

Women's Peace Banks

EFCA unites women, local communities and civil society activists in Southern Kyrgyzstan in order to build peace and prevent new community-based conflicts in the region. EFCA USAID-funded project Women's Peace Banks strengthens the capacity of women equipping them with skills and opportunities to realize inter-ethnic reconciliation initiatives, and increasing their role in peacebuilding. The project was started to be implemented in June 2012 (24-month duration). The main project partners are Mayor's Offices, and territorial councils of Osh and Jalal- Abad cities.



Context

Violent inter-ethnic clashes of June 2010 in Southern Kyrgyzstan has left deep wounds in lives of local residents – ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek– , and instilled suspicion and mistrust of one another.

Ethnic divisions have significantly widened in the aftermath of ethnic riots with a polarization of communal identities and fewer contacts between different ethnic groups. There is a need to engage community stakeholders at grassroots level to prevent new conflicts.

Women have the potential to play an active role in preventing and mitigating disputes and conflicts, but they often lack mediation and conflict resolution skills and social recognition.



Goal and main objectives

Women's Peace Banks is a 24-month project to empower women in Osh and Jalal-Abad cities of Southern Kyrgyzstan to lead inter-ethnic reconciliation initiatives and promote women's peacebuilding role at the national level.

The Women Peace Bank project has two main objectives:

- Strengthen cooperation and trust between women in communities, recovering from conflict;
- Increase role of women in promoting reconciliation initiatives and mitigating conflicts.

USAID Project "Women's Peace Banks" is based on an innovative and successful concept of "Youth Banks", which was first implemented in Northern Ireland in 1999, and then applied in various forms all over the world. EFCA has used this format from 2010 to 2012 in order to unite the young people who live in the border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Activities

EFCA is training and support 16 Women's Peace Banks in Osh and Jalal-Abad to implement and fund small projects which promote and facilitate inter-ethnic reconciliation and confidence building. The project is organizing small-scale cooperation and social development projects between groups still suffering from tensions.

Project applications will be selected transparently by the Women's Peace Banks to address priorities shared widely in the communities. A conflict management workshop series is giving skills and practical support to women in addressing the particular tensions in their communities.

A series of forums is bridging the gap between grass-roots activism and achievements of women in their communities, and national recognition and use of that valuable role by government and other decision makers at higher levels.



Results and expected achievements

- 16 x 10-member women's initiative groups – Women Peace Banks (WPB) – established in Osh and Jalal-Abad cities;
- 160 WPB members of the initiative groups trained in need assessment, development and implementation of community-based projects;
- 20 WPB members trained in Conflict Management, and then themselves acted as trainers;
- Over 400 WPB members and local residents received basic knowledge and skills in mediation and conflict prevention;
- 233 project applications received and selected. 64 projects funded amount ranging from 500-9000 US\$;
- 2nd round of small grants (expected in 2014)
- Regional and national forums, photo exhibitions and a film about women peace initiatives with broadcast on television (expected in 2014).

“At first, the locals were closed and did not have much optimism. However, after our meetings, they realized that the project “Women’s Peace Banks” can actually help to solve local problems, so people began to actively participate in meetings to discuss the problems and their solutions.

Munozhat Tashbaeva, member of women’s initiative groups in the town of Osh.

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