Youth and Community Development in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan

Timothy K. Kock

M. Craig Edwards, Ph.D.
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University
445 Agricultural Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-6032
Tel. #: 405.744.8143
FAX #: 405.744.5176
Email: tworustyspurs@yahoo.com
Email: tim.kock@okstate.edu

Abstract

As Kyrgyzstan recovers from collapse of the Soviet Union, its youth face troubling times. The nation needs to invest in its’ rural youth, not just its’ urban youth, through educational opportunities and centers that foster youth–adult partnerships (Gregoire, 2004). Youth centers hold the potential to promote social development at the grassroots level.

Before USAID monies would be spent to develop a Community Youth Center (CYC) in Kyzyl Kiya, KG, four issues had to be addressed: 1) community members needed to learn to work together as a team; 2) the Center’s purpose (i.e., its vision and mission statement) needed to be written; 3) development of an organizational hierarchy; and, 4) creation of a set of working by-laws. This poster describes the facilitation of these events and its’ outcome.

The local community provided 25 youth and adults who expressed interest in developing a CYC. A team-building, “process approach” (Earle, 2005) was used to build the skills needed to design a working infrastructure for the CYC. After consensus building and numerous revisions, the participants voted to combine the vision and mission statements into one statement: “This youth center was established to help develop youth to be qualified and competent citizens of Kyrgyzstan through information, education and the promotion of healthy living.” Next, participants worked through voting issues, length of board members’ terms and duties.

Participants gained the social-cultural tools necessary to become vital and contributing voices in their communities. The process described may help international development personnel design programs that further the “democratic process” and help others achieve social change and community improvement. However, the ultimate question is whether revitalized youth centers can create sustainable social cohesion and human capacity throughout Kyrgyzstan and the broader region (Silova, Johnson, & Heyneman, 2007). More research is needed to address that issue, including a follow-up evaluation of the Kyzyl Kiya community’s experience.

Keywords: Community Development, Kyrgyzstan, Youth-Adult Partnerships