

Local Transparency and Cooperation Initiative

EFCA works to improving communication between citizens, local authorities and the mining sector and reducing related tensions. In 2012, EFCA started a USAID-funded 3-year project “Local Transparency and Cooperation Initiative” (LTCI). The project is aimed at increasing citizen participation and cooperation with local authorities in the provision of quality public services, and to increase transparency, public trust and understanding of the mining industry. The main implementing partners are the Legal Assistance Rural Citizen (LARC) Network and the NGO “The Tree of Life”.

Context

The level and quality of public services in Kyrgyzstan remains uneven, especially in remote regions of the country. There is lack of trust and adequate cooperation between citizens and local authorities.

The mining sector lacks transparency and appropriate communication strategy to engage with community-based stakeholders. Local residents often lack awareness of mining activity and receives distorted information.

Multi-stakeholder cooperation between citizens, local authorities and mining companies needs to be encouraged to address social problems and raises living standards of mining-affected population.



Goal and main objectives

The project is aimed at achieving stability through transparency, accountability and public confidence.

This will be achieved through the implementation of two objectives:

- Improve cooperation and accountability between citizens and local authorities in the provision of public services;
- Increase transparency, public confidence and mutual understanding in the extractive industry.

USAID Project “Initiative for transparent local governance and cooperation” within the framework of the first task covers all 13 districts of Naryn and Jalal-Abad regions. The second task covers 8 districts of Osh, Jalal-Abad, Batken, Talas, Issyk-Kul and Naryn region.

Activities

The first objective will be achieved by educating citizens in their entitlements to public services and how to access them, and empowering citizens to monitor their experience of these services and hold those responsible accountable for their performance. EFCA will support citizens to work together with state authorities, based on results of their monitoring, to improve the provision of public services according to local priorities. The second objective will be achieved by raising awareness and understanding among community leaders in mining-affected areas of the extraction industry and its potential social and environmental impacts.

Results and expected achievements

Under the first objective - target communities started demonstrating visible progress towards assessing needs for government services and prioritizing areas in which improvements are needed. Through the project support, some communities doubled their local budgets allotted for local services such as garbage disposal, drinking water provision, and waste water management. Local citizens have also increased knowledge and awareness of their rights and entitlements, allowing them access state-run services and support. Despite the overall low level of knowledge and experience in local government's processes, local officials expressed readiness and consent in cooperating to improve services they provide to the population. The long-term results of the LTCI program are the following:

- more effective prioritization of government spending on public services in line with local needs;
- increased mobilization of community resources in cooperation with service providers will increase services quality;
- improved public access to higher quality public services;
- greater trust and appreciation between citizens and government, and lower risk of political instability.

Under the second objective - the capacity of local communities was built to understand and monitor sensitive issues related to mining more effectively and compensate for previous lack of awareness. Local citizens in target communities have been using 6 public reception centers to communicate their grievances peacefully and obtain detailed responses from relevant government structures. EITI CSO Consortium and its online forum also provided additional platform for discussion and coordination of efforts, giving citizens and groups opportunities to voice out their priorities and recommendations. The long-term results of the LTCI program are the following:

- increasing mutual understanding between local stakeholders mitigates community-based tensions related to mining industry;
- citizens have more confidence in the activities of mining companies and are less likely to resort to violence;
- decisions in respect to the development of communities and natural resources distribution are made more transparently and in public interest;
- investors are more confident in relationship management with local stakeholders and in the security of their investments



“Thanks to the lawyers of this project we have been able to prevent the closure in our district the rehabilitation center for children with disabilities, which once opened with the support of international organizations. Now the center will be financed from the budget, and our children will be able to receive much-needed services”.

Begimai Sainova, mother of one of the inmates of the rehabilitation center.

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