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Literacy for Life

Review of Central Asian countries

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Review of Central Asian countries

By the end of the 90's Central Asian countries had a sustainable and effective system of education that was formed for a long time of existence of the Soviet Union. The system had a common structure for all Soviet republics and it was managed centrally. It's necessary to note that USSR's education system was able to reach high level of coverage of almost all adult population of the republics. The level of literacy of adult population was about 96-100%. According to 1989 USSR census data the number of people having incomplete secondary, secondary, secondary special and higher education in Central Asian countries was as follows:

Table 1

*Number of people having education above incomplete secondary education
(% of the total population above 15)*

Country	Total (% of the population above 15)	Including				
		Higher	Incomplete higher	Secondary special	Secondary	Incomplete secondary
Armenia	90,1	13,8	2,3	17,9	37,5	18,4
Azerbaijan	87,8	10,5	2,0	14,4	41,4	19,2
Georgia	87,7	15,1	2,4	18,7	36,3	15,2
Kazakhstan	83,8	9,9	1,8	18,5	33,8	19,8
Kyrgyzstan	84,2	9,4	1,6	15,7	39,1	18,4
Tajikistan	83,7	7,5	1,4	11,0	42,7	21,1
Turkmenistan	86,4	8,3	1,4	13,5	41,9	21,3
Uzbekistan	86,7	9,2	1,9	15,0	40,8	19,8

Note: the portion of people having incomplete secondary education includes the number of persons having primary education according to the existing Soviet educational system and correspondingly these indices are taken into account while calculating the final index

Thus, out of persons over 15 having above incomplete secondary education every 13th (Tajikistan) and every 7th (Armenia) had higher education; and every 2nd (almost in all countries) – secondary or secondary special education.

Such good results were achieved due to the following advantages of education system in these countries:

I. Assured accessibility of school education to almost every citizen from the point of view of:

- **Proximity to the place of residence:** virtually every village had elementary or secondary school. The most remote and small villages had branches. Sometimes students-residents of these villages were provided with transport to attend school if the school was located in another village.
- **Financial potential of families:** All levels of education starting from elementary to higher and to post-graduate were free. In most cases textbooks for students were also provided for free. Studying at refresher courses was systematic and mandatory.
- **Provision with teaching staff:** Availability of sufficient number of schools for training teachers, strict system of assignment of young specialists to schools with less teachers

where they were required to work for 3 years, incentive system for rural teachers contributed to provision of even the most remote villages with teaching personnel.

- **Education in native language:** In every republic there were schools where education was conducted in national language. Also ethnic minorities living in these countries had a chance to study in their native language. Considering that the system of education in the USSR was common, schools for ethnic majorities were provided with textbooks by neighboring republics where that language was the language of national majority.
- **Education of people with disabilities:** There were special boarding schools for children with disabilities. The education took into account physical and mental health of students and was conducted considering specific character of perception and assimilation of teaching materials.

II. Common requirements to curriculum and programs

III. Set up mechanism for management of the education system

IV. Stable funding

V. Good image of teacher and prestige of this profession among population

VI. Availability of developed network of pre-school institutions especially in urban areas

It's necessary to note that besides positive moments by the 90's the system of education in Central Asian countries had also negative ones:

I. Insufficient although stable funding of education system: Many schools didn't have modern equipment, school buildings not always met requirements, teachers' salary was not high.

II. Strict centralized development of educational programs, that didn't consider local context.

III. Sufficient decrease in teaching history of indigenous population

IV. Pronounced politicization of liberal arts

V. Education system was developed for an average student, not taking into account personality of students.

VI. Decrease of availability of education for people with disabilities who don't attend boarding schools, i.e. who live with their families.

VII. Conservatism and rigidity of education system

The end of the 90's was marked by an important historic event – disintegration of a big empire USSR and each Central Asian country had selected its own way of development. Independent states were formed following different models and the education system of every state underwent significant changes under the influence of different factors that had impact on the level and quality of literacy. Change in the way of life and abrupt transfer to the market economy showed huge inconsistency of the quality of education of adults. Despite the fact that every adult residing in Central Asian countries had reading and writing skills ([in accordance with the accepted definition of Literacy by UNESCO, p.7](#)), the main problem for them was lack of adaptation skills, perception of the new conditions of life and necessity to acquire new knowledge and skills. The first and foremost problem for the adult population of Central Asian

countries was so-called functional illiteracy. That's why good indices of the level of literacy of adult population for the last 10 years indicated in the following table shouldn't be perceived as calming.

Table 2

*Comparative table of coefficient of the level of literacy of
Population of Central Asian countries*

Country	1990 год		2000	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Azerbaijan	99	96	99	96
Armenia	99	96	99	98
Georgia	100	98	100	99
Kazakhstan	100	98	100	99
Kyrgyzstan	99	95		
Tajikistan	99	97	100	99
Turkmenistan	-	-	-	-
Uzbekistan	100	98	100	99

It's necessary to note that some of the main factors influencing the problem of the quality of education leading to high level of functional illiteracy of adult population of Central Asian countries are the following ones:

1. Strong correlation of education with the Soviet economic structure, i.e. centralized planning system and neglect of the laws of market relations. After disintegration of the USSR many occupations became noncompetitive due to the different level of development of specific countries and a significant number of specialists was unclaimed on the labor market resulting in exposure of their insufficient functional literacy.

2. Redistribution of power during initial years of independency, forming of new governing elite in Central Asian countries didn't allow for solving problems of education in full. Only after stable State machinery was formed in Central Asian countries the situation with education system became to improve gradually.

3. Excessive eagerness of government structures for improving the status of the national language but the basis for successful implementation of the project wasn't prepared. It's necessary to note that by the end of the 90's almost every state (with the exception of Kazakhstan) made an effort to impart a status of state language to the national one. Sharp transfer from extensive use of Russian language to the national one didn't have only positive effects. From one side, the status of the national language had increased as well as its importance. Also the self-consciousness of the nations of Central Asian countries had improved but from another side:

- The majority of adult population that received education and had work experience using Russian language for a short period of time became relatively (functionally) illiterate. Only a small part of population was able to adapt to similar work in the national language in Central Asian countries. Perhaps, the situation is not as that for Transcaucasia.
- The outflow of Russian-speaking population had increased. This part of population was represented by highly professional specialists in different fields. Many of these people represent a part of indigenous population who knew Russian language more but didn't have enough native language skills. After the law was adopted these people have lost prospects of good career for themselves and their children. Even if they have learned the national language that could change the opinion of many of them about possible threat of inequality

in future. The outflow of that part of population from the countries that suffered during civil unrest was faster resulting in decrease in the number of highly skilled professionals.

- Sharp limitation of the national languages in all areas of life of society in the former Soviet republics resulted in slowing down the development of the language. As a result development of national languages didn't have a sufficient base – developed specialized terminology, technical means, specialists-translators, educational and methodological materials, sufficient funding, etc. for a quick replacement of Russian language in all areas of social life. That's why rapid transfer to training in national language resulted in deterioration of the quality of training of specialists in all countries. Transfer to Latin alphabet in Uzbekistan showed that change of the alphabet also contributes to simultaneous occurrence of a huge group of relatively “illiterate” adult population for a specific period of time. According to the law adopted in Tajikistan it was planned to transfer to Arabic script but due to the lack of funds and opportunities Cyrillic alphabet is still used. Kyrgyzstan made a decision to return Russian language the status of the state one.
- Many Central Asian countries (with the exception of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) are small population-wise and that means that the range of functioning of national languages is not big. Transfer to education in the national language that occurs everywhere assumes professional activities only within the range of functioning of that language. At present there is no sufficient motivation and opportunities to study (lack of highly skilled professionals, language environment) predominant languages (English and Russian – for the republics of the former USSR). The existing situation limits their opportunities to find a job outside their native country. People who received training in national language and who don't know other languages on professional level don't have global prospects. All that forms a new type of so-called “relative” illiteracy. The notion “relative illiteracy” means impossibility to use their knowledge and skills outside the range of functioning of the national language.

Thus, after the 90's significant changes occurred in functioning of the system of education that besides general tendencies that were discussed above have also several specific features (Table 3)

Table 3

**Comparative data of main development indices and peculiarities
of education in Central Asian countries**

<i>Main development indices</i>	<i>Main features of education after the 90's</i>
	<i>Armenia</i>
Total number of population (thousands) - 3.072	Reduction of budget for education
Birth rate (per 1,000) - 9,4	Deterioration/disintegration of system of improving teachers' skills
GNP - \$790	Decrease of access to education
Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (1.7)	Fee-based education
Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 69	Reduction of funding of system of education for more than three times in comparison with 80's
Rate of coverage with secondary education:	Increase in the ratio teacher-students
Males - 71	Reduction in the number of students attending school
Females - 76	Low efficiency of education system
The state guarantees free secondary	Low salary level of teachers
	Gender misbalance in favor of girls
	Unequal access to quality education in rural and urban areas

education and 20% of professional education	Unequal access to quality education for vulnerable groups of population
<i>Azerbaijan</i>	
Total number of population (thousand) - 8297 Birth rate (per 1,000) - 17,4 GNP - \$710 Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (0,2) Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 88 Rate of coverage with secondary education: Males - 80 Female - 80 The state guarantees free elementary and secondary education	Reduction of budget for education Low salaries of teachers Corruption in educational institutions Unequal access to families with different level of income Unequal access to quality education of IDPs' Disproportion in access to education in urban and rural areas Non-observance of sanitary norms in classes (cold, lack of electricity and water) Lack of tools and manuals Extortions from students Low quality of education (only 52% of girls after graduating from elementary school could pass literacy test)
<i>Georgia</i>	
Total number of population (thousand) - 5177 Birth rate (per 1,000) - 10,2 GNP - \$650 Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (-4,0) Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 95 Rate of coverage with secondary education: Males - 72 Females - 74 Compulsory education – elementary. Citizens of Georgia may receive secondary special and higher education for free but not more than 30% of students	Lack of funding Weak material and technical base Russian schools were transformed to mixed Russian-Georgian At some schools teaching is conducted in the languages of national minorities (Russian, Osette, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Greece) but final exams are only in the state language, i.e. Georgian Acute shortage of textbooks Arrears of wages for teachers Decrease in obtaining free secondary education System of extortion for school needs Unequal access considering the level of income of families Deterioration of level of education of girls
<i>Kazakhstan</i>	
Total number of population (thousand) - 15.469 Birth rate (per 1,000) - 16,3 GNP - \$1510 Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (- 0,6) Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 89 Rate of coverage with secondary education: Males - 90 Females - 87	Imperfection of management of system of education Unequal access to education in urban and rural areas Remoteness of school from place of residence Problem with quality education Lack of educational and methodological materials especially in national language Poor material and technical base of educational institutions; 1/5 of schools require capital repairs Inadequate funding of education system Unsatisfactory access of children with disabilities, orphans, homeless children and repatriates to quality education

<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	
<p>Total number of population (thousand) - 5.067</p> <p>Birth rate (per 1,000) - 22,1</p> <p>GNP - \$290</p> <p>Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (-3,2)</p> <p>Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 83</p> <p>Rate of coverage with secondary education:</p> <p>Males - 86</p> <p>Females - 86</p>	<p>Lack of funding of poverty reduction programs</p> <p>Unequal access to education in urban and rural areas</p> <p>Unequal access to quality education of children from families with different income</p> <p>Decrease of prestige of education especially for women</p>
<i>Tajikistan</i>	
<p>Total number of population (thousand) - 6.195</p> <p>Birth rate (per 1,000) - 24,5</p> <p>GNP - \$180</p> <p>Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (-8,1)</p> <p>Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 100</p> <p>Rate of coverage with secondary education:</p> <p>Males - 86</p> <p>Females - 71</p>	<p>School attendance rate in the capital is lower than in the regions (77% vs. 85%)</p> <p>Unequal access to education in urban and rural areas</p> <p>Limitation of budget allocated for education</p> <p>Unequal access for families with different income</p> <p>Illegal extortion at schools and other educational institutions</p> <p>High level of migration of specialists</p> <p>Poor quality and insufficiency of pre-school education, especially in rural areas</p> <p>Poor system of improvement of teachers' skills</p> <p>Terrible material and technical base of school especially in rural areas</p> <p>Lack of quality educational and methodological materials especially in national language</p> <p>Low-quality education on all stages</p> <p>Unequal access to education for children from marginalized groups (children with disabilities, orphans, IDPs')</p>
<i>Turkmenistan</i>	
<p>Total number of population (thousand) - 4.794</p> <p>Birth rate (per 1,000) - 22,1</p> <p>GNP - \$1200</p> <p>Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (-4.3)</p> <p>Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 85</p> <p>Rate of coverage with secondary education:</p> <p>Males - no data</p> <p>Females - no data</p>	<p>Diplomas issued in Russian Federation are not valid</p> <p>It's necessary to have 2 years of working experience before entering institutes of higher learning</p> <p>Unequal access due to different level of income</p> <p>Low quality of education at schools and institutes of higher learning</p> <p>Poor funding of education system</p> <p>Lack of skilled teachers</p> <p>Low salaries of teachers</p> <p>Lack modern textbooks and manuals</p>
<i>Uzbekistan</i>	
<p>Total number of population (thousand) - 25.705</p>	<p>High weight of expenses for education in the budget (6.7%-6.8%)</p>

Birth rate (per 1,000) - 21.8 GNP - \$450 Rate of GNP increase (annual average in %) - (-1,0) Rate of coverage with elementary education (%) - 78% Rate of coverage with secondary education: Males - 99 Females - 87 The state guarantees elementary and secondary school education	Establishment of new educational and methodological base in Latin alphabet; training of specialists Problems of quality education Unequal access to education in urban and rural areas Unequal access for children from poor families Lack and inefficient use of resources for funding of education Low coverage with elementary education especially in rural areas Poor material and technical base Gender imbalance (reduction of the number of girls in the total number of students)
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That table shows relatives similarity of status of education system and existing problems.

The data presented in the table 3 differ from the data in the table 1. It may be explained by the following:

- We have considered it would be important to cite the data of 1989 of the main adult education levels. This promotes the understanding of the different degrees of adult education prevalence. This is important point in overcoming functional illiteracy (the adult educational process runs more deliberately and qualitatively according to the educational level)
- This kind of analysis allows to compare the educational levels according to the standard methodology accepted by UNESCO for all world countries. The data of 1989 population census cited in the table 1 have not such indicators used in world practice of educational study. After the Soviet Union collapse there was no the standard methodology of conducting population census due to this they are not correct and completed. Many of them are inaccessible.

In suggested study report (table 2) the cited data of literacy ratio of the population portion above 15 having reading and writing skills (see: UNISEF report for 2001 “Early childhood. Situation of children in the world”, p.93) demonstrate peculiarities of literacy in the post-soviet Central Asian countries. We are agree with the definition of literacy accepted by UNESCO but taking into account the local context and peculiarities of Central Asian countries the definition of Adult’s functional literacy is also very important (see p.12) The cited data are evidence of insufficient sensibility of indices for determination of literacy peculiarities in Central Asia countries.

Situation analysis showed three main problems of literacy of population besides lack of funding in Central Asian countries:

- Unequal access to education
- Gender imbalance in education
- Unsatisfactory quality of education

Unequal access of education exists in all Central Asian countries (there is no information regarding Turkmenistan). First of all this group includes rural population, people without citizenship (refugees, migrants), IDPs and children with disabilities. Wars in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan resulted in destruction of education infrastructure, sufficient outflow of qualified specialists, establishment of camps for IDPs and refugees. As these groups of population lived in camps, suffered from extreme poverty, vulnerability and lack

of elementary conditions for education in native language they were less included in education.

Limitation of access to education of children with disabilities has special significance; especially those children who live with their families but not at specialized institutions. That happens because children with physical disabilities don't have technical conditions for attending ordinary secondary schools, including lack special access for persons using wheelchairs, lack of special facilities, etc. But besides, it also depends on the low level of cultural perception of children with disabilities as equal society members by health children and teachers. The society has stereotypes of non-perception of children with disabilities in the society of physically health children. Families with children with disabilities hide this fact and as a result the child suffers from the lack of normal access to education, communication, development. The society is not tolerant towards children with disabilities and doesn't treat them equally. Virtually no one, neither school nor family, nor society makes efforts to change stereotypes regarding that group of population.

Example:

Some years ago in one of the northern cities of Tajikistan the Non-governmental organization which works with disabled children, adopted a decision to make a festival. They organized transportation of the disabled children to the concert, so that they can as the others to listen to the favorite actors. Their arrival caused a huge indignation from the part of adults, which were a heavy blow for the disabled children. Many children openly demonstrated their antipathy and adults considered the festival as failed as they had to look at the disabled children.

That's why it is very important to breed the sense of respect the children to respect and equality to the children with the limited possibilities, and in this regard a lot depends on the employees of the education system, parents and the society itself.

Gender disbalance in educational aspect takes place almost in all countries. It is noted that if in such countries as Armenia the disbalance is in girl's favor than in the republics like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the situation is vise versa, level of girl's education declines. In the first case the reason is the early involvement of boys to maintain the families, and in the second case it is connected with the declining of the education prestige among the girls, increasing the early marriage tendency and religious code. Define part of population prefers to provide girls with the religious education via the private lessons conduced by the religious people. Another reason of gender disbalance in these countries is ingrained concept about the gender roles in the society, which are fixing through the school education due to the stable stereotype of the teachers towards this issue.

Unsatisfactory quality of education– is the problem for all countries under analysis without any exception. The index of low education quality apart from the mentioned above formation of functional illiteracy is such characteristics as:

- low specific weight of persons who managed to pass the tests,
- the education minimum is not covered due to the lack of teaching the necessary lessons.

Many school gradulators do not have the skills of independent creative thinking. Countrywide transfer to the education in local languages with the weak material base and deficit of education materials (both in quality and quantity aspect) lead to the decline of training standards in schools as well as in a higher education establishments.

Raising of the above mentioned problems related to the complex of factors which could be grouped as following

Factors related to:

- **Funding of the education**

Lack of funding system is noted in all countries. It is the problem, which relates to weak material and technique base of education establishments, many schools require the capital renovation; they have no heating system, electricity, water. In all places there is a poor provision of education facilities, especially in the local languages considering the modern requirements to the education. Low quality of training the specialists as a result of unconformity of the Universities' technical facilities to the required standards. Low salary level of teachers.

- **Decline of the living standard and improvement of the society marginalizing**

Unequal access to the education for the low families, who mainly live in a rural areas, lack of funds for purchasing the education articles, shoes, clothes; necessity to use children's labor in order to survive. Significant share of these families' budget in these countries (60% and more) is spent for the feeding. Purchasing of the other required items is limited. Thus, many children from these families who do not attend school said that absence of clothes is the main reason for that - 23%- 38,8% cases (Tajikistan).

- **Consequence of the local and global armed actions**

These problems exist in the countries, which survived the military contest. These are Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In these countries during the military actions there was a direct threat to the life of students, and later there were the refugees camps and internally displaced persons. The problems with registration, availability of the required documents and weak points of the education system itself do not allow to provide this group of population with the qualitative education. Thus in Tajikistan, in the capital the attendance at school is low in comparison with the other regions (77% against 85%). It's connected with the huge flow of internally displaced persons to the capital as a result of the civil contest and this cohort do not have opportunity to train their children at school due to their poverty. Thus, many children from these families who do not attend school said that the absence of clothes is the main reason in 23%- 38,8% cases.

- **The degree of corruption.**

Almost all the countries point on the facts of the illegal fees at the educational establishments. These fees makes one to doubt if there is a guaranteed by the many states free basis education. Many poor families say that their children do not attend the school due to this reason. It is significant for the republics with the high level of fertility and high level of big families. The fees for each child for the budget of such family become huge burden. The system of fees and illegal payments exist in all levels of education starting from the preschool up to higher level establishments.

- **Management of the education system**

Unconformity of the management system to the modern requirements and imperfect level of the management staff on the issues of the modern management system as well as the lack involvement of the civil society resources into the management issues are also an obstacle for providing the qualitative education to the population

- **Traditions and life style**

The gender disbalance and declining of the education level among the women and girls in some degree depends on the public opinion, traditions and life style. Currently, especially in a rural area, there is an access decline for the education of girls. This is depends on the life style, when a family itself connects the welfare with male. That is why when there is a choice of who will continue education the preference is given to boys. Girl in any case will get married and will live in another family and sons have to support parents in future. Besides, especially at the rural area the demand for the educated women is declining. Currently in some countries of the region there is a tendency to form such a stereotype among the young and relatively educated men as a prohibition for wives to work and there

are more and more cases when husbands require their wives to wear hijab (or big kerchief), and seldom be out of home.

The state bodies of the Central Asia countries at present take an attempt to improve the situation in the sphere of education via the development of effective and financially eligible education reforms. Almost all the states already have the programs of education reforms oriented on the settlement of the priority problems on population literacy.

As it was mentioned above, there are three main problems in the area of adults' education. **Decline the unequal access level to the education** is solving by the state through the following ways:

In Azerbaijan: increase the access to the free textbooks; increase the number of free places for the poor level of population (less burden on the family budget and appears the education opportunity for the children from these families)

In Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, within the Document on Strategy of poverty alleviation it is envisaged to establish a basis to involve children from the vulnerable families to the school and vocational education.

In Uzbekistan they are working on a full access to the system of 12 years school education. The decline of the unequal access according to the income level is considered while developing the strategy to increase the life standard of the population.

Is there are another attempts to improve this issue. Many non-governmental national and international organizations influence on the improvement of the access for the separate level of population. For example, ACTED in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan implements the program of school feeding at the border districts of Fergana valley, which fosters the significant growth of school attendance in the program implementation areas. UNICEF and Save the Children Fund (UK) supports the projects oriented on disabled children in such countries as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan. OSI activity in the Central Asia countries has a row of educational programs which include provision of schools, Universities and libraries with the modern textbooks; support in preparation and publication of the actual books for the particular region, replenishment of the library funds and training of library specialists and many other issues.

Many reforms imply the solution of the other important task – **provision with the qualitative education**. Solving of this task depends on the condition of the education system itself, availability of the high level professionals, funding, improvement of the system etc. There are two approaches to improve the issue:

- Performance of the adequate reforms according to the national programs and strategies (both independent and supported by the international institutes) to improve the **formal education** considering the settlement of the priority problems with the quality of education
- Implementation of projects by the non-governmental and international organizations to provide the **non-formal education** for the various groups of population.

Table 4 shows the data on the reforms to improve the quality of education

Table 4

Comparative table of the reforms and politics in the area of the improvement of the education quality

<i>Country</i>	<i>Content of the reform and politics</i>
Armenia	1 . Decentralization of the management system and introduction of the new structure – School board 2. Optimization of the interrelation teacher-pupil and optimization of the

	<p>salary</p> <p>3. Improvement of the education management system</p>
Georgia	<p>1. Establishment of the new education standards and national program; development of the objective evaluation system; on-going work with the teachers, their evaluation and reduction of the teachers' quantity, training of the improved textbooks</p> <p>2. Improvement of the education management system: reduction of the control bodies on the city and district level with the simultaneous reduction of the management apparatus. Establishment of the management bodies inside the school – special observers boards of teachers and parents.</p> <p>3. Improvement of the material, technical and financial basis of the education system (World bank granted a preferential credit for the amount of US\$ 60 mln.)</p>
Azerbaijan	<p>Increase the role of the Ministry of education to provide the definite level of education quality and number of pupils</p> <p>Increase teachers' salary via changing the budget structure or reduction the number of teachers. Salary should be partially based on the success of pupils</p> <p>Improve the quality of textbooks</p> <p>Provide the authorities on making decisions by the teachers</p> <p>Work on improvement of the teachers' image</p>
Uzbekistan	<p>Improve the quality of the educational programs</p> <p>Improve the level of preparation of pedagogical staff</p> <p>Optimization of the teachers' salary</p> <p>Improvement of the physical condition of the school objects</p>
Kazakhstan	<p>1. Rehabilitation of the small schools, which partially reinstate the attendance of children schools, reduced during the previous years. Access to education for the vulnerable level of population.</p> <p>2. Establishment of educational funds for purchasing of clothes, shoes, textbooks, training materials, stationary, feeding at schools, financial assistance, trips to the resorts and camps, participation in cultural and sport events</p> <p>3. Introduction of the informatics program for the secondary education,.</p> <p>4. Introduction of the new educational standards and establishment of the new generation of textbooks</p> <p>5. Introduction of the state grants and credits practice, practice of the centralized organization and state certification of the entrance exams</p> <p>6. Introduction of the compulsory and free coverage of all 5-6 year old children by the preschool classes</p> <p>7. Providing of the timely payment of the salary to the budget organizations including teachers. Substantial increasing of their salary.</p> <p>8. Development of the education infrastructure system, settlement of the qualitative funding of this system</p>
Kyrgyzstan	<p>1. Improvement of the education sector development via the onward educational reforms.</p> <p>2. Building-up the capacity of preschool education.</p> <p>3. Support the affordability of the school education for the children from low-income families, as well as providing them with all necessary things for the participation in the educational process.</p> <p>4. Improvement of the training plans and programs.</p> <p>5. Increasing of the professionalism of the management and pedagogical staff of the education sector.</p> <p>6. Establishment of the competitive educational structures via the</p>

	<p>development of mechanisms oriented on the market relations.</p> <p>7. Establishment of the national information system of education management.</p> <p>8. Improvement of the role of the local communities and flexibility of the management system.</p> <p>9. Reform of the funding system especially in the part of attraction of the additional funding sources for schools.</p>
Turkmenistan	<p>1. Transfer to the 9 years system at schools, 2 years – in the special education establishments and 4 years at the higher education establishments, close the correspondence schools.</p> <p>2. Development of the private school education along with the state (on the universal state program), specialized and facultative religious schools.</p> <p>3. Review the content of the History textbook, where the major accent should be paid to the national epos and history of the nation.</p> <p>4. Introduction of the traditional crafts training at the special schools.</p> <p>5. Improvement of the teaching of Turkmen language at the Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek schools.</p>
Tajikistan	<p>1. Establishment of conditions for bringing up children in families and preschool organizations</p> <p>2. Reforming of the school system. Achievement of the various forms of school education: regular schools and schools with the deepen study, lyceum and gymnasium. Provide the affordability of the secondary education for all level of population</p> <p>3. Provide the high level of education and achievement of the international standards</p> <p>4. Rehabilitation and improvement of the professional and technical education</p> <p>5. Improvement of the education quality in the higher education establishments</p> <p>6. Programs of computerization of the secondary schools</p>

These data from the accessible sources shows that almost all the countries suggest paying many efforts for the improvement of the education system and settlement of the specific education problems. Reforms conducting by the state mainly oriented on the improvement of the formal education system. The main problems while implementing the reform may include:

- Lack of funds,
- Deficit of qualified specialists
- Low quality of management of the education system,
- Low participation of citizens in the education reform

Modern concept of the functional adults' literacy as a possession of the system of knowledge and skills, which allow people to use them for the maximum adaptation in a fast changing world and achievement of the success in survival.

To improve the existing situation the most suitable and proved step is to introduce the understanding by responsible officials and the people themselves the necessity of lifelong learning. In solving this issue the special role is given to formal and informal education.

There are differences between the formal and non-formal forms of education of adults:

FORMAL SECTOR OF EDUCATION	NON-FORMAL SECTOR OF EDUCATION
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable funding - Orientation to the request of big organizations and enterprises - Standard educational programs which change very rare - Fixed price for education, set centralized - Relatively good but ineffectively used material and technique basis - Absence of close relations with the clients of educational services - Constant staff of teachers - Motivation of audience is not enough considered - Marketing methods are not used - Use privileges and state subsidies - Administratively limited access to international donors' grants - Quality of education does not influence the organization's activity - There is no need to worry about the number of listeners - Relatively big potential for the internal development - Deficiently high interest in cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instability and unreliable funding - Orientation to the request of the small organizations and enterprises - Quick adaptation of the educational products to the users' needs - Flexible prices and opportunity to set them independently - Absence of the own educational base - More close relation with the clients of educational services - Rotation opportunity to attract the best trainers and consultants - Training supposes the set motivation of listeners - Marketing is the main method to promote the educational services - No privileges and access to the state grants and subsidies - Huge access to grants of the international donors - Quality of education directly impacts on the future opportunities - Necessity to fight for the client, conquer him - Internal development opportunities are restricted - High interest in cooperation
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Source: Anragog research in Central Asia countries, Center of sociological research TAHLI, ordered by the Institute of international cooperation German Association of public Universities, page 27

As it was mentioned earlier, if the majority of national reform in the education area is oriented on the improvement of the formal education so in all countries of the Central Asia region the civil society is involved in the process of improvement the non-formal education more actively. Some non-governmental development organizations over the ten years with the support of international donors (USAID, Counterpart Consortium, OSI – Soros Fund, International Labor Organization, Eurasia Fund, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, Asian Bank of Development, WHO, UNFPA, IOM, INTRAC, World Bank, Mercy Corps, TASIC, OSCE, IIZ/DVV, Fridrikh Ebert Funds, ACCELS, Embassy of USA, Switzerland, Norway) conduct huge educational activity. Their activity is oriented on elimination of gaps of the Soviet education system, namely: increase the independent solution skills, maintain the rights, entrepreneur skills and study the basis knowledge how to survive in a market conditions.

Apart from that, an important aspect of NGO's activity is the issues of gender education, prevention of violence against women, training and re-training of the migrants to obtain profession and other. Activity of such organizations in cities and remote villages allows to change the stereotypes and increase their opportunities for better life in the communities.

An example of such activity may serve the cooperation of local non-governmental organizations, state structures of the Central Asia countries and Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association. The activity of this organization is concentrated on a basic education, education of the out world and democratization. Special

attention is paid to the poverty alleviation, advocacy of the ideas «self help» and increasing the women's role in the society. The main priorities in its activity in the Central Asia are:

- Assistance to unemployed and socially undefended levels of population in finding job opportunities and obtaining a profession
- Facilitation and practical support into adults' education for establishment and intensification of institutional development
- Lobbying and popularization of adults' education ideas among the interested parties
- Involvement of the Central Asia countries into international discussions on the issue of «Life long learning»

This organization established in **Kyrgyzstan** eight centers for adults' education, combined in a unified net, which is unique itself.

In **Tajikistan** for the last two years of partnership there were conducted 60 courses and above 800 persons were trained; mainly they are representatives of the vulnerable level of population.

In **Uzbekistan** this organization plans cooperation with the state organizations, such as Ministry of High and Secondary/Vocational education, Ministry of Labor and Employment, and national NGOs.

Enlargement of cooperation with this Institute is mutually beneficial for all the Central Asia countries, as it is directly connected with the improvement of the situation with the adults' education in the region.

In settlement of the third problem – achievement of the gender disbalance we may note the joint efforts of the state and non-governmental bodies. Thus, in Tajikistan there was adopted a special Presidential Decree on provision of quotes for the higher education of girls from the remote areas. Such organizations as OSI Soros Fund, UNIFEM, UNFPA, GAA and other, which are operating in many Central Asia countries, have a gender component in their activity, this also fosters to alleviate the gender problem in the region.

Thus, adults' education in the Central Asia countries despite of the population literacy figures has a number of problems, where the most vital are decline of the education quality and increasing of inequality towards the access to the qualitative education for some categories of population.

The main factors, which foster the decline of the education quality are: insufficient funding of the education system, reduction of the number of qualified specialists, decrease of the material and technical basis and deficit of modern textbooks, especially in the national languages. The accelerated transfer to the education on the local languages without the corresponding basis lead to the decrease of the education standards. One of the examples of poor quality education is the high level of functional illiteracy among the adult population.

Such factors are poverty, especially at the rural area, forming of the groups of refugees and IDP as a result of local conflicts, lack of adequacy of physical basis of education, which create the conditions for the disabled people to attend schools influenced on the increasing of the inequality for the education access. And important aspect to decrease the access to education for the disabled children play the society stereotypes, when the joint education of the healthy children and disabled children considers as unacceptable and painful situation for the healthy children. The significant influence of stereotypes and improvement of the gender disbalance, when girls' education is decreasing in all the regions (Armenia is an exception) the image of educated and pushing the fortune girl especially in the rural area is declining and the tendency of early marriage increasing.

The government of the Central Asia countries takes various measures to reform the education system in order to improve the situation in this sector. Many of them adopted some important government documents, implying the gradual improvement of the education in their countries. It should be noted that state measures, in general are oriented on the improvement of the formal education, and the efforts of many international and non-governmental local organizations concentrated on the non-formal education. It should be mentioned that the success of the reform in each Central Asia country would depend on such factors as sources of funding, increasing the quality of the education management system and high interest from the party of government to achieve the real transformations in the education area of their countries.