included in this section are the key questions contained in the scope of work (SOW) related to effectiveness and sustainability of the current program, followed by discussion, findings/supporting data and, where appropriate, suggestions.

### **A. Validity of the pilot school/cluster model - provision of in-service training to a greater number of teachers:**

*Are the Ministries of Education (MOEs), local district education departments (DEDs), and teacher training institutes (TTIs) willing to accept the pilot schools/professional development schools (PDSs) as local training providers, and as an appropriate solution to their country's training needs?*

The answer is mixed. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, for example, the MOE, local DEDs, and TTIs do not tend to see the pilot (PDS) schools in terms of in-service training providers but rather as model schools, while in Kyrgyzstan the MOE has adopted two supportive regulations on PDS training, one to give the PDSs the status of adult training provider, i.e. in-service training provider, and the other authorizing the use of state funds to pay for training coordinators. In all three countries, the government training institutions in general indicated that they see the strengthening of their own capacities to provide quality in-service training and effective supervision to teachers as key to developing sustainable solutions to their country's training needs. Some of the school directors, finally, indicated that in their view the main purpose of their schools and staff was to provide a quality education for their students, rather than to serve as an in-service teacher training center.

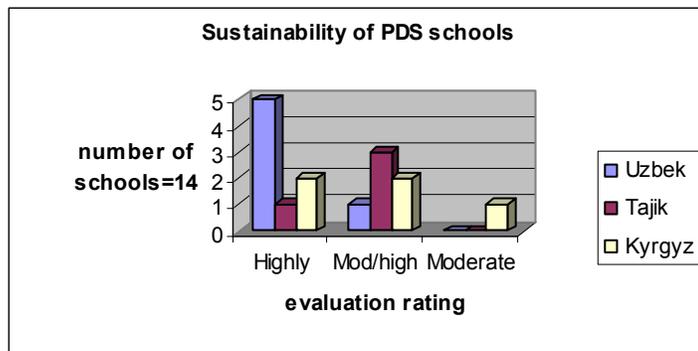
The team does not believe that these differences, while significant, should be interpreted as an unwillingness to make appropriate use of the capacity developed in the PDSs, but rather view

that the latter will not be effective unless it is integrated into the larger systems. The challenge for PEAKS is to respond to this reality by working with the governments to incorporate the official institutions into the project and vice versa, in ways that complement, rather than compete with each other. In Uzbekistan, the focus should be on the TTIs. In the other two countries, where the number of TTIs capable of playing a significant role is small, the primary focus must necessarily be on the DEDs.

### Sustainability Findings

In the three countries, seven of the 14 PDS schools evaluated were rated as “highly sustainable”; six as “moderately to highly sustainable” and one as “moderately sustainable” No PDS school received a sustainability rating of “low”. Of the three countries, the Uzbekistan PDSs are the strongest with four out of five PDSs rated as “highly sustainable”.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1: Sustainability of PDS schools**

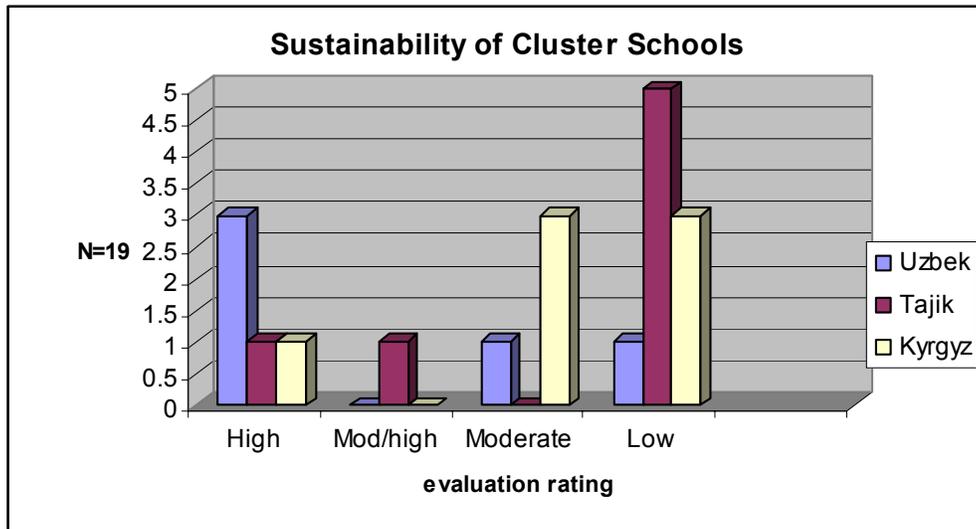


The high sustainability ratings for Uzbekistan PDSs, in the team’s judgment, may be due in part to a high degree of selectivity. The schools that the team visited, presumably representative, were on the whole of exceptional quality and undoubtedly were so prior to their incorporation into the project. The Uzbekistan schools also had a longer history of prior involvement with OSI. The fact that the DEDs and TTIs in Uzbekistan also received relatively high ratings is another possible factor.

All of the PDS schools were selected based on criteria that showed a history of strong commitment and interest, strong teaching staffs, and most were urban except in Kyrgyzstan, where only one was urban. Most had been strong schools during the Soviet era and/or had received previous international support.

As can be seen from the following table, 10 of the 19 cluster schools in the team’s sample were rated as moderately sustainable or higher.

<sup>1</sup> Although definitions of sustainability vary, there is some degree of consensus on the elements that contribute to sustaining development efforts in general. Such elements typically include system-level approaches that encourage broad participation (participation), financial responsibility (resources), partnerships (partnerships), and an openness (transparency) that allows individuals greater involvement in decisions that affect their lives (empowerment). These elements correspond to the five sustainability measures utilized in the CAR evaluation. See Appendices A and K for definitions of the best practices which the team observed and rated.



The sustainability data for cluster schools accurately reflect the situation at the time of the study. It is important, however, to note that the cluster schools are relatively new to using active learning methodologies; though some started in September of 2003, many, especially the rural schools, only started in September of 2004. Thus, the fact that the cascading of training to them to date has not been fully effective, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, should not be taken as meaning that the model is invalid. Indeed, the team, in making its recommendations for the remainder of the current agreement, has assumed that the rollout of the cluster schools will be completed successfully, as planned. But, for this to happen, there is a need to address the monitoring and follow-up training issues identified below, as well as reaching consensus with the MOEs on the role of PDS-based training in the larger system.

*Are the MOEs, local DEDs, and TTIs prepared to support the pilot schools, if necessary, after USAID is gone?—why/why not?*

At the district level, the MOE will accept these schools as model schools (or lab schools) that can provide training venues, demonstration classes and effective examples of best practice. If this is the level of “support” envisioned by USAID, then yes, MOE in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have stated that they are willing to incorporate the PDS schools into their own pilot school models. Again, in order to persuade them to do more than this, they need to be given a stake and sense of ownership of the PDS system.

Evidence of the fact that it should be possible to do this, is the fact that the districts indicate a strong interest in empowerment, participation and partnership activities with the PDS and cluster schools, with 40% showing moderate involvement and 25-30% high involvement. Illustrations derived from the team’s interviews, include:

**Uzbekistan**

- In one district, a school director from a leading cluster school is hired to coordinate PDS training efforts; jointly with the PDS trainers this person is beginning to provide some

training/mentoring; a local NGO has worked hard to build relationships with school directors and the district education head and is cooperating in community mobilizations.

- A district education head holds discussion sessions with the PDS school leaders, has participated in the SI training and the development of several of the school-based action plans, and provides school-based supervision - one supervisor visits two schools per week and has responsibility for three to four schools.
- An education head meets with PDS school directors to discuss ways to work together; hosts open seminar; promotes between school visits, and encourages schools to send teachers to PEAKS.

### **Tajikistan**

- District directors indicate support and visit the PDS and cluster schools on-site, but their staff (methodologists and inspectors) have only a basic level of knowledge and need more training in order to provide a more supportive/monitoring, mentoring and technical support role.
- Some education heads are knowledgeable about PEAKS/active learning, supportive and would like to facilitate awareness sessions for other interested schools in the district but do not have sufficiently trained staff to do so.
- The districts recognize a need to work with the TTIs to jointly provide active learning methodology training support to the schools, yet the TTIs are even less prepared to serve as a training and mentoring provider on the active learning methodologies than the districts.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

- Many of the district staff have attended seminars and training courses but express a need for more formal training to equip them for their jobs; some would like to become trainers.
- In the districts where TTIs still exist, there is interest in working with TTIs, but the latter need more knowledge, better management, and trained staff to be of interest.

*If not, should the project adjust its approach?*

The adjustment in approach should be to focus more strongly on increasing involvement and related capacity building at the local district education level, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, to help ensure that the PDS training capacities are incorporated into existing MOE systems. It is not a question of “either or”, but rather one of complementarity and a need to extend the impact of project training activities to include the development of a critical mass of trained people in the DEDs to involve and equip them to work within the project framework. The needs and opportunities vary by country. Uzbekistan is in the strongest position, as evidenced by its high ratings in a number of categories and the findings of the redesign team. There are major needs in Tajikistan, with Kyrgyzstan somewhere between the two.

*How might this be done?*

Identify districts with cooperative directors/heads of education departments that have developed plans for identifying and using strong schools as in-service training venues, as classroom demonstration sites, for piloting of new curricula, and as lab schools.

Assist with identifying and meeting staff training needs and with the development or refining of a strategic plan that effectively incorporates PDS and cluster schools into district and TTI training and professional development activities.

Replication of the PDS model should occur as an integral part of the strengthening of the local district education departments, and in order to increase their capacity as effective in-service training providers in each of the three countries.

*Is there evidence that by the end of 2005, pilot schools in Kyrgyzstan will be fully capable of providing good quality training to teachers of their cluster schools?*

The capacity of PDSs to provide good quality training to teachers of their cluster schools in all three countries is dependent on their sustainability ratings. Only two of the Kyrgyzstan PDS schools were rated as “high” overall. The Kyrgyzstan PDS ratings are as follows:

**Table 3: Kyrgyzstan – Sustainability Ratings of PDS Schools**

School	Overall Rating	Empowerment	Participation	Networking/ Partnerships	Accountability/ Transparency	Mobilize Resources
Shopokov Gym #1	High	high	high	high	High	high
Boogachi (rural)	High	high	high	high	High	high
Tangatarova #14 (co)	Mod.	mod.	mod.	mod.	Low	mod.
Osh Town #16 (co)	Mod. /High	mod.	mod.	high	mod.	mod.
Tadjibaev (rural)	Mod. /High	high	mod.	high	mod.	mod.

These ratings, of course, reflect the team’s findings at the time of each visit. They are not immutable and can be improved.

There is currently a clear fall off in sustainability ratings from the PDS to the cluster schools, as follows:

**Table 4: Kyrgyzstan – Sustainability Ratings of Cluster Schools**

School	Overall Rating	Empowerment	Participation	Networking/ Partnerships	Accountability/ Transparency	Mobilize Resources
Sokuluk #2	Mod.	mod.	mod.	high	low	low
Chui #78	High	high	high	high	high	high
Koychumanov	Mod.	mod.	mod.	mod.	low	low
Kazybek	Low	low	low	mod.	low	low
Lenin	Mod.	mod.	mod.	low	low	mod.
Toktogul	Low	mod.	mod.	low	low	--
Toktorov	Low	low	low	mod.	low	mod.

Two of the Kyrgyzstan sample PDS schools are rated as highly sustainable (Shopokov and Boogachi), and two as moderate/highly sustainable (Osh Town #16 and Tadjibaev). Tangatarova rated as only moderate.

Only Chui #78 is rated as highly sustainable among the cluster schools. Both cluster schools of Boogachi (Koichumanova and Kazybek) reported problems with training at the PDS, including problems with distance, having to stay at the homes of PDS school teachers, inability of cluster school teachers to borrow resources from Boogachi, and a general feeling of resentment at having to go to Boogachi for in-service training.

Teachers from Kazybek stated that they preferred the district in-service training, and felt that it was more useful. Cluster school Chui #78’s high performance is directly related to the dynamic leadership of the school director, as stated clearly by both parents and teachers. Although SbS teachers from Chui #78 trained at Shopokov, no PDS trainer had yet come to their school to mentor or observe the difficulties that teachers there are experiencing with effectively managing the four classroom clusters (two teachers were teaching the same subject to all four clusters of children).

Cluster school sustainability ratings, like those of the PDSs, are based on what was actually found at the time of the team’s visit. They do not imply that, if the rollout continues as expected and other steps taken as needed, they are necessarily unsustainable in the longer run.

*What is the current practice related to mentoring?<sup>2</sup>*

At present, PDS schools do not seem to be providing “good quality training to teachers in their cluster schools”. Teacher ratings for mentoring in Kyrgyzstan were as follows:

<sup>2</sup> Best practice definitions can be found in Appendix K.

**Table 5: Mentoring—Kyrgyzstan**

Type of School	Number of Schools	Teachers interviewed N=88	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
PDS	1	14	100%			
PDS cluster schools	2	16	50%	50%		
Co-PDS	2	10		100%		
Co-PDS cluster schools	2	10			100%	
Rural PDS	2	15		100%		
Rural PDS cluster schools	3	23			66.6%	33.3%
<b>total</b>	<b>12</b>					

Data from the Teacher’s Questionnaire show that Kyrgyzstan teachers rated their experiences in working in a peer mentoring relationship nearly evenly divided between “very helpful” and only “somewhat helpful”.

**Question 4:** “How would you describe your experience in working with another teacher in a peer mentoring relationship”?

**Table 6: Peer Mentoring Relationships: Overall Response**

Country	N=	very helpful	somewhat helpful	not helpful
Uzbekistan	78	51.1%	35.8%	13.1%
Tajikistan	93	56.0%	28.0%	16.0%
Kyrgyzstan	104	50.7%	43.8%	5.5%

*How should the project adjust its approach to ensure that the mentoring goal is met?*

In general, the PDS schools are providing training seminars and workshops on-site at PDS schools which cluster school teachers must leave their schools to attend. No cluster schools report that the training provided to date by their PDS is sufficient, particularly in terms of mentoring and post-training follow-up visits to assist and support teacher trainees who are experiencing difficulties in implementing the new, learner-centered methodologies.

Suggestions:

- Diagnostic follow-up is essential to being responsive to difficulties encountered by teachers when applying new knowledge, skills and attitudes surrounding learner-centered methodologies. Monitoring of cluster school teachers, should be improved, which will lead to earlier identification of normal difficulties involved with effectively implementing learner centered methodologies.
- Train a larger number of teachers in cluster schools so that a “critical mass” is reached in terms of a majority of the teachers going through the training and experiencing similar difficulties. A larger group will be better able to work together to try new strategies and will be more supportive of each other, especially with support and encouragement from a strong

director. In smaller schools, a “critical mass” is probably all teachers, not just one or two. In the larger schools, half or more of the teachers should, if possible, be trained.

- Involve more MOE District staff, especially DED methodologists and supervisors. These are the key staff that visit the schools and observe and critique teachers as part of their daily job responsibilities. These MOE staff should be active participants in all PEAKS trainings, and a majority of methodologists should be trained in each District—not merely one or two. In addition, begin serious training for these supervisors in up-to-date supervisory techniques (structured observation techniques, active learning, student-centered methodologies, managing the learner-centered class, use of effective lesson plans, assessing student portfolios, etc) so that they can become active participants in both in-service teacher training and, most importantly, training follow-up in the teachers’ schools.

*Are the mechanisms in place to ensure that the PDS (in all countries) have the skills, the commitment, and the resources to train others?*

As the following tables indicate, the picture is mixed.

**Table 7: PDS Ratings**

	<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>
<sup>1</sup> level of skills	high	moderate	moderate to high
<sup>2</sup> level of commitment	high +	moderate	high
<sup>3</sup> resources	low	low	low

<sup>1</sup>level of skill = Question 2 of Teacher’s Questionnaire (using learner-centered methodologies) plus interview/best practice learning environment, and teaching/learning activities)

<sup>2</sup>level of commitment = best practice behavior for empowerment at the school level

<sup>3</sup>resources = training support resources

**Table 8: Level of Resources**

<b>Training support resources</b>	<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>
release time from PDS	no	no	limited to a few schools
substitute teacher for trainer’s class	no	no	limited to a few schools
incentive pay	no	no	no
transport costs	no	no	no
lodging costs	no	no	no
meals	no	no	no
training supplies provided	?	?	?
copies of training materials	?	?	?
preparation time	no	no	no

? = training costs which must be absorbed by someone—not clear who pays for this

In addition to the above-cited factors, constraints to quality training include:

- if training held during vacation or holidays, trainers must “contribute” their own personal time
- teachers sometimes lack training experience and confidence
- distance to cluster schools is often excessive
- teachers in multiple shift schools have little time
- heavy workload in schools; teachers already busy with teaching duties

- no preparation time for trainers during the school day
- low pay for teachers

The levels of skills, commitment and training resources vary among countries. However, the lack of sufficient training support resources is a serious constraint to all PDS teacher-trainers' abilities to provide consistent, high-quality training and mentoring to cluster school teachers.

*What can be done by USAID to alleviate this issue?*

PEAKS and the PDSs should jointly determine what short-term steps need to be taken to alleviate the problems, in particular, the lack of substitute teachers to allow some training at least to take place on regular school days and the lack of travel funds, so that the PDS training model can receive a fair test. Government education staff, at all levels, should be involved in these discussions, as government must be a part of any long-range solutions.

*Is there a conflict between the program's efforts in local teacher training NGO capacity building and the PDS capacity building?*

The answer to this question is that the potential for conflict exists but that there seems to be a desire on all sides to find ways to avoid it.

The central long-term sustainability issue is the fact that the SbS and RWCT training packages and materials are copyrighted. While this is not a major problem while OSI, and the local foundations spun off by the Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation Network, are delivering services under a sub-agreement with PEAKS, it has the potential to be a major issue when the project reaches the replication phase. It is likely that at that point, the PEAKS model, to make it affordable, would be stripped down to its basics, with costs, including training and materials, being a large factor. The requirement to purchase training services and materials exclusively from the local SbS and RWCT foundations or licensed affiliates could well be unaffordable and would certainly restrict options.

This situation would change dramatically, of course, if 1) the training courses were recognized by the governments and 2) the PDSs, TTIs, and other official training providers were "licensed" to provide them, without any requirement to pay royalties. Efforts to obtain recognition are reportedly underway in all three countries.

The NGO situation varies by country. For better or worse, the NGO issue basically doesn't arise in Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan, NGOs are relatively strong and increasingly offer alternatives to government services, but the general environment seems to favor reaching an eventual accommodation and a reasonable division of labor between the sectors.. It is in Tajikistan where the NGOs, especially if backed by donors, run the most risk of unduly displacing government and weakening the latter's ability to develop needed capacity and control.

*Given the lack of financial resources in the sector, is it realistic to expect that both can be sustainable?*

It is probably realistic to expect both to be sustainable in Kyrgyzstan, especially if the donor community continues to use NGOs on a regular basis. The uncertainty in Uzbekistan relates to the government's current and future policies with respect to the NGO sector. In Tajikistan, the NGOs generally remain dependent on international assistance and are likely to remain so, though the OSI/SF-related institutions are actively pursuing strategies to become self-sufficient.

The training voucher scheme has as one of its expected results assisting local NGOs to provide some portion of government-funded in-service teacher training.

*What can be the long-term expectations of the PDSs?*

Briefly, the long-term expectations are as follows:

- Overall (in all three countries) the PDS is a good concept when implemented properly. That is, the PDS provides a holistic model of high-quality education. The main focus is on the delivery of quality education to its students, a well-trained, cooperative and professional teaching staff, dynamic and empowered school leadership and strong commitment and support from parents and community members.
- Although a foundation piece for student achievement, with improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills, learner-centered methodology is just one component in the dynamics of a successful school. Most PDSs have been built on a solid foundation of older, highly successful Soviet schools, and the long-term work of organizations like OSI and the Soros Foundation in improving the quality of teaching and learning at these model schools.
- PDS' responsibilities as providers of in-service teacher training seem to be an overlay on the dynamics of already successful schools. Underpaid teachers now have additional responsibilities for training less skilled colleagues at sometimes distant cluster schools.
- In the long term, PDS schools will at a minimum function as model schools, as seven of the 14 schools are highly sustainable and six of the other seven schools are moderately to highly sustainable. The goal of PEAKS, however, should be to promote their incorporation, both conceptually and actually, into the national education systems.

**Table 11: Summary of PDS Sustainability Ratings**

	# of PDS schools	Highly Sustainability	Moderately to Highly Sustainability	Moderately Sustainability
Uzbekistan	5	4	1	
Tajikistan	4	1	3	
Kyrgyzstan	5	2	2	1

Again, the sustainability ratings above are based on current situations and can be influenced by future program decisions, e.g. the planned RWCT training in Tajikistan.

## **B. Sustainability of the Teacher Training Programs**

*Is there evidence to demonstrate that the USAID methodology training programs will be integrated into country teacher training policies and philosophies?*

Interviews with MOE staff at various levels, and with TTI staff in all three countries, demonstrated an awareness of the importance of active learning and an understanding of best practices in the modern classroom.

MOE staff are well aware of the enormous need and huge backlog for effective and up-to-date in-service training. The level of interest is high, and all three MOEs are committed to improving the quality of in-service teacher training. All three MOEs also recognize the value of the USAID and other donor-sponsored support for teacher training while realistically recognizing their own lack of capacity (technical, material and financial) to respond to teachers' training needs.

Uzbekistan MOE collaboration on the PEAKS redesign project is evidence of the Ministry's ability to be creative and responsive in terms of looking at alternative approaches to in-service teacher training.

In addition, in Tajikistan, the MOE, teachers, school directors, and community/parents are all well aware that SbS is not sufficient, and want to extend these new student centered methodologies into the upper grades.

A successful example of integrating active learning methodologies into the training policies and philosophies of the regional and district level of MOE, as well as two Institutes of Professional Development (IPD), is the Tajikistan IBET project implemented by AKF. Prior to the project, AKF began introducing these methodologies in the Khorog IDP, rather than at the school level, and developed good working relations with local education officials, which provided a good basis for subsequent work with the schools under IBET.

Kyrgyzstan's MOE has traditionally supported integrating active, learner-centered methodologies into both primary and secondary classrooms.

*If not, what additional steps should be taken to advance this issue?*

Additional steps which would advance the commitment to integrating these methodologies into each country's teacher training policies and philosophy might include:

- creation at the local or district level of advocacy associations for teachers, school administrators, parents; and/or school-related community organizations.
- involvement of MOE staff at all levels and in all activities (materials development, teacher training, teacher observation and supervision, teacher mentoring, etc.) in order to create a "critical mass" of informed and supportive MOE personnel;
- encouraging TTIs and other providers of subject-oriented in-service teacher training to incorporate course modules on how active learning methodologies can be effectively used to teach different subjects;

- regular and frequent meetings with high-level MOE staff to brief them on progress at local levels in order to increase understanding and ownership of these changes at the national level; and
- policy dialogue with MOE in furtherance of changing training policies and philosophies.

*How effective are the training programs in changing teacher behavior?*

Training programs, in isolation, do not change teacher behavior. Behavior change is highly dependent on successful use of the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in training programs. Behavior change is also a developmental process that takes place over time. This is why follow-up and support soon after the completion of the training, and then at regular intervals, is critical in providing reinforcement for positive behavior change, early identification of normal difficulties with using new skills and knowledge, and positive feedback on successes.

Mentors and trainees should share criteria for successful behavior change. For example, Ferghana Valley TTI trainers and their teacher trainees prepare a “trainee action plan” during the training. The TTI trainers then make follow-up visits within a month of the completion of training, observe trainees’ classes based on the action plan criteria, and give the trainees structured feedback. This is a successful and proven strategy for changing teacher behavior.

*Are teachers adopting the underlying philosophy of student-centered teaching, instead of just focusing on the more visible aspects of the methodologies?*

Classroom observation and teacher interviews show that SbS teachers have most frequently adopted the underlying philosophy of student-centered teaching. In addition to incorporating the visible elements of active learning (rearranging desks and using new teaching/learning materials) most of these teachers showed a high degree of effectiveness in managing the cluster-based primary classroom. They could also express clearly the values of adopting a learner-centered approach, and enumerate the clear benefits to student participation and learning achievement.

RWCT teachers showed a lower level of use of student-centered methodologies and creating good learning environments. Importantly, in some cases there were too few trained teachers to constitute a critical mass. Another factor is that RWCT teachers and students in grades 5 and higher change rooms throughout the day, so that an RWCT teacher doesn’t have the opportunity to display students’ works or often even to rearrange the furniture from traditional rows into more learner friendly clusters.

The importance of involving a critical mass, preferable a majority of the teachers at a school (whether SbS or RWCT, and particularly in rural areas) in the training program cannot be overstated. These teachers can then work together, without a sense of isolation, to implement changes in teaching behaviors. At the same time, all school officials should participate in all trainings in order to provide support for the teachers. Within six months to a year, school leadership with the support of parents and community should ensure that all teachers be trained and are effectively implementing either SbS or RWCT. This avoids the problem of divisions among teachers which the team observed in some schools – those using new learner-centered methodologies, versus the traditionalists.

Data from the Teacher Questionnaire show the following regarding levels of teacher cooperation, and support from the school director:

**Teacher cooperation in implementing new methodologies:**

**Question 6.** “How would you describe the other teachers in your school in cooperating to implement the new, student-centered methodologies”?

**Table 12: Overall response:**

Country	N= 257	very helpful	somewhat helpful	not helpful
Uzbekistan	60	60.2%	34.8%	5.0%
Tajikistan	93	50.0%	45.0%	5.0%
Kyrgyzstan	104	55.3%	42.0%	2.7%

The highest response of “very helpful” came from Uzbekistan teachers, and this supportive environment is reflected in the higher sustainability ratings of both PDS and cluster schools in Uzbekistan. Tajikistan’s lower rating of “very helpful” teachers may indicate the problems many of the cluster schools are having with effectively using learner centered methodologies.

The two IBET schools visited responded to the same question much differently:

**Question 6.** “How would you describe the other teachers in your school in cooperating to implement the new, student-centered methodologies”?

**Table 13: IBET Response**

IBET School	N=15	very helpful	somewhat helpful	not helpful
Rogun #4 (IBET core)	N=7	100%	0%	0%
Rogun #3 (IBET satellite)	N=8	87.5%	12.5%	0%

These schools show a notably higher level of cooperation than the other school models in Tajikistan.

**Attitude of school director:**

Another key factor in support of teachers working to introduce active learning and student centered methodologies into their classrooms is the attitude of the school director. The more positive and stronger the support of the school leader, the more likely that teachers will be able to work together to overcome normal difficulties associated with change, and successfully use learner centered methodologies in their classrooms on a regular basis. Teachers responded to question 7 of the Teacher Questionnaire as follows:

**Question 7:** “How would you describe the attitude of the school director in encouraging teachers to use the new, student-centered methodologies”?

**Table 14: Overall Response:**

Country	N= 257	very supportive	somewhat supportive	not supportive
Uzbekistan	60	80.0%	20.0%	0%
Tajikistan	93	72.6%	23.2%	4.2%
Kyrgyzstan	104	70.9%	25.5%	3.6%

Again, teachers in Uzbekistan described their school directors as being highly supportive; only teachers in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan responded “not supportive” to this question. Teachers from the two Tajikistan IBET schools responded 100% that their school director was “very supportive”.

There were a few schools where teachers were on board but the school director and/or the parents and community were not and the resulting sustainability was affected.

**Table 15: Effectiveness Rating**

	school	teachers	community/ parents	school director	resulting sustainability
Uzbekistan	Kokand #42	high+	moderate	moderate	moderate
Tajikistan	Kolkhozobod #50	high	low	low	low
Kyrgyzstan	Koychumanov	high	moderate	moderate	moderate

*What changes can be expected in teaching styles within the timeframe of the current program, and what other, or additional help should be envisioned to secure the sustainability of those changes?*

The changes that can be expected are highly dependent on the variables discussed above. Training of a majority of teachers in a school, inclusion of school leaders in training, a clear plan for training follow-up and support for teacher-trainees, parent awareness training, student support, and a high degree of parent/community involvement and support are all important and integral to achieving sustainable changes in teaching styles.

The school director and parents need to show continual support for the teachers as it is the teacher who must implement the active learning methodologies.

*Do teachers believe that the new methodologies produce better learning outcomes?*

The teacher interview guide includes a section on best practice in using learner centered methodology, and the following questions are included for the teachers to answer:

- Are these methodologies suitable for your students?
- Do the students like these methodologies?
- Are the students learning more effectively?

Teachers in all three countries responded positively to those questions, and cited increases in students’ achievements, the fact that slower learners were achieving more as part of mixed groups and as a result of peer coaching and assistance, and that most learners responded to the challenges of doing well in their groups. Motivation levels were higher and positively influenced student achievement.

As regards usage at both PDS and clusters school levels, the interview results are summarized in Tables 16 and 17.

**Table 16: Using Learner Centered Methodologies—PDSs**

Country	Number of schools	Teachers interviewed N=101	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan	5	34	80%	20%		
Tajikistan	4	28	50%	50%		
Kyrgyzstan	5	39	20%	60%	20%	

**Table 17: Using Learner Centered Methodologies—Cluster Schools**

Country	Number of schools	Teachers interviewed N=94	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan	5	42	60%		20%	30%
Tajikistan	5	19		40%	40.0%	20.0%
Kyrgyzstan	7	49	28.6%		57.2%	14.3%

Teachers in PDS schools were rated more highly at using learner centered methodologies, and the current high drop off rate from PDS school ratings to cluster school ratings is clearly noticeable. Teachers in Uzbekistan rated most highly, both in PDS and cluster schools.

*Do parents and students believe the same and what do they cite as evidence?*

*What evidence is there to suggest that the new methodologies result in greater interest in learning on the part of students?*

Parents believe that learning results have improved, but the evidence cited is often indirect. They say, for example, that students are more motivated, that they spend more time monitoring their children’s homework and talking to their children’s teachers, that they make more class visits to see how their child is doing and take greater interest in their children’s performance and level of achievement.

Student comments are even more indirect, i.e. they like school more, therefore they must be learning more. A sample of student comments included the following:

- Yes, it’s fun, not boring, and we can help each other.
- We work together and share things. If I have a problem, I can ask my friend, or I can help him if he needs help.
- We work on problems together and sometimes I think of the answer first and help my friends. But sometimes my friends help me when I’m stuck.

- We all work together in reading and in math, and I like this because I can say my own ideas and we often laugh and have fun
- I like working in groups when everyone has something to do, like be the timekeeper or the recorder or presenter.

During interviews with secondary students (grades 5 and above) in all three countries, almost all of the students stated that they were more interested in learning as a result of learner-centered methodologies. Secondary students' comments included:

- they liked working together in groups and enjoyed different roles during group work (e.g., recorder, timekeeper, reporter or presenter)
- school was more enjoyable and more interesting
- they enjoyed helping each other and were challenged to complete the tasks together
- they felt freer to express and support their opinions and felt more confident
- they liked doing different types of tasks, like making flip charts, developing role plays, preparing debates.

*Have these methodologies encouraged attendance of students, who otherwise might not have attended school regularly?*

The new methodologies, as well as PEAKS components directed to the students, such as school parliaments and clubs, have had a positive effect on attendance. This was evidenced by numerous comments made by the children themselves, as well as some parents, and comments by teachers and staff involved with the extra-curricular activities. It is not possible for the team to quantify the impact of these particular factors, as attendance, in general, is not a major problem in most schools through Grade 9, unless there are special circumstances like agricultural harvest periods.

The following comments by school directors on student attendance outline the main factors influencing attendance.

### **Uzbekistan**

Attendance was very high – no unusual absences or problems; 95-98 % improved attendance; new methods have affected attendance; parents are warned and paid a visit on attendance issues; now at 97-98% attendance; students were going into the markets during market day and this has been corrected – local neighborhood committee helped solved this problem; talked with parents of the non-attending students.

### **Tajikistan**

More of a problem in the upper grades, especially in the winter; more boys than girls do not attend due to economic reasons; involvement of the community and parents seems to be the best method to resolve attendance problems; teachers are working with parents to collect food and support from interested groups for low-income families to help with clothes, supplies and related expenses; provision of lunch through WFP is helping the attendance issue as many times children come to school hungry; health care, parental support, and some school-related cost items are an issue for the poor families.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

Some problems with upper grade children – need for the children to help in agriculture, pasturing and harvesting; problems during the agricultural season and in the winter season; in the case of non-attendance – we call the parent in and talk with the parent or sometimes we have a member of the parent committee visit the parent in the home; for non-performing students, we call parent in and ask parent to sit in class of non-performing students and either teacher or school official talks with parent; use of student diaries with follow-on request of parent signature.

*Some teachers in Uzbekistan complained that the required volume of information mandated by the curriculum and rigid student assessment requirements do not allow them to use the new methods regularly.*

Four of the secondary school teachers interviewed in Uzbekistan did bring up the problem of the amount of information in the curricula in the higher grades. They felt that interactive methods were not appropriate for the “difficult subjects”, such as physics, higher levels of math, chemistry. This shows a basic misunderstanding of “active learning” and “student-centered methodologies”. A possible solution is to give teachers trained in RWCT additional training focusing on using learner-centered methodologies in science and math, and training in how to adapt assigned texts to a variety of learner-centered activities. Two teachers in Kyrgyzstan made the same comments regarding “hard subjects” and the perceived inappropriateness of using student centered methodologies (Kazybek, in At Bashi district) in those classes.

Basically, the presence of these issues indicates, more than anything, the fact that many teachers are in the early stages of achieving full domination of the new methodologies.

However, if teachers believe that these new methodologies are not compatible with the texts assigned and the curriculum, they will not use them. Teachers need to understand that active learning methodologies can be integrated into subject studies and that this will improve student learning.

One solution is to present specific workshops and seminars that focus on combining subject presentation and active student-centered methodologies, and with using examples from the assigned texts. These seminars and workshops should be designed using these texts and the curriculum as the base for integrating effective active learning methodologies and materials. The team was glad to see that this will be a key aspect of further module design in Uzbekistan and that the issue will be included in the June trainings in Tajikistan.

No teachers commented on rigid student assessment requirements in Uzbekistan or in either of the other two countries.

*Are the learning resource centers located in the pilot schools achieving their goal of disseminating best pedagogy to a wide teacher audience?*

In all three countries, Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) most benefit the teachers of the PDS schools where the LRCs are located. Almost all cluster school teachers report that they are not allowed to use or borrow resources from these LRCs. Sometimes teachers from PDS also report

that they are not allowed to take the books home to read and use, but must use them in the LRC room.

The LRCs are being used by the teachers at the PDS schools and they all appreciate having these resources available. Only the IBET Core Schools have LRCs that are being actively and extensively used by teachers from satellite schools, through a well defined system of signing out materials, and accountability for borrowing and returning teaching resources. PDS schools in all three countries would benefit from developing a clear set of procedures for learning how to manage the lending and use of materials in the LRC, particularly to teachers from cluster schools.

*Are they being used to the extent that would justify expansion in the same schools and into other schools?*

PDS schools may need other types of resource materials. A needs assessment should be prepared by teachers in those schools. The expansion of LRC materials to cluster schools in all three countries is an excellent idea and teachers from these schools, particularly the cluster schools that are fairly distant from their PDS, would benefit greatly.

*In Uzbekistan—look at the redesigned teacher training approach and make conclusions and recommendations regarding its feasibility and appropriateness.*

### **Uzbekistan Program Redesign**

For reasons unrelated to PEAKS, in the first half of 2004, OSI was denied re-registration in Uzbekistan, resulting in the need for AED to take responsibility for OSI's functions and to redesign the IR-1 and IR-2 programs in that country. The opportunity was taken to redesign key aspects of the program, some of which had already been identified as needing revision, notably the need to take greater advantage of the Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs), which in Uzbekistan, in contrast to the other two countries, continued to enjoy strong government support. Additionally, arrangements were made with a local foundation, Ziyoyi, and SCUS to implement IR-3 community work, alongside similar IR-5 being conducted by SCUS.

The redesign included greater involvement and ownership by government education bodies, including the TTIs and district education offices, to supplement, but not replace, the PDSs. Also included was the development, in association with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), of a distance learning component, accompanied by a network of resource centers, to take both TTI and PDS training and follow up services to outlying schools, rather than rely on extensive traveling back and forth within the clusters. An additional component was the development of new, interactive training programs and materials to replace the OSI products.

The team was impressed with the strategic nature of the redesign, that is, its potential to remove many of the constraints to the PDS-Cluster School model identified elsewhere. The team is not certain that the precise distance learning approach being tested will work as expected, but there are a number of backup options that can be turned to, if necessary, to get the job done.

While it is unlikely the Uzbekistan redesign will turn out to be fully applicable elsewhere – the situation in each country is different and, in general, the situation in Uzbekistan is the most favorable – the direction of change, especially towards integrating national education bodies into the project, strikes the team as likely to add substantially to sustainability and replication prospects.

Close monitoring of the materials and delivery process will need to be done followed by further revisions and materials development. Simultaneously, it will be important to support the training modules with on-site training teams. If the process unfolds successfully, further development of a few pilot modules for school officials and the community/parents should be developed in the area of community mobilization along with a module or two for the students (e.g., Children’s Clubs and School Parliaments). Design teams could be put together utilizing representative school officials, parents and children along with a community mobilization NGO, such as Ziyo.

A priority in reviewing the redesign plan and materials is to ensure the inclusion and active participation of MOE staff at the regional and district level and of key TTI staff, whenever possible, to guarantee ownership, effective implementation, sustainability, and replication of effective in-service teacher training.

### **C. Effectiveness of the School Management Training in Changing Organizational Behavior in Schools**

This section responds to the evaluation questions contained in the scope of work (SOW) related to effectiveness and sustainability of the school management training in changing school behavior followed by discussion, findings/supporting data and, where appropriate, conclusions. Utilizing a structured interview/focused group methodology along with a review of action plans, minutes of recent meetings, and a cross-validation with the parent and teacher groups, five effectiveness ‘best practice’ focus areas related to school management were rated; i.e., empowerment, participation, networking/partnerships, accountability/transparency and mobilizing resources. (See Appendix L for best practice definitions.) Each of these focus areas is discussed in accordance with the SOW outline.

*Is there evidence of strategic planning and organizational management skills on behalf of school directors that did not exist before?*

Change is a process. Rather than mandating change through new policies and procedures, which may or may not ever be implemented, this view of change as a process entails focusing on the implementation of ‘best practices’ actions targeted to achieving specific ends and examining results along the way. Clearly, the school management in the sample schools is focusing on specific behaviors related to expected results. Included are illustrative empowerment and networking ‘best practices’ identified by school management in the three countries:

**Uzbekistan**

School director regularly visits classes (Uchkuprik #8, Tashkent #98, Tashkent #114), supports teachers (Dangara #12, Tashkent#145, Almalik#5), works to create awareness and training opportunities for both teachers and parents (Akkurgan #6, Uchkuprik #8), maintains an open-door policy where teachers and parents can visit anytime (Kokand #42, Tashkent #114, Uchkuprik #8), encourages non-trained teachers to observe and try some of the active learning techniques (Uchkuprik #8), supports in-school and between school mentoring (Tashkent #145, Tashkent #114, Tashkent # 98, Kokand #42), holds open seminars where parents and teachers may attend (Tashkent #98, Uchkuprik #8, Akkurgan #6), and mentors Parent and/or CEC/SRC Committee heads ((Tashkent #145).

School director facilitates sharing through open seminars, discussion sessions, class visits, newsletters (Akkurgan #6), etc. within and between schools and at the district/city education office and at director meetings and through collaborative involvement by the director and staff members in training and seminar/workshop opportunities in the area (Akkurgan # 6, Uchkuprik #8).

**Tajikistan**

School officials participate in the SbS trainings as well as the SI trainings (Bakhtar #26, Vahdat #4); provide instructional leadership and are actively involved in the instructional process and supportive of the teachers in understanding and using the active learning process (Bakhtar #26, Vahdat #4) and help to continuously identify and provide relevant information (Bakhtar #26, Khairakum #14); work with a council of teachers (Tashkent #145, Akkurgan #6, Uchkuprik #8), encourage the active participation of the community in the education meetings, men and women (Vahdat #140); help to ensure that all participate in the needs assessments, action plans, and decision process (Vahdat #140, Vahdat #4); and work with the village/neighborhood committee and share information (Vahdat #140, Vahdat #4, Khairakum #14).

School director shares information at the district level meetings with the other directors (Kolub #12, Vahdat #4, Vahdat #140); allows use of school facilities for local activities, i.e., conferences and elections (Khujand #9) and access to computer room (Kairakum #14, Vahdat #140, Vahdat #4); invites district education officials to seminars and trainings (Kolub #2, Vahdat #4, Vahdat #140); encourages the school to participate in regional, national and international trainings and exchanges and identifies potential international donors (Kairakum #14); allows materials from resource center to be shared with neighboring schools (Rogun #4); and maintains close cooperation with local government (Vahdat #4, Vahdat #140).

**Kyrgyzstan**

School officials provide awareness sessions for parents and ask for input on a regular basis – monthly class parent meetings and/or open forums (Shopokov #1, Chui #78, Boogachi); maintain open door policy for teachers, community/parents, and students (Chui #78); assist local education committee in preparing and implementing an action plan and provide progress reports (Boogachi, Tadjibaev), hold regular staff meetings and include teacher input in school decisions (Chui #78), and support inclusiveness on committees (Osh Town #16, Toktogul, Boogachi).

School officials develop relationships and share experiences with other schools (Osh Town #16, Lenin, Chui #78, Boogachi, Tadjibaev); show support for the school parliament, Children’s Club and other school-related social partnerships (Chui #78, Boogachi); include each of the schools in the cluster as a training venue (Boogachi); work to create a separate room - parent/CEC and/or School Parliament/Children’s Club (Osh Town #16, Koychumanov); facilitate sharing through open seminars/discussion sessions, class visits, and district-level training and seminar/workshops (Tadjibaev, Chui #78), maintain communication with alumni from the school (Shopokov #1, Kazybek, Toktogul #49).

Overall, school management (PDS and cluster schools) are currently demonstrating effective practice of the empowerment and networking/partnerships skills as follows:

**Table 18: School Management Current Practices**

School Management Current Practice by Country	# of schools	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan					
empowerment	10	60%	30%	10%	0%
networking/partnerships	10	50%	30%	10%	10%
Tajikistan					
empowerment	13	8%	61%	8%	23%
networking/partnerships	13	38%	8%	46%	8%
Kyrgyzstan					
empowerment	12	25%	33%	25%	17%
networking/partnerships	12	17%	50%	25%	8%

As is evident from the table, Uzbekistan school management is much further along in its development (90% and 80% ratings on current practice above 60% on empowerment and networking/partnerships, respectively) than Tajikistan (69% and 46% on empowerment and networking/partnerships, respectively) and Kyrgyzstan (58% and 67% on empowerment and networking/partnerships, respectively). The evaluators were told that many of these skills were new to the school management, especially in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, but were not able to verify this.

*If so, are there any constraints for administrators in utilization of these skills?*

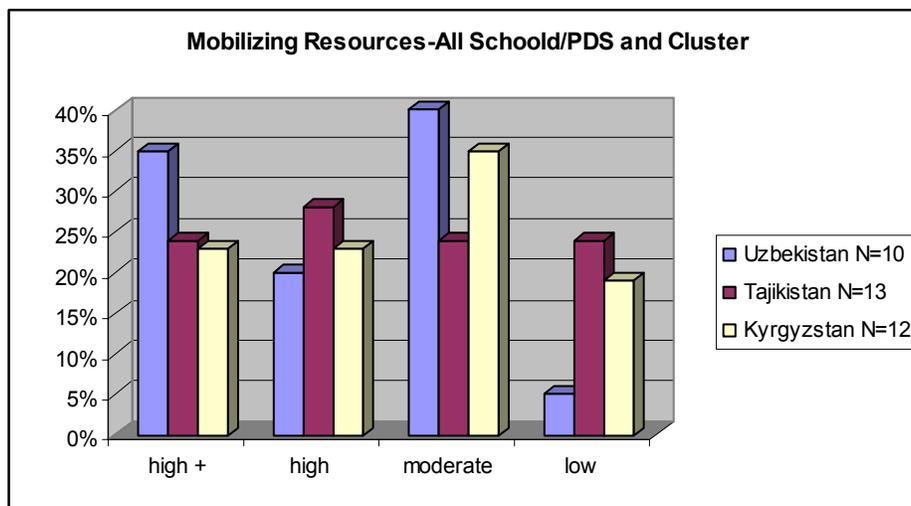
The key is continued reinforcement through refresher training and monitoring, especially in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where only about two thirds of the school management are at the

60% current practice level. With no reinforcement, many of the school management will fall below the 50% level in the use of their newly acquired management skills.

*Are directors better able to mobilize resources through fundraising and parent outreach activities to address a particular school need?*

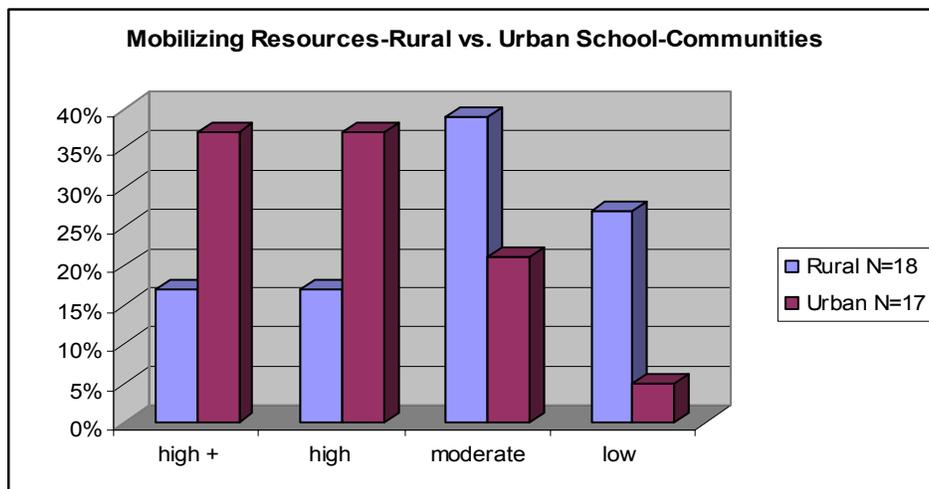
With limited government resources, there is a greater demand on the local community to mobilize resources through fundraising and community support activities. School directors play a large role in making this happen. Urban schools have more resources and opportunities than rural schools. In both cases, PEAKS, through project inputs and a variety of special efforts, has made a significant contribution to the ability of project schools to undertake such projects.

The team assessed best practices in this area (See Appendix C for definitions). The results were as follows:



Uzbekistan was a little higher on current practice followed by Tajikistan and then Kyrgyzstan. Actually, all are relatively low with only about half the schools demonstrating a sustainable level (above 60%/high+ and high categories combined) of performance on mobilizing resources – Uzbekistan-55%, Tajikistan-53% and Kyrgyzstan-46%.

The difference is more of a rural vs. urban difference as noted in the table below. Seventy-four per cent of the urban schools were above 60% in their ratings compared to only 34% of the rural schools. This may be related to the fact that rural communities have fewer resources to mobilize. Most of the resources mobilized in rural areas related to infrastructure improvements. There was more variety in the urban schools. School alumni are often a key source, again mostly in urban areas.



*Is there increased confidence among parents than before, that the funds collected will be used wisely?*

Mobilizing local resources is a new area of emphasis for many of the schools although many of the urban center schools have previously been soliciting non-budget resources for basic school and special need students through contributions, assessment of fees, and use of volunteer unskilled labor for those who could not contribute. With the USAID grants for infrastructure and the development of the Community Education Committees and School Rehabilitation Committee, there has been a greater emphasis placed on the role of the community in mobilizing local resources in support of local school needs. The communities have actively participated in these projects mostly through unskilled labor and with some contributions and fund raising.

Of the 35 school-communities visited, only three had registered local board of trustee types of governing boards which had the authority to have a bank account and handle money. In the other cases, the money was handled by the CEC or PTA. In all cases, there were parent oversight committees to ensure the proper accounting and public reporting out of the non-budget resources. The school officials and parents were very conscientious in carrying out this responsibility because of past regional history related to corruption. Additionally, because of increased participation and involvement of the community/ parents in the school decision-making process as discussed in the section on community involvement, the parents have direct input into determining school needs and priorities and, thus, use of these funds.

*Is there evidence that decision making became more participatory?*

All the school-communities were rated for 'best practice' for participatory decision-making, as follows: (See Appendix C for definitions.)

**Table 19: Participation– All Schools/PDS and Cluster**

Country	Number of Schools	Number of Groups	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan	10	17	47%	35%	19%	0%
Tajikistan	13	14	17%	40%	17%	26%
Kyrgyzstan	12	17	23%	23%	45%	8%

Results showed that the current practice related to participatory decision-making was above the 60% level in 82% of the Uzbekistan schools, 57% of the Tajikistan schools, and 46% of the Kyrgyzstan schools. Consequently, there is evidence that about half or more of the schools are using participatory techniques with Uzbekistan leading the way.

Below are illustrative participation ‘best practices’ identified by school management in each of the three countries:

**Uzbekistan**

School officials consult with stakeholder groups, hold open forums, assist local education committee in preparing and implementing an action plan, provide progress reports, hold regular staff meetings, include teachers input in school decisions, work with Council of Teachers, and support inclusiveness on committees.

**Tajikistan**

School officials share information with staff in school-wide meetings and with the education committees on a regular (bi-weekly or monthly) basis, input is solicited, and all have an opportunity to speak; discussions are held on what has been achieved, short-term goals to be attained and important issues; annual open forums are held with community/parents to share expenditure reports, provide information on the performance/status of the school and determine a priority of needs; and action plans are developed and implemented in cooperation with staff and community/parents.

**Kyrgyzstan**

School officials provide awareness sessions for parents and ask for input on a regular basis – monthly class parent meetings and open forums; maintain open door policy for teachers, community/parents, and students; assists local education committee in preparing and implementing an action plan, provide progress reports, hold regular staff meetings, include teacher input in school decisions, work with Council of Teachers, and support inclusiveness on committees.

*If so, can that be attributed to USAID efforts?*

It is difficult to determine precisely at what stage the schools were in their development of participatory decision-making prior to PEAKS but, clearly this was an area of weakness the project was designed to address. Currently, there is awareness of the concept and content of participatory techniques and many of the school officials are now using them on a regular basis, especially some of the community mobilization techniques; e.g., community drama, SWOT analysis, and PRA.

Increased student participation was observed across the board in the classrooms, clubs, school parliaments where they exist, and in CECs. This is an important finding not just for the children but also for their parents and siblings.

Additionally, some of the parent participation activities mentioned by the community members and cross-validated between the groups and by action plans, review of dairies and meeting minutes that are now occurring were as follows:

- More parents are maintaining a home environment that encourages school attendance and learning (Tashkent #98, Tashkent #145, Vahdat #4, Boogachi, Sokuluk #2, Chui #78);
- More parents are providing space for their child to study, are monitoring homework, and engaging their child in discussions related to schooling (Tashkent #145, Tashkent #119, Tashkent #98, Uchkuprik #8, Vahdat #140, Vahdat #4, Sokuluk #2, Chui #78);
- More families are providing for the health and guidance of child – nutrition and clothing (Tashkent #114, Kolub #2, Khairakum #14, Osh Town #16, Chui #78, Kazybek, Boogachi);
- More parents are attending school meetings (Tashkent #145, Tashkent #98, Vahdat #140, Rogun #3, Kolub #2, Kazybek, Koychumanov, Sokuluk, Chui #78);
- Parents are providing input in school decision making relative to school needs and school priorities during open forums and parent committees (Tashkent #145, Tashkent #98, Ganchi 322, Vahdat #4, Kolub #2, Shopokov #1, Sokuluk, Chui #78, Boogachi); and
- Parents are visiting school/observing classes more (Uchkuprik #6, Tashkent #145, Tashkent #119, Ganchi #29, Vahdat #4, Kolub #2, Boogachi, Chui #78)

*What else could be done by USAID to strengthen the management capacity in schools?*

Without question, the most important step that USAID and others could take in the school management area is to promote national policies delegating greater responsibility to the schools and by law or decree require the establishment of local governing boards for all schools. The per capita school finance pilot projects offer an immediate opportunity to move in this direction.

The two weakest ‘best practice’ effectiveness areas identified by the team were accountability and mobilizing local resources (see Appendix C for definitions); thus, additional training in both of these areas would be very beneficial. Typically, these are the two most difficult areas to change at the school-community level. The District can also play a support role in these two areas and should be included in any training provided. These focus areas also have implications for replication and mainstreaming the project within national education systems.

In addition, the identification, training and on-going support of local community leaders as change facilitators is a key element in strengthening the management capacity in schools. It is important that those potential local leaders be identified and on-going training be provided to assist them to be active in the support of their schools. Thus, an important element for strengthening the management capacity of the school-community change process is that local leader participation support structures be developed and implemented, whether by the central government, district or community.

#### **D. Gender**

*Question: In traditional classrooms, girls are usually more active than boys and demonstrate slightly better performance on tests. Are the new methodologies affecting the gender dynamic in the classroom, and if so, how? Please provide illustrations of the change, if it occurs, and suggest solutions if the impact is adverse for any gender.*

During each site visit, the team observed gender dynamics in the classrooms, between administrators and teachers, within children's clubs and parliaments, between parents and community groups and administrators/teachers, and within parent and community groups. The measurement of project impacts was very difficult, as no baseline data were available. The results are summarized below.

Students. In the majority of cases, positive gender dynamics were observed. In SbS primary grades, there has been a clear positive effect. Observations in SbS classrooms clearly showed boys and girls working together and generally equally active. Small group work by mixed sexes has contributed to this outcome, as has the active teaching method and the interesting lessons.

The results in upper grades taught by project-trained teachers are less dramatic, but there, also, boys and girls were observed working together and for the most part participating equally. Gender dynamics in traditional upper grade classrooms observed by the team, were noticeably different. In the majority of cases, girls were less assertive and less active than boys. This was especially the case in Tajikistan, where project interventions have been limited to Grades 1-4, and all upper grades are being taught in traditional ways with traditional classroom layouts (two students per bench, no mixing of sexes).

A relatively high proportion of girls in Tajikistan drop out of school after grade 9, when attendance is no longer compulsory. While this cannot be attributed solely to the lack of AL approaches in the upper grades, it is a possible factor that will be put to the test once RWCT is introduced. Interestingly, in schools where children's clubs and/or school parliaments are active, girls tend to be more active than boys.

The decision to introduce RWCT in Tajikistan project schools, thus, may help improve retention of girls after Grade 9, as well as provide a more supportive classroom environment for students who have gone through the SbS program.

Teachers. In all three countries, the teachers are predominantly women, primarily for economic reasons. However, there are noticeably more male teachers in the rural areas, with the reason

being that there are few job opportunities and that men, as the main supporters of the family, should have them.

Female teachers with project training were observed to be generally more confident and assertive in the classroom and in interactions with school administrators than teachers without such training.

Female rural teachers find it difficult to travel to attend training at PDSs. Training needs to be provided in their school or nearby cluster schools. The proposed distance learning scheme for teachers in Uzbekistan, in part, is an attempt to deal with this problem.

Parents. Mothers are usually the parent who supervises homework and goes to the school, whenever the presence of a parent is required. Where the mother also has to work to support the family, the responsibility is often assumed by older siblings. Many of the men work in other countries, and send money to support the family. Social attitudes are slowly changing, however, and men, especially in urban areas, are gradually interacting more with the school.

Not surprisingly with respect to a variable as socially important and powerful as gender, the school environment is only one factor influencing gender behavior. But, the project’s impact has clearly been positive.

## E. Effectiveness and Sustainability of Community Involvement Approaches

### *Influence of community involvement activities on school-community relationship?*

Five effectiveness ‘best practice’ focus areas related to community involvement were rated: empowerment, participation, networking/partnerships, accountability/transparency and mobilizing resources. Together these ‘best practice’ effectiveness measures form a sustainability measure for community involvement. (See Appendix C for best practice definitions.) Specifically, the evaluators looked at both the participation of the local education committee members in initiating actions to address school concerns/school improvement plans as well as parent participation through parent volunteers in the school.

The results are summarized in the following table:

**Table 20: Community Involvement Current Practices**

Community Involvement Current Practice by Country	# of schools	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan					
local committee/participation	5	40%	40%	10%	0%
parent volunteer/participation	9	33%	56%	10%	11%
Tajikistan					
local committee/participation	6	0%	33%	33%	33%
parent volunteer/participation	10	30%	40%	0%	30%
Kyrgyzstan					
local committee/participation	5	40%	20%	40%	0%
parent volunteer/participation	11	18%	0%	73%	9%

Examples of interactions with the schools derived from the team's instruments and observations include:

**Uzbekistan-illustrative interactions with the school**

Increased interest and involvement by parents– thanks to community mobilization efforts (Dangara #12-want more parent training, Tashkent #98-parents very satisfied, Tashkent #145-more monitoring of homework); increased enhancement of interest of students and quality of education (Akkurgan-youth group donations, Tashkent #114-more students applying for higher education, Uchkuprik #8-action plan includes quality item); parents are volunteering/assisting with classes (Tashkent #114-helping with visual aids, Uchkuprik #8-assisting in material development, Akkurgan-assisting in material development and school projects); assisting in attendance issues (Uchkuprik #8-other parents meet with the parents of the non-attending students and involvement of local police station, Tashkent#145-parents talk with parents), and helping to raise funds for school activities (Tashkent #114-textbooks, school supplies and clothes, Tashkent #145-provided fax machine and electrical work, Akkurgan-youth group donated 2 globes and microscope, Almalik-; occasionally responding to a special needs child – e.g., a disabled child is being taught in the house (Kokand #42) – parents had observed this elsewhere and initiate an action to do this in their school along with providing clothes, books and materials for the children (Tashkent #114, Tashkent #98); good relationship between CEC and local neighborhood committee (Uchkuprik #8-community based agreement, Kokand #42-solved attendance issues and infrastructure problems, Tashkent #114-assisted in setting up a Public council).

**Tajikistan- illustrative interactions with the school**

Community assists school with visual aids-Ganchi #22 and Vahdat #4-material development; volunteers for infrastructure projects (Ganchi #22, Rogun #3 & #4, Kolub #2); assist in identification and implementation of school improvement actions (Khujand #9-meeting to identify more ways to bring community into the school, Kairukum #14-meetings to strategize for ways to productively involve the community/parents in the school more; use of the community as a resource for the school (Ganchi #22-storytelling and cultural demonstrations by community members in the school, Rogun #4-provide science supplies and one man was especially pleased that he could share some experiences with a class, Chui #4--a woman from the community now shares how to make handicrafts; collaboration with neighboring communities/schools – currently some of this taking place informally (Khujand #9-cooperation with religious leaders and neighboring community to write a proposal, Kolkhozobod-monitoring of performance, Kairakum- assisting with some of the social problems, Khujand #15-sharing of school facilities, Kolub #2-more joint school cooperation with city education department).

**Kyrgyzstan-illustrative interactions with the school**

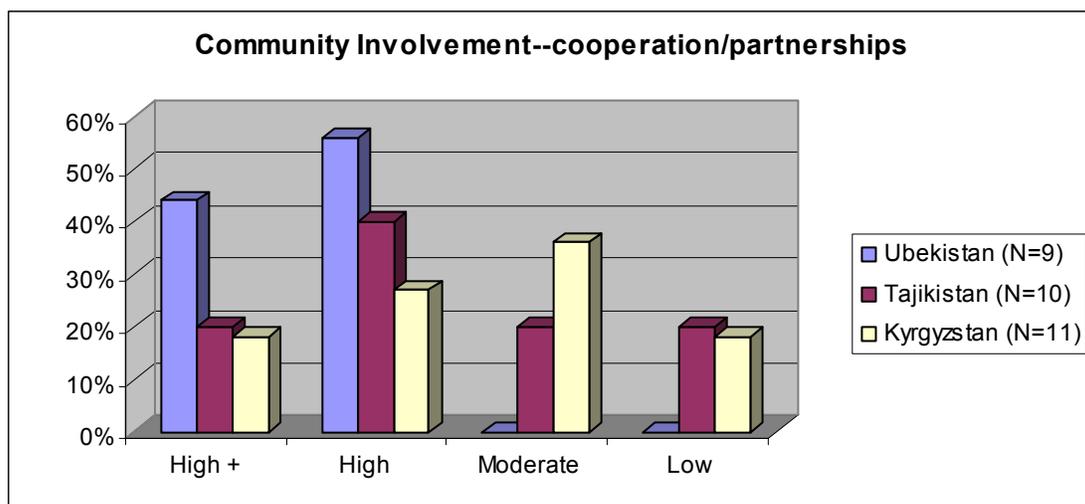
Parents beginning to be empowered-more active in decision making (Shopokov-action plan reviewed monthly, Chui #78-six meetings with director per year, Koychumanov-strategies for more involvement, Toktogul-more active alumni support); help in arranging community activity space in school - parent room, resource work room, space for school parliament and children's club (Koychumanov, Osh Town #16); work on weekends on facilities and grounds (Tadjibaev, Toktorov); starting to volunteer to help teachers and in preparing visual aids (Chui #78, Osh Town #16, Lenin), help with non-attendance issues (Boogachi, Koychumanov, Tadjibaev), meet and interact with teachers – in and outside of the classroom (Boogachi, Chui #78, Tangatarova #14, Osh Town #16); and help in arranging sports competition and excursions (Tangatarova #14, Osh Town #16).

Uzbekistan participation was the highest with 80% of the schools above the 60% current practice level in both local committee participation and parent volunteer participation; followed by Tajikistan with high parent volunteer participation (70% of the schools above 60% on current practice) but a lower local education committee participation (33% of the schools); and Kyrgyzstan with a low parent volunteer participation (18% above 60% current practice) and a better local education committee participation (60%). Clearly, the community/parents are having a very direct influence on school-community activities in Uzbekistan but more work appears to be needed in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to obtain a more sustainable level.

The team’s observations generally support the research data. The team observed sizable, sustained interactions between the schools and the communities. In general, community organizations called for in the project design were present and functioning. Parents were clearly more involved with the schools, particularly SbS parents in their children’s classes, and there appeared to be a clear increase in school visits and conferences with teachers. Many of the interactions, of course, have focused on the identification and execution of school projects, in which the community played a significant role in planning, fund raising and monitoring. This may reflect the emphasis placed on projects by the implementers, SCUK and SCUS, and in the training provided.

*Is there a sense of unity, mutual support and ownership in tackling critical issues?*

As the following table illustrates, the answer varies by country. Cooperation/partnerships between the community and the school were extremely high in Uzbekistan, which was showing 100% current practice above the 60% level (46% at high plus & 54% at high), followed by Tajikistan with 60% of their schools demonstrating current practice above the 60% level (20% at high plus & 40% at high), and Kyrgyzstan at 45% above the 60% level (18% at high plus and 27% at high). Clearly Kyrgyzstan needs more work in this area and Tajikistan, as well, could use more training and practice in implementing ‘best practice’ cooperation/partnerships between the school and community. (See Appendix C for definitions.)



*What are the relevant illustrations?*

Below are some illustrations drawn from the team's research of cooperation/partnerships demonstrating unity, mutual support and ownership in tackling school issues.

**Uzbekistan**

School director facilitates sharing through open seminars, discussion sessions, class visits, newsletters, etc. within and between schools and at the district/city education office and through collaborative involvement in training and seminar/workshop opportunities.

Parents and community stakeholders encourage other parents and community members, whether they have a child in the school or not, to visit the school and get involved in school-related activities and network and share experiences with the school and community.

Teachers employ an open door policy along with involvement in school-level, PDS-related, and community/district-level learning events.

**Tajikistan**

School director coordinates with the local neighborhood committee allowing the local committee to use the school facilities for conferences and elections; allows community access to computer room; includes District education officials in seminars and trainings; identifies potential donors and shares information; allows materials from resource center to be shared with neighboring schools; maintains communication with alumni from school; and maintains close cooperation with local community and government.

Parents visit school and classes; hold regular open forums with the community; provide support to disabled and needy families and children in the attendance area; show cooperation with local authorities by including representation on the education committees; meet with parent committee from neighboring community and share experiences about how they each did their work; and participate in school and District-level trainings/workshops.

Teachers conduct open classes; include teachers and parents in training/awareness sessions; invite parents to visit classes to better understand the new methodologies; hold cluster meetings with teachers from the other schools; and identify and utilize available community human and material resources.

**Kyrgyzstan**

School officials show support for the school parliament, Children’s Club and other school-related social partnerships - partnerships take a lot of hard work, need to work at it; create a separate parent room in the school; facilitate sharing through open seminars, discussion sessions, class visits, and newsletters within the school and community; and develop relationships and share experiences with other schools.

Key representatives of the community are included on the school education committee; parents actively monitor homework and provide supportive home environment; parents and community stakeholders encourage other parents and community members to and get involved in school-related activities, whether they have a child in the school or not; and network and share experiences with community members in other communities utilizing the active learning methodologies.

Teachers make every effort to visit the cluster schools; employ an open door policy along with involvement in community-level and city/district-level active learning events.

*Many school-community groups, such as Community Education Committees, Social Partnership groups, and Parent Committees have received more than a year of training and capacity building through projects addressing school needs. Have they by now emerged as important stakeholders in the education process, able to affect the quality of education and management in their school?*

The answer is a mixed one. The team observed situations where local community groups had developed to the stage implied by the question and a greater number which may have been active in carrying out their anticipated functions but could not be described as independent forces effectively monitoring the schools and acting on their perceptions thereof. Again, there were significant differences among countries.

The use of ‘best practices’ for empowerment of the local education committees and the empowerment of parents in decision making was rated as follows: (See Appendix C for best practice definitions.)

**Table 21: Community Involvement and Current Practices**

<b>Community Involvement Current Practice by Country</b>	<b># of schools</b>	<b>High + 80-100%</b>	<b>High 60-80%</b>	<b>Moderate 40-60%</b>	<b>Low 0-40%</b>
Uzbekistan					
committee empowerment	5	40%	60%	0%	0%
parent empowerment	9	44%	56%	0%	0%
Tajikistan					
committee empowerment	6	0%	33%	33%	33%
parent empowerment	10	20%	30%	20%	30%
Kyrgyzstan					
committee empowerment	5	40%	40%	10%	0%
parent empowerment	11	0%	27%	73%	0%

Uzbekistan empowerment was the highest with 100% of the schools above the 60% current practice level in both local committee empowerment and parent empowerment/involvement in

decision making; followed by Tajikistan with high parent empowerment but low committee empowerment and Kyrgyzstan with high committee empowerment and low parent empowerment. Kyrgyzstan has a ‘board of trustees’ in two school-communities (Shopokov #1 and Chui #78) which are functioning extremely well and influencing the results and Tajikistan has three rural communities, Ganchi #22, Rogun #3 and Rogun #4 (the latter two being IBET schools), where parents are very active but the education committees are not as strong, which is influencing the results.

*If not, what can be done over the next year to strengthen their role?*

The team recommends that the approach to the community component over the coming year be revised, putting the emphasis on two critical structural actions. The first is to develop a project-wide association of community group leaders and members. It is believed that an association would increase interest and participation. It also would provide a channel for future community mobilization training, professional development, and advocacy, as well as enhance prospects for sustainability. The second would be to promote the creation of a new, decentralized school governance system, with primary responsibility assigned to the communities. (See answer to the next question for additional comment on this issue.)

*What are school and community long-term expectations of these newly created school-community groups?*

This question is difficult to answer as long-term planning is a short-coming of the current education committees, as most have been consumed with dealing with immediate concerns and issues and have been project driven. Only about half of the current committees are sustainable unless something is done. Where communities have developed a more comprehensive action plan/school improvement plan, sufficient resources continues to be at the heart of the issue.

Again, the best long-term solution observed by the evaluators is a new school governance system. The team saw a few examples of the ‘board of trustee’ approach where the board is registered, has a bank account, and can directly mobilize and manage financial resources. With this responsibility comes both academic and financial accountability and transparency. The governance issue should be a long-term expectation and high priority policy issue for USAID.

*Do the school and community see a future role for the groups?*

The answer will depend on progress toward the association and governance objectives mentioned above. These in turn will depend on the emergence of local change leaders and on the leadership of the school director. An equally important question is how does the government see the future role of the groups? and what will be the government’s role and responsibility? The role that the government plays in supporting local community leaders, community mobilizations, and the school is one of the main keys to their future.

*Is any additional assistance required to ensure that the community groups can fulfill the role identified above?*

USAID assistance on the association and governance issues will be critical. In addition, the role that the DED and the local government play in supporting local community leaders and the school will be important factors in sustaining community involvement, ownership and change. The District is the main official link between the school and the central government; thus, the type and frequency of contacts and support between this office and the local school is critical. Local leader competence, motivation and commitment are directly affected by the activity of this office.

*Is there support for those community initiatives on the part of the local and central government that would make it possible for larger-scale replication?*

The team did not encounter any resistance to this area of the project. Indeed, strong interest in the community development component was expressed in many of the Districts visited, and the Ministries of Education are generally supportive.

Below are the ratings for sample Districts in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on the three effectiveness focus areas of empowerment, participation, and networking/partnerships, including communities.

**Table 22: District Involvement Current Practices**

District Involvement Current Practice - Overall	# of Districts	High + 80-100%	High 60-80%	Moderate 40-60%	Low 0-40%
Uzbekistan					
empowerment	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
participation	1	0%	0%	100%	0%
networking/partnerships	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
Tajikistan					
empowerment	7	14%	29%	14%	43%
participation	7	0%	29%	29%	43%
networking/partnerships	7	0%	29%	43%	29%
Kyrgyzstan					
empowerment	4	0%	25%	50%	25%
participation	4	0%	50%	25%	25%
networking/partnerships	4	25%	50%	0%	25%
Overall					
empowerment	12	17%	25%	25%	33%
participation	12	0%	33%	33%	33%
networking/partnerships	12	17%	33%	25%	25%

As noted, overall District empowerment and networking/partnerships are at 52% and 50% effectiveness based on the 60% cutoff figure followed by participation at the 33% level. The sample is small but the trend is clear with about half of the Districts showing some effectiveness in empowerment and networking and about a third showing some effectiveness in participation. These are encouraging trends.

*What can the project do to assist the government in replicating community initiatives?*

The answer to this question is encompassed in the replication recommendations in Section IV. The key contribution the project can make to persuading governments to replicate the community and other project initiatives is to work with the governments and others to develop consensus on and design replication projects tailored to each national situation. The team recommends that this process begin toward the end of the current project and that it be the central focus of any follow-on project.

#### **F. Complementarity of Inputs in Pilot Schools under the Different Components and Program Cohesion**

*How well do inputs in pilot schools under different components complement each other? Is there clear understanding among stakeholders of the holistic approach taken by the programs, that is, that the different components are parts of a comprehensive USAID effort?*

Unlike integrated basic education projects in many other countries, which have sought to demonstrate the efficacy of a uniform package of inputs, PEAKS was designed to simultaneously test a number of different models, within a single project. In addition, there was no clear pattern of uniform inputs provided more or less simultaneously across the entire project, even where OSI was the principal teaching and learning provider and SCUK the primary community development provider. The geographic coverage and experience of implementing partners varied, e.g. OSI in Tajikistan. Schools came into the program at different times and benefited from project inputs accordingly, making comparisons difficult. Some schools, principally cluster schools, are still quite new to the project, and to date have only received partial inputs. Further complicating an already complicated picture is the fact that a number of PDS schools, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, were beneficiaries of earlier, related OSI activities.

Nonetheless, it is possible to say that in PDS schools where all five components were present and for a long enough time to make a difference, that is, where the whole school approach was clearly followed in a sustained way, the results were clearly positive. In other words, the components, when applied as intended, are indeed complementary and the observed results are greater than the sum of the parts. This is an important finding for the future, including both the remainder of the current agreement period and a possible, subsequent replication phase. It suggests that if the bulk of the unevenness of the project's progress to date can be ironed out by mid-2007, as the team believes it can, a sound basis for replication will exist.

#### **G. Advocacy and Association Development**

*USAID has employed a number of strategies to build capacity of independent groups, such as the teacher training membership associations or local school-community partnerships. Is it feasible to bring these groups together to create a broad-based advocacy body that could foster quality improvement and engage in dialogue on policy issues? If so, what can be done by USAID to advance in this direction?*

PEAKS' strategy in this area has focused on strengthening local professional NGOs that will sustain networks of innovative teachers and education professionals engaged in the PEAKS activities and mission and that will carry project activities forward into the future. During the extension period, these NGOs, will also continue to provide professional development for new

teachers, mentoring trainers working from PDS sites, working to ensure the quality of training, and developing professional standards for innovative teaching methods.

In early 2004, in Kyrgyzstan a group of three NGOs, including a large English language training School, came together, with OSI help, to register the Association of Independent Providers – Novel School (AIP). The number of members has since grown to seven and there are fifteen pending applications for membership, reportedly including eleven PDSs. Through arrangements with the MOE and the KAE, which are members of its Advisory Council, the Association’s members are expected to be able to provide officially recognized training and to certify teacher trainers. OSI currently pays half of the association’s costs, with the other half provided by the members.

While AIP is well-positioned to provide valuable services to its members, especially if it can assure that members can offer certified courses, in the team’s judgment it cannot take the place of individual professional membership associations for teachers, school directors, and community leaders. The latter are needed to empower their members to advocate for educational reform, as well as their professional interests, and assist them to keep their professional skills up-to-date.

The project does not seem to have the development of this other kind of professional associations as a priority at the present time. The team believes the matter should be urgently reconsidered. Under present circumstances, it may be more difficult to accomplish in Uzbekistan than in the other two countries, but the need there is as great or greater, so Uzbekistan should be included in whatever feasibility studies are launched.

Once the additional associations have been created and are functioning, they and the AIP should form the core of an effort to establish National Education Reform Associations (NERAs) in each of the three countries. The functions of the NERAs would be primarily information and advocacy. Their members would be education, private sector, and civil society organizations, which share the conviction that creation of a modern, effective, and efficient education system is central to success in a globalizing world.

#### **H. Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Indicators, Assessing Learning Outcomes, and the Impact of Teacher Training on Attendance and Completion**

*The contractor will review the SO 3.4 PMP and implementing partner data collection plans, and make recommendations regarding the appropriateness and reliability of indicators for assessing progress towards performance goals, including recommendations on how to best assess student outcomes resulting from PEAKS inputs and how to better assess the impact of teacher training on attendance and completion.*

The team’s review of the SO3.4 PMP included discussions with the implementer regarding the rationale for the choice of performance indicators, refinement of data collection instruments, methodology for analyzing the data, and the success of the overall plan for collecting data from PEAKS partners.

**Findings:** The SO3.4 PMP performance indicators were developed in cooperation between USAID and AED and finalized in 2004. Baseline data collection took place in September 2003. The first round of data collection for project impact took place in April/May 2004 to measure the result of project inputs during the 2003 to 2004 academic year. Many of the PEAKS cluster schools in all three countries are implementing student-centered learning for the first year (2004 to 2005) so the data collection instruments, procedures and methods of calculation should remain the same in order that valid comparisons can be made between the results of the 2004 data collection and the results of the 2005 data collection exercise.

The performance indicators remain appropriate and valid, and the second major round of data collection to assess performance is presently underway (May 2005). The M&E teams have developed valid and reliable instruments, data collection procedures and sample sizes.

The main implementer, AED, developed a solid overall data collection plan for the other implementing partners and ensured that all partners understood the rationale, instruments, and data collection procedures through a series of M&E workshops for the partners. A monthly partners meeting is held to discuss M&E activities. The national PEAKS team in each country uses this collaborative data collection plan to accumulate the data required for project reporting purposes. All IR outcomes are incorporated into partners' annual work plans.

The AED M&E team has continued to refine the instruments, data collection and compilation methods utilized for teacher observation, teacher quality, parent surveys, assessing the level of critical thinking skills among grade 8 students, and financial reform. The weighting mechanisms are questionable – they treat nominal data as interval data - but the process is good. The idea is to track stages of development, i.e. to clearly define each stage of development and track distribution changes rather than averages.

The IBET program being implemented by AKF has a solid M&E component, including a baseline implemented after the IBET intervention began, and a good on-going system of data collection which includes director, teacher and student assessments, and an excellent mentoring checklist with clear criteria. Training results are also well documented and teachers are tracked throughout the school year.

**Factors affecting attendance:** USAID requested recommendation on how to better assess the impact of teacher training on attendance and completion. Any studies or comments regarding completion rate are premature at this stage in the project implementation, however, the role of the teacher vis-à-vis student attendance problems can be discussed. The training level of the teacher is not nearly as important a variable as is “teacher behavior”. It is the attitude and behavior of teachers that positively or negatively affect students, rather than their level of training.

Three studies by SCUK in Kyrgyzstan examined a variety of factors affecting student attendance: Educational Problems of Ak Muz Village in At Bashy District (preliminary report, 2003); Educational Problems of Naryn Town, Naryn Oblast (preliminary report, 2003), and C-EMIS Report: Survey conducted in Beshik Jon Village, Bazar Korgon Rayon, Djalal Abad Oblast (2004).

All three studies found that the major factors in children's non-attendance at school included: lack of warm clothing/shoes, need to help with agriculture, need to help in household or parents' business, no textbooks or stationary, sudden illness and long distance to travel to school.

Teacher behavior, or "dislike of teacher" was cited infrequently (1 to 4%) by both students and parents. Indeed, all three studies indicate that teachers are part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, as in each village teachers often went to visit the homes of non-attending students in order to ascertain the reasons for non-attendance, and to assist in solving these problems whenever possible.

In all three countries, many parents commented during interviews that their children had a more positive attitude about attending school when they were in classes featuring the learner centered methodologies, particularly SbS. Indeed, some parents of SbS students reported that the children wanted to go to school even when ill.

### **Suggestions:**

1. PEAKS M&E staff in each country select a small sample of data submitted by the various partner implementers through their data collection plans to check for reliability and validity.
2. PEAKS works with training providers in all three countries to ensure that a comprehensive plan for the assessment of individual trainees based on the training goals and objectives is provided for each training session, and that the assessment plan is kept on file in the relevant PEAKS office. This will ensure that successful trainees have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) for training follow-up evaluation and assessment in their schools.
3. PEAKS M&E staff begins to investigate setting up tracking programs in each country where C-EMIS is being implemented in order to follow the progress of an appropriate sample of program beneficiaries, including representatives of students, teachers, school leaders and community/parents.
4. PEAKS begins to develop more detailed indicators for assessing school accountability and transparency, under the school management component.
5. PEAKS continues to work on the development and refinement of their impact indicators (e.g., teacher quality index, parent satisfaction index, student achievement, institutional accountability index, and education policy reform index) and on tracking sustainability.

### **I. USAID Comparative Advantage in Current Assistance Areas**

*The Issue: Whether USAID has a comparative advantage in the areas where USAID is providing assistance.*

The U.S. is a large education donor in the CAR region, and its superpower status gives it added weight in dealing with the governments, as well as substantial influence over one of the major

donors, the World Bank (WB). (This at a time when the ADB and WB are on the verge of initiating or have recently initiated sizable new programs of high relevance to PEAKS and broader basic education development strategies throughout the region.)

USAID's education work worldwide is focused heavily on basic education development. As a consequence, it has an unusually rich pool of experience and talent to call on in this area. There is nothing like it in other areas, where staff and expertise have basically left the Agency.

With PEAKS already on the ground and with two years of experience, USAID has an existing, established basic education development program with a strong presence in the three countries, a record of effective coordination with other donors, especially the WB, and good credibility and relationships with the three governments. (The IBET program gives USAID additional presence in TJ.) In other words, USAID is now a recognized and valued player in the sector.

Another advantage is that while government relationships are generally good and PEAKS receives official support for its education work from all three countries, USAID directly controls its resources and most implementation mechanisms, that is, it does not channel its resources through the governments. This gives it added flexibility and better quality control. This does not seem to be a major problem with the governments, provided they are kept informed and involved.

A further advantage enjoyed by USAID is the ability, through a range of procurement instruments, to relatively quickly tap a deep and diversified global pool of specialized skills in education development, including ready access to the largest and deepest higher education system in the world.

**J. Comparative Analysis of Different Models for Quality Improvement as Used by Different Implementing Partners**

*The contractor will take note of the different models for quality improvement under the USAID Basic Education program (across country, and as used by different implementing partners) and provide a comparative analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, in addressing program priorities outlined above."*

Models for quality improvement under the USAID basic education program are illustrated in the following tables:

**a) Uzbekistan**

Description of model	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>PDS plus cluster schools (implementer was OSI until late 2004)</b>	1. PDS fit criteria of strong schools, well organized and well run	1. Cluster schools currently weaker
	2. Staff of PDS usually well trained	2. Distance of cluster schools from PDS often constrains good mentoring and interaction of PDS/cluster school teachers
	3. Competent school leadership supportive of changes	3. Cluster schools show a current shortfall in in-service training, training follow-up and community/parent involvement
	4. PDS usually have a good environment of teacher cooperation	4. Constraints on PDS teachers include lack of substitutes, lack of release time, heavy work load, problem of multiple shift schools, travel expenses, adequate training prep time
	5. PDS show high sustainability	5. Relationships with local district education department often not strong
		6. Cluster schools were mixed with about 60% showing high sustainability potential
		7. Need to train a “critical mass” of teachers (at least a majority at each grade level) to provide support and peer cooperation

**b) Tajikistan**

Description of model	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>PDS plus cluster schools (implementer: OSI)</b>	1. Most PDS fit criteria of strong schools, well organized and well run	1. Cluster schools weaker, teachers have received less training
	2. Intra-school mentoring rated as high	2. Lack of inter-school contacts due to many teacher constraints
	3. School leadership—Moderate to high leadership demonstrated in the PDS schools	3. Ties with local department of education or rayon not strong; school leadership needs more training
	4. SbS classes well received and teachers are doing well	4. Many SbS teachers having problems implementing the full SbS model
	5. PDS show sustainability potential but still need more work.	5. Most of the cluster schools were rural schools, some just getting started – majority were not demonstrating sustainability potential yet
		6. Need to train a “critical mass” of teachers (a majority at each grade level) to provide support and peer cooperation
<b>Rural cluster model (implementer: SCUK)</b>	1. Teachers in rural areas have received some training	1. Rural cluster schools weak, with problems in implementing student-centered methodology

Description of model	Strengths	Weaknesses
	2. Community interest beginning to develop due to involvement in infrastructure projects	2. Poor understanding of interactive learning on the part of implementers
	3. One rural cluster school was showing some sustainability due to strong school leader and community/parent involvement	3. Impact of training after two years very limited
		4. Absence of stronger PDS school limits transfer of training content
<b>IBETS core school plus satellite (implementer: AKF)</b>	1. Strong links with local department of education officials and methodologists	1. Weaker links with community groups
	2. Inclusion of professional mentors from IPDs	2. Criteria limit the number of schools that can be included in this model
	3. Workable model of core school plus two nearby satellite schools	3. Questionable that it is replicable on a wide scale
	4. Sharing of resources and TLM through well-organized lending system	
	5. Sustainability was high – shows that model can work in rural schools if implemented properly	

**c) Kyrgyzstan**

Description of model	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>PDS plus cluster schools (implementer: OSI)</b>	1. PDS schools are strong, well established and well organized	1. Cluster schools currently functioning at a lower level due to a variety of constraints
	2. Well trained and professional teaching staff	2. Poor mentoring to date; only one example of PDS teachers helping cluster school teachers at their schools
	3. Supportive school leadership which encourages teachers to implement student centered methodologies	3. Weak links with local education departments and local TTIs
	4. Parents are supportive of SbS activities	4. Cluster schools need more work – sustainability mostly moderate to low
	5. PDS schools demonstrated high sustainability	5. Need a “critical mass” of teachers trained to encourage sustainability
<b>Potential/rural PDS plus cluster (implementer: OSI)</b>	1. PDS schools are strong and well organized	1. Distances between PDS and cluster schools too great for effective mentoring by PDS
	2. Teaching staff has a fairly high level of training	2. Cluster schools so far not positive about their training experiences at PDS
		3. Little sharing of resources from PDS to cluster schools
		4. Need to train a “critical mass” of teachers at each grade level in order to provide peer support

Description of model	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Co-PDS plus clusters (implementer: OSI)</b>	1. Strong school leadership in the two Co-PDS schools observed	1. Community involvement in cluster schools comparatively weak so far; likewise teacher training, monitoring
	2. Combined resources of the two Co-PDSs impressive	Co-PDSs do not have a clear division of labor

Experience with the PEAKS PDS-based models has been generally very positive. If one factors in the complexity of the project design, the tight time frames within which the project has functioned and the fact that the rollout of the cluster schools has been quite recent and project inputs are only now being systematically applied, the performance is impressive.

The team was impressed with the IBET model, especially its careful and sustained integration of the project with local education institutions. The latter, in the team’s view, is a weakness of the PEAKS model. The OSI/Soros focus on developing and sustaining independent, national organizations to work on behalf of the schools is a sound, long-term strategy for society as a whole. But, in the PEAKS context, where scaling up and replication of the project through the national education systems must be the ultimate goal, there is some conflict between the two approaches.

The team is critical of SCUK’s rural cluster model in Tajikistan, at least as it has operated under PEAKS. It is recognized that the model focuses on fostering self-help among some of the poorest schools in a poor country, which is a commendable objective. But, in practice, few positive results were observed. The reasons are unclear and may have more to do with management than the model per se. Nevertheless, at this point, it would be hard to justify recommending making a new start at developing and testing it.

## **K. Policy Initiatives**

While it was not an integral part of the original design, PEAKS has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the testing of two educational finance pilot initiatives. The first is a per capita school funding scheme, which addresses both equity in school finance and decentralized, transparent management of school budgets. As a result, the first major experiment with decentralization of school governance to local boards is now underway in pilot areas in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The second initiative, which is philosophically quite different, is a pilot test in one district in Kyrgyzstan of a training voucher scheme. The goal of the pilot is to test whether the introduction of competition into teacher retraining systems can simultaneously promote the entry into the system of new, private training providers, while encouraging current providers, especially the TTIs, to upgrade the quality and relevance of their offerings.

The team supports the first initiative wholeheartedly and believes the second can be useful, so long as it does not, de facto, lead to the decimation of training capacity in the national education system which is often the only viable option for many teachers and schools. Both kinds of training sources are going to be needed in the years ahead.

## **L. Summary Comments on PEAKS and IBET**

PEAKS overall is an excellent project and by the end of the current agreement it will have left significant marks in the great majority of the schools and communities in which it operates. The team has been critical of some aspects of the project, but that has strictly been with the goal of helping it become even stronger and in ways that will increase the likelihood that it will be institutionalized into national education systems and widely replicated, as it deserves to be.

The team did not do a sufficiently extensive study of the IBET project to develop reliable finding and recommendations. In the team's view, the IBET model is attractive and the project seems to be on a sound course. The next logical step would be to move the reform process into the upper grades, through the introduction of something along the lines of RWCT. If resources are available, the team believes an extension through June 2007 to support such an effort would be appropriate. If this were done, it would put IBET on the same time table as PEAKS and open the option in Tajikistan of integrating AKF/IBET into the proposed PEAKS replication project.

## **M. PEAKS Program Management**

AED's management of the PEAKS program has been generally strong. Its primary role at the outset was to coordinate and bring cohesion to an unusually complicated mix of goals, models, and implementers in three countries. This did not happen overnight, but the evidence is that the issues were identified and dealt with in a reasonably sound and timely way. During this initial period, AED relied primarily on the implementers for their special expertise in each of the components for which they were assigned lead roles.

The situation was altered significantly with the changes in Uzbekistan in the first half of 2004. At this stage, de facto, AED began to play a much larger conceptual and technical role. Today, as the project is challenged to define and work towards its ultimate objectives in a number of areas, the need for AED leadership is further increased. In the team's opinion, in order to do this, AED should consider augmenting its project-specific technical expertise, both in-region and via consultants on regular visit schedules, particularly in relevant methodologies, materials development, and related training.

Throughout the project, AED has worked closely and effectively with the governments and key donors, especially the World Bank, in order to coordinate the project's work with them and to seek their understanding and support.

## **III. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL FUTURE INVOLVEMENT**

### **A. Original and Current Validity of USAID's Education Sector Strategy and Approach**

This section addresses the assumptions underlying USAID's decision to target basic education, as outlined in the team's SOW.

The team believes these assumptions were and remain valid but also believes the case for basic education is even greater than indicated.

The number of beneficiaries is indeed high at this level of education in all three countries and improvements in access, quality and efficiency of education are badly needed. But, in addition to these traditional arguments, targeted, effective interventions in primary and basic education can help accomplish other things critical to nation-building besides education *per se*, including:

- The gradual creation of a pool of well-educated, thinking and self-learning future citizens and engines of social and economic development.
- The impact of this kind of modern education in the schools on older children, parents, families, teachers, and school and community leaders should not be discounted. If they can be brought into the process, they themselves can be energized and converted into change agents, with immediate payoffs not only in education but also other sectors. Modern basic education approaches also contribute to the development of capacity to organize and implement a wide range of local self-help initiatives.
- Evidence in a developing country that a failing education system can be and is being turned around, can have profound impacts on matters as diverse as the investment climate, brain drain, social and gender equality, recruitment of talent to the education sector, retention of girls and other potential dropouts in school, and a general public perception that an improved future is possible.

Although it is tempting to extend this fundamental effort to modernize the learning process back at least a year into the final year of pre-primary, particularly in countries where children start school at the relatively late age of seven, the team agrees that even highly successful pilot efforts at this level are unlikely to be scaled up significantly in the CAR region, given the severe shortage of local resources for educating the current primary school population. (An alternative would be a much more modest investment in piloting innovative, low-cost home-based child development modules for clusters of homes in given neighborhoods, as BRAC has been doing in Bangladesh.)

Vocational and technical training investments are costly and should not be undertaken until they can be closely linked to a viable national economic development strategy. The team did not look into this sector, but as the resources available for USAID work in the education sector are small in relation to the cost of VAT training and there is little clarity on the exact kind of VAT capacity that is needed, it seems that the assumption remains valid. Another factor discouraging intervention in this area is the strong interest of the European Union's TACIS program in this sector.

The higher education sector presents a more complicated picture. The facts outlined in the original assumption appear to be true. But, the question remains whether the large investments being made in higher education in the region are providing an adequate level of return to national development, including basic education development. In particular, targeted efforts to engage the region's universities in helping resolve seemingly intractable education sector problems of teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention could be a good investment. University partnerships might play a useful role in this regard. The recently restructured ALO university partnership program would offer an easy and relatively quick mechanism for exploring the possible benefits of such arrangements, similar to what the American International Health

Alliance does in the health sector, and ALO, if desired, could help the Mission develop a targeted solicitation through its (ALO's) Special Initiatives window.

## **B. Current Policy, Capacity, and Donor Environment**

### ***Policy***

Any discussion of education policy in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan has to begin by noting that by and large, the policies are quite good. Laws and decrees exist that make liberal use of modern concepts like integrated school development, interactive teaching, decentralization, community involvement, transparency and accountability, etc. and that show a reasonably good understanding of their meaning. In many cases, the ideas have been tested by earlier pilot projects.

The problem is, of course, that better policies and even pilot projects at best create only the potential for reform. The record of converting them into real and sustained change in national education systems in Central Asia is, on the whole, poor. There are two closely related reasons for this: lack of money and weak capacity. There can also be lack of political will to reform and there is always resistance to reform by people and groups who are doing quite well with the system as it is, but they are not the main constraining factors.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in Central Asia and other poorly-resourced areas of the region eliminated the massive social subsidies, including for education, that the Soviet system brought with it, while at the same time devastating their economies. In a few cases, oil or other special advantages have created offsetting economic development and with it, public revenue to fund at least some restoration of health, education, and other public services, but this has not generally been the case in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, or Uzbekistan.

In the absence of locally-generated development, external aid, much of it based on geopolitical calculations, has become very important. Loans, grants, and remittances from the growing number of citizens of the three countries that have either emigrated or are working temporarily abroad are the main sources of cash to the region. The combined resources coming from abroad cannot, of course, replace the transfers inherent in the Soviet system, but they are large enough to have major impacts on policy and capacity.

As a consequence, international aid agencies have disproportionate influence on governments, their policies in areas of interest to the donors, and the ways the connections between policies and action play themselves out. Tajikistan has become a prime example of a donor-driven environment. Kyrgyzstan also displays some of these same characteristics, while Uzbekistan seeks to share in the largesse, while trying to make sure donor influence does not become too great or destabilizing.

### ***Capacity and Sustainability***

As noted, the capacity of the education establishments in all three countries is low. The explanation is not basically the quality of national human resources, but rather the lack of money to enable the MOE to attract the best people. In other words, if the financial picture were

different, better people would be on the job at the MOE, and from the perspective of donors, making a large difference in the working environment.

International aid programs, with their own implementation needs and the ability to pay high salaries in comparison with local norms, directly employ much of the local talent still in the region. In order to ensure the success of their investments, donors also subsidize government agencies, presumably on a temporary basis, to ensure that their projects receive high-level attention and are executed by competent people.

Another variable is the growing strength of the private sector and civil society. This has been a priority of many donors, including USAID, and a specialty of some, such as the Soros group of organizations. These efforts focus on creating alternatives to government in the short run while seeking to influence governments to become more democratic and effective in the long term - a not wholly consistent position.

USAID obviously cannot solve the resource problem, except in limited ways within project budgets. Nor are the efforts of various donors, including the Banks, to strengthen the quality of management of the educational system likely to make any dramatic changes in the near term. Therefore, USAID's work in the sector must be planned and proceed on the assumption that government capacity will remain low.

Modest investments at the margin, however, can make a significant difference. For example, because teachers are so poorly paid, even modestly improved recognition and compensation can substantially increase motivation and performance. As a case in point, if PEAKS can resolve the problem of lack of certification of PDS training, it would have two important effects. The first would be to empower PDS trainers, in association with the district/city departments of education, to provide officially recognized teacher training services, which would provide them with both status and some income. Secondly, it would mean that teachers who receive district and city DED-approved training provided by PDS trainers, would be eligible for promotions and salary increases.

Is effective development work in cooperation with the public sector possible under these circumstances? The answer is yes, but it has to focus on the feasible, not the ideal, and it has to limit its contributions to critical, non-recurring investments and eschew subsidizing recurrent expenses. In the case of an integrated school development program like PEAKS, this means working with existing government structures and funding inputs, such as training and modern materials, that in the future can be provided by the regular system at affordable costs, thus demonstrating that modest investments can produce significant increases in productivity, with manageable cost increases.

In essence, projects like PEAKS, at their best, seek to create more positive cost-benefit ratios at critical points in the system. If enough of these positive ratios are created and the recurrent cost increases can be kept low, a legitimate basis for sustainability and replication is established. If not, the projects are likely to go on the shelf, along with their predecessors.

### ***Donor Environment***

The basic education donor communities in the three countries are relatively small, but, from USAID's point of view, significant. This is because at present and for the first time ever, both the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB) are on the scene in Central Asia with sizable involvements in improving basic education systems. The World Bank is the newcomer, having previously focused on the health sector, while ADB concentrated on education. The change is a fortuitous one for USAID, as the WB is more open to collaboration and has closer relations with USAID in Washington and around the world. It has created an opportunity to develop a more strategic relationship between USAID and the Banks in education.

The team recommends that USAID/CAR enter into negotiations with the ADB and WB aimed at creating a strategic partnership in order to strengthen the education policy environment in Central Asia. Negotiations could begin in Almaty, with the formation of a working group charged with preparing a joint discussion paper encompassing a number of specific high priority ideas and issues, such as the teacher question, and drafting a proposed division of labor for subsequent review and consideration by the regional offices and the respective headquarters in Washington and Manila.

The bedrock of a possible strategic relationship is the fact that while the ADB and WB have money and an increasingly flexible array of program mechanisms, they lack capacity to field long and short-term technical assistance teams on relatively quick notice across a wide range of fields and topics. These, on the other hand, are areas in which USAID has a significant comparative advantage. Among the contributions USAID might make are action-oriented policy studies, providing technical advice for the design and execution of pilot programs, and arranging for in-country and overseas training/study tours for key policy makers.

AED has sought to coordinate with the ADB and WB and there are a number of existing collaborative arrangements at local levels. PEAKS' field experience also has been drawn on in the design of the WB's new Rural Education Project in Kyrgyzstan. It is now imperative that this collaboration be taken to a new, strategic level. Prompt action is needed, as the ADB is well along in conceptualizing substantial new programs for the sector, and the WB's new programs are getting underway. Areas of interest to USAID in the two Bank new programs include teacher training (both pre-service and in-service), educational finance, textbooks, student assessment, school mapping, and infrastructure development.

Donor coordination by governments in the region is uniformly weak. Even in Kyrgyzstan, where an International Advisory Council on Education was established to assist the MOE to coordinate donor inputs, with the Minister of Education as Chair and the Representative of the ADB as Deputy Chair, the results reportedly have been meager. One of the reasons for this is that the tenure of ministers of education in KG is typically short, including the minister who launched the Council. Coordination by donors is more frequent and successful, though more often consist of arrangements to work together in pursuit of specific joint interests rather than strategic partnerships. .

### **Attitudes of Governments to Donor Involvement in Selected Areas of Education**

The Scope of Work seeks the team's input on the region's governments' attitudes toward donor involvement in certain sensitive areas in the education sector, including curriculum restructuring, textbooks, and student assessment reform. Based on interviews with the ADB and WB and other key donors in the countries visited by the team, there are significant differences in this regard among the three governments. In Uzbekistan, policy, curriculum, textbook, and assessment are all areas where the government, while avowedly open to cooperation, appears to be proceeding very carefully and the added value of donor involvement in these areas, de facto, may be low. Although the Tajikistan government may harbor some concerns along these lines, especially after the events in Kyrgyzstan, its needs are so great and its capacity so low, that there appears to be ample space for donors to operate. In Kyrgyzstan, the previous government was relatively open to cooperation, viz the major components in all the above areas in the proposed ADB Third Education Project and the textbook and assessment components of the World Bank's upcoming Rural Education Project. The position of the interim government on the question is not clear, but it has signaled its intention to observe all prior agreements, including those with the ADB and WB.

### **C. Issues or Areas that May Require USAID Intervention to Ensure Sustainability of Quality Improvements, Given the Basic Education Investments to Date, with Special Reference to Policy Reform and Teacher Training**

The team's responses to this question are included in Section IV.

### **D. The Case for USAID Involvement in Basic Education in the CAR Region**

Based on the team's observations of the PEAKS project, as well as its collective experience elsewhere, the team feels strongly that carefully designed, integrated interventions to reform and restore basic education systems, like PEAKS, have two kinds of impacts which are relatively quick and go beyond the direct educational benefits. They are:

- The creation of pools of new stakeholders in the education system, i.e. teachers, school administrators, parents, and community leaders who are energized and can be converted into change agents for education reform.
- Replacement of despair over the collapsed education systems that these stakeholders see all around them with hope that they can and are being improved. Over time, perceptions that education reforms are real and progressing can have profound impacts on matters as diverse as restoring community pride, recruitment of talent to the education sector, retention of girls and other potential dropouts in school, raising public attitudes toward the future, and even improving the investment climate and reducing brain drain.

USAID, at comparatively low levels of direct investment, can have a disproportionate impact on the sector, by using its sizable influence to leverage other funds. But, it can only do that if it remains at the table.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **A. Recommendations for PEAKS during the Extension Period:**

1. Reach strategic consensus that the ultimate goal of the project is to institutionalize it within the education systems of the national education systems and then focus sharply during the remaining two plus years of the current agreement on strengthening the most critical elements for sustainability and replication.
2. Increase AED's project-specific technical expertise, both in-region and consultants on regular visit schedules, in relevant methodologies, materials design, and training.
3. Build stronger links between the project and the education establishments of the three countries, especially the local district education departments and their urban counterparts and give them a real sense of ownership. There is currently substantial contact and communication, but no clear agreement on the DEDs' role, which needs to be expanded and help supported to enable them to perform it.
4. As part of a strategy to give greater involvement and ownership to district (and city and town) inspectors and methods staffs in the pilot areas, offer additional training to better equip them to provide professional support to the schools and communities.

A special regional training course should be designed for this purpose, including modules on inter-active learning, school management, community mobilization, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation. A two-tier approach is suggested, with the first tier being a general survey of the curriculum for regional and district directors and education heads, as well as methodologists and inspectors. As part of the second tier, the methodologists and inspectors would receive in-depth training in the curriculum. Training teams should include senior, experienced PDS trainers. If possible, videos illustrating good and bad practices should be prepared to be shown in both tiers. Towards the end of tier two, trainees could engage in role playing exercises, perhaps in a session again involving their superiors.

5. Give priority attention to building long-term, sustainable support strategies for the trained teachers, school directors, and parent and community leaders, through a combination of district and PDS mentoring and assistance, and the development of membership associations to support their continued professional development and advocate for their interests and education reform.
6. Resolve the SbS and RWCT copyright issue to either remove it as a barrier to replication or to replace these training modules with new PEAKS modules.
7. Execute the re-designed program for Uzbekistan.
8. Continue the two education finance pilots, according to plan.

9. Finally, towards the end of the agreement, do an extensive internal evaluation, with the focus on identifying and documenting lessons learned and best practices, to lay the basis for replication.

## **B. Recommendations for the Next Strategy Period, 2007-2011**

### **1. Adoption of a three-part strategy:**

*a. A concentrated effort to demonstrate the replicability of the PEAKS integrated school development approach in the three countries.*

*b. While maintaining a tight focus on basic education, structuring the remainder of the education program around addressing critical education reform issues. Included would be taking the ongoing educational finance reforms to completion and exploring and moving forward, as needed, with other critically needed reforms, for example, internal efficiency issues, school governance, pre-service teacher education, the content and methodology of selected curriculum reforms, assessment, and building a national constituency for reform. Activities would include appropriate packages of policy studies, technical assistance, training, and advocacy. The role of the universities and possible university partnerships in addressing selected issues should be explored.*

*c. The development of strategic relationships between USAID and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, to maximize the value of USAID's limited education budget by focusing on strengthening the policy and regulatory environment for reform and testing new ideas, while looking to the Banks for the major investments.*

### **2. PEAKS Replication Project**

During the first year, a cooperative effort would be undertaken in each country, including the MOE, MOF, PEAKS, USAID, and possibly other donors to design a feasible, affordable, demand-driven replication model and strategy, based on core elements of the PEAKS experience. In Tajikistan, AKF/IBET should be invited to participate.

The main drivers of the replication and sustainability effort would be teams seconded from the stronger PDSs, district offices, and TTIs, where they are active participants in the project (principally in Uzbekistan). Initial priority would be given to adding school clusters in current PEAKS districts, neighboring districts, and areas of special interest to USAID.

Beginning in year two, districts, schools, and communities in the replication areas would be offered a chance to compete for a limited number of replication opportunities. The governments and the replication beneficiaries would be required to provide cost sharing, as well as meeting other selection criteria.

USAID would fund the planning phase and provide matching support for an initial replication phase, estimated at four years. An information and advocacy campaign would accompany the

effort to publicize it and lay the groundwork for obtaining government, other donor and local sponsor support for subsequent phases, with USAID assistance limited to supporting technical and quality control and evaluation.

### C. Budget

Three levels of budget are proposed: A recommended base budget and higher and lower alternatives.

<b><u>Base Budget: 2007-2011</u></b>	<b><u>\$(000s)</u></b>
PEAKS wind down & transition - Year 1	750
Replication planning and development of training modules – Year 1	750
Replication project – Phase One (rollout – 40 clusters) years 2-5	8,000
Replication project – Phase Two (evaluation, analysis) year 5	500
Education reform initiatives – Years 1-5	4,500
Education reform information and advocacy projects – beginning year 2	2,000
Program management for new activities	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>18,500</u></b>

#### Alternative Higher Budget

Add teacher education improvement projects – 1 per country	6,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,500</b>

#### Alternative Lower Budget

Reduce replication target to 30 clusters	(2,000)
Reduce education reform initiatives	(1,500)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,000</b>