

Governance, Social Development, Conflict and Humanitarian PEAKS Consortium led by Coffey International Development

# Country Report: Kyrgyzstan ©

Independent Evaluation

Central Asia Regional Migration Programme (CARMP)

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SPECIALISTS IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES



# Country Report: Kyrgyzstan ©

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# **COUNTRY REPORT KYRGYZSTAN**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS .....	6
1.1	Relevance and quality of design.....	6
1.2	Efficiency of implementation to date .....	7
1.2.1	Management and coordination.....	7
1.2.2	Internal monitoring of progress.....	7
1.2.3	Level of involvement and sense of ownership of CARMP by local implementing partners.....	8
1.2.4	Value for money .....	8
1.2.5	Quality of selected indicators of achievement .....	8
1.2.6	CARMP visibility and dissemination of outputs.....	8
1.3	Effectiveness to date and impact prospects .....	9
1.3.1	Program effectiveness related to individual Outputs.....	9
1.4	Impact.....	16
1.4.1	Design and coordination .....	16
1.4.2	Inter-linkages .....	16
1.4.3	Policies for managing labour migration: .....	16
1.4.4	Knowledge base.....	17
1.4.5	Labour migrants and their families benefit from a broader range of services .....	17
1.5	Potential sustainability .....	17
1.5.1	Financial sustainability.....	17
1.5.2	Institutional sustainability .....	18
1.6	Broader impact.....	18
1.7	Coherence and cooperation.....	18
2	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	19
2.1	CONCLUSIONS .....	19
2.1.1	Design and assumptions.....	19
2.1.2	Efficiency of implementation .....	20
2.1.3	Effectiveness of activities.....	20
2.1.4	Impact of the programme.....	21
2.2	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	21
2.2.1	Relevance and quality of design.....	21
2.2.2	Efficiency of implementation .....	22
2.2.3	Effectiveness of the Programme .....	22
2.2.4	Impact.....	23
	Annex - List of organisations consulted in Kyrgyzstan.....	25

**Project title:** Central Asia Regional Migration Program (CARMP)  
**Funding institutions:** DFID (main donor), with IOM, UN Women, World Bank  
**Implementing partners:** IOM, UN Women, World Bank  
**Period of implementation:** 12 March 2010 – 28 February 2013  
**Country mission period:** 2-5 November 2012  
**Evaluation team members in the country:** Anna Lucia Colleo

Following a review of relevant available documents, the independent evaluation team visited the CARMP beneficiary countries and met with a wide range of stakeholders, including CARMP teams, representatives of government structures, civil society actors, migrants and their families, and implementing partners<sup>1</sup>. The country mission agenda included inception and wrap-up meetings with the CARMP country teams. The main aim of the country missions was to observe and collect first-hand accounts/views, ensure a transparent evaluation process, and encourage ownership of the findings of the review. In addition, tailored questionnaires were prepared and exchanged by email with individual CARMP regional and national coordinators. Individual experts have helped to place the programme and its achievements in the broader context of political evolutions and socio-economic trends. Following the country missions, individual country reports were shared with DFID and CARMP teams for review and feedback. A final report was then prepared on the basis of the comments and reviewed country reports.

## 1 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

### 1.1 Relevance and quality of design

The CARMP programme design was the outcome of a three-month inception period, initiated and coordinated by DFID. CARMP brought together three well-established leading international organisations with different mandates in the region, to work on a joint, complex programme. In Kyrgyzstan, as in the other countries, the programme works at three different levels: individual migrants and their families at the grass roots level; governments, employers and civil society at the national level; and at the bilateral or regional level through inter-governmental bodies such as EURASEC and network communities such as MIRPAL.

Initial assumptions for Kyrgyzstan were largely confirmed. The economic crisis has not significantly altered labour migration flows from Kyrgyzstan into Russia and Kazakhstan, and the high unemployment rates suggest that migration trends will not contract in the short-term. Remittances to Kyrgyzstan dropped in 2009 and 2010, but started to increase again in 2011 accounting for almost 30 per cent of GDP in that year. The theory of change, risks and assumptions initially made remained relevant, with the level of commitment within the national government varying depending on the changes in the country's institutional setting, and attribution of competences on labour migration, as well as the high turnover of staff.

The identification and selection of beneficiaries was also appropriate, with a clear focus on potential migrants and migrants' families, including vulnerable households, mostly headed by women. The beneficiaries' needs were indirectly addressed by supporting institutional dialogue and policy development; and more directly through the establishment of the public Centre for Employment Abroad in Bishkek, which provides pre-departure orientation services, as well as by fostering the economic empowerment of families of migrants in rural areas. Targeting woman-headed households was found to be an appropriate means to

<sup>1</sup> A list of organisations consulted during the country mission in the Kyrgyz Republic can be found in Annex.

contribute towards the reduction of poverty in Kyrgyzstan. With men more prone to migrate abroad (although female emigration is allegedly on the increase), the most stable adult population in the country is represented by women. In future the specific needs of female labour migrants should be considered more distinctly. Additionally, a clearer distinction could be made between labour migrants working in regular or irregular situations, as they are different groups with distinct needs at both the policy and service levels.

## 1.2 Efficiency of implementation to date

### 1.2.1 Management and coordination

The overall management and monitoring requirements by DFID were clear, as were the management and coordination mechanisms within, and among, implementing agencies. Inter-agency coordination at the country level was positive between IOM and UN Women, possibly facilitated by the sharing of the same office space. On the contrary, initial coordination between the World Bank and the other partners was not ideal because not only did World Bank activities start later, but the World Bank's Logical Framework and Activities Log, as well as contractual arrangements, were developed separately from those of IOM and UN Women. The situation improved when the Migration and Remittance Peer-Assisted Learning Network (MIRPAL) restarted its meetings and offered partners a common ground to collaborate. Both IOM and UN Women became MIRPAL members, and contributed to the identification of issues for discussion during its videoconferences.

CARMP has offered a valuable opportunity to three leading international organisations on labour migration in Central Asia to gain a more concrete understanding of the benefits of joint implementation as opposed to managing separate programmes/projects. Despite the fact that the initially prevailing attitudes of CARMP partners was to implement their own set of activities more or less autonomously, and that this did not transform over a 3-year period into a fully 'joint' initiative, the programme has nevertheless moved forward in this direction and enhanced collaboration between the three agencies.

CARMP local implementing partners have worked in the same sectors for years. However, most of them report that joining CARMP has reinforced their capacity in different ways. Firstly, they point to the training they received in planning, monitoring and evaluation methods. Secondly, as a consequence of the fact that CARMP agencies (UN Women in particular) solicited local partners to act as full partners rather than executive sub-contractors, their views on the fine-tuning of activities and action plans were concretely taken into consideration. Lastly, the programme facilitated networking among civil society organizations at the regional level, with study tours and country visits supporting mutual learning and the establishment of bottom-up networks.

### 1.2.2 Internal monitoring of progress

DFID's close monitoring of the programme allowed for an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that occurred during the programme's implementation and allowed for a good degree of flexibility, thereby steering the programme towards expected results (for example by adjusting financial management to promote programme effectiveness). CARMP partners responded well to DFID recommendations and overall this was an important contribution towards meeting and exceeding the programme's target results despite political turmoil and changes in the country's institutional structure.

### **1.2.3 Level of involvement and sense of ownership of CARMP by local implementing partners**

The level of involvement of implementing partners in the programme is heterogeneous but in general, implementing organizations and beneficiaries demonstrated their ownership of CARMP. Participation of local implementing partners in the monitoring of achievements has encouraged CSOs to contribute to programme implementation choices, feeding their sense of ownership and responsibility for CARMP.

### **1.2.4 Value for money**

The evaluation did not conduct a thorough economic assessment of the programme. The knowledge base available did not allow to assess the programme's Value for Money (VfM) against the two main indicators of achievement identified to measure quantifiable economic benefits, i.e. a decrease in the proportion of migrants who have chosen to migrate and work through unregulated channels, and an increase in remittances per migrant. All local implementing partners were contributing to the implementation of planned activities in complementarity with other initiatives and projects. In particular, the NGO supporting UN Women successfully attracted extra-CARMP support to deliver specialised training sessions and obtain technical support in the launching of new economic initiatives.

### **1.2.5 Quality of selected indicators of achievement**

Assumptions in the intervention logic were ambitious for a single three-year programme, for instance, assuming that the project would result in transforming the migration process from an irregular to a regularised one. Such assumptions also were reflected in the selection of indicators to measure the programme's impact. The definitions of indicators and milestones to monitor progress at the operational level were well developed and appropriate. However, there was room for improvement in the quality of indicators selected to measure changes brought about by the programme, as in the case of the mentioned indicators on value for money, or indicators assuming that the programme would make families more capable of channelling remittances in a productive way.<sup>2</sup> In the future, coherence between selected indicators and the available evidence base should be ensured during the design phase. Moreover, selected indicators should be relevant to isolate the effects of a specific programme.

### **1.2.6 CARMP visibility and dissemination of outputs**

Institutional and civil society stakeholders met during the evaluation mission almost invariably attributed CARMP to the institution that served as their main counterpart. Only occasionally were they aware of the role of the other partners in the programme or the progress of activities in which they were not directly involved. The turnover of government officials was high and may have played a role in this regard, as may have the frequent changes in the allocation of institutional competences on labour migration within State structures. Whatever the reasons, a logo (with the exception of a common slogan), a website and a depository of the programme's analytical products and reports were missing, thus limiting the accessibility and dissemination of CARMP analytical outputs and information.

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<sup>2</sup> According to annual household surveys conducted on the beneficiaries of Output 4, 83% of families with relatives abroad are recipients of remittances. However, these are received on an irregular basis, and contribute half of the family budget, on average. For vulnerable households, as CARMP beneficiaries are, remittances are insufficient to cover basic consumption needs, making surplus for economic investments a non-existing option.

The main visibility issue regarding CARMP, however, did not concern the visibility of individual actions or the dissemination of individual outputs, but rather its recognition as a comprehensive programme. In addition to the above-mentioned limitations in identity and tools, the evaluation noted that partners did not always emphasise that they were acting as representatives of CARMP. Limited action in this regard has likely hampered understanding of CARMP as a consistent programme rather than an umbrella initiative bringing together different organisations. CARMP stakeholders were not in a position to identify or solicit synergies between different programme components or to fully understand the added value of CARMP, and will likely not be ready to identify in future as a concrete experience of inter-donor coordination.

## 1.3 Effectiveness to date and impact prospects

Political instability in Kyrgyzstan and a complicated division of responsibilities between various Ministries persisted throughout the implementation period, causing delays in policy related discussions and interventions. In April 2010, political unrest resulted in the replacement of key Kyrgyz government officials, including CARMP's main governmental partners. The competence on labour migration was split between the Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Labour was responsible for pre-departure orientation and training, vocational training, and employment overseas, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealt with transnational agreements to regulate labour migration and the protection of Kyrgyz citizens abroad.

The main institutional counterpart of the programme until the spring of 2010 was the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration (MOLEM). However, since the beginning of 2012 CARMP cooperated closely with the two main agencies now responsible for migration management: Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment (Pre-Departure Stage) and the Department for External Migration under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Migration Stage).

### 1.3.1 Program effectiveness related to individual Outputs

#### **Output 1 – Policies for managing labour migration are evidence-based and effectively implemented**

*Output Indicator 1.1:* Number and proportion of government officials (by gender) that are working on data-collection report that they are able to interpret and use migration data on a regular basis 6 months after the training.

*Milestone (IOM and UN Women):* Kyrgyz Republic 30 (12 women)

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic 94 (45 women). *Proportion:* 65%

*Milestone (WB):* A migration module is mainstreamed into Household Surveys in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.

*Achievements:* Migration modules were mainstreamed in Household Surveys in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, and will be piloted in the first half of 2013.

*Output Indicator 1.2:* Policies and legal frameworks on labour migration changed in the four countries.

*Milestone (IOM, UN Women and WB):* Number of policies and legal frameworks on labour migration that include the protection of migrants' rights in four countries: Kyrgyz Republic 5.

*Achievements:* N/A

*Output Indicator 1.3.* Number and proportion of state officials (by gender) responsible for developing and implementing policies in the four countries trained on gender, migration and poverty, and who report that they are using the training knowledge in their daily jobs.

*Milestone (IOM and UN Women).* Numbers of trained state officials who report that they are using the training knowledge in their daily jobs 6 months later: Kyrgyz Republic 60 (40 women)

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic 44 (24 women). *Proportion:* 78%

*Milestone (WB):* No. of high-level government officials trained in gender, migration and poverty, who report that they are using the training knowledge in their daily jobs 3 months later. Kyrgyz Republic 20 (5 women).

*Proportion:* 30%.

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic n/a

### **Effectiveness of IOM and UN Women components**

In response to the need for ensuring the availability of migration data collected in Kyrgyzstan, IOM, supported by UN Women's gender expertise, worked on the establishment of a migration database with the State Registration Agency and a mechanism for sharing data with relevant state agencies. Training sessions were provided on data collection, analysis and sharing. However, since the actual establishment of a migration database at the Ministry of Labour was made impossible by the changes in the government structure, an IOM Migration Profile (MP) of Kyrgyzstan was developed instead, adapting the standard IOM template to the Kyrgyz context. The functionality of MPs was more limited than the originally foreseen database, as MPs only provide a static photograph of migration data. Nevertheless, the MP's mechanism for collecting and sharing gender-disaggregated migration data was adopted by the government, enabling some degree of sustainability.

Overall, CARMP managed to offer a continuous platform for institutional dialogue on labour migration despite political turbulence and institutional changes. In the words of a senior official at the Ministry of Labour, "CARMP preserved the institutional memory of policy developments on labour migration, offering key support to senior officers who were moved from one structure to another, and training new staff".

CARMP worked with relevant agencies and ministries in charge of migration policy and migration regulations in a very uncertain environment, as there were several significant structural changes in Kyrgyzstan's government over the last three years. The regular contacts, information exchanges and work coordination with government structures contributed to the maintenance of focus on labour migration throughout this period. Some interviewees suggested that CARMP was also quite effective in helping to change public and state attitudes towards migration from shifting the focus away from brain drain and towards a better understanding of the complexity of inter-linkages of labour migration with country development prospects, and the need to support labour migrants.

The Migration Coordination Meetings organized by IOM under the framework of CARMP were allegedly the only platform within the country that gathered institutional stakeholders together and maintained a line of dialogue and exchanges with civil society and international organizations on migration. One of the outcomes of the latest Migration Coordination Meetings has been to coordinate international organisations' efforts in assisting the Government in producing the 2020 Migration Management Strategy.

CARMP was supported MOLEM in 2010 to develop the Road Map for Decent Employment. Expertise provided by CARMP teams of staff and experts were allegedly widely used in other policy discussions concerning labour migration. Supported by CARMP, the Road Map approach was reflected in the efforts to develop a methodology for forecasting the country's labour needs in relation to its development prospects. In Kyrgyzstan, where the entire institutional set up was affected by an extended period of political turmoil and the institutional competence on labour migration reassigned recently to a new structure, this was an indication that CARMP was doing well in supporting the maintenance of a coherent policy. Forecasting

labour needs requires the availability of accurate data on population trends and labour forces, and data availability remains a standing need in the country.

Support to the Department for External Migration under the MFA, which had no background experience in migration issues, centred around three lines of work: 1) the negotiation of bilateral agreements regulating labour rights with the main countries of destination of Kyrgyz workers; 2) support to develop the Migration Management Strategy until 2020; and 3) analytical contributions to the discussion on the attribution of institutional responsibilities on labour migration, which the programme has strongly advocated for merging competences on labour migration under the same Ministry. This was mirrored in a new Government decision in December 2012.

CARMP also organised regular expert group meetings with the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Policy, which is the parliamentary group responsible for migration issues, by organising technical seminars/ round tables on the management of labour migration and the migration-development nexus, as well as the provision of training sessions on specific migration and remittances topics.

### **Effectiveness of the WB component**

The WB has been working closely with the Kyrgyz parliament to put migration back on the country's development agenda by contributing high-level technical expertise in support of the development of migration strategies and by reinforcing the statistical knowledge base. At the Government's request, the WB provided technical assistance on the Migration Management Strategy 2020 as well as an action plan for its implementation for the period 2013-2015, which is now awaiting formal approval. In addition, the WB also supported a review of the private employment framework in Kyrgyzstan and the development of mechanisms for migrants' social insurance.

To maintain close collaboration with the authorities and to facilitate migration policy dialogue, the head of the Centre for Employment Abroad was appointed as MIRPAL's National Coordinator. In June 2012, the Kyrgyz Republic initiated a MIRPAL video-conference devoted to forecasting remittances, which initiated further work on the harmonisation of the collection and availability of data on remittances across CIS countries.

In the framework of MIRPAL, the WB coordinated discussions about the development of an Integrated System of Household Surveys to Collect Data on International Migration in the CIS States with the aim of improving the country's capacity to collect and disseminate data on labour migrants and the effects on households. This will be piloted in the first half of 2013.

### **Output 2 – Improved regional partnerships, dialogue and coordination on selected migration issues between sending and receiving countries (target indicators refer to all four CARMP countries)**

*Output Indicator 2.1 (IOM and UN Women):* Number of regional templates (including EURASEC) used by the national governments to change the domestic laws and regulations, and bilateral agreements.

*Milestone:* At least 1 template (agreement on organised recruitment) adopted at regional level is in the process of being adopted at national level.

*Achievement:* N/A

*Output Indicator 2.1 (WB):* Number of people that report that they have used knowledge shared through the MIRPAL network 3 months after participation in MIRPAL event.

*Milestone:* 100 people (20 women)

*Achievement:* 50 (26 women)

*Output Indicator 2.2 (WB):* Number of regional and national policy documents (agreements, strategies, action plans) that use policy recommendations from flagship research and policy analysis notes.

*Milestone:* At least 1 regional agreement and 2 policy documents on selected migration issues in each participating country that use policy recommendations from flagship research and policy analysis notes.

### **Effectiveness of regional activities in Output 2**

- The CARMP approach has been to work regionally, linking destination and receiving countries with pilot interventions on: improved recruitment practices and other services to migrants throughout the migration process; pre-departure training to migrants; and better and eased access to basic social services by labour migrants in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.
- MIRPAL, a regional knowledge platform managed by the WB involving practitioners in nine countries, including the four CARMP countries, played a role in support of policy dialogue by facilitating exchanges and reinforcing a common knowledge base. In 2011-2012, MIRPAL prepared two reports, one on the role of diaspora in the development of origin countries and a second on the use of migration modules in national household surveys (which have now been introduced in Kyrgyzstan as well as in Tajikistan).
- The programme cooperated strongly with EURASEC via the establishment of a working group on labour migration. Members included IOM, UN Women, and Migration Services from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus (because of the latter's participation in the Customs Union).
- CARMP supported the drafting and finalisation of several model laws and regulations now used by EURASEC member states: bilateral agreements on organised recruitment, including between Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; an agreement on the legal status of labour migrants and members of their families for Customs Union states; and an agreement on social protection of migrant workers.
- Within the programme, policy discussions at EURASEC benefitted from analytical work and expert discussions that had taken place within MIRPAL. Unfortunately, the fact that members of the EURASEC working group were also mostly members of MIRPAL did not avoid duplication of background work on the same topics (pre-departure orientation, organised recruitment, migrants' access to education and medical assistance). It should be noted that Government stakeholders considered EURASEC not to be a crucial player in promoting regional agreements, referring especially to the coming into force in 2012 of the Customs Union's agreements on free movement of workers.
- CARMP's efforts have led to encouraging signs that the networking capacity of migrant support organisations in the country have improved. CSOs unanimously reported that they had established collaboration lines enabling them to refer individual cases to their partners in other countries.

### **Effectiveness of IOM and UN Women components**

- In addition to preparing technical notes for the Government preparation for its participation in the EURASEC working group on labour migration, the main focus in Output 2 has been to facilitate bilateral dialogue and agreements, which led to signing the bilateral agreement with Russia on organised recruitment and the agreement with Kazakhstan establishing a 90-day non-registration regime for Kyrgyz citizens in Kazakhstan. Moreover, members agreed to work on the implementation mechanism of labour migration schemes based on quotas.
- CARMP also promoted exchanges between the Kyrgyz and the Tajik Governments to discuss harmonised country strategies in negotiating with Russian authorities conditions for their respective citizens in Russia.
- UN Women organised a regional conference of ombudsmen from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia to discuss access to effective legal remedies for migrant workers and their families.

### **Effectiveness of the WB component**

- In September 2012 a MIRPAL conference on the role of remittances was hosted by Kyrgyzstan in Cholpon-Ata, organised jointly by the World Bank and the Bank of Russia. As a result of the conference the participants representing government agencies, national banks and statistical services from MIRPAL countries identified the major gaps in statistical methodologies and agreed on a work plan to harmonise statistics on remittances.
- Two analytical digests covering labour migration issues in Kyrgyzstan were finalized under MIRPAL in 2011-2012: "Strengthening infrastructure and creation of support services system in labour migration based on Private-public partnership" and "Protecting social and labour rights of migration in the CIS countries". A separate analytical paper on labour migrants' social insurance coverage was delivered in November 2012 and served as a key report for discussion at the November MIRPAL conference. In addition, as noted above, a regional report was delivered in 2012 which led to the integration of migration modules in Household Surveys, to be piloted in 2013.
- Individual experts noted that the impact of analytical materials could have been enhanced if they were circulated more widely across the country. The programme included local universities as recipients of its e-bulletins, but the absence of a depository of analytical outputs limited their dissemination and CARMP's contribution to the local research base.

### **Output 3 – Targeted labour migrants and their families benefit from broader range of gender sensitive services provided throughout the migration cycle**

*Output Indicator 3.1:* Number of labour migrants (by gender) who are provided with specific advice (legal, health, social protection) in Information Centres run by the programme.

*Milestone:* Kyrgyz Republic 45,000 (13,500 women)

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic 314,336 (information on share of female beneficiaries is not available); the Centre for Employment Abroad provided services to 165,525 (28,716 women)

*Output Indicator 3.2:* Number of women and men reached by publicity campaigns about employment opportunities and migrant related services available

*Milestone:* Kyrgyz Republic 5,000

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic 5,992,769. The percentage of women cannot be calculated for radio, TV and video broadcasting campaigns.

*Output Indicator 3.3:* Percentage (by gender) of labour migrants applied to the Information Centres who are satisfied with the services received

*Milestone:* Kyrgyz Republic 80%

*Achievements:* Kyrgyz Republic 85%

### **Effectiveness of activities (IOM and UN Women)**

- The significant changes recommended in the 2011 Annual Review to increase the scope, value for money and coverage of beneficiary migrants in the programme were implemented and met target milestones.
- CARMP support was decisive in establishing and operationalising the Centre for Employment Abroad in Bishkek, which has rapidly become a model public service provider for labour migrants. Despite delays related to the consequences of the country's unrest, ethnic clashes and the overthrow of the Government in 2010, the centre was inaugurated during the spring of 2012. The programme supported renovation of a Government building and provided furniture and equipment; provided training to the Centre's staff on gender-sensitive services to labour migrants; and contributed to pre-departure and orientation materials including videos, and to the development of minimum standards in new operational

procedures. CARMP also supported the design and launch of a job vacancies database and facilitated interactions with Public Employment Agencies (PEAs) in Russia.

- The establishment of the Centre for Employment Abroad was regarded as a major outcome of CARMP in Kyrgyzstan. With the opening of the centre Kyrgyzstan has a state agency working on regulated labour migration. The Government has full ownership of the centre and financially supports it through staff salaries, while current CARMP contributions are being complemented by a South Korean recruitment scheme. The Government was committed to continuing support to the centre in the future, and had already requested other donors' support to assist in the establishment of more centres for employment abroad in other provinces.
- According to staff interviewed, the Centre was visited and praised by the Russian Federal Migration Service, a factor that has facilitated bilateral agreements to regulate labour migration with Russia. Moreover, IOM facilitated a visit by PEAs from Russia, as the Centre serves as a service provider to labour migrants as well as a focal point for other relevant actors such as PEAs, local NGOs, Migrant Resource Centres abroad, and diasporas.
- The Centre cooperated with CARMP NGOs to disseminate information on its services and on the advantages of receiving pre-departure support, by the centre or by PEAs, to find regular and protected employment abroad.
- A total of 10 NGOs joined CARMP to conduct information campaigns (i.e. producing booklets, brochures, leaflets, information seminars, TV broadcasts, and conducting seminars in secondary schools). According to the NGOs involved, information materials reached 70,000 people, although none of the experts or migrants interviewed by the evaluation team were reached by these information campaigns. Information sessions were also conducted in high schools for senior graduating students using role-playing games, and in campaigns broadcast on national TV in 2011.
- The number of target beneficiaries in information campaigns exceeded target milestones. More stable and less ad hoc dissemination channels should however be sought in the future.
- Ways to improve outreach and cost-effectiveness include a more thorough exploration of synergies with UN Women partners. To some extent synergies were already exploited, with the UN Women partner – Community Development Alliance – proposing IOM MSCs to provide mobile information campaigns in villages targeted by CDA. However, there is more potential for synergies, including the valorisation of Self-Help Group members as partners in information campaigns. SHG members claimed that the services provided by local employment centres were inadequate and that the network of SHGs should be a relevant information channel in rural areas, with more potential than a simple depository of leaflets, as was the case in CARMP. The recognition that they gained among their communities has made SHG leaders suitable ambassadors for migration campaigns, especially as most of the population who leave the country in an unstructured way come from rural areas.

#### **Output 4 – Families of target labour migrants in the sending countries enhance their skills and knowledge to improve their livelihoods**

*Output Indicator 4.1:* Number of families assisted by the project who gained access to services allowing to improve their livelihoods in identified villages in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

*Milestone:* 3,500 families in total

*Achievements:* 545 Self Help Groups in Kyrgyzstan, involving 3,358 families; 92% of SHGs members are women.

*Output Indicator 4.2:* Number of families of labour migrants assisted by the project who undertook economic initiatives in identified villages in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

*Milestone:* 800 targeted families of labour migrants

*Achievements:* In Kyrgyzstan, 303 beneficiary households opened a new business (17% of total beneficiaries), and 324 expanded an existing business (18.2% of total beneficiaries). More generally, 85.5% of SHG members in 2012 were engaged in income-generating and entrepreneurial activities in 2012; before CARMP, the rate for the same beneficiaries was 18.1%.

### **Effectiveness of activities (UN Women)**

- Beneficiaries were identified amongst the poor and poorest families with relatives working abroad. CARMP assisted as many as 3,358 families in 52 target villages (17 districts) located in seven oblasts (Batken, Osh, Jalalabad, Issyk Kul, Talas Chuy, and Naryn).
- The review verified that the families of labour migrants targeted by the programme had seen their economic and social status improved and poverty levels reduced. An evidence-based assessment referred to the results of annual surveys monitoring the socio-economic profile of CARMP beneficiary households: the average employment rate of beneficiaries rose from 2.8% in 2011 to 7.2% in 2012; the proportion of poorest families among the beneficiaries fell from 7.5% in 2011 to 1.3% in 2012; the proportion of beneficiaries conducting their own income-generating activities increased by 2.8%; and some 17% opened new businesses in 2012, with 18.2% expanding their existing businesses.
- Self-sufficiency and future sustainability were supported through the establishment of financial tools and financial skills training for SHG members. These include the establishment of a Community Fund (CF) for each SHG, which operated as a revolving fund to support the economic initiatives of SHGs' members. As many as 1,820 SHG members were provided with funds and seeds from 52 CFs. By using CFs CARMP beneficiaries promoted and co-funded seven different social infrastructures at village level.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in April 2011 a network of CFs registered a national structure, the 'Agency of Development Initiatives' (ADI). ADI negotiates the purchase of seeds on the national market and covers costs for needed expertise. To date, it has accumulated the equivalent of \$64,000 and spent some \$62,000 to purchase seeds for SHG members.
- In order to ensure complementarities and needed technical expertise, partnerships with other agencies and projects were actively sought, resulting in concrete cooperation.<sup>4</sup>
- Training focused both on practical skills such as land cultivation, vegetable and fruit processing, handicrafts, combing cotton and marketing strategies (which beneficiaries reported they use in their everyday lives and have resulted in increases in family incomes) and in improvements in accounting, business development and planning, and making grant applications. The results were visible: 14 grant applications were submitted by members of SHGs and eight economic projects were selected for co-financing (they had not started at the time of this evaluation).
- Twelve villages located in the southern oblasts of Osh and Jalal Abad received legal assistance from the Women Entrepreneurs Support Association (WESA) (a UN Women partner in another project)

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<sup>3</sup> A medical centre serving 960 rural people in Kaurma (Chui). Pre-school education for 58 children in Otyz Adyr, also creating jobs for 12 teachers and nurses, for 147 children in Zhashasyn (Jalalabad), and 40 children in Baltabay (Issyk Kul). Instalment of heating systems in primary schools, improving access to school education in the winter period for 1175 children in Ogombaev (Talas), and 210 children in Kulanak (Naryn). CARMP contributions covered approximately 20% of the total grant amounts, while CFs and local governments covered up to 60% (the remaining was complemented by UN Women core resources).

■ <sup>4</sup> The WB funded the Agricultural Productivity Assistance Project under the Ministry of Agriculture, providing agricultural consultations and quality seeds to SHGs; 4;4 GIZ business development training; USAID support to 200 women to develop and implement small-scale agriculture; CEEBA and the NGO BIOM, provided training on the installation and use of energy-saving technologies for domestic and business use; and the Legal and Business Development Foundation assisted CFs to develop and negotiate the conditions of land use, to reduce the risks involved in the implementation of the economic initiatives. Furthermore, the Association of the Kyrgyz Diaspora supported a confectionery/bakery shop, the pharmaceutical company Galenfarm purchased medical herbs from 36 members of SHGs in Issyk-Kul, and 200 more farmers were trained on medical herbs' cultivation. The mapping of credit service providers suitable for linking with SHGs resulted in an agreement signed with the Eco Islamic Bank, which issued loans to nine members of SHGs.

without financial support from CARMP. Cases mostly concerned unregistered births and marriages, which expose women and children to abuse and increased vulnerability for example when their spouses divorce them after a period abroad.

- It is worth noting that migrant families met by the evaluation team tended to agree that female labour migration was a growing phenomenon. According to CDA's annual survey, 30% of migrant workers in 2012 were women.

## 1.4 Impact

### 1.4.1 Design and coordination

- Overall, the implementation of CARMP has been a successful learning experience, with the programme effectively achieving its specific objectives. Its partners have gained a richer understanding of how policy and delivery of services could be mutually reinforcing and serve the common goal of benefitting migrants and their families.
- Less attention was paid to the issue of how these agencies would work together to deliver the programme jointly as opposed to implementing individual action plans. This was now clearer and can be counted as an important achievement of CARMP. The programme has brought together key international players in Central Asia to complete an ambitious programme of activities and has also provided a precious platform for collaboration, which is already easing the identification of areas for improvement.
- The programme tried to cover many aspects of labour migration, engaging at a range of levels. CARMP covered high-level policy dialogue, delivery of services to migrants, and grassroots anti-poverty activities. All these areas provided relevant examples of good practices under the programme, but there were limited strategic connections between them. In the opinion of the evaluator, at programme level this has likely resulted in more focus given to the implementation of activities and less to the building of the programme's strategic dimension.

### 1.4.2 Inter-linkages

- Objectives were well designed but again, could have benefited more from inter-linkages. Synergies between IOM and UN Women could be exploited further. More efforts should be put into reinforcing the outreach of their respective activities by identifying existing synergies, starting from targeting the other agency's beneficiaries and enhancing cooperation between their respective implementing partners. Only on limited occasions did IOM and UN Women engage in joint campaigning, and only to make information materials available in rural areas where SHGs operate

### 1.4.3 Policies for managing labour migration

- Constant policy dialogue with the authorities, from high to more operational levels, allowed for hands-on assistance in the development of policy strategies, action plans and policy recommendations, which according to some government representatives resulted in keeping labour migration in the Government agenda.
- Improvements were also noted in support for bilateral agreements and regulations oriented toward better protection of migrants' rights. As an example, CARMP played an important technical role in

facilitating consultations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan that led to a bilateral agreement extending the non-registration period for Kyrgyz migrants in Kazakhstan to 90 days before they became illegal residents. In the discussions that led to the introduction of a patent system in Kazakhstan, CARMP not only facilitated meetings and country visits with Russian counterparts, to present the patent system in Russia, but also contributed with background information for country institutions, which facilitated and informed discussions.

#### 1.4.4 Knowledge base

- Peer learning within MIRPAL proved to be very effective and brought long-lasting results, including the establishment of working groups on labour migration and remittance data to work systematically on the improvement of the statistical evidence base.
- An important example of CARMP's contribution to strengthening the statistical knowledge base was the commitment of national banks through MIRPAL to work jointly on harmonising remittance statistics. Similarly, the development of migration modules integrated into household surveys was an important achievement for improving knowledge of migrant workers and the effects at household level, thereby supporting evidence-based policy-making.

#### 1.4.5 Labour migrants and their families benefit from a broader range of services

- The outreach and effectiveness of services from MSCs, all of which pre-dated CARMP, have clearly improved.
- Although relatively small scale, good practice was achieved and included the experience with the Centre for Employment Abroad in Bishkek and work with SHGs in rural communities. The quality of methods and results achieved was a good basis to replicate them in other areas as well and expand outreach.

## 1.5 Potential sustainability

### 1.5.1 Financial sustainability

- The financial sustainability of the Centre for Employment Abroad, a main achievement of CARMP in Kyrgyzstan, seemed solid, with the MYLE ensuring financial coverage for the continuation of services by the Centre and allegedly seeking additional funds to extend the experience to provinces outside the capital city.
- At the operational level only a few of the CARMP implementing partners encountered during field visits had outlined a clear strategy for future financial sustainability of the services currently provided to potential migrants. MSCs in different countries mentioned that as at the time of interview they saw little possibility of continuing the level of services in place, their risking losing the trust they had built among migrant communities.

### 1.5.2 Institutional sustainability

- Institutional sustainability is closely related to the internal capacity and competence of government structures. IOM and the World Bank under the framework of CARMP clearly contributed to the maintenance of institutional capacity on labour migration in Kyrgyzstan by investing in building the capacity of new staff and by offering a platform for migration policy dialogue over the last few politically turbulent years.
- Institutional sustainability was confirmed in the case of one of the main outcomes of the programme, i.e. the establishment of the Centre for Employment Abroad. The institutional sustainability of the Centre was undisputed, and according to the centre's director, the Government was also committed to supporting it financially, and to opening similar centres in the southern provinces, for which it is seeking donor support.
- Local implementing partners recognised that CARMP had improved its institutional capacity to deal with migration issues and to provide services to migrants and their families. All of them implied having gained a deeper understanding of the relevance of migration for the people involved and for the country's future prospects, and intended to include migrants as a regular target group of their activities.,
- The work with SHGs had made their members more capable of engaging in sustainable income generating activities. Moreover, different CARMP initiatives also ensured that in 2013 and 2014 all CFs would get seeds on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in February 2012 between the Agri-Business Competitiveness Centre and UN Women defining grounds for further cooperation on implementation of the WB funded project "Agricultural Productivity Assistance Project" on assisting CARMP SHGs.

## 1.6 Broader impact

- The management and monitoring provisions of CARMP (i.e. its planning and reporting tools) and the programme's attention to ensuring value for money resulted in unplanned results, including more networking and cooperation among partners and service providers, and the identification of synergies between CARMP and other programmes.
- CARMP implementing partners had worked in the same sectors for years. For some, namely UN Women partners in Output 4, joining CARMP reinforced their capacity in different ways. The planning and monitoring tools of the programme became regular management methods. They developed a much better understanding of the relevance of the migration phenomenon in their area of work. Also, requests they received from CARMP to provide inputs into the fine-tuning of action plans and to engage in policy dialogue strengthened their confidence and capacity to be more proactive in public life.

## 1.7 Coherence and cooperation

- CARMP's cooperation activities were implemented at different levels: with other interventions by the partners, with the governments, with other international agencies and donors, with civil society (e.g. NGOs, diasporas) and the private sector (employers), and with journalists and media partners.

- All CARMP partners mentioned cases in which programme resources were complemented by their core funds as part of the agreement on co-funding with DFID. Examples can be found in the effectiveness section for cooperation in UN Women work in Output 4 and IOM in Output 3.<sup>5</sup>
- Local partnerships promoted by CARMP were also in place with the ombudsman's office and with Kyrgyzstan's consular services in Russia and Kazakhstan.

## 2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1 CONCLUSIONS

#### 2.1.1 Design and assumptions

- The initial design assumptions were still valid, with labour migration from Kyrgyzstan into Russia and Kazakhstan likely to remain sustained for the coming years. Foreseeable, persistent challenges for the future include: the prevalence of unregulated migration, which is often conducive to irregular employment that is less stable and has lower wages, with a commensurate impact on remittance flows and lower benefits for vulnerable families in Kyrgyzstan; widespread abuses suffered by migrants, often associated with unregulated migration, especially for women and underage youth; limited institutional capacity due to staff turnover, particularly at the local level, coupled with political instability and frequent changes in the institutional set-up; and qualifications and vocational training curricula having limited alignment with the country's development prospects and labour market demands abroad.
- The regional approach was still valid. Kyrgyzstan is currently undergoing negotiations to enter the Customs Union, at a time when the CU is displaying its legislative and economic impact on labour migration in the region. Yet the development potential of migration in Kyrgyzstan was still insufficiently addressed by policy makers. Also, inadequate and ad hoc institutional and regulatory systems tended to undermine its benefits.
- The intervention logic was ambitious for a single three-year programme: The initial economic appraisal noted: *it is assumed that the project will result in transforming the migration process from an irregular to a regularised one....* More specific assumptions on remittances appeared to have been incorrect where they assumed remittances would be productively invested, while employment abroad for Kyrgyz citizens was largely irregular and often seasonal, and remittances were used for family consumption and not as a source of savings or investment.<sup>6</sup>
- The choice of partners was adequate. The mandate and comparative advantage of each partner was taken into account in the design phase. CARMP made it possible for leading international organisations in Central Asia, differing in operational arrangements, expertise and approaches, to gain a more

<sup>5</sup> There are different examples: the national conference on mixed migration flows IOM organised together with UNHCR and the Kyrgyz Government in 2011 to prepare the government for the Almaty process; the joint IOM and UN Women application to USAID Toward Inclusive Markets Everywhere (TIME) Annual Program Statement to seek support for the livelihoods of families of migrant workers in the rural areas of Kyrgyzstan by helping them to benefit from inclusive market environment activities in the agricultural and processing sectors; the UN Women agreement with the WB project specialised on agricultural development to provide seeds to SHGs running agribusiness; the partnerships established with microcredit schemes, diaspora organisations, business companies, GIZ and other development aid donors.

<sup>6</sup> The source of information are CDA annual surveys on beneficiary households in the framework of Output 4.

concrete understanding of the added value of joint implementation. This is a potentially strong added value for any future initiatives in this field.

- The identification of target groups was also generally appropriate but could have distinguished more clearly between labour migrants working in regular or irregular positions. Also, additional focus should have been accorded to female labour migrants, whose numbers are allegedly on the increase. Finally, the current focus on families with relatives working abroad as the target group for income generating activities appeared somewhat redundant, for the twofold reason that most vulnerable families in Kyrgyzstan do have relatives working abroad, and, more importantly because this might not be the most relevant connection between current work in Output 4 and the need to effectively address labour migration and poverty issues in the country. The degree of success of such activities should be regarded as a step in the right direction in terms of investing in the capacity and the confidence of local communities to work for their economic sustainability in their home countries, as an alternative to seeking employment opportunities abroad. Although still small scale in CARMP, an extension of coverage of such activities, targeting all vulnerable families, could in the long term become a solid side-investment to prevent unregulated labour emigration and reduce levels of poverty in the most deprived areas of the country.

### 2.1.2 Efficiency of implementation

- Despite a complex management structure, programme management was found to be efficient overall.
- Partners' coordination improved over the last programme period. Strategic guidance could have been stronger, but in the case of a programme bringing together three international organisations working together for the first time this cannot be expected to be the outcome of management and coordination arrangements. The issue of strategy needs be addressed in the design phase to build ownership and direction.
- Monitoring of progress and levels of expenditure was good for individual activities, based on a set of indicators and milestones. Monitoring of programme impact was more difficult, with some indicators of achievement being too high order or difficult to track with the available evidence or without specialised surveys.
- The involvement of local implementing partners in monitoring exercises has enhanced their value to the implementation of the programme and has improved the management capacity of at least some of the local partners. Some NGOs have introduced the use of activity logs and indicators in their regular programmes as they proved very effective in streamlining efforts and enhancing effectiveness.
- Communication was good in terms of public events and contacts with high-level policy makers and mid-level government structures. However, programme visibility as a comprehensive joint implementation initiative, as opposed to an umbrella initiative bringing together different organisations, appeared limited for both Government and civil society stakeholders. Communication channels were separate for each agency and the programme lacked a strong visual identity or a common depository of information and outputs produced, which in turn reduced their circulation and availability.

### 2.1.3 Effectiveness of activities

- CARMP was largely successful, with target indicators of activities mostly achieved and often exceeded.
- CARMP partners have made large investments in building the capacity of new structures and staff dealing with labour migration and in maintaining labour migration in the country's development agenda. However, the country's institutional context on labour migration remained a work in progress, with a very high turnover of staff, which in turn challenged the sustainability of training outcomes.

- Services provided by MSCs have allegedly improved in terms of type and quality. However, the level of involvement of implementing partners in the programme is heterogeneous. More investments should be made by CARMP agencies, in particular IOM, in capacity development to ensure consistent levels of service and increase sustainability of products and services after the end of CARMP in Kyrgyzstan.
- In areas with high emigration rates, the empowerment of members of the poorest households to improve their income generation skills has additional value because it has shown concrete alternatives to emigration for employment.
- Good experiences that could be scaled up include the Centre for Employment Abroad in Bishkek, whose effective set-up is believed to have played a role in taking forward negotiations with Russia regarding entry to the CU, as well as work with SHGs in rural communities in Kyrgyzstan.
- The strengthening of the statistical infrastructure and data availability remain needs in the country.

#### 2.1.4 Impact of the programme

- Evidence collected during the country mission suggested that CARMP was key to maintaining migration on the government's political agenda despite political turmoil and institutional changes in Kyrgyzstan during the programming years.
- The programme has thoroughly invested in the capacity of the new government's structures on labour migration created in 2010. Despite CARMP's engagement however the government's views on how to approach labour migration and place it in the country's development agenda remained scattered. Political turmoil and resulting changes in the country's institutional structure, as well as the high turnover of staff, hampered development of a more strategic approach to migration issues.
- Finally, and most importantly, CARMP made more people aware of the legal channels for migration, through its crucial support for the establishment of the Centre for Employment Abroad, which was the first public agency in the country offering services on regulated migration abroad. The programme allowed potential migrants to have the alternative of organised labour migration versus uninformed migration. Another important aspect that would ensure protection of migrant workers prior to departure, in the views of different stakeholders and experts, would be to focus on their skills through the country's vocational education and training system.
- Activities with vulnerable households in Output 4, although still small scale in CARMP, should be seen as a long-term side-strategy to reduce unregulated migration.
- Data infrastructure remained a standing need but will likely improve as a result of CARMP, with the introduction of migration modules in household surveys to be piloted in 2013 and agreements between central banks to engage in the harmonisation of remittance statistics.
- The financial sustainability of service related activities was uncertain.

## 2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.2.1 Relevance and quality of design

- Regulatory changes introduced by the CU should be carefully taken into consideration when supporting future initiatives on labour migration. Analytical work will be important to follow the evolution of institutional and regulatory frameworks, and to understand their repercussions for the region and for countries within and outside the CU, and on CU and non-CU labour migrants.

- The programme in Kyrgyzstan has been largely successful, especially if the country's turmoil and institutional changes since 2010 are considered. However, the experience gained in its first three years, also point to the fact that its purpose was very broad. This has likely affected priority making within the programme, with individual agencies focusing on target achievements for individual activities, but with less clarity on how individual activities were actually feeding a shared programme strategy. CARMP partners should use the positive relationships that they have established at all levels of government, from high-level decision makers to technical structures, to support the definition and implementation of a development strategy that takes labour migration into due account and to prioritise specific goals.
- The geographical reach of identified good practice should be expanded, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan (Batken, Jalalabad and Osh oblasts).
- The identification of target groups should distinguish clearly between labour migrants working in regular or irregular employment, avoid distinctions between migrants and other families in origin countries, and add female labour migrants as a specific target group.
- The regional dimension remains very important to protecting labour migrants, taking into account the often complementary interests of sending and receiving countries in improving and extending regulated labour migration.

### 2.2.2 Efficiency of implementation

- Monitoring was adequate in CARMP, but indicators of impact and achievement should be based on more realistic assumptions, be measurable with available knowledge and results clearly referable to one programme. Monitoring of impact of services on beneficiaries was particularly well developed by NGOs working with SHGs.
- Visibility and recognition of this complex programme needed to be stronger. Visibility strategies could include a logo, a common website and a user-friendly depository of outputs, information and updates. Where partners are leading international actors, visibility can also be enhanced through their respective websites and networks.
- Guidelines for the selection of implementing partners should serve as a starting point to set quality standards in the institutional and managerial capacity of local partners.

### 2.2.3 Effectiveness of the Programme

- Continuing work on both the regional and the country knowledge infrastructure was very important. MIRPAL has played an important role in bringing together peer technical institutions and promoting common work.
- Institutional capacity building and associated training remained a standing need in the country. A restructuring of institutional competences was on-going, with labour migration competences compacted under the Ministry of Labour.
- Positive experiences in CARMP, which have been relatively small-scale and can be scaled-up, include work on the economic empowerment of women in rural areas and pre-departure orientation and training sessions developed and provided at the Centre for Employment Abroad. These can possibly be replicated outside the Bishkek in order to reach the poorest areas, which also record the higher migration rates.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Government is allegedly committed to replicating the experience in other regions, and is investigating the interest of other donors. In a more limited interpretation, replication to other areas could imply learning the method, organisation and materials used in the centre.

- A next phase should also follow-up on existing pilot recruitment schemes linking countries of origin and destination, which CARMP has started to explore with the Russian Federation.
- The possibility of engaging local employment offices and CSOs in pre-departure services is a sustainable means to expand the offer and outreach of regulated services for employment abroad as well as in investing in local capacities.
- Additional focus should be placed on the social impact of labour migration, and particularly on children and women left behind. A starting point can be the experience of the legal association WESA in Southern Tajikistan which promotes civil registration of births and marriages, marital contracts, and formal co-ownership of land, housing and other assets.

#### 2.2.4 Impact

- Methods of intervention should include the extension of geographical coverage and of cooperation with sub-national governments as well as focused investment in local ownership and capacity.
- Since migration rates will likely remain high in the coming years, it is essential that pre-departure services are made accessible to the population at large, especially targeting areas with the higher emigration rates. It is important to assess the capacity of local employment offices and NGOs to engage in pre-departure service, with a view to expand the offer and outreach of regulated services for employment abroad.
- The possibility of expanding the offer of services provided by Private Employment Agencies should also be explored. PEAs are already numerous and do collaborate with the Centre for Employment Abroad in Bishkek. However, the sector is unregulated and at present it is impossible to verify the quality of the services of PEAs as well as to prevent fraud and abuse. Supporting the development of a selected network of PEAs, whose services are certified, should be explored in the future as a possible asset for regularising protected migration movements.
- The success of the work done was undoubtedly directly related to the high capacity of the implementing partners involved by CARMP. This is a highly relevant aspect of the success of any ambitious programme: CARMP partners might want to consider the development of guidelines to support the future selection of implementing partners.

# ANNEX



## ANNEX - LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED IN KYRGYZSTAN

- IOM country teams for CARMP
- WB country teams for CARMP
- UN Women country teams for CARMP
- Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment
- Centre for Employment Abroad, Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment
- Ministry of Agriculture and Land Development
- Ministry of Economy and Antimonopoly
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for External Migration
- National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic
- National Statistics Institute
- NGO Sezim
- NGO Community Development Alliance (CDA)
- Center for Public Policy
- Women Entrepreneurs Support Association (WESA)
- NGO Chuy Regional Development and Training Centre
- NGO Innovative Solutions