



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

KYRGYZSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Trip Changes Man's Life

A U.S. study tour empowers a Kyrgyz man to take action for the development of his community



Sagyndyk Chekirbaev in front of his new mosque in Naryn. Photo: ACCELS

“I had a vague idea for establishing a mosque and shelter but did have a clear plan of action to take me to its fruition. Thanks to the USAID program, I developed a realistic plan and reached my goals within a short period.”

- Sagyndyk Chekirbaev, a USAID Community Connections program alumna.

Sagyndyk Chekirbaev started a new life after his trip to the United States of America organized by the USAID Community Connections program to demonstrate the role of religion in the United States. Upon return from the three-week visit, Chekirbaev began to work on an action plan that focuses on religious education and community development. He has already succeeded in building a mosque in his community using volunteer labor and his own funds garnered from the sale of his car.

During the Soviet period, the Communist Party actively discouraged religious activity throughout the Soviet Union, including Kyrgyzstan with its largely Muslim population. Since independence, people renewed their interest in religion, but its place in this constitutionally secular society remains uncertain.

Even before the study tour, Chekirbaev had many plans for his community such as building a mosque and establishing a shelter for orphans with the support of donor organizations, but sustainability was an obstacle he had yet to overcome.

In the spring of 2008, Chekirbaev visited Chicago as part of a group of religious leaders. Program participants visited private schools operated by various religious groups, as well as public schools. Chekirbaev was especially interested in cooperation among both individuals and organizations from the secular and religious communities. Program sessions on strategic planning, plan implementation, monitoring, analyzing, and plan refinement were of even greater interest to him.

“I had a vague idea for establishing a mosque and shelter but did have a clear plan of action to take me to its fruition. Thanks to the USAID program, I developed a realistic plan and reached my goals within a short period,” says Chekirbaev.

Chekirbaev's plans outlined the steps needed to establish a mosque in his community and to open a small business in order to support the community with religious education and employment. The newly-established mosque has hot water, heating, showers, a kitchen, a dining room, and an indoor plumbing which are all uncommon in the Naryn City. Ten volunteers run the mosque, and about 20 people attend it every day. Chekirbaev also opened a small car service center where four men are employed.

Chekirbaev now plan to open a shelter for 15 to 20 orphans and a school which will teach not only religious disciplines but also secular subjects such as those he saw in the United States.