

This briefing note forms part of a series that shares achievements and lessons learned of the Youth United for the Future (YOU) project which operated from 2017 to 2025. The project was implemented by Helvetas Kyrgyzstan, Youth of Osh and Progress Aravan. Its aim was to improve the integration of young people into the social and economic life of southern Kyrgyzstan.



Challenges of scale and reach

Strengthening capacities of schools to develop the self-awareness, confidence and communication skills of students and their parents can make a significant contribution to positively transforming inter-generational relations

One of the core components of the YOU project's strategy was the Tune In training programme. Young people and adults who participated in the course strengthened their self-awareness, self-confidence and communication skills, transforming their relationships (see Briefing Note 2 for further details).



As the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project found many years ago, one of the big challenges with such transformative training programmes is scale. Interventions that cause change at the level of individuals' attitudes and relationships, need to reach a lot of people if they are going to contribute to peace and social cohesion at a societal level.

The partners in the YOU project were confronted with this challenge early on. After a year of developing and testing the Tune In trained programme, it was clear that it worked. It had a transformative effect on those who participated. It helped to improve relationships between young people, their parents and their teachers, thereby tackling young people's sense of exclusion and marginalization. However, the partners had a limited number of trainers and resources available and so were restricted in their capacity to offer training courses.

They also faced a second challenge. Some groups in areas where young people were vulnerable to getting drawn into extremism and violence were hard to reach. Religious young people were suspicious of the secular nature of the training programme. It was also hard to engage married young women, who had duties in the home, and young men who were busy working or who had migrated. A suspicion of NGOs as promoting foreign interests also led some potential participants to stay away.

The solution to both challenges was to shift from directly delivering the training programme, to working with schools. By training teachers of children in grades 8-11 (aged 14-17), the project could reach many more young people, including those who were hard for the project partners to reach directly.

Main Achievements

Several milestones marked the successful integration of the project's components into the education system.

Resources for teachers

A manual for teachers with easy to navigate sections, illustrations and links to video-tutorials via QR codes consisting of the following modules:

- **Personal development:** 17 lessons of 45 minutes adapted from The Tune In module for young people was adapted for use in secondary schools.
- **Professional orientation:** 5 lessons of 45 minute, adapted from the professional orientation manual.
- **Workbook for students:** to promote personal reflection at home
- **Parenting:** 10 lessons for parents based on extracts from the Tune In Module II (Adults) and Module III (Generations dialogue). These materials were developed as guidance tools for teachers to support them in leading parent–teacher meetings and interactive sessions with parents.

- **1500** copies of the manual were printed for distribution to teacher training institutes and centres in all seven oblasts. In addition, the project also produced:



- A **72-hour** teacher training curriculum for use by the teacher training institutes (available in Russian and Kyrgyz).
- A video version of **8 lessons** accessible via QR-code access for easy viewing and use by teachers during their lessons.
- **Online** versions of the lesson.

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The lessons are described as easily as possible, with examples and explanations. The exercises are original, not hackneyed, gently lead to reflection and conclusions. What I liked about the guide is that you don't need to add or subtract anything. It is enough just to carefully study and prepare the necessary

(teacher-trainer interviewed as part of the project's external evaluation)

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Official endorsement

- In **2020** a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Kyrgyz Academy of Education on undertaking joint efforts to develop and introduce a manual on “Self-awareness and personal development of adolescents” into schools.
- On **29 September 2020**, the Academic Council of the Kyrgyz Academy of Education approved the lessons to be introduced into the school curriculum and on 16 October 2020 the Ministry of Education invited the project partners to pilot the lessons in secondary schools.
- In **April 2021**, the Scientific Council of the Kyrgyz Academy of Education approved the five lessons on professional orientation adapted from the YOU Professional Orientation Module and recommended to all school countrywide.
- In **2023**, a memorandum of understanding was signed with teacher training institutions in all 7 oblasts of Kyrgyzstan to continue promoting the integration of the methodology into the formal education system.



Teacher training

- **1567** teacher trainers were trained on the personal development and professional orientation modules.
- Since 2023 the Republican and regional teacher training institutes systematically and independently conducted courses on “Self-awareness and personal development of adolescents”. In 2024 around **12** courses for groups of around **20** teachers were being run at the central education academy and around **7** courses a year in **6** regional training centres. At this rate, around **1’000** teachers could be trained per year. **91%** of teachers surveyed believe that the materials meet the real needs of adolescents and parents, and **94%** feel confident in conducting classes after completing the trainings. *(Data from final project evaluation.)*

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This course gets the best feedback among the courses, compared to subject courses. Teachers choose these courses the most and participate until the end

(Teacher trainer in focus group discussion on 17.09.2024)

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The keys to success

Several elements came together to make possible integration of the project’s components into the education system.

A ready-made answer

The objectives of the YOU project corresponded closely to priorities of the state to promote the personal and civic development of young people. Integration of the training into the school curriculum was therefore in line with state concepts and decrees such as the national concept “Development of Civil Identity - Kyrgyz Zharany (Kyrgyz citizen) in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period of 2021-2026, the presidential decree “On the spiritual and moral development and physical education of the individual”, the presidential decree “On national tradition”, the concept of Ministry of Education and Science on “Nurturing of schoolchildren and youth of the Kyrgyz republic for 2021-2030” and the Concept of the State Youth Policy for 2020-2030. The Tune In training programme offered a ready-made answer, on how to address the topics of personal and civic development in schools.

Internal allies helped to promote integration

The project worked closely with the Republican Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of Pedagogical Workers, which is the national institution responsible for teacher training in Kyrgyzstan, and the Kyrgyz Academy of Education, which is responsible for curriculum development. The KAE had been promoting the topic of self-awareness and personal development in education for the previous ten years. The program came at a very good time. KAO had been planning to bring the topic of self-knowledge into the education system but had not developed a plan how to do so. The director of the institute, Almazbek Toktomametov, witnessed the positive impact of the Tune-In methodology on schoolchildren and lobbied for the topic of self-awareness to be included in the list of 3 main competencies in the State Educational Standard of School General Education of the Kyrgyz Republic.[1]

Key official partners of the project



Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan

Officially supported the delivery of teacher trainings on YOU methodology in line with existing formal education system (secondary schools) through the educational partners listed below.

Kyrgyz Academy of Education

As the institution responsible for managing the process of curriculum development, gave approval for the methodology and developed manuals to be recommended for schoolteachers and be used in the frame of extracurricular activities.



Teacher training institutes:

- Republican Institute for Advanced Training and Retraining of Pedagogical Workers
- Regional Institutions for Teachers Retraining in Osh and Karakol cities
- Methodological centre for advanced training of teachers in Batken, Manas, Talas and Naryn cities



[1] Competence - a predetermined social requirement (norm) to the educational training of a student, necessary for his/her effective productive activity in a certain sphere.

With teachers, for teachers

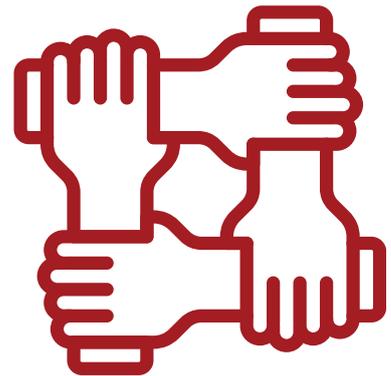
The adaptation of the training programme for schools was done in close collaboration with teachers. Youth of Osh worked closely with the Kyrgyz Academy of Education, the main teacher training institute in Kyrgyzstan. Multiple pilots and tests with secondary teachers were carried out to finalize the lessons. The adapted lessons were also revised by psychology expert. Feedback from teachers confirmed that the teaching materials were very practical and easy to use.

Recommendations for the future

To ensure the sustainability of what has been achieved, the project recommends education actors to consider the following four points.

Establish peer support networks

To ensure high quality lessons, and maintain teacher motivation, it is recommended to establish a peer support network or community of practice for teachers that have been through the training. This could be facilitated largely online at relatively low cost. An annual in-person meeting, perhaps with a “teacher of the year” component could further contribute to teacher engagement and motivation.



Extend training to pedagogical universities



The project focused its efforts on reaching teachers through the advanced and further training institutes. Reaching students who will be the teachers of the future, can help them to build the mindset and approach into their teaching from the beginning. It is therefore recommended to work also with pedagogical universities, where future teachers receive their basic training, to reinforce the anchoring of the approach within teacher training.

Find new ways to reach parents

The approach of the YOU project was to train both young people and adults. Changes in the attitudes and skills of both groups contributes to an improvement in their relationship. The original Tune In methodology therefore had separate modules for both young people and adults (see Briefing Note 2). As the project shifted to teachers becoming the main trainers, it was foreseen that teachers would train students and offer separate classes for parents. 10 lessons were adapted from the Tune In Adults Module, for use at parent-teacher meetings at schools, and approved for use by the Scientific Council of KAE.



Feedback from parents confirmed the transformative effect that participation in the training had for parents (see Briefing Note 2). However, teachers reported that participation by parents was low, particularly among fathers. This can be explained by the limited availability of many parents, and a suspicion that school-organized events are used by the school to complain to parents about their children.

The following ideas could help improve outreach to parents:

- Revitalizing parents' monthly meetings with stronger and more positive communication by the school. Training activities could be integrated into the meetings.
- Working together with parents' committees, who could champion, and even co-organize the courses
- Working with parents from primary-school age children, who may be more motivated to work on their parenting skills
- Reaching parents through other channels than schools. For example, Youth of Osh developed 4 video podcasts on the topic of "parenting among fathers".

Involve school management

While the project engaged closely with teachers and teacher training institutes, there was not a systematic engagement with schools as institutions. Some teachers faced difficulties in implementing the different elements of the project (personal development lessons, professional orientation, supporting student-led initiatives). Obstacles included high student numbers, limited availability of appropriate space and materials a high workload, a crowded timetable and resistance from parents. While in some schools, teachers received strong support from their principals and school administration, this was not the case in every school.

To address possible obstacles and ensure teachers receive the support they need, it is recommended that school management is sensitized about the different courses and involved in planning their integration into the school curriculum.

Secure support of education officials at national, regional and city levels

Motivation in schools, teacher training colleges and amongst teachers is high. National level education authorities should support this momentum by making available the resources to ensure teachers are trained and supported to apply this approach.

Officials in the regional and city education departments also have an important role to play. They are responsible for selection of teachers for further training. They can therefore contribute a lot by promoting the course and helping to identify potential training participants from amongst teachers working in areas where young people are most in need of such training.

Personal story

Guli describes her life as once constrained by expectations: a teacher, wife, mother, daughter, always trying to meet the standards set by others. She was shy, rarely expressed her thoughts, and distanced herself from the world. Conflict at home, tension with children, and limited self-expression defined her daily life.



Guli Nurdinova

Attending the project's training sessions sparked a personal awakening. Gradually, she became more confident, openly expressing opinions, interacting respectfully with her children, students, and husband. She stopped yelling at her children and began seeing them as unique individuals capable of growth. She learned to guide rather than punish, transforming minor mistakes into learning opportunities. Guli now loves herself and others as they are, navigating challenges with awareness.

Her transformation extends beyond personal growth: as a teacher and coordinator, she applies these principles in her school, fostering respect, collaboration, and student initiative. She describes the project as a journey from silence and self-doubt to confident action and empowerment, both personally and professionally.