

Home comforts in Issyk-Kul villages: affordable rural infrastructure and new business opportunities

BISHKEK (TCA) — The winter is beautiful in the Kyrgyz landscape, cold and snow have covered the Kyrgyz landscape again, which is however a yearly recurring challenges for the rural people.

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The winter in the villages is much more difficult than in the cities, there is a large divide related to the infrastructure, water, sanitation and heating, which hinders, not only but especially in the cold months, the economic development such as tourist activities in the rural areas.

The EuropeAid funded project “Home comforts” demonstrates solutions how to find affordable and sustainable ways towards improved living conditions in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. “It is so important to bridge the divide between rural and urban areas in Kyrgyzstan,” says Anara Choitonbaeva, chairperson of the Kyrgyz Alliance for Water and Sanitation (KAWS), “thus applying adapted and sustainable technologies for rural areas.” She coordinates the activities taking place in nine villages in the Issyk-Kul oblast. “Especially women and girls are suffering from insufficient infrastructure in the villages,” adds Aijamal Bakashova, gender expert of ALGA, who prepared the baseline study about the situation in the villages.

The selected adapted technologies cover three aspects essential

for an improved living standard: comfortable heating, warm water and safe sanitation in the house. Energy efficient stoves, solar collectors for warm water and ECOSAN toilets have been installed in each of the nine villages for demonstration. They are located in public places, mostly in the Community Drinking Water Users Unions (CDWUU) so that the villagers can see and touch the new technologies, e.g. in the village Chyrak the energy efficient stoves were installed in the post office and in Toguz Bulak in the village ambulatory. “The energy efficient stove is an advanced stove technology which saves fuel, heats more space and protects the indoor air quality better than a traditional stove,” argues Ruslan Isaev, expert of Camp Ala-Too. 18 stove masters were trained by Camp Ala-Too in October and more than 20 stoves have been constructed up to now by the new stove masters.

The ECOSAN toilet is an innovative technology which does not need water for flushing, does not smell and attract flies. The CDWUUs will support the construction, operation and maintenance of the ECOSAN sanitation facilities in the villages.

The solar collector built from local material makes use of the sun’s energy, provides warm water for the houses and complements

the home infrastructure. Bakyt Choitonbaev, chairman of Territorial Self-governance Public Union “Bokonbaevo-Manjly” of the village Bokonbaevo underlines, “The energy efficient stove, the solar collector and the ECOSAN toilet are the infrastructure needed for a guest house to set up tourist business activities.”

“After successful installation of demonstration objects, the key challenges for sustainably implementing and up-scaling the environmental infrastructure technologies are the lacking financing options for the villagers,” explains Claudia Wendland, the overall project coordinator at WECF, Women in Europe for a Common Future. “There are many micro finance opportunities in Kyrgyzstan available, however they offer commonly high interest rates which are unaffordable for many villagers. Thus social financial mechanisms for this type of infrastructure up-scaling in rural areas should be made available. The project foresees a social housing microcredit scheme being made available for the villagers.” The governor of Issyk-Kul oblast, Mirbek Asanakov, welcomed a delegation from the village and the project coordinators: “These activities are very important for the Issyk-Kul oblast and will be integrated into the strategy development plan.”