

Project profile

WhatsApp peacebuilding courses: strengthening the role of young people in Kyrgyzstan

Introduction

In 2018 Saferworld, the International Debate Education Association Central Asia, International Center Interbilim and Foundation for Tolerance International – with the support of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund – launched a project to strengthen the role of young people in Kyrgyzstan to promote peace and security. The project aims to facilitate safe dialogue spaces for young women and men in Kyrgyzstan to collectively identify and articulate their peace and security concerns, support youth to advocate for action and accountability from their authorities, and create opportunities for their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. The project also aims to facilitate the youth-led report in Kyrgyzstan on young people's perceptions of the government's progress on goals related to youth, gender, peace and security under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To ensure that the project supports as many young people as possible, including in remote areas of Kyrgyzstan, Saferworld aims to run peacebuilding courses via WhatsApp for 100–180 young people aged between 17 and 25.

Background

Young people, who constitute more than a third of Kyrgyzstan's population, face various challenges including a lack of employment and development opportunities, limited access to services, and marginalisation within their communities. Living in this environment, young women and men appear to be excluded from major socio-economic and political life in Kyrgyzstan, and are often divided along geographical, ethnic, religious and gender lines. Young people living in remote areas face additional barriers to participation, but the WhatsApp peacebuilding course aims to involve young people of different backgrounds from these areas.

Eighty to 100 young women and men from communities in Kyrgyzstan, including from remote areas, who will not be able to physically join programme activities – such as youth camps and participatory research – will participate in a pilot WhatsApp peacebuilding course, which will also help them to connect and interact with each other. The WhatsApp course was designed and piloted by Saferworld to support the work of youth and gender activists, community initiatives and civil society in Yemen, through harnessing the knowledge, creativity, and expertise of communities, and by offering new skills and materials to increase the impact of existing and future peacebuilding work. The course was adapted to the context of Kyrgyzstan, translated into Kyrgyz and Russian, and tested among 12 Russian-speaking volunteers.



Project

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strengthening the role of young people in
Kyrgyzstan

Project locations

Osh, Batken, Jalal-Abad and Chui districts

Donor

United Nations Peacebuilding Fund

Project duration

December 2018–May 2020

Saferworld thematic area

Security and justice, youth

It aims to strengthen the skills of young people and support existing youth-led initiatives, engage participants in collaborative activities, critical reflections, and thought-provoking discussions, and support the development of a network among course participants. Using WhatsApp ensures that more remote and excluded groups of young people are included in peacebuilding processes. A government partner, the State Agency on Youth, Physical Culture and Sports, recommended remote areas in Kyrgyzstan to cover within the course including Ak-Talaa and At-Bashy districts in Naryn province; Chatkal and Toguz-Toroo districts in Jalal-Abad province; Jeti-Oguz, Ak-Suu and Tup districts in the province of Yssyk-Kul; and Leilek and Batken districts in Batken province.

Project approach

Together with our partners, Saferworld will:

- Adapt WhatsApp peacebuilding course content including peace concepts, peacebuilding approaches and tools, gender and conflict analysis and sensitivity training, community needs assessment, problem identification, identifying and mitigating against risks, goal setting, action planning and theories of change; and develop a delivery strategy for Kyrgyzstan.
- Train young women and men, aged 17–25, from remote areas via WhatsApp on peacebuilding principles and concepts and, specifically, on effectively dealing with stereotypes, ‘single stories’ (one-sided stories that sometimes embed false perceptions about others), ongoing violence, conflict analysis and actor power mapping. We will also support existing or new youth initiatives which contribute to resolving the peace and security concerns of young people and transforming their communities.
- Facilitate and support WhatsApp peacebuilding course graduates to share learning from the course and implement community-level peace initiatives with other young people in their communities.

Anticipated outcomes

- Young women and men from remote areas of Kyrgyzstan demonstrate an increased understanding of peacebuilding principles, conflict analysis tools, and ways to positively contribute to addressing challenges facing youth in their communities.
- WhatsApp course participants build a network across geographic, ethnic and religious divides.
- WhatsApp course graduates lead peer learning and peacebuilding activities.

Photo: Participants of a youth camp discuss the central principles of democracy, March 2019. ©Saferworld

Activities

- Introduce the course and provide a space for the participants in each WhatsApp group to get to know each other.
- Create spaces for sharing best practices of supporting one another during conflict, including identifying shared issues, self and group expression and exposing each other to different perspectives.
- Introduce peacebuilding tools, including context/conflict analysis and personal risk mitigation in peacebuilding.
- Build the capacity of the participants to map community needs and identify factors that either contribute to addressing those needs or stop them from being addressed.
- Build participants’ risk analysis and management skills, introducing them to budgeting and accountability in terms of behaviour and human and financial resources.
- Give participants the opportunity to develop proposals for small peacebuilding initiatives and submit them to Saferworld, which will then finance the most promising four initiatives and coordinate their implementation.

Partners

- International Debate Education Association Central Asia
- International Center Interbilim
- Foundation for Tolerance International

Funded by



United Nations Peacebuilding Fund

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