EVALUATION

Learning Evaluation of USAID/Kyrgyz Republic’s National Admissions Test (NAT) Project

April 2014

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PROGRAM CYCLE SERVICE CENTER

LEARNING EVALUATION OF USAID/KYRGYZ REPUBLIC’S NATIONAL ADMISSIONS TEST (NAT) PROJECT

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PROJECT BACKGROUND</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. FINDINGS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX I: STATEMENT OF WORK</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX II: BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX III: STAKEHOLDER DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX IV: CHART OF QUESTIONS POSED IN ANSWER TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX V: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX VI: CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX VII: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF CHARTS

CHART 1. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES/MISSED OPPORTUNITIES........................................................................................................... IX

CHART 2. OVERALL NAT ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES/MISSED OPPORTUNITIES............................................................................................................. 8

CHART 3. MOES ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES/MISSED OPPORTUNITIES........................................................................................................... 12

CHART 4. USAID ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES/MISSED OPPORTUNITIES........................................................................................................... 13

CHART 5: USAID FUNDING TO CEATM – 2005-2013 ............................................. 14

CHART 6. COUNCILS/CEATM ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES/MISSED OPPORTUNITIES........................................................................................................... 15

CHART 7: LOE FOR EVALUATION TEAM................................................................ 35

CHART 8. QUESTIONS POSED IN ANSWER TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS 53

CHART 9. US INTERVIEWS................................................................................................. 55

CHART 10. IN-FIELD INTERVIEWS AND ACTIVITIES ........................................... 56

CHART 11. SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS AS A PERCENT OF NAT TEST-TAKERS, BY GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORY................................................................. 61

CHART 12. NAT TEST TAKERS VS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ............................. 62

CHART 13. PERCENTAGE OF NAT PARTICIPANTS VS. SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ENROLLED, BY GEOGRAPHIC QUOTA CATEGORIES, BY YEAR ........................................................................................................................................... 63

CHART 14. NUMBER OF TEST-TAKERS, SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS, AND AVERAGE SCORES BY SEX ........................................................................................................... 65

CHART 15. NUMBER OF NAT TEST TAKERS, NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS, PERCENTAGE OF TEST TAKERS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS ............. 66

CHART 16. AVERAGE NAT SCORE OF BUDGET STUDENTS, BY GEOGRAPHIC CATEGORY .......................................................................................................................... 67

CHART 17. PERCENTAGE OF NAT TEST TAKERS RECEIVING SCHOLARSHIPS, BY LANGUAGE ........................................................................................................... 68

CHART 18. ENGLISH AND MATH SUBJECT MATTER (SM) TEST RESULTS BY SEX (2012 AND 2013) ........................................................................................................................................... 69

CHART 19. MATH NAT AND MATH SUBJECT MATTER TEST RESULTS BY SEX (2012 AND 2013) ........................................................................................................................................... 69

CHART 20. BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY SUBJECT MATTER TEST RESULTS BY SEX (2012 AND 2013) ........................................................................................................................................... 69
### ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTR/ACCELS</td>
<td>American Councils of International Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Cooperative Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central Asian Republics</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEATM</td>
<td>Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
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<td>ETS</td>
<td>Educational Testing Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITO</td>
<td>Independent Testing Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAE</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Academy of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KR</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAT</td>
<td>National Admissions Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NST</td>
<td>National Scholarship Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Testing Center (of MOES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTI</td>
<td>National Testing Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEAKS</td>
<td>Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program of International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPL/LER</td>
<td>Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning’s Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research at USAID, Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>QR</td>
<td>Quarterly Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Scholastic Aptitude Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOW</td>
<td>Statement of Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction: The purposes of this evaluation of USAID/Kyrgyz Republic’s Project on the National (University) Admissions Test (NAT) are: (1) to learn about the results of the project, i.e., to provide information and recommendations about the organizational sustainability of the Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM) and to inform the design of future higher education activities for USAID in the region; and (2) to build the evaluation capacity of USAID staff members. Specifically, the statement of work posed the following:

1. To what degree has NAT resulted in greater equality of access to the university system? How has this manifested across different populations (e.g. rural/urban, languages, gender)? What have been the main promoters and hindrances to meeting this objective?
2. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in higher education policies and/or practices (e.g., admissions policies, language policy, curriculum, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
3. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in secondary education policies and/or practices (e.g., curriculum, textbooks, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
4. How can NAT be sustained and improved as the basis for allocating state scholarships? What other functions could NAT serve?

Background: Kyrgyzstan President Akaev in 2000, appointed Camila Sharshekeeva, a noted innovator in higher education, to spearhead an initiative to change the way universities awarded state scholarships as the system had become very corrupt. Calling upon her past relationships with the American Councils for International Education (in the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) referred to as ACTR/ACCELS; in this report referred to as Councils), the Minister and Councils wrote a proposal to USAID that sought, first, to develop a standardized test that would help determine which students would receive scholarships (to be allocated on a geographic basis that weighted the results emerging from rural and mountainous regions), and, second, to develop an independent testing organization (ITO) that would further develop and administer the NAT.

Within two months of receiving the proposal in 2002, USAID/CAR awarded funds for the project for two years. Although USAID/CAR did not have an education strategic objective, this project “fit” under two cross-cutting themes: anti-corruption and creating opportunities for alienated youth, and the strategic objective 2.1, Strengthened Democratic Culture Among Citizens and Target Institutions. Councils delivered on all its goals, including the development of the ITO, CEATM. The initial test (administered in 2002) was designed by international experts from the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, NJ, and a cadre of Kyrgyz professional educators who had been introduced to a different type of learning facilitated by the Soros Foundation. In establishing CEATM, these same professionals were hired and further trained by noted international aptitude test developers. CEATM was registered as an NGO in 2004, and worked closely with Councils until the end of the project in 2005. Thereafter, CEATM applied for a tender from the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) to administer the test in an ever-growing number of test centers. The MOES often awarded the tender late, thus creating financial gaps between registration and test administration. Each year USAID filled this gap to cover the cost of generating new subject-matter tests, purchasing a new scanner, creating study
guides, and other targeted deliverables. The original award for the test plus the two-year project amounted to US $1.5 million, and subsequent funding amounted to about US $600,000.

Since CEATM was established it has dealt with significant challenges in performing its functions, not the least of which have been death threats, unsubstantiated charges of corruption by the media and others, challenges from the Education Committee of Parliament, and ever-changing political leadership, some of whom were wholeheartedly for the NAT while others were abjectly against it. Through all of these, CEATM and the NAT have survived and even flourished. Their resilience was rewarded on the last day the evaluation team was in country: CEATM was awarded the first three-year tender to continue administering the NAT.

Methods and Limitations: A mixed-methods approach was utilized in this evaluation, including document review, individual and focus group interviews, and an interview process utilizing the Likert Scale. \(^1\) Data were collected from the following 101 respondents:

- **Universities** (Kyrgyz National State University (Bishkek) and Osh State University (Osh)): 2 Rectors, 4 Vice Rectors, 18 Faculty (including 8 deans); 18 Students [3 “budget” (scholarship) and 15 “contract” (fee-paying)]
- **Urban Secondary Schools** (#87 in Bishkek; Mombekov #101, Osh Outskirts; and Gagarin #17, Osh City): 2 Directors, 1 Vice Director, 14 Teachers, 22 Students, 11 parents
- **USAID staff members**: 6 past and current
- **Implementing partner staff**: CEATM: 6; and Councils: 3
- **Academic/Other**: 4

Several limitations affected the evaluation team’s ability to sufficiently answer the evaluation questions. These include: the limited evaluation experience and availability of USAID team members since this was a learning evaluation to increase their evaluation skills; the constrained number and urban location of schools and universities at which interviews were conducted, which minimized the generalizability of findings; restriction on interviewing MOES (due to the impending tender decision noted above); delayed access to documentation; and difficulties related to translation and interpretation between English, Kyrgyz, and Russian.

Findings: The findings related to increasing access to university (Question 1) and NAT’s effect on universities and secondary schools (Questions 2-3) are summarized as follows.

**Increased Access to University and Reduction of Corruption (Question 1)**
Given the comprehensive nature of this question, the findings are presented on NAT and key stakeholder (MOES, USAID, and Councils/CEATM). They include key quantitative and qualitative findings related to NAT test takers, scores, and scholarship recipients across various demographics in context of the equality of access question. The unique feature about the findings is that many achievements include caveats that can also be seen as challenges/missed opportunities.\(^2\) For this reason, we present selected aspects of these two sets of findings juxtaposed in chart format so that the reader may see the complexity of this analysis.

\(^1\) A ranking exercise to gauge satisfaction in four categories: very satisfied (1), satisfied (2), dissatisfied (3), very dissatisfied (4).

\(^2\) Challenges within this report context are defined as difficulties each stakeholder experienced in fulfilling its roles. Missed opportunities are areas in which a positive action could have been taken with minimal effort by a given stakeholder, but was not.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Chart 1. Summary of Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Challenges/Missed Opportunities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NAT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NAT increased university access for students from disadvantaged geographic areas, since the majority of scholarship winners have been from rural and mountainous areas—between 62% (low) and 72% (high) from 2002 and 2013.</td>
<td>The equalizing effect of NAT may be overstated, as the number of scholarships relative to test-takers is small. Moreover, this percentage diminishes as the number of test-takers increases and the number of scholarships remains constant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NAT quota system has promoted a “level playing field” since the percentage of NAT test-takers in each geographical category is roughly equivalent to the percentage of scholarship winners in each category.</td>
<td>The quota system may inherently set up unequal standards for scholarships by geographical categories; limited choice of specializations for scholarship students; different treatment of scholarship/fee-paying students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NAT is sensitive to language equity since it is available in both Kyrgyz and Russian, and, until 2013/2014 academic year, in Uzbek.</td>
<td>Despite the test being available in Kyrgyz and Russian, there are challenges in examining equitable scholarship distribution, NAT test scores, and test equivalency across language groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females take the NAT in greater numbers, score higher on the NAT, and receive more scholarships.</td>
<td>Males take the NAT in fewer numbers, score lower on the NAT, and receive fewer scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreed that an independent testing organization (ITO) should create and administer NAT.</td>
<td>Significant objections were raised about not having the relevant MOES unit develop and implement the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed corruption in awarding scholarships by facilitating the creation of a standardized, transparent testing system.</td>
<td>Other forms of corruption continued: some scholarship students reported paying an informal fee to take end-of-term exams so as not to lose their scholarship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a scholarship quota system intended to make the system more accessible to students from under-represented geographic areas (mainly rural).</td>
<td>The quota system did not take into account financial need of the student in determining scholarship allocations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a quota system for budget and fee-paying students intended to increase the number of students pursuing specializations linked to the labor needs of the country.</td>
<td>The quota system limited the choice of specializations for scholarship students. Uncertainty exists about whether graduates become employed in their specialization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreed that all students should be admitted to university on the basis of their NAT scores.</td>
<td>Despite the large increase in NAT test-takers, the MOES maintained the same number of scholarships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USAID</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided timely support that enabled a “quick win” regarding eliminating one source of corruption by opening up transparency for equality of access.</td>
<td>Evolutionary follow-up processes that would have helped establish lasting, systemic, cultural change in education were not undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabled the creation of a local, independent testing organization in the post-Soviet environment in a short period of time.</td>
<td>The piecemeal nature of subsequent grants meant that USAID missed an opportunity to serve in a longer-term mentoring or organizational capacity development role, which has served as a means to strengthen the NAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that project activities were completed in a timely and consistent manner (i.e. activity oversight), and initial performance monitoring planning was comprehensive.</td>
<td>The lack of synthesis, analysis, and use of existing data suggests that USAID engagement in high-level performance management was limited and the chance to influence educational reform further was missed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial collaborative relations with the MOES precipitated quick establishment of the NAT, more objective awarding of scholarships, and increased access to university.</td>
<td>NAT is not a central topic of USAID-MOES dialogue given other priorities in the education sector; MOES changes have resulted in fluctuating support for NAT.</td>
</tr>
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### Achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councils/CEATM</th>
<th>Challenges/Missed Opportunities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established and maintained the highest standards of test development and administration free of corruption and capable of responding to MOES needs in continually updating the NAT and developing subject-matter tests.</td>
<td>Attack by those with a vested interest in maintaining the patronage system; unsubstantiated accusations of corruption by the media; undetermined use of subject-matter tests for university placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed and implemented a countrywide aptitude test based on the use of logical thinking to solve problems.</td>
<td>Lack of familiarity with this type of testing led students to enroll in privately-held classes (for a fee).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continually establishes new testing sites to facilitate ease of access to students.</td>
<td>Must negotiate with school directors and officials presiding over other public buildings to allow free testing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and trains proctors to staff training centers on testing days.</td>
<td>Must ensure that no corruption takes place, especially when tests are not all offered on the same day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops and updates study guides in the NAT and subject-matter tests for students and teachers to use.</td>
<td>Guides must be updated periodically and include several sample questions. Increasing costs limit the number schools and poorer students can purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds informational campaigns countrywide at schools and other venues to inform parents, students and teachers about the NAT and subject-matter tests.</td>
<td>Not all geographic areas can be reached to the same degree, so some stakeholders are not as well informed as others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops annual reports documenting student marks and access in all geographic categories.</td>
<td>Further analyses would indicate how access is changing with the increasing number of test takers.</td>
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Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014

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**NAT’s Effect on Universities and Secondary Schools (Questions 2 and 3)**

**Universities:** Although university rectors and faculty were initially displeased with the autonomy taken from them when NAT was made a requirement for state scholarship awards, they are now accustomed to NAT and cite it as the basis for more free and fair state scholarship awards and university entrance. Students from families that are economically challenged discussed the increased hope inspired by NAT because previously their parents would have had to “sell a cow” to pay a bribe for university entrance. This particular system of corruption is no longer in operation. Other obstacles remain, e.g., scholarship students are limited in their choice of specializations but fee-paying students are not (except if slots have already been taken); and budget students are often taught by those less qualified while contract students are taught by more experienced faculty. Owing to the increase in students taking the NAT and subject-matter tests (from 33,000 to 55,000 in 2011-2012), attributable to the MOES requiring that all potential university students take these test, faculty members reported there is little relationship between NAT results and the ability of a student to perform well at university, but this could not be substantiated and counters earlier evidence (Davidson 2003).

**Secondary Schools:** The NAT has succeeded in raising the hope of university studies for many high-school students, and it has introduced aptitude-testing and logical thinking into secondary school discourse. However, there is little evidence to indicate that the secondary school methods and curriculum have undergone meaningful change as a result of the NAT general and subject-matter tests. Teachers do not have time in the curriculum or appropriate training to prepare students for NAT. Teachers also agreed that textbooks are woefully inadequate, outdated, and insufficient in number. The team could not ascertain whether any changes have been made in teacher training as a result of the NAT and the subject-matter tests.
Conclusions: The conclusion for each question posed in this evaluation is largely “it depends,” or “yes, but…” Owing to the number of respondents we could only draw conclusions specific to the groups that we interviewed, rather than posing generalizable conclusions that might be drawn in more comprehensive evaluations. The conflicting findings presented may indeed take on different contours if a more extensive evaluation were undertaken.

Recommendations: The recommendations for USAID relate to the NAT/CEATM and program management:
- Support the continuous evolution of CEATM as it seeks to further professionalize its staff and address the complexity of the NAT as a means to equalize access to the university.
- Address the “evolutionary” characteristics noted in the Findings by committing a longer-term time horizon, using higher-level outcomes, generating an M&E plan, conducting periodic research on selected themes, and assisting with organizational capacity-building.
- Support CEATM for a year to conduct an organizational assessment and guide them through a realignment of the NAT and subject-matter tests.

The recommendations for CEATM go beyond the NAT project’s original mandate generated more than 10 years ago and entail changes in the mandate and thus future activities.
- Build support through strengthened relationships with the MOES, Education Committee in Parliament and other political leaders who may not be aware of significant accomplishments.
- Continue to develop study guides and post related materials on the website.
- Publish “white” papers, based on data collected and published annually on NAT results and on critical issues in tertiary and secondary school reform.
- Hold public policy forums on the NAT as an aptitude test and the usefulness of subject-matter tests, calling upon the opinions of global experts.
- Continue to review the NAT to determine if it is still culturally relevant, subject-matter appropriate (especially for rural school students) and gender equitable.
- Standardize annual reports to include the same information every year.
- Establish relationships with more universities to develop research on selected topics (e.g., scholarship student drop-out rates, ability of NAT scores to predict academic success, etc.).
- Establish a broader coalition of support, e.g., with Peace Corps teachers, other civil society organizations, and other agencies with an interest in educational reform.
- Work with the CEATM Board of Directors in identifying other sources of support; have each Board member contribute to the financial sustainability of the organization.

The recommendations for universities and secondary schools include:
- Develop “bridging” courses for new university entrants with subject-matter deficiencies.
- Universities can collaborate with the appropriate MOES unit to revise curricula and develop textbooks in the Kyrgyz language.
- Universities can explore, with the MOES, establishing a financial needs-based scholarship award process. The NAT could serve as the first “cut” to demonstrate proficiency.
- School directors should explore different ways that teachers could actively engage in regular in-service training to update their teaching approaches and subject-matter skills.
- School directors and teachers should determine where there is some space in the school day to offer NAT preparation courses.
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1. INTRODUCTION
This learning evaluation of USAID/Kyrgyz Republic’s Project on the National (University) Admissions Test (NAT) has two purposes: (1) to learn about the results of the project, i.e., to provide information and recommendations about the organizational sustainability of the Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM), to inform the design of future higher education activities for USAID/CAR and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, and to inform similar reforms being implemented in post-Soviet contexts; and (2) to build the evaluation capacity of participating team members, which predominately consist of USAID staff.

Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions
The evaluation Statement of Work (SOW) (see Annex I – SOW) focuses on four questions:

1. To what degree has NAT resulted in greater equality of access to the university system? How has this manifested across different populations (e.g. rural/urban, languages, gender)? What have been the main promoters and hindrances to meeting this objective?
2. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in higher education policies and/or practices (e.g. admissions policies, language policy, curriculum, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
3. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in secondary education policies and/or practices (e.g. curriculum, textbooks, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
4. How can NAT be sustained and improved as the basis for allocating state scholarships? What other functions could NAT serve?

Team Learning Plan
Each member of the team had different levels of training and experience in evaluation. Hence, the learning process included, among other items: 1) an initial assessment of evaluation skills; 2) learning experiences assigned over conference calls, including the generation of questions to be posed to different sets of stakeholders; 3) field data collection; 4) daily learning debriefings; 5) learning days that focused on different topics; 6) analyzing data; 7) writing and revising the report; and 8) a final assessment.

Organization of the Report
Section 2 presents the complex political transitional background out of which emerged the need for a mechanism to create equality in accessing university scholarships and university entrance. Section 3 outlines the methodology used to gather and analyze data to answer the four evaluation questions, and the limitations through which the team had to work to collect and analyze this information. Section 4 presents the findings of the research, organized in terms of the questions posed in the SOW, focusing on the achievements and challenges/missed opportunities of each of the four major stakeholders. Section 5 presents conclusions based on the limited number of research respondents. Section 6 suggests recommendations made both by major stakeholders and the team based on the limitations noted above.
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

National and Educational Context
Since the 1920s (shortly after the USSR was formed) and continuing until independence in 1991, the Soviet Union in Kyrgyzstan settled largely rural, nomadic populations on to collective state farms, provided employment in rural, state-owned factories, made schooling mandatory for all, and increased the literacy rate from 5% in 1926 to 97% by the 1980s - all measures designed to build the Soviet state (Johnson 2008:32-33).

The dissolution of the USSR and the independence of the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) in 1991 left an educational vacuum in the country. Russian educators returned en masse to Russia, the number of schools in which Kyrgyz became the language of instruction increased without adequate teacher preparation and textbooks, and educational decision-making remained centralized, although directives came from Bishkek. The system the Kyrgyz state inherited was imbued with a mentality of centralization, had to meet the educational needs of a population joining a global economy, was devoid of significant resources to address a crumbling secondary education system, and was rampant with corruption. At the tertiary level, corruption was a pattern set by the Soviet Union when increasing numbers of students sought university places (only between 20 and 30 percent of students who applied to university were accepted). The constraints on university entrance led, after independence, to the explosive growth of higher education institutions (HEI) to 52 state and private institutions. Russian persisted as the medium of instruction in Bishkek both at secondary schools and universities while Kyrgyz became the medium of instruction in almost 85% of rurally-located schools. The language residual of the Soviet system is observable today in schools, universities, textbooks, test results, and drop-out rates, with those learning in Russian consistently earning higher grades. (For a comprehensive discussion of the Soviet system and its legacy in education, see Johnson 2008, DeYoung 2006, and DeYoung 2011.)

Project Context
The system of university admissions and scholarship distribution was said to be corrupt as rectors and others sought to benefit from the increased demand for higher education, perceived to be the “ticket” to economic well-being. Each university established its own admissions policies and procedures, and the families of secondary school graduates generated their own admission strategies largely based on the principle of “willing seller, willing buyer.” Rural, less economically advantaged students could not meet the financial “incentive” needs to gain entrance without “selling a cow” or liquidating other assets (Johnson 2008:1-33).

Without an adequate budget, HEIs found it necessary to recruit students who could pay their own fees (contract students), changing their admissions procedures to accommodate the shift from written/essay and oral interviews to a variety of unique admissions procedures, including multiple-choice tests (Shamatov 2012, 76-7; Drummond 2011, 47-9; International Crisis Group, 2003). “[N]epotism, favoritism, and a lack of transparency….wealth and personal connections

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3 HEIs are distributed as follows: Bishkek, 21 state HEIs, and 9 non-state HEIs; in Osh and Osh oblast there are 5 state HEIs and 1 non-state HEI; Djalal-Abad, 1 state and 2 non-state; Issyk-Kul, one state and 3 non-state HEIs; Naryn, Talas and Batken oblasts, 1 HEI each (established since independence) that currently educate approximately 230,200 students (MOES 2012:22-23).
 replaced merit as essential prerequisites for enrollment at most universities with state scholarship funding” (Shamatov 2012, 77).

The NAT (initially called the National Scholarship Test (NST) when it was used only to determine scholarship awardees) was introduced into this transitional milieu to create a standardized means for academically proficient students to be awarded one of the approximately 5,700 state scholarships to study at university. The NAT was ultimately based on the US Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) mainly because the quality of secondary education varied significantly, especially when comparing the education provided in Bishkek to that provided in the rural and mountainous areas.

The MOES determined that certain university specializations required specific knowledge (e.g., biology and chemistry for medical school) and required subject-matter tests (based on secondary school curricula) for these specializations, in addition to the general aptitude test. Consequently, subject-matter tests were developed in biology, chemistry, German and English (later augmented with physics (for engineering students), specialized math, and Kyrgyz and world history (German was dropped due to declining interest)). At the same time, the MOES established a geographic quota system that favored students from underrepresented rural and mountainous areas to assure equitable competition and access. The MOES also determined the university specializations that would be available for scholarships, based on an analysis of which sectors needed skilled labor and therefore would lead to employment. No such limitations on fields of specialization exist for contract students. The research could not confirm if scholarship students studying specific subjects actually were employed in their respective fields.

Project Design and Implementation
The American Councils of International Education (in the KR, referred to as ACTR/ACCELS, but here shortened to Councils) had a long history of working in the region on educational exchange programs. In 2000, then President Akaev requested that Camila Sharshekeeva become Minister of Education (she was a known innovator in higher education, and is currently the Provost of the International University of Central Asia), and gave her the responsibility of initiating educational reform at the tertiary level. The Minister strategized with Councils to develop a national test, the results of which would be an objective measure upon which to award scholarships (interview with C. Sharshekeeva, February 27, 2014, Bishkek, KR).

Councils submitted a proposal to USAID/CAR that had two goals: development of a standardized test that would serve as the basis for an objective system on which to base scholarship awards, and the reduction of corruption at the tertiary education level. USAID/CAR did not have an education objective, but the proposal “fit” under two cross-cutting themes: reduction of corruption and creating opportunity for alienated youth, and the Mission’s Strategic Objective 2.1 – Strengthened Democratic Culture Among Citizens and Target Institutions (USAID/CAR 2001). In 2002 Councils was awarded US $1.5 million to create and administer the NAT (Contract 176-C-00-02-00026-00, May 2002), and to form an

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4 At the time, USAID activities in the Kyrgyz Republic were under the auspices of the CAR office in Almaty, with a few individuals working out of the embassy in Bishkek. This was changed only a few months prior to the evaluation when a country director was appointed to the Kyrgyz Republic and the office became a Mission.
independent testing organization (ITO) that could carry on the work after the project was over (Cooperative Agreement 116-AA-00-03-00014-00, April 3, 2003). From 2005-2013, USAID provided CEATM with targeted annual funding amounting to approximately US $600,000.

USAID/CAR’s strategy identified a critical component for the region that was not fully implemented in this project: “The Eastern European model of a rapid, structural transition to open market democracy is not appropriate for the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. . . . A modified, longer-term approach is needed to build popular knowledge, demand and political will, and opportunities for stable, pluralistic economic and political change within government, business and professional sectors, and among the citizenry” (USAID/CAR 2001:2). As a project that “fit,” it was somewhat of an “orphan” as it was not clear under which strategic objective/cross-cutting theme it would be administered and oversight exercised.

Councils produced and administered the first test in 2002 with the assistance of expert test developers in the US (from the Educational Testing Service (ETS)) and a team of education professionals that had benefited from an innovative “critical thinking” initiative funded by the Soros Foundation. After the first successful test administration, Councils developed the ITO, CEATM, which was registered in 2004 as an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) (Drummond 2004:2-3; Drummond 2010:122). Its initial staff members were the education professionals who were involved in developing the test. The test, after much deliberation and consultations with testing experts, took on the form of an aptitude test due, largely, to shortcomings in secondary education (compiled from interviews with CEATM staff, February 11-14, 2014).

CEATM faced significant challenges (and still does) from all sides: the livelihood of bribe-takers was severely threatened by NAT; parents in rural areas did not trust that their children would really have an opportunity to go to university; and secondary school and university leaders could not envision a “free and fair” system that gave all students a chance. The MOES itself did not fully trust that CEATM would deliver on its promises and required that CEATM and other organizations compete in a tender. No other organization applied, and CEATM was awarded the grant annually, but often late, thus limiting the registration period and the time to collect fees. Maintaining their professional integrity and desire to improve the system, CEATM delivered. As a result of its reputation and continuous attempts to work collaboratively with the MOES in a transparent manner, CEATM was awarded this year with a three-year award to continue developing and implementing the tests.

CEATM’s sustainability rests on its ability to generate funding. Test revenue in 2012 was 30,270,000 KGS (US $571,132.07) based on an approximate number of 55,000 test takers in 2012.5 However, this amount is not sufficient to sustain the organization given the increased expenses to administer the tests to a growing number of students. Other revenue-generating activities include: USAID’s Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS) project; World Bank’s Program of International Student Assessment (PISA); studies on testing in other countries in the region; and the third round of grade 4 National Assessments.

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5 The cost of the NAT and each subject-matter test is 220 KGS, each student takes the NAT and at least one subject-matter test, and the exchange rate is factored at US $1=53 KGS.
3. METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Team
The evaluation team consisted of five people: Nancy E. Horn, Ph.D., Team Leader, DevTech Consultant; Lacy Kilraine, USAID/Washington, PPL/LER; Marc Bonnenfant, USAID/CAR, Health and Education Office; Corey Hancock, USAID/CAR, Program Office; and Vepa Berdiyev, USAID/CAR, Turkmenistan Program Office.

Evaluation Design Process
Data collection entailed a mixed methods approach that included document review, key informant interviews, focus group interviews, and a Likert-scale satisfaction ranking exercise. The team commenced the evaluation with a document review that included: quarterly reports submitted to USAID by the implementing partner (QRs); the Cooperative Agreement (CA) and related documents; Ph.D. dissertations on this topic; published research findings; annual public reports produced by CEATM; a stakeholder analysis, M&E plans, and project close-out report by ACTR/ACCELS; USAID strategic planning documents; and selected documents provided by key informants (see Annex II – Bibliography). On the basis of the document review, each team member was assigned to identify information gaps and develop questions to be posed to individuals and sets of stakeholders in order to answer the overall evaluation questions. The Team Leader generated the evaluation design and included these questions. The data collection instruments appear in Annex III – Stakeholder Data Collection Instruments and Annex IV – Questions Posed in Answer to Evaluation Questions. The predominant method of data analysis used was pattern and thematic analysis, identifying achievements and challenges under each theme, identifying areas of impact, and creating charts, tables and diagrams to summarize test data reported by CEATM.

USAID/KR provided assistance to the team in obtaining a letter of introduction to schools from the MOES, and in recommending schools where interviews should be conducted. The team conducted stakeholder interviews in the field from February 10-21, 2014 (see Annex V – Schedule of Interviews and Research Activities), and then analyzed the findings, prepared a debriefing presentation for USAID/KR and CEATM (February 28, 2014), and began to draft sections of the report. Based on the team’s identification of relevant stakeholders, data were collected from the following:

- 2 National State Universities (Kyrgyz National State University, Bishkek; and Osh State University, Osh): 2 Rectors, 4 Vice Rectors, 18 Faculty (including 8 deans); 18 Students (3 “budget,” and 15 “contract”)
- 3 Urban Secondary Schools (#87 in Bishkek; Mombekov #101, Osh Outskirts; and Gagarin #17, Osh City): 2 Directors, 1 Vice Director, 14 Teachers, 22 Students, 11 parents
- 6 USAID staff (past and current)
- 9 Implementing partner staff, including CEATM: 6; and ACTR/ACCELS: 3
- 4 Academic/Other
- TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED: 101

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6 Several interviews were conducted in the US by the Team Leader and Lacy Kilraine before the field research was undertaken as many project staff or other key informants had moved to other positions within or outside the Agency since the project was fully implemented. These interviews are also noted in Annex V.
Limitations of the Evaluation

There are several limitations that emerged during the process of implementing the evaluation.

**Time/Availability/Expertise:** As a learning evaluation, the time and assignments allocated had to be restricted to the corresponding availability and skill sets of the USAID staff. Related limitations included: (1) reduced time to review the volume of documents provided (most obtained the week prior to field research – also owing to the age of the project and the time it took to locate them); (2) increased time needed for team members to produce capacity-building assignments prior to field research; (3) limited field time and thus a limited number and type of organization at which data collection could occur (thus constraining the generalizability/external validity of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations); and (4) reduced availability to write the report after leaving the field. Additionally, the highly varied range of evaluation experience and understanding among the team members meant that significant supplemental learning was required.

**Restriction on Interviewing the MOES:** Due to the ongoing tender process, interviews were not conducted with the following MOES units:

- **National Testing Center (NTC)** – the unit responsible for developing and implementing 9th and 11th grade school leaving exams (also the unit that spawned an organization that competed with CEATM for the 2014 tender).
- **Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE)** – the unit responsible for teacher training and curriculum development.
- **Department of Higher Education** – the unit responsible for developing and implementing university admissions and specialization policies.
- **Department of Secondary Education** – the unit responsible for secondary curriculum and all policies and procedures at the secondary level.

The absence of interview data from these units has limited findings as we could not triangulate or verify statements made during interviews.

**School/University Entry Approval from MOES:** Although the research design setting forth the intended interview dates for various stakeholders was submitted approximately two weeks before the evaluation team arrived, USAID/KR did not request MOES entry approval until two days after the team arrived, and it was not granted until a day before the team went to schools.

**Language:** Most official reports are written in Russian, which necessitated document translation. Two interpreters (one in Bishkek and one in Osh) had to be identified for most of our interviews. This presented inherent limitations related to ensuring that the meaning and integrity of the information was maintained as it was interpreted and/or translated from one language to another.

**Choice of schools and universities to visit:** Responding fully to evaluation question 1 would require that observational visits and interviews were conducted in rural secondary schools in order to verify “common knowledge” that secondary education was inadequate in the rural areas. The final schools recommended for visit included only those in urban and peri-urban areas. At the university level, the Kyrgyz National State University, the urban university at
which interviews were conducted, was to have been balanced by the inclusion of a “provincial” university. Based on the available information, Osh State was selected by the team members. However, this was based on information more than two years old. Osh State had become the second largest state university in the country. Hence, similar to the secondary school level, the evaluation team could not address the perceptions of the quality of education and quality of students attending a provincial university, inherent in evaluation question 1.
4. FINDINGS

Introduction
In this section we present information obtained through interviews, USAID and implementing partner reports, scholarly publications, and other materials. Our presentation is supplemented by Annex VI – Charts and Diagrams. Evaluation question 1 targets the two goals of the project – creation of an objective aptitude test and the reduction of corruption, while evaluation questions 2 and 3 target the effects of the NAT on universities and secondary schools. Evaluation question 4 asks for recommendations on the sustainability of NAT; the response to this question is split between the Findings and Recommendations.

Evaluation Question 1:
To what degree has NAT resulted in greater equality of access to the university system? How has this manifested across different populations (e.g. rural/urban, languages, gender)? What have been the main promoters and hindrances to meeting this objective?
This question targets both purposes of NAT – creating broader access to university for rural students through the implementation of a standardized aptitude test and the reduction of corruption at the tertiary education level. Through interviews and literature reviews, the team identified ways in which geographical location, language and gender concerns were addressed by the NAT. The data collected also pointed to the major hindrances students, especially those from rural areas, encountered in gaining access.

Given the comprehensive nature of this question, we first present key quantitative and qualitative findings on NAT test takers, scores, and scholarship recipients across various demographics in the context of the equality of access question. Then, we provide more specific information on the three stakeholders that were involved in the development of the NAT: MOES, USAID, and Councils/CEATM. The unique feature about the findings for Question 1 is that many achievements include caveats that can also be seen as challenges/missed opportunities. For this reason, we present selected aspects of these two sets of findings juxtaposed in charts so that the reader may see the complexity of this analysis. Other elements are then discussed in the following narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 2. Overall NAT Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NAT increased university access for students from disadvantaged geographic areas, since the majority of scholarship winners have been from rural and mountainous areas – between 62% (low) and 72% (high) from 2002 and 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NAT quota system has promoted a “level playing field” since the percentage of NAT test-takers in each geographical category is roughly equivalent to the percentage of scholarship winners in each category.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Achievements: Equality of access is here defined as scholarships being awarded to students from underrepresented/disadvantaged areas (i.e., rural and mountainous). According to the data, between 62% (low) and 72% (high) of students receiving scholarships between 2002 and 2013 have been from rural and mountainous areas (see Charts 11 and 12 in Annex VI).

Equality of access could also be defined as whether the number of scholarships awarded (and accepted) is proportional to NAT test takers. Consequently, as Chart 13 shows (see Annex VI), the percentage of NAT test-takers in each geographical category has been roughly equivalent to the percentage of scholarship winners in each category. Per interviewees and documents reviewed, the proportionality is achieved by establishing the number of scholarships to be awarded in each quota category relative to the number of test takers, and then setting varying NAT score thresholds in each quota category. So essentially, the test takers in each category are competing against each other, which a couple of interviewees called, “leveling the playing field,” and thus achieving equality of access.

Questions of equality also relate to the language in which the test is administered and scholarships awarded. Per one scholar, “As NST results are the sole criterion for university scholarship distribution, the public is counting on the NST to be fair to all examinees, regardless of ethnic or language background” (Drummond 2011: 1). Hence, some interviewees noted that it was a worthy achievement that the exam is available in both Kyrgyz and Russian, and, until 2013/2014 academic year, in Uzbek.

In most developing countries, there is a significant gender imbalance in the number of females who move on to higher education. The opposite is true for the Kyrgyz Republic, in which females take the NAT in higher numbers (about 4,000-6,000 more females from 2009 to 2013), receive higher scores (between 3 and 9 points higher from 2009 to 2013), and are awarded more scholarships (between 1300 to 800 more from 2009 to 2013) (see Chart 14 in Annex VI).

Challenges/Missed Opportunities: Critics noted that the equalizing effect of NAT is overstated since the number of scholarships relative to test-takers is small and has remained constant since the test was first administered (DeYoung 2011 and interviews). Moreover, this percentage diminishes as the number of test-takers increases and the number of available scholarships remains constant at 5,700, especially after the decree declaring that all students must take NAT for university admissions. Chart 12 in Annex VI shows the total number of scholarship recipients. When these totals are examined relative to the NAT test takers (Chart 15 in Annex IV) a different picture emerges. Across time, a maximum of 16% of test takers...
were awarded scholarships (in 2005). More recently in 2012 and 2013, this chance has diminished to 8%.

In addition, some students interviewed remarked that the quota system is inherently setting up unequal standards for scholarship awards by establishing different NAT threshold scores in each geographical category. According to one source, the rural/urban weighting system is not always fair as it closes off some urban students who might otherwise have gained places/scholarships (OECD 2010:331). Another interviewee told anecdotes of rural students needing to gain higher scores than urban students for a budget space, undermining the assumption on which the quota system was created. Chart 16 in Annex VI illustrates that there are instances in which rural budget students may score higher than Bishkek city students depending on the university. However, on the whole, Bishkek students average higher scores than budget students.

Also, it was noted that a limited number of specializations are open to scholarship students, essentially reducing access for these students, which was a common statement made by interviewees. Likewise, each specialization (and each university) has a different NAT threshold score, further complicating the access issue. And once a scholarship student is admitted to a specialization on the basis of the quota system, s/he may withdraw from university because the specialization is not the one desired, undermining the increased access. For example, about 50% of scholarships are earmarked for teaching to help increase the number of teachers at secondary schools. However, only 43% of those attending teacher colleges and 63% of students in pedagogical departments complete their degrees (OECD 2010:326).

In other cases, interviewees cited that the creation of two different student categories – budget (i.e. scholarship) and contract (i.e. fee-paying) – has created inequalities in the way they are treated at university. For example, scholarship students may be placed in classes that are taught by inexperienced, untrained and lesser-paid faculty members, whereas contract students are typically taught by more experienced, better-paid faculty members. Likewise, scholarship students can lose their scholarships and be dismissed if they get low grades (three or more class grades below the mark of 4), whereas fee-paying students are allowed to continue regardless of grades because the university budget needs their funding.

While the data do not reveal a challenge in university access for females, the data reveal a potential issue related to access for males. All stakeholders interviewed indicated that a large percentage of males drop out of secondary school after taking the 9th grade leaving exam either to earn an income on their own, join the family business or farm, or continue their education at a vocational school. Consequently, as Chart 14 in see Annex VI shows, fewer males take the NAT, they earn lower scores, and receive fewer scholarships. The evaluation team attempted to further explore these numbers through interviews, but the qualitative data only yielded inconclusive findings since interviewees expressed a wide variance of perceptions regarding the relationship between gender, academic achievement, and NAT scores. Some interviewees perceived that males perform worse in school but better on the NAT; others opined that females do better on both measures; still others expressed that males achieve higher marks on both accounts; and many interviewees noted that a student’s success in school and on the NAT is unrelated to gender. Other interviewees noted that a significant number of females study medicine or languages, aspiring to be doctors or translators, both well-paying careers. But documentary evidence noted that there is an overrepresentation of women in the humanities
and language subjects, and an overrepresentation of male students in the sciences and technology (DeYoung 2011:20). Charts 18, 19, and 20 in Annex VI show the breakdown of the scores males and females achieve in taking the NAT and subject-matter tests. While many more females take math, biology, and chemistry, it seems that numbers for the Math test are not as drastically different, nor are the differences in scores. Math is required by future engineers, while biology and chemistry is required for those who intend to be doctors or want to work in the medical profession.

Despite the test being available in Kyrgyz and Russian, interviews and literature pointed to challenges in examining equitable scholarship distribution, NAT test scores, and test equivalency across language groups. As Chart 17 in Annex VI illustrates, Russian test-takers receive higher scores – between 25 and 32 points higher than those taking it in Kyrgyz. And those taking the test in Uzbek generally score between 3 and 5 points lower than Kyrgyz. As for scholarships, Chart 17 illustrates that most students take the test in Kyrgyz (between 60% and 65% over the years), and that Kyrgyz language test-takers had a higher chance in the past of receiving a scholarship than Russian language test-takers (in 2009 and 2010). Although, more recently, that trend has changed, with Russian test takers having a slightly higher chance of receiving a scholarship (in 2012 and 2013). And the chance of an Uzbek test-taker receiving a scholarship has been inconsistent across the years. Explaining these trends, however, is extremely difficult, as scholars point out, since “the language gap closely parallels the urban-rural divide…most Kyrgyz and Uzbek schools are concentrated in rural, resource-poor areas while Russian schools are more typically found in urban areas” (Drummond 2011: 40). Rural pupils miss more hours because of harvest time, have less educated teachers, and face greater poverty levels (Drummond 2011: 40). Likewise, Kyrgyz schools face unique challenges, including fewer adequate textbooks, less contact hours, and non-elite parents who are less likely to advocate for change (Drummond 2011: 40-41). Also, one in-depth equivalency study showed that, while evaluators detected differences in the content between Kyrgyz and Russian NAT test items, they were unable to accurately predict which language group the difference favored (Drummond 2011: 151-3). Finally, one interviewee noted an additional challenge regarding Uzbek students, in that abruptly eliminating the Uzbek language from the NAT this year may negatively affect members of the marginalized Uzbek community and may continue to be a hardship for several years as schools transition to Kyrgyz-based instruction.

MOES Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities
USAID/KR requested that the evaluation team refrain from interviewing MOES officials given that the tender related to administering the NAT was still being deliberated by the MOES during the team’s fieldwork time. However, many non-MOES interviewees and much of the research literature commented on the MOES’ role in expanding access to university to rural students. Therefore, the team found that from the year 2000 to the present, the MOES can be attributed with the following achievements and challenges/missed opportunities:

7 These marks demonstrates the interrelationship between math on the NAT and math as a subject-matter test; the curiosity is that NAT is aptitude-based while the subject-matter math test is based on the curriculum.
Chart 3. MOES Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges/Missed Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decreed that an independent testing organization (ITO) should create and administer NAT.</td>
<td>Significant objections were raised about not having the relevant MOES unit develop and implement the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed corruption in awarding scholarships by facilitating the creation of a standardized, transparent testing system.</td>
<td>Other forms of corruption continued: some scholarship students reported paying an informal fee to take end-of-term exams so as not to lose their scholarship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a scholarship quota system intended to make scholarships more accessible to students from under-represented geographic areas (mainly rural).</td>
<td>The quota system did not take into account student financial need in determining scholarship allocations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a quota system for budget and fee-paying students that was intended to increase the number of students pursuing specializations linked to the labor needs of the country.</td>
<td>The quota system limited the choice of specializations for scholarship students and those who did not wish to pursue these specializations dropped out. Data do not indicate how these funds were reallocated. Uncertainty exists about whether graduates become employed in their specialization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreed that all students should be admitted to university on the basis of their NAT scores.</td>
<td>Despite the large increase in NAT test-takers, the MOES maintained the same number of scholarships, decreasing an individual student’s probability of receiving a scholarship and potentially crowding out the financially disadvantaged students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014

The MOES created the enabling environment for the NAT to be designed and implemented, but the President’s and Minister’s decisions created consequences later, which have not been fully addressed.

It is not clear how much NAT influenced or leveraged the educational reforms envisioned in the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2012-2020. Among the strategy’s objectives is student choice of academic specialization (thus removing choice constraints by budget students). Limiting specialization access for budget students produces an increasing number of dropouts because students were not satisfied with their choices. Annual reports published by CEATM provide ample opportunity for further analysis to determine other reform priorities in tertiary and secondary education.

USAID Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities

Themes of democracy, anti-corruption, transparency, democratic values, market demands, and building civil society prevailed as the overarching narrative in the documents reviewed and interviews conducted. USAID/CAR supported the Councils proposal to produce the NAT and create an ITO to continue after the project was over. However, some USAID staff reported that it was hoped that this project would serve as a “back door” to education reform, an area rife with corruption, especially at the tertiary level.

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8 See Section 2, Background, above for a more detailed presentation of how this project was funded.
In terms of corruption, the KR now ranks 150 out of 175 on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, which puts them in the bottom 15% of the worldwide rankings. Corruption has attributed to low-income levels, legacies of large-state interventionism, weak democratic institutions, an ineffective legal system, and a cultural background that operates through informal and traditional links between families, friends, and clan, and the Urmat system (respect for elders/authority) (Johnson 2008, 26).

### Chart 4. USAID Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges/Missed Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided timely support that enabled a “quick win” regarding eliminating one source of corruption by opening up transparency for equality of access.</td>
<td>Evolutionary follow-up processes that would have helped establish lasting, systemic, cultural change in education were not undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabled the creation of a local, independent testing organization in the post-Soviet environment in a short period of time.</td>
<td>Short-term vision and the piecemeal nature of subsequent grants meant that USAID missed an opportunity to serve in a longer-term mentoring or organizational capacity development role, which would have served as a means to strengthening the NAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensured that project activities were completed in a timely and consistent manner (i.e., activity oversight), and initial performance monitoring planning was comprehensive.</td>
<td>The lack of synthesis, analysis, and use of existing data suggests that USAID engagement in high-level performance management was limited and the chance to influence educational reform further was missed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial collaborative relations with the MOES precipitated a quick establishment of the award and the NAT, more objective awarding of scholarships, increased access to university education, and the reduction of corruption.</td>
<td>NAT is not a central topic of USAID-MOES dialogue given other priorities in the education sector; MOES changes have resulted in fluctuating support for NAT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014

**“Revolutionary” and “Evolutionary” Approach**

**Achievements:** From the “revolutionary” perspective,9 USAID/CAR made the first award in “record” time (two months), taking advantage of a confluence of factors that created a short window of opportunity to establish the NAT: (1) strong, reform-minded governmental leaders (including the President and the Minister of Education); (2) societal consensus starting to favor reform; (3) a relatively small number of NGOs in post-Soviet CAR with innovative ideas; (4) local actors willing and able to take ownership; and (5) conditions amenable to project/pilot implementation.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** USAID/CAR missed an opportunity to build on the initial short-term results of CEATM/NAT by complementing it with characteristics corresponding to an “evolutionary” approach, including: (1) continuing to generate stakeholder buy-in and coordination (from the public, the donor community, and the government); (2) explicitly placing the project within the context of a strategic plan with clearly articulated long-term outcomes; (3) utilizing a performance monitoring and evaluation system with regular data analysis and feedback loops in a usable format; (4) using a systems approach that addresses the education system as a whole; and (5) expressing a long-term commitment.

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9 These terms were used by the Director of CEATM when she was discussing how the project began vs. how it evolved in later years.
Local Capacity-Building

**Achievements:** USAID/CAR met its second goal (the first was to design and implement the test) when Councils established CEATM, an indigenous ITO “capable of providing professional assessment services in fair and transparent ways using modern educational practices” (ACCELS M&E Plan, 2003). After the end of the project, USAID’s small grants provided a lifeline for CEATM’s continued existence.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** USAID did not take advantage of the opportunity to formally mentor or build the capacity of CEATM personnel. After the project ended, the piecemeal, targeted funding did not entail rigorous oversight and feedback.

**Award/Activity Oversight vs. Performance Management**

**Achievements:** The two USAID awards to Councils to develop the exam and to establish an ITO totaled US$1.5 million. From 2005-2013, USAID supported selected CEATM activities in amounts as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (in US $)</th>
<th>Give Back (non-profit)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-6</td>
<td>80,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>80,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>55,500.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>55,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>63,830.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>63,830.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>94,751.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>94,751.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>50,000.00</td>
<td>27,597.37</td>
<td>77,597.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>110,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>110,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>168,000.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>168,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>646,081.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,597.37</strong></td>
<td><strong>673,678.37</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEATM report, 2014

The COR exercising oversight over the NAT project documented that all project outcomes had been achieved, and the closing report of the Chief of Party (COP) reported on the ways in which this was accomplished (Drummond 2005). CEATM continued to provide periodic “milestones” and output reports to USAID on the use of the targeted funds.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** No further tracking of outcome indicators or “extensive guidance feedback” to inform policymakers and others was conducted after the first year of the project. Former USAID staff members identified factors impeding rigorous performance management: the short timeframe of the award; limited education staff; and the initial staffing structure at the start of the award, with a regional COR/AOR and a country-based activity manager; and the failure to include project outcomes in a larger strategic planning framework.
Councils/CEATM Achievements and Challenges/Missed Opportunities

The two goals Councils was required to fulfill were (1) to generate a standardized examination, the results of which were to determine which students would receive scholarships; and (2) establish an ITO to further develop and administer the test. Since its inception, the ITO - CEATM – has developed and administered an aptitude and several subject-matter tests, has annually added to its database of questions (teachers and other education professionals are invited to submit questions), has generated study guides, expanded the number of test centers to increase access, and generated an annual report on student grades.

Overall, CEATM’s efforts have resulted in a high regard that the average citizen, civil servant, and international organizations hold for the organization. While missed opportunities exist and real challenges remain, these pale in comparison to the degree to which the average Kyrgyz student has been empowered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges/Missed Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established and maintained the highest standards of test development and administration free of corruption and capable of responding to MOES needs in continually updating the NAT and developing subject-matter tests.</td>
<td>Attack by those with a vested interest in maintaining the patronage system; unsubstantiated accusations of corruption by the media; undetermined use of subject-matter tests for university placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed and implemented a countrywide aptitude test based on the use of logical thinking to solve problems.</td>
<td>Lack of familiarity with this type of testing led students to enroll in privately-held classes (for a fee) to learn how to take the NAT and achieve a higher score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continually establishes new testing cites to facilitate ease of access to students.</td>
<td>Must negotiate with school directors and officials presiding over other public buildings to allow testing free of charge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and trains proctors to staff training centers on testing days.</td>
<td>Must ensure that no corruption takes place, especially when tests are not all offered on the same day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops and updates study guides in the NAT and subject-matter tests for students and teachers to use.</td>
<td>Guides must be updated periodically and include several sample questions. Increasing costs limit the number schools and poorer students can purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds informational campaigns countrywide at schools and other venues to inform parents, students and teachers about the NAT and subject-matter tests.</td>
<td>Not all geographic areas can be reached to the same degree, so some stakeholders are not as well informed as others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops annual reports documenting student marks and access in all geographic categories.</td>
<td>Further analyses would indicate how access is changing with the increasing number of test takers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014

Organizational Values & Mission

Achievements: Councils established CEATM as a free-standing, independent NGO complete with Vision, Mission, Goals and Activities, and a professional staff to undertake the work of the organization. Councils also brought in international testing experts to help in the development of the first test and to build the professional capacity of CEATM staff to continue work on the NAT once the project was over (see www.testing.kg). CEATM has also established a time-tested system of procedures and institutional operations related to personnel, financial management, and confidentiality of tests and student data (ACTR/ACCELS 2005). Under Councils, an independent board was established to provide advice and oversight over CEATM’s
activities, including participation in informational campaigns that entail public presentations (American Councils 2005:3-4). Of the professional staff that began their work with the development of the first NAT, 92% are still with CEATM because of their personal commitment, the fact that CEATM is an independent NGO, and the livable salaries the organization pays.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** Recent changes in the approach taken to aptitude testing have not yet been fully explored by CEATM, and their staff is in need of further capacity building to take new innovations into account. CEATM could conduct much more comprehensive data analysis that helps inform the MOES and other donors on education sector topics, e.g., reforms that would promote free and fair access to university. CEATM could therefore promote more objective, data-driven decision-making. The Board could exercise greater fiscal responsibility by helping CEATM to find other donors to support the further development of the test and make any necessary changes that would assist in facilitating tertiary education reform.

CEATM also sought to introduce learner-centered teaching methodologies into the teacher training curricula. The staff, originally trained through a critical thinking endeavor funded by the Soros Foundation, is well equipped to take on this challenge. However, the responsibilities of the NAT have taken precedence over teacher training.

**“Revolutionary” Change**

**Achievements:** The aptitude test implemented by CEATM was “revolutionary” in nature as no other former Soviet country in the region had attempted such an effort. A CEATM staff member remarked that in the beginning, “in schools there was no understanding whatsoever that students need to know how to work with information, that information is not something to memorize, but that information is something that you need to manage. And the NAT was the first test in all of the Soviet countries that introduced reading and comprehension.” Average citizens increased their support for the test as they saw their neighbors’ children being awarded scholarships and attending university.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** NAT was so revolutionary and came at a time when the country was still emerging from Soviet rule and had not yet considered a system of nation-building to define what a Kyrgyz citizen was. Although the value of increasing access to tertiary education was espoused and the test mandated, it was not made part of an MOES strategic plan until 2012, a full 10 years after it was initiated. This meant that CEATM had to address negative challenges put forward by senior political officials on its own.

**Responsiveness to MOES and Public Needs in a Critical Environment**

**Achievements:** From the outset CEATM assumed a leading role in a process that was extremely controversial at best. Government champions of the NAT were overthrown, and successors ranged from unsupportive to outright hostile (Drummond 2010). In 2008 MOES officials tried to do away with the NAT (with the assistance of a negative media). Delays in awarding CEATM with the tender to administer the NAT prevented timely registration and recruitment of the 900 volunteers who organize and proctor the exam. Regardless of the challenges placed before CEATM, the organization has never failed to perform. CEATM has consistently acted on its value of customer-service, most significantly by responding in a
professional way to the requests of the MOES. In 2011 and 2012, CEATM developed subject-matter tests in physics (for engineers), history (for those studying the humanities), and two specialized mathematics tests (USAID Fixed Obligation Grant 2012) by working with university faculty and other subject-matter specialists. Each test requires a considerable amount of time to develop, pilot test, and mark. CEATM also scaled-up test administration to include 145 testing sites so that rural students had greater access.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** University faculty identified other areas (e.g., geography) where subject-matter tests could better inform them of student ability to perform well in their subjects. However, the MOES, to date, has just required subject-matter tests in areas where considerable knowledge is required to study (e.g., biology and chemistry for entrance to medical school). Specializations not in high demand or not available to scholarship holders most often do not require special subject-matter tests; some (e.g., art, performance) do not even require the NAT.

**Public Perception & Awareness Raising**

**Achievements:** Public opinion of NAT is high, as demonstrated by what one teacher reported having said during political turmoil: “the government can go, but NAT must stay.” Any individual or organization is welcome to review CEATM’s reports at any time and may participate in test administration as a volunteer. As reported by a CEATM staff member, Citizens Against Corruption is one civil society organization that has taken repeated advantage of this opportunity. Research conducted on school directors found 71% of urban and 57% of rural directors believe that NAT should be conducted by an ITO and not the MOES (ACTR/ACCELS 2005). Grassroots support of NAT was demonstrated during the political uprising in the Andijan region of Uzbekistan in 2005, when those supporting a blockade temporarily “opened” roads to allow for the delivery of NAT test booklets to testing centers. CEATM’s quarterly reports further attest to such local support during times of unusual hardship.

CEATM’s quarterly and annual reports from 2005 to the present detail the use of radio, print, advertisements on local television channels, information seminars at the community level, and press conferences in an effort to increase the awareness about NAT in local communities. In the past, this has included Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek communities and similarly-targeted language media services.

**Challenges/Missed Opportunities:** CEATM staff has faced acts of violence and even death threats in order to do its work. Cultivating a stronger network of civil society organizations may provide CEATM with a stronger support system for NAT. Though formally and meaningfully associated with the Bishkek-based Education Network Association (EdNet) at inception, CEATM’s relationship with EdNet was discontinued.

The research found significant misinformation about NAT at all schools and universities where research was conducted. Although rayon (district) officials are responsible for disseminating information on the NAT (in addition to the direct efforts of CEATM staff members), according to the school directors, teachers, and parents interviewed, not all schools and geographic areas receive information through these distribution channels.
Financial Sustainability

Achievements: In 2012, CEATM generated approximately 30,270,000 KGS (about US $571,132.07) in test fees (each student must take the NAT as well as one subject-matter test, each at 220 KGS) (using the 2012 number of 55,000+ test takers and an exchange rate of $1 = 53KGS). They also generate revenue through the sale of its review guides and the administering of practice tests. As this amount is insufficient to cover expenses, CEATM staff has also undertaken other testing endeavors, including the World Bank Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2006 and 2009 (OECD 2010); the USAID-funded Participation, Education and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS); conducting comparative studies on testing in other countries in the region; and the grades 4 and 8 National Assessments.

Challenges/Missed Opportunities: CEATM has devoted itself to NAT’s success, while insufficient attention has been paid to diversifying CEATM’s services and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organization.

Evaluation Question 2:
What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in higher education policies and/or practices (e.g. admissions policies, language policy, curriculum, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?

With Question 2 we transition our narrative to effects of the NAT on universities as discussed with university rectors, vice-rectors, deans, faculty, and students (both contract and budget). In presenting their perspectives, we highlight the perceived impact on the university as a whole and the challenges in transitioning from a subjective, individualized university scholarship allocation and admissions process to one this is more objective and standardized.

Scholarship Allocation and Admissions: Before NAT, students “competed” for scholarships with others nationwide; now the competition pool has been reduced to peers within the same geographical locations. Given the limited number of scholarships, not all students who score high on the NAT are awarded scholarships. Students who are not awarded scholarships generally enroll as contract students.

NAT scores are now also the basis for contract student admissions. Universities have changed their admissions criteria and set NAT score thresholds that any student must meet to be eligible to attend the corresponding university: a NAT score of 105 and a subject-matter test score 60 (out of 150) are required at one university. Students desiring scholarships must score much higher in both tests. Contract students can be accepted with lower scores, especially if they are applying to low-demand specializations.

Scholarships and Specializations: The specialization-based quota system was designed to control the number of scholarship students in a specific non-preferred major that is supposed to lead to employment. Tripartite agreements are made between the university, employers, and the MOES, according to one university vice-rector, identifying the number of places available in certain specializations based on expected labor market demand. However, one scholar notes that universities no longer have direct links to employers, despite employer and ministry input into identifying skills in certain majors needed to build the country (DeYoung 2011:viii). University students and faculty could not tell us how this placement system worked...
as there was no employment counselor on campus. Universities no longer have direct links to employers, despite employer and ministry input into identifying skills in certain majors needed to build the country (DeYoung 2011:viii).

**Faculty and Teaching:** University leadership reported that the structure of teaching both budget and contract students has changed. In some universities, budget students are taught by less-qualified faculty, while contract students are taught by those with higher qualifications, largely because good instructors can attract more fee-paying students. One university explained the ever-present challenges of the salary gap between budget and contract professors. Even when salary adjustments correct the income differential between contract and budget faculty, the gap starts growing again each year since contract professors receive more frequent salary increases than budget professors.

Faculty qualifications, although mandated by the MOES, cannot be met at each university. Students felt that some faculty members are less prepared to teach than their secondary school teachers. Many faculty members have to teach courses in which they have no expertise (DeYoung 2011:ix). These findings are supported by the European Commission Tempus (2010:11), which found that 60% of faculty members have no degree. Lack of dedication to the job is also a problem: “Faculty members are often late or call in sick at the last minute so students don’t know from one day to the next whether they will have class or whether they will have some type of substitute. Faculty could easily be called away from class to fulfill some sort of task for senior leadership, leaving the class without a teacher” (DeYoung 2011).

In at least one university, professors noted that the existence of NAT has instilled a culture of standardized testing, as well as record-keeping and tracking students based on such test scores. While the university has created and maintained a sophisticated database of information on student achievement and demographics, it has not yet mined the data to reveal, for example, the predictive validity of NAT or inform and influence other internal issues, like the relationship between achievement and class size, certain faculty members, demographics, etc.

Under Soviet rule, all university classes were taught in Russian. At independence, this began to change to include Kyrgyz and some Uzbek. However, the limited number of textbooks in Kyrgyz hinders learning at university level. Moreover, most faculty teach in Russian rather than in Kyrgyz.

Because faculty teaching loads are mandated by the MOES and are extremely heavy (between 750 and 850 contact hours per class), there is little if any opportunity to respond to learning needs, especially of rural-schooled scholarship students, before the courses start. It is the opinion of some university faculty that this need has arisen, since secondary school students began taking NAT test preparation courses, focusing more on how to take the test vs. learning the content included in each test section.

**Students and Learning:** Davidson’s analysis (2003) found that NAT scores correlated well with marks achieved by scholarship students in their first year of university study, despite the different marking traditions at each university. However, faculty members now claim that this predictability has diminished. They also remarked that, in the beginning, the NAT increased the quality of the cohort of students entering university. Some attribute these downward trends to
students learning how to take the NAT rather than learning the substance of the test. Others explain such phenomena by the decreasing quality of secondary schooling. And still others attribute these trends to the new requirement that all students take NAT for university admissions, increasing variability in test scores and student quality, compared to previous cohorts of NAT test takers that tended to be high scoring scholarship students. Differential scoring systems used across universities make it difficult to conduct comprehensive predictive validity tests. However, high-scoring students are still pursued by HEIs, especially since universities are ranked according to the number of students with high scores who are admitted.

Prior to NAT, individual universities required that students be interviewed by a team of assessors. At that interview, a student was asked a question on selected subject matter. This process has been dropped in favor of NAT scores as the determining criteria. However, some university faculty claim that scholarship students’ skills in speaking/presenting information is low as they no longer have to prepare for an interview. Moreover one geography professor stated that he loses half a year teaching his students how to think logically and solve geography-based problems. Logical thinking is the approach used in the aptitude-based NAT, but this appears not to be the overall learning process used in the classroom.

**Corruption:** Although corruption in awarding scholarships and gaining entrance to the university has declined, other areas of corruption have emerged. University students indicated that they are often required to pay fees to take end-of-term exams. If a scholarship student earns less than a grade “4” in three classes, a fee to “pass” can be negotiated so that the student does not have to lose his/her scholarship. If a contract student does not attend class, s/he might be expelled, but then reinstated once a fee is paid. This re-invention of corruption in other areas has been described by USAID staff members as “squeezing” corruption out of one place, and having it reappear elsewhere.

Several respondents also noted that vacated scholarship places can be “sold.” Each year, a certain percentage of budget students drop out because they do not wish to pursue studies in their major (determined on the basis of the quota system). The CEATM annual reports show that, while 5,700 scholarships are to be awarded, CEATM’s numbers never reach beyond 5,200 and generally average around 4,700. Once budget students withdraw, their scholarships revert back to the university budget so that another student can receive the award. However, several respondents indicated that rectors often “sell” these awards and they are never reported.

To explain the discrepancy in the number of scholarship recipients reported in the annual reports in 2013 vs. the purported scholarships available, CEATM provided the following:

- 75 scholarships were awarded to ethnic Kyrgyz who are living abroad
- 185 scholarships were awarded to international students under agreements with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- 730 scholarships were provided to students studying specialties that do not require NAT scores (e.g., art, culture, design)
- 190 to students as an incentive to study “undesired” majors
Evaluation Question 3:
What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in secondary education policies and/or practices (e.g. curriculum, textbooks, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?

Our analysis continues on the effects of NAT, this time at the secondary school level. In presenting the data gathered in interviews with school directors, vice-directors, teachers, students and parents, we address the perceptions of how NAT has leveraged some incremental changes, although major reforms await MOES action. NAT’s impact on the 2,134 secondary schools in the Kyrgyz Republic (Duishon 2010) depends on several factors: the rural/urban nature of the oblast in which the school is located; the quality, motivation, and teaching ability of the teachers; the student population; and the quality and language of textbooks.

Curriculum and Teaching Methods: Early NAT project documents implied that the NAT could be used as a backdoor to inspire changes secondary school teaching methods and curriculum, which work hand-in-hand. Nearly all teachers interviewed (n=14) expressed their desire to teach relevant and pertinent information to their students. Some teachers, however, felt “handcuffed” by the national standards that leave little room to deviate from what they are mandated to instruct. Teacher focus group discussions revealed that many still focus on rote memorization in order to cover the MOES-mandated curriculum. In an urban high school, one student summed up the gap between the curriculum and the exam: “In Kyrgyz language class, we learn what a noun is. But on the NAT, you never get this kind of question. We are asked to identify a noun in a sentence, not define what it is.” This emphasis on applying what has been learned is a skill not taught in secondary schools.

Teachers stated that they were willing to incorporate instruction in logical thinking into their teaching, but noted that they were untrained in how to do it. Whether during their day classes or when moonlighting at NAT prep centers, teachers try to create tests that purportedly “mimic” the NAT. There is no evidence to indicate that teachers have the ability to create such questions. It is likely that teachers may be doing students a disservice if the questions are not in line with what the students will face on the actual test.

Twelve years after the introduction of the NAT, the MOES has introduced a number of reforms that seek to: create access to high quality basic general and secondary education for everyone; increase the opportunity of secondary school students to choose areas of specialization; utilize a competence-based learning approach aimed to improve the ability learn, to orientate oneself in uncertain and make decisions based on the analysis of information; and to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity (MOES Education Development Strategy 2012:3-4).

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10 2,134 were Kyrgyz language, 162 Russian, 137 Uzbek, and 7 Tajik, and 449 that had multiple languages.
11 School overcrowding in urban areas is an issue. A Bishkek school director reported that the intended capacity of her school is 720 students, but current enrollment is 1,727, necessitating double shifts.
12 Many teachers ambitiously try to mimic the NAT and give their students practice test questions that they believe mirror that of the actual test, because official test practice guides from CEATM are too costly for the students and the schools (The cost usually varies between 100 and 150 KGS). The quality of these questions and the extent to which they actually do resemble NAT questions cannot be determined.
The shortcomings these changes are meant to address were highlighted in Duishon (2010: 22) where he lamented that “the NAT has drawn attention to certain defects in national curriculum.”

**Textbooks:** Many school textbooks are outdated and in decrepit condition. One student showed a member of the evaluation team a textbook for an English class that came from the 1980s, replete with outdated methodologies and language usage. In Uzbek high schools, the situation is even worse, as their textbooks come from neighboring Uzbekistan, which *latinized* their script in the mid-1990s. The KR still uses the Cyrillic alphabet, thus forcing Uzbek language students to use obsolete textbooks. In focus groups with parents at one high school, there was much consternation at the condition of the textbooks. Most agreed with the comment from one mother, that “they are old but the main thing is that there aren’t enough of them for all of the kids. There are also some textbooks that are too complicated for kids” because they are meant for students at higher grades. Hence, making the NAT conform to curricula may create even more problems as not all schools have the textbooks upon which the curriculum is based.

**Teacher Motivation and Salaries:** Many budget students enter teaching never truly intending to remain there, favoring more their *chosen* profession (which may not have been open to budget students). Younger teachers are less committed to the profession, which may be reflected in the quality of their in-classroom skills and overall professionalism (DeYoung, et al. 2010:36). At one school, we were allowed to interview only new teachers, who were still very enthusiastic about their work; at another, we interviewed only teachers with more than 20 years of experience. The perceptions one had about the other reflected age and experience biases, as well as a pride in having been educated under either the Soviet system or since.

Further inhibiting teachers’ ability to fully dedicate themselves is their economic reality. With teacher salaries reportedly starting at $35 a month, many routinely teach a “double load,” buy their own teaching materials, and are less likely to implement “innovative” methods as there is no time and no increased remuneration (DeYoung and Reeves, 2010:203). Teachers predictably look for ways to supplement their income: those in rural areas sell home-grown produce in the local market (DeYoung and Reeves, 2010: 204), and those in the more urban areas might teach NAT test preparation classes, or tutor students individually. One secondary school director lamented that “there are six teachers that have two jobs, as some work at universities and at other schools … and some work doing odd jobs.” While NAT cannot leverage change in teacher salaries, the ability to teach concepts included in the NAT rests upon a teacher’s professionalism to do her/his work; low salaries prevent teachers from being fully dedicated.

**In-service Teacher Training:** The MOES, teachers reported, organize in-service teacher training every three to five years. Some teachers claimed to attend this training on a regular

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13 This represents a borderline conflict of interest, because some teachers charge their students an extra fee and teach them after school hours. Some would conclude that teachers “withhold” valuable information from their daytime pupils, and then teach the rest to them after hours when they are being paid extra.

14 We could not verify this officially as we could not conduct interviews at the MOES.
basis, while others stated their skepticism that it actually happens. A group of veteran university professors initially scoffed at the idea that this training actually took place, before correcting themselves and stating that they were unsure of whether or not it actually happened (largely because they would likely be the ones to address subject-matter competence). On the school level, one secondary school director stated that she has established a 2-3-year mentoring program to ensure that seasoned experts share their knowledge with the newcomer. That teachers are not updated on a regular basis in subject matter knowledge and methodology may be one reason why many may not be able to academically prepare their students for the NAT and other educational opportunities.

**11TH Grade Leaving Exam:** One of the impacts that the NAT has had on the secondary school environment is the significantly diminished importance that all actors (MOES, universities, secondary schools, students, teachers, and parents) have placed on the 11th grade leaving exam. The NAT has simply become the test that determines a student’s future. The OECD (2010) writes that the national leaving exam is inherently very poor. “It is based on rote learning and is not designed to measure ability or to be a predictor of success. They do not enable admission to higher education, nor, given the lack of transparency and marking systems, do they give students a recognized qualification for the labor market.”

**Test Preparation Industry:** Due to the lack of understanding of the logical-thinking approach, students seem compelled to seek out after-school tutoring, which has expectedly led to an incipient industry of businesses run by aspiring entrepreneurs charging a handsome sum of money to prepare students for the exam. The costs vary: group classes can easily cost 2,000 KGS per month while individual tutoring can range from 200-300 KGS per hour. Those students who cannot afford to pay for additional tutoring (or it is not available) often turn to their parents to help them prepare for the test, but as one secondary school director explained, sadly, less than 50% of parents have a secondary school certificate.

Purchasing NAT study guides is another option. The guides are produced by CEATM and distributed to secondary schools; they are also available for sale from stores and kiosks. A teacher focus group member reported that the school receives the guides in May, giving teachers little time to prepare students for the NAT. At another secondary school, only one copy of the study guide is provided to the deputy director. It is then photocopied and shared among relevant teachers. Those students with financial resources can purchase their own books, thus potentially creating an economic imbalance in accessing scholarships and university entrance. For those who have Internet access, another option is to go to [www.testing.kg](http://www.testing.kg) to download practice test materials and other documents.

**Motivation and Misinformation:** Students, teachers, and parents are driven, dedicated, and know the extent to which their future rides on the NAT. One female student stated: “if you get a high score on the NAT, you will be proud of yourself, not only you, but your teachers and

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15 Some university professors claim that this tutoring works well to prepare kids for the test, as each successive generation of students scores higher and higher on the test, but they seem to be less prepared to undertake high level university studies. When secondary school teachers do the teaching however, one is not sure of the efficacy of their teaching.
relatives and your classmates as well.” School directors and teachers take great stock in the high scores their students achieve on the NAT. However, some naiveté and misinformation permeated thinking about scholarships and the NAT in the three high schools where data were collected. At one school, six out of eight 11th grade students truly believe that they will earn a scholarship for university studies, whereas statistically their chances are likely much lower. They also believed they would be accepted into the specialization of their choice; they were not aware that scholarships were awarded to study only selected subjects. Many students and teachers also had not seen the CEATM study guides, nor were they aware that CEATM was the organization responsible for the test.

**Corruption:** As noted above, while NAT helped decrease corruption at the point of university admissions, it inspired the extension of old and the creation of new opportunities for corruption and cheating elsewhere, including at the secondary school level. Some students, in focus groups, reported cases about friends and neighbors who got expelled from the testing center due to breaking the rules. According to Serij Gebrseck (2010:35), corruption/cheating on the test is usually via “talking on cell phones, another person taking the test for someone else, some individuals collecting the test from the previous year and then conducting test prep training for a fee.” Students and teachers reported that people from the countryside come to the cities to gather information about the test before they are due to take it. They are able to do this because the test is not given on the same date nationwide (owing to geographic diversity, time for the test to arrive in each location and then for it to be distributed). A perception that test proctors can be bribed was also mentioned, but we could not substantiate this claim. As the CEATM director has indicated, new security measures will be instituted to ensure that these practices do not occur.

**Evaluation Question 4:**
**How can CEATM/NAT be sustained and improved as the basis for allocating state scholarships? What other functions could NAT serve?**

The response to this question must address two issues: CEATM as an implementing organization, and the NAT as the mechanism that helps determine who is to win a scholarship and who is to gain admission to university. Since CEATM is the ITO that has developed, administered and marked the test for the past 12 years, and has just been awarded the three-year tender to continue doing so by the MOES, NAT’s sustainability in relation to NAT administration is guaranteed for the next three years. Therefore, the first response to Question 4 considers ways in which CEATM might be improved to deepen and broaden its commitment to tertiary education reform and the reduction of corruption. The second response entails a consideration of the functionality of NAT in and of itself, and how the NAT might be improved to further the goal of improving access to university for both budget and contract students. Finally, the third response to this question is manifested in the “recommendations” section of the report given the forward-looking nature of the evaluation question.

**CEATM Sustainability:** At this juncture, CEATM would benefit from undertaking a systematic organizational capacity assessment (OCA). Through interviews, the team discerned that the organization may have some areas requiring strengthening, which is appropriate for an organization operating for at least 10 years under the same foundational guidelines. Such areas
are related to financial longevity, how to work more collaboratively with the MOES, how to build a more comprehensive public relations approach, how to expand the analysis of data collected and reported on annually, and professional development in light of changes in the global aptitude-testing domain.

A concern has been expressed that CEATM holds a “monopoly” on all of the work related to NAT. While no qualified organization has been structured to be competitive, it may be that selected universities are developing that capacity and might be seen as future partners, especially in the development of “white” papers using the data published annually by CEATM.

While CEATM’s independent, international Board members do not have any official financial responsibilities to support operations; they could assist in seeking collaborative partnerships and networks to further CEATM’s financial stability.

**NAT Sustainability:** NAT has become a part of tertiary education culture. Secondary schools try to prepare students to take the NAT and subject-matter tests (albeit in a very limited way), schools have volunteered their premises to be test centers, a secondary industry in test preparation has emerged, and each year more students aspire to win scholarships and attend university. While the former Soviet system of scholarship awards changed “overnight,” and the use of the NAT as a university entrance mechanism for all became a presidential decree just a few years ago, the common belief that NAT reduced corruption has introduced a perception of NAT resiliency. This was demonstrated several times during periods of extreme political upheaval when government changed, but the NAT remained. The longer the NAT is administered, and if it continues to evolve as a way to ensure “free and fair” scholarship awards and university entrance criteria, it will remain a part of the Kyrgyz landscape. Continued development of government and university support mechanisms will ensure that the NAT remains, as will CEATM as an independent organization that holds itself beyond corruption.
5. CONCLUSIONS
Equality of Access
This evaluation has demonstrated that the NAT has substantively increased equality of access and the perception that the NAT reduced corruption. On the most oft-cited measure – the percentage of students from rural and mountainous areas receiving scholarships – NAT succeeded. In terms of gender equality, more females than males take the NAT and are awarded scholarships. However, challenges to equality remain (as cited by interviewees and in documents reviewed), largely owing to: the disjuncture between subject-matter tests and the school curriculum; the limited number of scholarships and the MOES-generated quota system favoring selected students; limited choice in specializations for scholarship students; purported discrepancies in the different language versions of the exam; and new manifestations for corruption in other places in the educational system. As a result, the answer to this question is “it depends.” While this conclusion is likely unsatisfactory to some, it also likely provides the impetus for further analysis, research, and dialogue for many others.

MOES
The MOES should be lauded for the bold steps it took initially to establish the NAT to reduce corruption in awarding scholarships, and later to be the basis for university admission. However, as noted in our Findings above, several concerns remain about the quota system: (1) different threshold scores for rural and urban students; (2) the increasing number of test takers that reduces the chance of a student being awarded a scholarship; (3) the limited choice of specializations open to scholarship students; and (4) the rigid curriculum requirements at the secondary school level. Hence, the conclusions we come to for the MOES is that it does, under the right political administration, support NAT. However, its policies and some of its promulgations have been ill-informed and have not taken into account their long-term consequences.

USAID
USAID’s “revolutionary” support of Councils and CEATM was not adequately complemented by evolutionary follow-up processes that would have helped foment lasting, systemic, cultural change in tertiary education reform. As a result, USAID missed opportunities to: engage in long-term mentoring and capacity-building; analyze and use NAT data to inform other USAID programs and KR policymakers about broader education system reforms; and collaborate more closely with the MOES and other governmental stakeholders on such reforms. In sum, USAID did not fully capitalize on the ambitious higher-level objectives set forth in the initial M&E plan that sought to use the NAT as an entry point for changing the KR education system.

CEATM
CEATM’s activities have been widely recognized and have been viewed as the model for other Central Asian and Eastern European countries in how to generate a “free and fair” university entrance and scholarship awarding system. Much remains to be accomplished however. Political leaders, members of the education establishment and citizens who are against NAT invent ways to reduce its credibility as well as that of CEATM. Over the next three years (when CEATM is under the current tender award), CEATM has the opportunity to examine its options, develop a broader support base, expand its activities, and review the NAT (in light of
changes in aptitude testing in the US) and reporting strategy to play a more active role in informing broader education system changes.

**Universities**
Although university rectors and faculty were initially displeased with the autonomy taken from them when NAT was made a requirement for state scholarship awards, they are now accustomed to NAT and cite it as the basis for more free and fair state scholarship awards and university entrance. Students, especially those from economically marginalized areas, discussed the increased hope inspired by NAT as their economic circumstances previously would have forced their parents to “sell a cow” to pay a bribe for university entrance. This particular system of corruption is no longer in operation. Scholarship students are limited in their choice of specializations but fee-paying students are not (except if slots have already been taken). And faculty qualifications vary, with some students and faculty reporting that budget students are often taught by those less qualified while contract students are taught by more experienced faculty.

**Secondary Schools**
The NAT has succeeded at giving many high-school students aspirations to undertake studies at the university level, and it has introduced the concept of aptitude-testing and logical thinking into popular secondary school discourse. However, there is little evidence to indicate that the secondary school curriculum and methods have undergone meaningful change as a result of the NAT. The “logical thinking” approach is a buzzword that is widely misunderstood by many actors. Teachers do not have time in the curriculum or appropriate training to prepare students for NAT. Textbooks are woefully inadequate, outdated, and insufficient in number. In-service teacher training is inconsistently provided and enforced. As one informant stated, “if [NAT] doesn’t impact the content in the education system in general, this is a problem. There should not be a big gap….The biggest problem with [NAT] is that they didn’t manage to move ahead the educational system because they struggle to administer the test.”
6. RECOMMENDATIONS
USAID

We present two sets of recommendations for USAID, the first of which is more general and the second project specific. The first set is designed to highlight issues that should be addressed in all projects (because many were not fully implemented in the project evaluated), while the second set targets issues related to the project evaluated.

**Program Planning and Performance Management**

- When considering unsolicited proposals, the Mission should ensure that they are based on its broader strategic plan and results framework, including identifying how the award will contribute to higher-level results and, if the award was not originally contemplated in the results framework, how the results framework might be adjusted to ensure that the award is part of the Mission’s systematic, routine portfolio management.

- Play a more proactive role in the performance monitoring of the award/activity – not just award/activity oversight. The award or activity-level M&E plan, the project-level M&E plan, and the mission-level performance management plan are the required tools that should be employed to plan, manage, and capture performance.
  - While the implementing partner is responsible for drafting the activity M&E plan, it is incumbent upon USAID to collaborate with the implementing partner on, and ultimately approve, the activity M&E plan to ensure that the proposed performance indicators contribute to higher-level Mission results. USAID should also work with the implementing partner to ensure that each performance indicator has the required performance indicator reference sheet (PIRS), as well as determine which baseline data should be collected at the onset of the activity.
  - Above the activity level, USAID is responsible for pulling those indicators from the activity-level M&E plan that contribute to the project-level M&E plan, maintained by USAID, as well as those that contribute to the Mission-wide PMP, also maintained by USAID. This will encourage coordination across activities so that they can build on each other as opposed to working in isolation.

- Play an active role in collating, analyzing, and using data submitted in implementing partners’ reports. The requisite performance indicator tracking tables/system should be employed to capture Mission data from all partners.

- Designate a full-time USAID/KR M&E POC, who collaborates closely with the USAID/CAR M&E POC.

- Determine how the data collected by CEATM can be further used to inform similar activities or projects in the region and elsewhere.

**Education/CEATM-Specific**

- Support the continuous evolution of CEATM as it seeks to further professionalize its staff and address the complexity of the NAT mechanism as a means to equalize access to the university for all Kyrgyz students, especially since CEATM was awarded a three-year tender to continue the further development and administration of the NAT.

- In any new award, address the “evolutionary” characteristics noted in the Findings by committing a longer-term time horizon, using higher-level outcomes, generating an M&E plan with regular feedback loops, conducting periodic research on selected themes, and
assisting with organizational capacity-building conducted through an AOR/COR with related skills.

- Support a consultant to work with CEATM for a year to conduct an organizational assessment and guide them through a realignment of the NAT and subject-matter tests to reflect the reality of uneven educational outcomes throughout the country.

**CEATM**

The recommendations for CEATM go beyond the NAT project’s original mandate generated more than 10 years ago and are designed to address the second half of evaluation question 4 – *What other functions could NAT [and CEATM] serve?* Consequently, the recommendations entail changes in the mandate and thus future activities.

- Continue to build relationships with the MOES, Education Committee in Parliament and other political leaders who may not be aware of CEATM and NAT’s significant accomplishments and impacts and to provide them with further analytical evidence that would support reform measures.
- Continue to develop study guides and advertise the range of materials available on CEATM’s website so more students can access them to begin their review for the NAT and subject-matter tests.
- Publish “white” papers, based on data collected and published annually on NAT results and on critical issues in tertiary and secondary school reform.
- Hold public policy forums on the NAT as an aptitude test and the usefulness of subject-matter tests, calling upon the opinions of global experts.
- Continue to review the NAT to determine if it is still culturally relevant, subject-matter appropriate - especially for students from rural schools - mathematically appropriate, and gender neutral. It also has to be reviewed for level of expertise required to achieve a particular score given the uneven teaching in schools throughout the country.
- Standardize annual reports to include the same information every year; should any changes be made in formatting, they should be explained in the preface/introduction.
- Establish relationships with more universities to develop research on selected topics, especially scholarship student drop-out rates, ability of NAT scores to predict academic success, etc. The data collected by CEATM is a “treasure trove” of information; blending it with data collected by universities would reveal significantly more about the relevance and usefulness of NAT and the subject-matter tests.
- Establish a broader coalition of support, e.g., with Peace Corps teachers, other civil society organizations, and other agencies with an interest in educational reform.
- Work with the CEATM Board of Directors in identifying other sources of support; have each Board member contribute to the financial sustainability of the organization.

**Universities**

- Develop “bridging” courses for new university entrants with subject-matter deficiencies.
- Collaborate with the appropriate unit of the MOES to revise curricula and develop textbooks in the Kyrgyz language.
- Conduct an investigation into a financial needs-based scholarship award process so that scholarships are awarded on the basis of economic hardship. Scholarships might also be offered on a sliding scale, with the poorest receiving the highest amount. The NAT
could serve as the first “cut” to demonstrate academic proficiency, but thereafter a
demonstration of financial need should be required.

Secondary Schools

- Directors should explore different ways that teachers could receive regular in-service
  training to update their teaching and subject-matter skills to help students better
  prepare for the NAT and subject-matter tests.
- Directors and teachers should determine where there is some space in the school day
  to offer NAT preparation courses. This may be in the form of a learning club, a class, or
  other basis.
ANNEX I: STATEMENT OF WORK

Statement of Work for Team Leader
for a Joint USAID/CAR, USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, and PPL/LER Evaluation

1. Objective
PPL/LER requires the services of a qualified evaluation methods specialist/consultant to serve as the Team Leader for an evaluation of USAID/Kyrgyz Republic’s Further Improvements to the National Admission Test project in Kyrgyz Republic (hereafter referred to as the National Admission Test-NAT). The consultant will be expected to work closely with USAID staff from USAID/CAR (Central Asia Republic), USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, and PPL/LER to conduct a high quality evaluation of this university entrance exam project, in accordance with the standards set forth in the USAID Evaluation Policy/Automated Directives System 203. The consultant will also support efforts to build the capacity of USAID staff participating on the team in the field of evaluation.

2. Background
Country context: The Kyrgyz Republic is located in the heart of Central Asia and is of crucial importance to U.S. foreign policy goals. This small, landlocked, former Soviet country features a nascent democracy, a vibrant and increasingly influential civil society, slow but steady progress on education and public health outcomes, and robust cooperation with the U.S. on a number of issues. The past ten years have been marked by successive political revolutions and occasional bursts of ethnic violence. Following the ouster of the authoritarian president in April 2010, a new constitution established the Kyrgyz Republic as a parliamentary democracy. Since then, it is passing through its transition phase, serving as a bright spot among its less progressive neighbors. The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous country with a population of roughly 5.5 million. Although it has considerable gold resources and hydropower as a source of electricity, the Kyrgyz Republic has no hydrocarbon resources. Its considerable physical, educational, medical and social service infrastructure represents the legacy of seven decades of Soviet subsidy and investment; yet, two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, these systems are crumbling and suffering from overuse, neglect, and low human capital.

Activity to be evaluated: At the request of Kyrgyz Republic’s Ministry of Education, USAID has been supporting the national university entrance exam since 2002. A critical element of post-Soviet higher education reforms, the National Admission Test (NAT) was created to provide equal and fair access to higher education through a transparent and independent testing process. NAT has helped to professionalize and facilitate both the university admission’s process and the government’s financial aid allocation process. It is recognized as one of the most important activities in the country to combat corruption in the education sector. To date, more than 435,000 students have taken the exam and more than 58,000 government-funded scholarships have been allocated based on its results.

The development, administration, and management of NAT by an independent, local non-governmental organization (NGO) – the Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM) – is one of the hallmark features of this project and is key to the merit-based and transparent annual university testing process. NAT is now administered
independently by CEATM, with strong government support. NAT’s sustainability is now based primarily on the collection of test fees. USAID’s investment in CEATM has resulted in the creation by this local NGO of a unique capacity for test development and administration in Central Asia. CEATM has built its capacity to develop subject-matter tests in English, German, Chemistry, Physics, History, as well as additional subject specific tests in Mathematics for Mathematical and Technical specialties. With assistance from USAID, CEATM has also regularly upgraded the test databases, revised and published study guides for students, and conducted public awareness campaigns throughout the Kyrgyz Republic. Tajikistan, a neighboring country, is beginning to develop a national university entrance exam and hopes to learn and replicate the steps followed by Kyrgyz Republic and CEATM, with potential USAID support.

Since 2002, USAID support for the National Admission Test (NAT) has totaled almost $1.5 M, ending with FY 2012 resources. Following discussions with the Kyrgyz president and initial steps in 2002, collaboration between the Ministry of Education, USAID, and CEATM started in full through a 2003-2005 cooperative agreement with ACTR/ACCELS. Then, USAID entered into Fixed Obligation Grants directly with CEATM, which started in 2004 and ends on November 30, 2013, and has a total funding of $618,000.

Evaluation: The following are illustrative evaluation questions, as the full evaluation statement of work (including the related evaluation design) will be further developed, in conjunction with USAID and the consultant, once the team begins working together:

1. To what degree has NAT resulted in greater equality of access to the university system? How has this manifested across different populations (e.g. rural/urban, languages, gender)? What have been the main promoters and hindrances to meeting this objective?
2. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in higher education policies and/or practices (e.g. admissions policies, language policy, curriculum, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
3. What evidence is there to support the assertion that NAT contributed to changes in secondary education policies and/or practices (e.g. curriculum, textbooks, teacher training/professional development, learning outcomes)?
4. How can NAT be sustained and improved as the basis for allocating state scholarships? What other functions could NAT serve?

Required sources of information and evidence based on the illustrative evaluation questions:
Basic Information (as available):
1. Cooperative agreement
2. Project reports
3. Test Results Documents for the entire country
4. Scholarship granting documents (including a summary of where applying students come from, the criteria for granting, and the geographic distribution as well as funding sources)
5. Evidence of working with Secondary school curriculum
6. Documentation related to scoring of exams

Documentation related to post-education activities of youth (employment, education, etc.).

3. Scope of Work
PPL/LER, USAID/CAR, and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic are seeking a consultant to lead an evaluation of the NAT project. The purpose of the evaluation is to (1) provide critical information to USAID/CAR and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic in order to inform the design and strategy of potential higher education activities, as well as to (2) develop the capacity of USAID/CAR and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, regional, and PPL/LER staff in the field of evaluation.

The contractor will perform the required tasks as described below:

1. Conduct desktop review of documents.
2. Lead development of the draft evaluation design, work plan, and pre-departure briefing.
3. Work with individual team members to develop individual learning plan for the evaluation.
4. Work with team to finalize proposed methodologies, including the initial development of interview guides, interviews or focus groups or roundtable discussions with NGO partners, program beneficiaries and other stakeholders as identified by the evaluation team. Train team on methodologies and related tools/ instruments to be applied during the field work. Information will likely be obtained from the following illustrative sources, subject to change:
   a. Secondary data
   b. Parliament Committee on Education, Religion and Sports
   c. Ministry of Education and Science and Kyrgyz Academy of Education
   d. Active youth movements and civil society engaged in education
   e. Todd Drummond, original ACCELS manager
   f. Eric Johnson, USAID/E3/ED
   g. School and university teachers
   h. Students
   i. Rectors
   j. Parents
5. Provide training and support in application of evaluation methodologies, synthesis of data, and data analysis. (To ensure adequate training and support, there will be “learning days” built into the fieldwork portion of the evaluation. These can be divided as appropriate to the front-end, mid-point, or back-end of the fieldwork, and should be used as a time for the team to come together and ensure common understandings of the evaluation methodology, data synthesis, analysis, report writing, etc.)
6. Lead final de-briefs.
7. Based on input from team members, compile the draft evaluation report for Mission and LER review.
8. Submit final evaluation report to USAID/CAR, USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, and PPL/LER.

4. Deliverables
The consultant will ensure that the following deliverables are achieved:

i. **Draft Evaluation Design and Work Plan and Pre-Departure Briefings:** The evaluation team will develop a draft evaluation design and work plan prior to arrival in the field, including a mutually agreed upon timeline which will be influenced by the evaluation design and logistical considerations. A pre-departure briefing via conference call may be conducted with the Mission.

ii. **Individual learning plans:** The consultant will work remotely with the individual evaluation team members to develop brief learning plans for their work on evaluation.
iii. **Mid-Point Check-In**: The evaluation team will provide a mid-point check-in to an extended USAID team, to clarify any outstanding queries that may have emerged since the initiation of the evaluation process.

iv. **Oral Presentation**: After field work and initial data analysis, the evaluation team will provide a presentation (e.g. power point or prezi) on its findings and early recommendations prior to departure.

v. **Reports**: The consultant will be required to submit the following reports:

   a) **Draft Report**: The evaluation team will present a draft report of its findings and recommendations no later than 10 business days after departure from the field, barring any unexpected delays outside of the control of the consultant. Any data collection and analysis will be disaggregated by gender where appropriate (required by USAID policy), and other characteristics as relevant and depending on data availability (i.e., age, geographic region). (USAID will provide feedback no later than 10 business days of receiving the draft report.)

   b) **Final Report**: The final report should meet the criteria for evaluation reports as stated in Appendix 1 of the USAID Evaluation Policy ([http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation](http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation)) and be emailed in PDF format to USAID A/COR Elizabeth Callender within 10 business days of receiving USAID feedback on the draft report.

5. **Level of Effort**

The contractor will accomplish the above tasks from approximately early January 2014 to mid-April 2014. Fieldwork will take place from on/around early February to early March, and the final document should be ready no later than late April 2014. It is understood, however, that shifts in the timeline may occur due to unexpected delays in various phases of the evaluation, which are outside of the control of the consultant.

It is envisioned that the contractor’s level of effort will be 48 days total, with time included before and after the fieldwork for document review and report drafting.

A six-day work week will be authorized to conduct field work in Kyrgyz Republic, as travel in the provinces may occur on the weekends. However, please note that at this time, it is unclear as to whether fieldwork in the provinces will be necessary, as such determinations will be made once the consultant is chosen and the evaluation design has been refined.

Logistical support for travel and arranging meetings/interviews etc. will be provided by USAID/Kyrgyz Republic mission in conjunction with USAID/CAR.

Authorized holidays per Embassy Bishkek are January 1, 7, 20; February 17 and 24; and March 7 and 21. At this time, it is not anticipated that are other holidays or other types of events (trainings, workshops, etc.) that will affect the schedule while the evaluation team is in country. Evaluation team members will be available during the preparatory phase (e.g. in January) to respond to emails and request for information, as needed.

The final schedule will be mutually determined as part of the evaluation design and related work plan. The following Chart outlines the suggested level of effort and ideal timeline for tasks to be
completed. However, as noted above, this timeline may shift to later dates if there are unanticipated delays in any of the various stages of the evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>LOE (days)</th>
<th>Approximate Start Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation prep, document review, work on learning plan with evaluation team members (includes weekly team phone call).</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>On or around January 6, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team members complete assessment form and learning plan</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
<td>January 2 (completion Jan 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to the field</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Early February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial learning days to go over materials not addressed on the telephone and to go through the research design</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Early February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct fieldwork, data analysis and daily learning debriefings</td>
<td>KR</td>
<td>Up to 21</td>
<td>Early to Late February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final “Learning days” with team on how to analyze data and write report</td>
<td>KR/CAR**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Late February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel home</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Late February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of preliminary findings/draft evaluation report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize draft evaluation report and submit; finalize evaluation report after receiving comments by USAID (separated by approximately 10 business days)</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Early to mid-April</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total LOE** | Up to 50

*Source: PPL Bureau*

*Learning days: Given that a stated objective of this evaluation is to build capacity, as noted above, to ensure adequate training and support, there will be “learning days” built into the fieldwork portion of the evaluation. These can be divided as appropriate to the front-end and back-end of the fieldwork, and should be used as a time for the team to come together and ensure common understandings of the evaluation methodology, data synthesis, analysis, report writing, etc.

**A couple of the “learning days” may involve working at the USAID/CAR Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan (which is accessible from Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic via car). For example, it may be useful to wrap up the trip at the USAID/CAR Mission, leaving some time for instructional and collaborative data analysis and report writing amongst team members. However, such logistical arrangements will be determined once the evaluation statement of work and evaluation design is refined. This is not included in the above ideal schedule.*
6. Reporting & Coordination
The contractor will report directly to Elizabeth Callender, A/COR for the Program Cycle Services Center.

However, daily liaison and coordination for the evaluation team with USAID/CAR and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic will be provided by Lacy Kilraine, the PPL/LER member of the evaluation team who will serve as activity manager on behalf Elizabeth Callender. The LER team member will serve as a critical link to the mission staff, in particular for organizing virtual team meetings in advance of the fieldwork and for ensuring team member contributions to report drafting after fieldwork.

6.1. Specific Qualifications
PPL/LER, USAID/Kyrgyz Republic, and USAID/CAR requires that the tasks be carried out by a seasoned development professional that has ample experience conducting mixed method, high quality evaluations in developing countries. Priority will be given to professionals with:

- experience developing, conducting, and leading high quality evaluations; teaching and applying state of the art evaluation methodologies and techniques; and prior experience working with USAID, as a key objective of this evaluation is to build the capacity of USAID staff participating on the team in the field of evaluation. Experience leading diverse teams to deliver high quality evaluation reports is of priority importance. Specific qualifications desired include:

Required Skills/Experiences
- Master’s or PhD degree in a field related to education, higher education, international development, social sciences, statistics, or another relevant field.
- At least five years of experience designing, managing, implementing, and/or participating in evaluations, preferably related to international development programs, and demonstrable experience in evaluation methodologies, operations research, and/or other monitoring and evaluation.
- Demonstrable experience leading evaluation teams, teaching the theoretical underpinning of various evaluation methodologies and applying their practical application in the field, and successfully transferring skills and knowledge to learners.
- Excellent English oral and written skills.

Desired Skills/Experience
- Prior experience in Central Asia and/or post-Soviet republics.
- Prior experience designing and managing programs (and/or conducting evaluations) related to international education systems, especially higher education systems and features such as test development (e.g., SATs), student assessment, or a related subject.
- Proven experience in preparing high quality reports based on participation of multiple team members/drafters.
- Russian and/or Kyrgyz language skills are a plus.
7. Evaluation Team Members
The core evaluation team will consist of the consultant provided by the Program Cycle Service Center, who will serve as the Team Leader, one PPL/LER staff member, and 2 members from USAID/CAR (1 M&E point of contact and 1 technical specialist/education point of contact). Other key team members who will participate as needed and available are: 1 member from the USAID/Kyrgyz Republic Mission and 1 member from another of the USAID/CAR Country Offices. Per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the core USAID evaluation team members, the core team members have committed to participate during the entire evaluation process, including preparation, fieldwork, data analysis, drafting specific sections of the report, and contributing to the finalization of the evaluation report. Core evaluation team members have also committed to working with the Team Leader to develop and implement a brief individual learning plan given the capacity-building objective of this evaluation. Per the MOU, during the preparatory phase, core team members are expected to commit to contributing part-time, with no “black-out” periods prior to the launch of the field work. During the fieldwork/research, the team members will be committed “full-time” (per the MOU), engaged in daily “what did you learn” debriefings and in transcribing their notes; they will not be otherwise engaged during the fieldwork. During the report-writing phase, while the Team Leader/Consultant is responsible for drafting the preliminary and final report, all team members are expected to contribute to the report, engaged “part-time” (per the MOU). Delays caused by other USAID requirements will be taken into account when setting the final due-date for the preliminary and final report.
All of the notional and ideal schedules identified in the SOW are contingent on the following:
- Final evaluation design and work plan, as agreed upon by the core evaluation team members
- Availability of the data and documents according to the schedule
- Contributions by all team members
ANNEX II: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX III: STAKEHOLDER DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The draft data collection instruments include a range of categorical questions from which the actual interview schedules to be used will emerge. These draft instruments will be revised to create internal validity and in accordance with other reports and documents obtained (that will negate the necessity of selected questions).

The questions are organized according to the set of stakeholders addressed. Several questions are repeated across sets for the purposes of triangulation. Overall, the questions address the formation of CEATM and its management, the development of NAT and subject matter tests, the roles each set of stakeholders played, public and other responses to the test, its effect on teaching and education policy reform, its effect on corruption and a more objective system of university entrance, and whether the test should be altered in any way.

Selected interviews were held prior to the receipt of documents that provided detailed information about the early development of the project. Subsequent review of these documents has negated the necessity of some questions (underlined in the protocols below).

Questions for former American Councils Project Personnel and related individuals (Dan Davidson, President; Todd Drummond (COP); Alan DeYoung (conducted research on secondary and higher education); Jeanne-Marie Duval (former AC VP for Higher Education)

1. How did you become involved with the project? What was your role in the development and implementation of the NST project?
2. What type of response emerged from secondary schools about the exam when it was first given? From universities? How did the response change over the course of the project?
3. Were students who passed the examination able to undertake university work successfully? If not, what was lacking? How was university success measured?
4. In 2004, four subject tests (English, German, Biology, and Chemistry) were to be introduced into the NST. What was American Councils’ view on these tests? What was the MOE’s view? How did subject matter tests conflict with the notion of a general aptitude test? What is your opinion of the current trend to introduce more subject-matter tests?
5. To what extent did the NST affect the way secondary teachers teach specific subject matter classes?
6. To what extent did the creation of the NST provide broader access to university? To what extent did it reduce corruption in gaining university entrance and scholarships? In preparing for the NST, is it sufficient for students to study on their own from the review books, or is it necessary for students to take an exam prep course? Please explain.
7. What challenges did CEATM face in achieving organizational sustainability, and particularly financial sustainability? How did the project try to address these challenges?
8. Which longer-term project outcomes were achieved? (e.g., CEATM was envisioned to provide assessment services to all of the CARs and serve as a democratic non-governmental test administrator/NGO). What were the challenges in achieving these outcomes?
9. If there were to be a follow-on project, what would you recommend? If a similar project were to be considered for other (post-Soviet) countries, what aspects of the project would you recommend keeping the same? What would you recommend adjusting?
2. Questions for US-based USAID Staff with former Role in NAT Project and USAID KR Mission Staff (US: Eric Johnson, Luba Fajfer; Carina Omoeva; USAID KR: Garth Willis, Erkin Konurbayev, Guljan Tolbaeva); Jessica Leonard (Former COR of NAT Project at USAID/CAR and Current Director, American Councils, Almaty)

Project Background
1. Please describe your roles and responsibilities at USAID? How long have you been in that role?
2. What has been your interaction with how did you become involved the National Admissions Test project in the Kyrgyz Republic and with the USAID/CAR and USAID/Kyrgyz Republic Missions?
3. What M&E reporting structure was established between American Councils and USAID? What deliverables were expected from American Councils? How were they expected to report?
4. What support did American Councils provide to CEATM? What other organizations, if any, provided support to CEATM and in what way?
5. Once the project was over in 2005, how did USAID continue to support CEATM? What was the annual amount dispersed to the project?

Test Administration and Short to Mid-Term Outcomes
6. What type of response emerged from secondary schools about the exam when it was first given? From universities? How did the response change over the course of the project?
7. In 2004, MOES requested that four subject-matter tests (English, German, Biology, and Chemistry) be added to the testing procedures. What opinion did various stakeholders have about these tests (i.e., CEATM, universities, secondary schools, parents)? What information did the subject-matter test results provide different from the results of the NAT? What is your opinion of the current trend to introduce more subject-matter tests?
8. How has NAT leveraged changes in secondary school classroom teaching? How have subject-matter tests leveraged changes in teaching? How has NAT led to improved learning outcomes at the secondary level? (e.g., curriculum, textbooks, teachers)?
9. To what extent did the creation of the NAT provide broader access to university? How and when was the quota system introduced by the MOES?
10. To what extent did NAT reduce corruption in obtaining scholarships?
11. In preparing for the NAT, is it sufficient for students to study on their own from the review books, or is it necessary for students to take an exam prep course? Please explain.

Long-Term Outcomes
12. What long-term changes in secondary and/or university education have you observed that may be attributable to or influenced by NAT?
13. How does NAT compare to university admissions tests in other post-Soviet countries? If there were to be a follow-on project, what would you recommend? If a similar project were to be considered for other (post-Soviet) countries, what aspects of the project would you recommend keeping the same? What would you recommend adjusting?
3. Questions for CEATM Leadership/Team (certain questions to be posed of the director (with or without other staff members) while others should be posed to staff members separately). Team is comprised of Inna Valkova, Director; Chief Specialist for Item and Test Construction; Chief Specialist for Test Administration; Chief Specialist for Public and Government Relations; Chief IT Specialist. Questions were posed over portions of three days of interviews.

**Background and Organization/Management**

1. Please tell us about yourself and how you became involved in NAT. Inna, how did you become director? How did your activities with Soros Foundation prepare you to lead CEATM?
2. How often do you conduct strategic planning? Who participates? How have CEATM’s goals changed over time?
3. How were staff members initially identified? What are their qualifications? What is the turnover of CEATM’s professional staff? How do you recruit new professional staff? How has CEATM’s structure changed over time?
4. What type of training was professional staff provided by ACTR/ACCELS, or other organizations, if any? Over what period? How do you continue to develop staff?
5. In general, what is the public’s perception of CEATM as a national examination developer and administrator?

**Funding and Reporting**

6. How was funding obtained from USAID at the outset? How did you obtain USAID funding since the end of the ACTR/ACCELS award? How much did you receive each year?
7. What indicators/milestones did you monitor and report to USAID?
8. What are CEATM’s other sources of funding? For what services? To what extent do NAT testing fees fund CEATM?
9. How does CEATM cover the cost of generating new subject matter tests?
10. What is your projected source of funding over the next several years?

**Test Development**

11. When CEATM began its work, how did you develop the NAT? What assistance did ACTR/ACCELS provide? What process is used now to develop new questions for NAT? How is piloting conducted? With whom? What do you do with questions that do not produce the desired results in the pilot?
12. What is your opinion of the continued addition of subject-matter tests? How do the results of the subject-matter tests differ from those of the NAT?
13. How often does the MOES request new subject matter tests? What challenges do you face in trying to satisfy these requests?
14. How do you utilize the secondary school curricula in generating subject-matter tests?
15. What other materials are subject-matter tests based on? How do you pilot them? With whom? What do you do with questions that do not produce the desired results in the pilot?
16. What input does the MOES provide in the whole testing process? With which departments do you work most closely?
17. When did the MOES construct the quota system and why? How does it work?
18. Which other organizations work with you on test development and administration? What do they do?
19. How do you determine when it is necessary to add/change the questions on any given test?
20. What other organizations administer national tests? How do their tests differ from NAT and the subject-matter tests?

Test Administration
21. Where was the test administered at first and how the locations changed over time. What explains the dramatic increase in the number of test centers in 2011 and 2012.
22. How are test materials distributed?
23. How do you identify and train test monitors? Overall, what are their responsibilities?
24. When and how did the test administration become the object of an MOES tender? For how long is the contract awarded? What other organizations compete for this award?
25. What kind of challenges has CEATM faced in the administration of the test? How were these overcome?
26. How does CEATM receive feedback on the exam? From whom? What is the process that CEATM uses to determine what adjustments will be made to the exam from year to year?

NAT Information Campaigns
27. How has CEATM raised awareness of NAT throughout the country?
28. What role did the MOES play in expanding awareness? Did any others assist?
29. What challenges have you faced in expanding awareness? How have these been addressed?

NAT Preparation and Registration
30. In your opinion, in preparing for the NAT, is it sufficient for students to study on their own from the review books created by CEATM, or is it necessary for students to take an exam preparation course? Who provides these courses? How much are the fees?
31. What do teachers do to prepare students to take NAT? To take the subject matter tests? How is this different from how they used to teach before NAT?
32. In your opinion, are students from all geographic areas ready to take the test? What else can be done to prepare them?
33. How much has the cost of these tests changed over time? How has the increasing cost affected registration?
34. What information do you keep on student registration for the NAT and the subject matter tests (e.g., geographical distribution, home location vs. test location, name of secondary school, etc.)? How is this information analyzed? How is the analysis used in determining the need for new questions?

Reaction to Tests
35. What kind of response emerged from different stakeholders about the NAT when it first administered; how did this change over time?
   • Secondary school leaders and teachers?
   • Secondary school students and their parents?
   • University leaders and faculty?
   • University students
   • Government officials, policymakers, and politicians?
36. How did the media influence public reaction to NAT? How did this change over time?

NAT Project Outcomes
37. How has NAT achieved its original objective of being a good predictor of a student’s success in university? Are students who receive favorable scores on the exam able to undertake university work successfully?
38. To what extent has NAT provided broader and more equitable access to university?
39. To what extent has it reduced corruption in gaining university entrance and scholarships?
40. What other changes have you observed in secondary education that NAT may have influenced, including:
   - The introduction of critical thinking and the logic of test taking?
   - The Grade 11 exit exams?
   - The way secondary school teachers teach subject matter?
   - The way teachers assign grades to students for classroom performance?
   - The secondary school curriculum?
   - The language of instruction and corresponding language textbooks?
41. What changes have you observed in higher education that NAT may have influenced?
42. When the World Bank and USAID launched projects to improve teaching, how was the NAT seen as part of this process? Was there any attempt at integrating these projects?
43. In your opinion, how can NAT results be used to inform education policies or practices?
44. What research has CEATM conducted on the entire testing process?
45. What kind of teacher training in test taking has CEATM been involved with?

Closing Questions
46. How do you see CEATM’s role in building civil society?
47. What other organizations and/or universities could train organizations in test development and administration skills?
48. If this model of (an independent testing organization for the National Admissions Test) were to be implemented in other (post-Soviet) countries, what aspects would you recommend continuing? What would you recommend adjusting?
49. After more than 10 years of experience implementing NAT and the subject matter tests, what do you think needs to be changed about the tests? About CEATM?

4. Questions for Camila Sharshekeeva, Minister of Education at the time of the NAT Project, currently Provost of the International University of Central Asia
1. Please tell us about yourself and how you were appointed as the Minister of Education. What role did you play in educational reform? How did the number of universities jump from just a few to 52? What was happening in higher education that led you to want to change it?
2. How and why did you determine that a national scholarship test was necessary? How and why did you determine that the test should measure aptitude and not subject-matter information?
3. What led you to go to USAID for funding and not Soros or some other donor? What was the process of obtaining the grant from USAID?
4. What were your expectations about the ability of NAT to reform the university scholarship award process? Were your expectations fulfilled or not? Please explain.
5. Was it your expectation that the test be used as a university entrance requirement for both contract and budget places? What was behind the 2011 MOES decision to make NAT a mandatory part of all university admissions processes?
6. The MOES has allocated funding for tuition for 5,700 scholarships; the number of those seeking scholarships has increased, but not the number of scholarships. Can you explain this?
7. University faculty have stated that NAT has become less of a predictor of academic performance in recent years because students are taking extra tutorials to learn how to take the NAT. What is your opinion about this?
8. Why has the importance of the 11th grade leaving exam declined in favor of NAT?
9. Was the MOES involved at all in establishing CEATM as an independent testing organization? What response did NTC have to CEATM then? What concerns does the MOES/NTC have about CEATM today?
10. In terms of sustainability, how important is it for CEATM to have the full support of the President? Of the Minister of Education? Of the Education Committee in Parliament? What are the challenges in obtaining and maintaining this support?
11. What do you think explains the longevity of NAT in the face of two “revolutions” and several changes in government?
12. How and why did the test administration become the object of an MOES tender every year? Why was the tender posted for three years this year?
13. What do you feel about CEATM being the only organization that has been implementing the NAT? Should there be a competitor? How should others be trained to be in this position?
14. What long-term changes have you observed in the universities that are rooted in the NAT? In secondary schools? In the MOES?
15. What is your opinion of the subject matter tests and the annual addition of more subject matter tests? How about how the universities use the NAT subject matter tests to determine admissions and specializations?
16. What is your opinion of the quota system the MOES developed to guide scholarship students into selecting certain majors? (not necessarily the quota system re: geographic areas)
17. What is your current relationship with the MOES? Are you still involved in higher education reform?
18. In your opinion, what else can CEATM do to enhance its reputation and to further the work of educational reform? What other initiatives should they consider pursuing?
19. Do you believe that the development of an independent NGO to develop and administer a national test is the best way to reduce corruption and expand opportunities for higher education to the rural poor? What other strategies would you recommend? Would you recommend that this strategy be reproduced in neighboring countries? Why, why not?

5. Questions for Units in the Ministry of Education (not posed as constrained by USAID/KR from Meeting with Units)
National Testing Center (NTC)
1. Please tell us about yourself. What is your current position and what are your responsibilities? What level of education have you achieved? What other positions have you held in education? Over which years?
2. Please tell us about the NTC. When was it created? How? To address what need? How is the NTC structured? What are the overall responsibilities of NTC? How many staff do you have? What are their specific skills and responsibilities?
3. How are the results of the llth grade leaving exam used? How has this changed over time?
4. What is the difference between the school leaving exam and NAT and subject matter tests? What are the similarities?
5. Has any of your staff been involved in or consulted on the development of the NAT or subject-matter tests? In their administration?
6. To what degree is your department formally involved in reviewing, analyzing, or commenting on the way NAT test questions are created? In reviewing or commenting on the annual “NAT results” report produced by CEATM?
7. If you were responsible for generating NAT, what would you keep? What would you change?

**Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE)**
1. Please tell us about yourself. What is your current position and what are your responsibilities? What level of education have you achieved? What other positions have you held in education? Over which years?
2. Please tell us about the KAE. When was it created? How? To address what need? How is the KAE structured? What are the overall responsibilities of KAE? How many staff do you have? What are their specific skills and responsibilities?
4. What is your opinion of NAT?
5. What changes in secondary education have occurred since the NAT was introduced? (i.e., teacher training, curriculum, textbook choice/development, assessment, teaching approach, education policy).
6. Has any of your staff been involved or consulted on the development of the NAT or subject-matter tests? In its administration?
7. To what degree is your department involved in reviewing, analyzing, or commenting on the way NAT test questions are created? In reviewing or commenting on the annual “NAT results” report produced by CEATM?
8. If you were responsible for generating NAT and subject-matter tests, what would you keep? What changes would you make?

**Department of Secondary Education**
1. Please tell us about yourself. What is your current position and what are your responsibilities? What level of education have you achieved? What other positions have you held in education? Over which years?
2. Please tell us about the Secondary Education Department. When was it created? How? How is the Department structured? What are the overall responsibilities of the department? How many staff do you have? What are their specific skills and responsibilities?
3. Please tell us about the secondary school system: what are the strengths and weakness of the system? What has changed in the system in the last 10 years?
4. What is your opinion of NAT? What are the strengths and weaknesses of NAT and the subject-matter tests?
5. What difference has NAT made in the way scholarships have been awarded? When and why was the quota system introduced? How is it structured?
6. Has any of your staff been involved in or consulted on the development of the NAT or subject-matter tests? In their administration?
7. To what degree is your department formally involved in reviewing, analyzing, or commenting on the way NAT test questions are created? In reviewing or commenting on the annual “NAT results” report produced by CEATM?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of an NGO developing and administering the NAT and subject matter tests? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the MOES developing and administering the NAT?
9. If you were responsible for generating NAT and subject-matter tests, what would you keep? What changes would you make?

Department of Higher Education
1. Please tell us about yourself. What is your current position and what are your responsibilities? What level of education have you achieved? Please tell us other positions you have held in education? Over which years?
2. Please tell us about the Higher Education Department. When was it created? How? How is the Department structured? What are the overall responsibilities of the Department? How many staff do you have? What are their specific skills and responsibilities?
3. Please tell us about the higher education system. What are its strengths and weaknesses? What has changed in the last 10 years in terms of courses of study? Requirements for degrees? (i.e., diplomas vs. degrees) Other?
4. What is the average amount a non-scholarship student pays to attend university? How much do fees vary by major? By university?
5. What is your opinion of NAT? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
6. What is your opinion of subject-matter tests? What is the purpose of the subject-matter tests? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
7. What difference has NAT made in the way scholarships have been awarded? Has it increased the number of disadvantaged students attending university? How has the quota system addressed issues of equity? How could issues of equity be further addressed?
8. Please describe your interaction with CEATM, EdNet, and the Council of Rectors? How often do they meet with your staff? What do they discuss?
9. Has any of your staff been involved in or consulted on the development of the NAT or subject-matter tests? In their administration?
10. To what degree is your department formally involved in reviewing, analyzing, or commenting on the way NAT test questions are created? In reviewing or commenting on the annual “NAT results” report produced by CEATM?
11. If you were responsible for generating NAT and subject-matter tests, what would you keep? What changes would you make?

6. Questions for Universities
University Leadership (Rectors/Deputy Rectors/Department Chairs)
1. Please tell us about this university: What specializations are offered in terms of majors? What geographic areas do the majority of students come from? What is the language of instruction?
2. For a student to be considered for admission, what information is required? What else is required for a specific major?
3. What MOES policies and/or guidelines are used in admitting students? In hiring faculty and staff?
4. What is your opinion of NAT? What are the strengths and weaknesses of NAT and the subject-matter tests?
5. What difference has NAT made in the way scholarships have been awarded? When and how was the quota system for scholarships introduced?
6. From your point of view, how well do the NAT and subject matter test scores predict the academic success of a student at university?
7. How much does a non-scholarship student pay to attend this university? To major in a specific subject?
8. What kinds of challenges does your faculty face in teaching (e.g., salaries, other work commitments, funding for research, grading of student performance, providing extra tutorials to students not doing well, etc.)?
9. What are the differences and similarities between NAT and any other university entrance exams?
10. If you were responsible for generating NAT or a separate admissions test for this university, what would you keep from NAT? From subject-matter tests? What would you change?

Faculty
1. Please tell us about yourself: What subjects do you teach? At what level? How long have you been teaching at this (and any other) university? What are your educational qualifications? On average, how many students do you have in your classes? In which language do you teach? What other source of income do you have: e.g., teaching at another university, extra tutorials, etc.?
2. Please tell us about your students: In general, where are they from? What is their mother tongue? How would you characterize your students: well performing, average, low performers?
3. Which students do you teach? Fee paying? Scholarship? How is your approach to teaching different according to the type of student you teach?
4. What is your opinion of NAT? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
5. If your students took NAT and the subject-matter test in your subject, how well did their scores predict their ability to achieve academic success in your courses?
6. What additional subject matter tests would be helpful for you to understand the knowledge level of your students?
7. What explains the difference in NAT scores achieved by males and females? How do males and females make different/similar choices about the university they want to attend?
8. What are the differences and similarities between NAT and any other university entrance exams?
9. How would you compare the admissions policies and procedures of this university with any others with which you are familiar?
10. If you were responsible for generating NAT or a separate admissions test for this university, what would you keep from NAT? From subject-matter tests? What would you change?

Students
1. Please tell us about yourself: where do you come from? What is your mother tongue? In what language do you study at this university? What is your major? Are you a scholarship or fee-paying student? Did you take the NAT? What do you hope to do after you finish university?
2. When you were in secondary school, how did you learn about the NAT and the subject-matter exams? Which subject-matter exams did you take?
3. What is your opinion of the NAT in terms of the questions it asks and your ability to answer them? What is your opinion of the subject matter tests you took in terms of your ability to answer the questions? Which tests did you find the most challenging? Why?
4. How did you prepare for NAT? Did you use the study guide? Did you take extra courses or extra tuition? Do you feel you were adequately prepared to take the tests? If not, what else do you think is needed?

5. What is your opinion about how the tests were administered? (e.g., time available, monitors, location) What is your opinion about how the tests were scored?

6. What explains the difference in NAT scores achieved by males and females? How do males and females make different/similar choices about the university they want to attend?

7. If you are a scholarship holder, what university costs does the scholarship cover? What other costs do you incur to study at this university? How do you meet these costs?

8. If you are a fee-paying student, how much tuition do you pay at this university? What other costs do you incur to study at this university? For your major?

9. What qualifications were necessary to gain entrance to this university? What challenges did you face in gaining entrance?

10. If you were responsible for generating the NAT and subject-matter tests, what would you keep? What would you change?

7. Questions for Secondary Schools
   Director/Vice Director

1. Please tell us something about the community in which your school is located. Economically, are families of high, middle or low income? How educated are parents? What types of jobs do they have? What kind of resources are in the community (health, banking, industry, etc.)?

2. Please tell us something about yourself: How long have you been director at this school (and any other schools)? What formal training did you have to be appointed as a director? Were you a teacher before you were a director? For how long?

3. Please tell us something about your students: How many are enrolled in this school? In your opinion, are the majority of students above average, average, or under average?

4. Please tell us something about your teachers: How many teach at this school? Full time? Part time? What kind of training have they had? For how long? In what subjects? In which language(s) do your teachers teach?

5. What is your opinion about the NAT? About the subject-matter tests? What difference has the NAT and the subject-matter tests made in terms of expanding opportunities to more students to go to university? To be awarded scholarships? About how many students from your school are awarded scholarships each year? In general, to which type of university? To study which subjects?

6. How many fee-paying students from your school attend university? In general, which type of university? To study which subjects?

7. How do students learn about NAT? What is your opinion of the way NAT is administered? How can this be improved? What opportunities are available to take the test in case the student cannot make the appointed date?

8. How are students prepared to take the NAT? The subject-matter tests? What challenges do students face in preparing for the tests? In taking the tests?

9. How do male and female students decide which university to attend?

10. What are the entrance requirements for major state universities? For regional universities? How do universities decide on who will be granted admission?
11. What types of changes have been made in granting of scholarships since the NAT was introduced? What is your opinion of the quota system the MOES established to award scholarships?

12. How has the NAT influenced the way teachers teach? How have the subject-matter tests influenced the way teachers teach? Have these changes made a difference in the class grades students earn?

13. How has the increase in the cost of the NAT affected the number of students applying to take it? If a student doesn’t have the money to pay for any of the tests, what type of support can s/he access?

14. How do parents and parent organizations support your school?

15. What options are available to students who take the test and fail to obtain a scholarship?

16. If you were responsible for generating the NAT and subject matter tests, what would you keep? What would you change?

**Teachers who Teach 11th Grade**

1. Please tell us about yourself: how long have you been teaching? Which subjects? Which level? What kind of teacher training did you have? How do you supplement your income from classroom teaching?

2. How satisfied are you with your job as a teacher? What are three things you like most about your job? What are three things you like least about your job?

3. How do your students find out about NAT? How many of your students take NAT?

4. What is your opinion about the NAT? About the subject-matter tests? What difference has the NAT and the subject matter tests made in terms of expanding opportunities to more students to go to university? To be awarded scholarships?

5. How have the NAT and the subject matter tests influenced the way you teach?

6. What are the differences and similarities between the 11th grade leaving (exit) exam and the NAT? Should the NAT look more like the leaving exam, or vice versa? Why?

7. To what extent do grades students achieve for classwork correspond to their NAT scores?

8. What explains the difference in NAT scores achieved by males and females? How do males and females make different/similar choices about the university they want to attend?

9. How do your students prepare for NAT? How do you help them? What is your opinion of the study guides? How can they be improved?

10. How do the subject-matter tests relate to the standard curriculum in the corresponding subject?

11. How do students choose the university they wish to attend? The course of study they wish to pursue? What other funding options do students have who were not selected for a scholarship?

12. If you were responsible for generating the NAT and subject matter tests, what would you keep? What would you change?

**Students**

1. Please tell us about yourself: How long have you been studying here? Do you plan on attending university? If so, what do you plan to study? What kind of job would you like to have in the future? What is your mother tongue? What language do you study in now?

2. How did you learn about NAT? Do you plan on taking NAT? Any subject-matter tests? If so, which ones? In which language will you take the tests?

3. What is your opinion the NAT? The subject matter tests?
4. How will you prepare for the NAT? For the subject-matter tests? Who will help you prepare? (e.g., teacher, tutor, mentor, siblings, parents). Will you have to pay anyone for this preparation? If so, about how much?

5. What are the differences and similarities between the 11th grade leaving (exit) exam and the NAT? Should the NAT look more like the leaving exam, or vice versa? Why?

6. What explains the difference in NAT scores achieved by males and females? How do males and females make different/similar choices about the university they want to attend?

7. What qualifications do you have to have to be admitted to your chosen university? To your chosen major?

8. If you are granted admission to a university but not a scholarship, will you be able to enroll? If not, what will you do? How will you access this funding?

9. If it were up to you, on what basis should a university admit a student? Award a scholarship?

Parents (Focus Group)

General Questions and SATISFACTION INDEX


2. How many of you have children who have already taken the NAT? How many of you have children who will take the NAT this year? Do any of you have children in the 11th grade and won’t take the NAT? Why?

SATISFACTION QUESTION: Using a scale of 1-4, rank the answers to the following questions: 1= Very satisfied; 2 = Satisfied; 3= Dissatisfied; 4 = Very dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with:

a) The quality of teachers who are teaching your children
b) The marking/grading system your children’s teachers are using
c) The quality of textbooks your children are using
d) The physical quality of the school
e) The NAT as the basis for the awarding of scholarships
f) The NAT as a screening mechanism for university admissions
g) The quota system the MOES uses in awarding scholarships
h) The fee you have to pay for your children to take NAT
i) The choice of universities your male children have to further their education
j) The choice of universities your female children have to further their education
k) The fees you expect to pay for your children’s university education
l) The other educational options available to your male children if they don’t go to university
m) The other educational options available to your female children if they don’t go to university
n) The other funding options to go to university

Please explain your answers.

3. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about concerning your children’s education?
## ANNEX IV: CHART OF QUESTIONS POSED IN ANSWER TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### Chart 8. Questions Posed in Answer to Evaluation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Interview Questions (* = key/priority question)</th>
<th>Outliers/Uncertain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eq of Access to Scholar &amp; Entrance to Diff Pops; +, -</td>
<td>ACTR USAID CEATM KG Government KG Senior University Leadership Faculty Students Secondary Schools Leadership Faculty Students Parents</td>
<td>1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9*,10,11,12,14,15,16,17,18*,21,22,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49</td>
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<td>Change in BE</td>
<td>ACTR USAID CEATM KG Government KG Senior University Leadership Faculty Students</td>
<td>2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,18*,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,37,40,42,43,45</td>
<td>6?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Questions</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>Interview Questions (* = key/priority question))</td>
<td>Outliers/Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>8,12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>5,6,7,9,10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>a,b,c,d,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long term improve/sustain.</strong></td>
<td>ACTR</td>
<td>7,8,9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>4,5,7,10,12,13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEATM KG Government</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,6,8,9,10,11,13,16,17,18*,19,20,21,22,23,24*, 25,26,27,28,29,32,33, 36,37,38,39,41,43,44,45,46,47,48,49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KG Senior University Leadership</td>
<td>4,5,7,8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>4,5,6,7,8,10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5,6,10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary Schools Leadership</td>
<td>5,7,11,16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>9,12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>ACTR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>1,2,3,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEATM KG Government KG Senior University Leadership</td>
<td>1,2,3,6,7,10,11,21,22,23,27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>1,8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary Schools Leadership</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014
ANNEX V: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Chart 9. US Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (2014)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</th>
<th>Position Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Dan Davidson (Lacy and Nancy)</td>
<td>President of American Councils</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Obtain background information on project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Eric Johnson (Lacy and Nancy)</td>
<td>USAID/ Washington/E3, Education Specialist; former Fulbright fellow with CEATM</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Obtain NAT project information and his dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Todd Drummond (Nancy)</td>
<td>Former COP, NAT Project</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Obtain NAT project information, publications and his dissertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Alan DeYoung (Nancy)</td>
<td>Fulbright professor and researcher on education in KR</td>
<td>SKYPE</td>
<td>Obtain information on the status of university and secondary education in KR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Martha Merrill (Nancy)</td>
<td>Professor, Kent University; expert on higher education reform in KR</td>
<td>SKYPE</td>
<td>Obtain information on higher education changes and NAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Jeanne Marie Duval (Nancy)</td>
<td>Former VP of American Councils</td>
<td>SKYPE</td>
<td>Obtain information on AC project activities in KR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Carina Omoeva (Lacy)</td>
<td>Former USAID/CAR Staff, Activity Manager for NAT in Almaty</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>Obtain information on AC activities in KR and SAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Luba Fajfer (Lacy)</td>
<td>USAID/ Washington/E&amp;E, Education Specialist</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>Obtain NAT project information, USAID education sector and regional info</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014
## Chart 10. In-Field Interviews and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (2014)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</th>
<th>Position Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Interview with Jessica Leonard</td>
<td>Former USAID/CAR Staff, COR for NAT in Almaty</td>
<td>American Councils, Almaty</td>
<td>Obtain information on early administration of NAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Team Meeting: Nancy Horn, Lacy Kilraise, Marc Bonnenfant, Corey Hancock and Vepa Berdiyev</td>
<td>USAID/W, CAR, Turkmenistan</td>
<td>USAID Almaty</td>
<td>Team learning on synchronizing questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Team Meeting</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Intercon-tinental Hotel, Almaty</td>
<td>Team learning on finalizing questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Team depart for Bishkek</td>
<td></td>
<td>Almaty to Bishkek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Interview with Garth Willis</td>
<td>USAID/KR, Health and Education; Former American Councils Staff, wrote original NAT unsolicited proposal</td>
<td>USAID/KR, Bishkek</td>
<td>Obtain background and current status of project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>In-brief with Raymond Grant, Garth Willis, and Anna Kuznetsova</td>
<td>USAID/KR, Health and Education and Program</td>
<td>USAID/KR, Bishkek</td>
<td>Inform team of activities, discuss how to obtain clearance to visit schools, told we could not visit MOES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Interview with Guljian Tolbaeva</td>
<td>US Embassy, Bishkek; former professor</td>
<td>US Embassy, Bishkek</td>
<td>Understand how universities admitted students during Soviet era and how things changed at independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>Debrief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Interview with Inna Volkova</td>
<td>Director, CEATM</td>
<td>CEATM HQ</td>
<td>All details on CEATM launch, work, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date (2014)</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</td>
<td>Position Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Interview with Natalya Naumova and Konstantine Titov (Nancy, Marc, Vepa)</td>
<td>Head of Test Development and Head of IT and Psychometrics</td>
<td>CEATM HQ</td>
<td>All details on test development, annual reports, database, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Interview with Batrakeeva Chinan (Lacy, Corey, Chopin (interpreter))</td>
<td>PR Specialist</td>
<td>CEATM HQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Interview with Miriam Kadyrova (Nancy, Marc, Vepa)</td>
<td>Head of Test Administration</td>
<td>CEATM HQ</td>
<td>All details on how test administered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Interview with Asel Bazorkova (Lacy, Corey, Chopin (interpreter))</td>
<td>Administrative Manager</td>
<td>CEATM HQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Develop question chart (Lacy and Marc); review stats in CEATM annual reports (Corey, Vepa, Nancy)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Team learning on focus group interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Interview with Erkin</td>
<td>USAID/KR Health and Education; former AOR NAT project</td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>All details from AOR perspective; make interview arrangements for school and university interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5:15</td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Interviews at School No. 87 (rural) around Bishkek: Director, 4Teachers, 6Students, 4 Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>School No. 87</td>
<td>All details on secondary school views of NAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Team Review of newly-acquired information</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Marc’s Departure for Almaty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Third set of interviews with CEATM staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>CEATM</td>
<td>Finish interview questions; clarify information obtained in past interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</td>
<td>Position Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>2:30</td>
<td>Leave for airport and flight to Osh (Corey, Vepa, Lacy and Nancy)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bishkek/Osh</td>
<td>Conduct interviews at Osh State U and two schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>8:15</td>
<td>Interviews at Osh State University with Rector; IT Person who developed OSU website and database for students and faculty; 8 teachers representing physical and natural sciences, math and IT; and 9 students representing Medical School and Chinese language and literature</td>
<td>Rector IT Person Faculty Students</td>
<td>Osh State University</td>
<td>All details on NAT from each of the perspectives represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Interviews with Director, 5 teachers (F) and 8 students (4M, 4F)</td>
<td>Director Teachers Students</td>
<td>Mombekov #101 School, Ferkat</td>
<td>All details on NAT from peri-urban secondary school perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunrise Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>Depart Sunrise Hotel for flight to Bishkek at 9:40</td>
<td></td>
<td>Osh to Bishkek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Interviews with Rector, Faculty and Students</td>
<td>Rector Faculty Students</td>
<td>Kyrgyz National State University</td>
<td>All details on NAT from the perspective of the largest national state university in KR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Team Debrief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td></td>
<td>DAY OFF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date (2014)</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</td>
<td>Position Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Team Learning Day: Structure of Report</td>
<td>Lacy, Corey, Vepa, Nancy</td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>Learning on analysis and report writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to identify themes in each data set</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to combine data sets under themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to use quotes in support of assertions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to use statistical data in support of assertions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to transform qualitative data into quantitative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to analyze Likert Scale data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to construct conclusions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to construct recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Team work on identification of themes and combining data sets; team discussion; further identification of statistical data to include in findings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Team work on using quotes, incorporating statistical data, transforming qualitative into quantitative data; analyzing Likert Scale Data; team discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Round robin review of work; discussion of points raised; drawing conclusions from limited data</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Continue discussion of findings and conclusions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Camila Sharshekeeva</td>
<td>Former Minister of Education at time of NAT project</td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>Fill in informational gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td></td>
<td>Team development of PPT for USAID out-brief</td>
<td>Lacy, Corey, Vepa, Nancy</td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date (2014)</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Person Interviewed/Activity Undertaken</td>
<td>Position Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Team continue discussion of conclusions; begin to identify recommendations</td>
<td>Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Presentation of Findings at CEATM/USAID/KR Out-brief</td>
<td>USAID/KR: Garth Willis, Director, HEO Office; Kevin Dean, Acting Deputy Mission Director; 9 CEATM staff members; and 4 team members: Lacy, Corey, Vepa and Nancy, and translator</td>
<td>USAID/KR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Team departure for Almaty; discussion of USAID/KR out-briefing on what comments to include in report</td>
<td>In vehicle Bishkek to Almaty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>3:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Horn flight Almaty/Frankfurt/Chicago</td>
<td>Almaty/Chicago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAT Evaluation Team, 2014
Chart 11. Scholarship Recipients as a Percent of NAT Test-Takers, by Geographic Category.

Scholarship Recipients as a Percentage of NAT Test-Takers, by Geographic Category
(Source: CEATM Annual Report, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Scholarship recipients from rural/mountainous areas</th>
<th>% Scholarship recipients from Bishkek, oblast centers and small towns, or other areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 12. NAT Test Takers vs Scholarship Recipients


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of NAT Test Takers</th>
<th>Number of Scholarship Recipients</th>
<th>Scholarship recipients from rural and mountainous areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>13807</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>3305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>35247</td>
<td>4626</td>
<td>2956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>39284</td>
<td>5204</td>
<td>3200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>33372</td>
<td>5368</td>
<td>3323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>33400</td>
<td>4962</td>
<td>3255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>34225</td>
<td>4787</td>
<td>3394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>33431</td>
<td>4988</td>
<td>3477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>33579</td>
<td>4598</td>
<td>3421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>30264</td>
<td>4472</td>
<td>3215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35525</td>
<td>4526</td>
<td>3191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>55546</td>
<td>4593</td>
<td>3036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>52777</td>
<td>4361</td>
<td>2861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 13. Percentage of NAT Participants vs. Scholarship Recipients Enrolled, by Geographic Quota Categories, by Year
Chart 14. Number of Test-Takers, Scholarship Recipients, and Average Scores by Sex

Chart 15. Number of NAT Test Takers, Number of Scholarship Recipients, Percentage of Test Takers Awarded Scholarships

Source: CEATM 2013 Annual Report
### Chart 16. Average NAT Score of Budget Students, by Geographic Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Oblast Center</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Small Towns</th>
<th>Bishkek</th>
<th>Mountainous Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University #1 (Kyrgyz State University)</td>
<td>144.40</td>
<td>155.90</td>
<td>136.50</td>
<td>156.60</td>
<td>164.50</td>
<td>141.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #2 (Talas State University)</td>
<td>124.10</td>
<td>133.00</td>
<td>166.00</td>
<td>113.00</td>
<td>130.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #3 (Manas Kyrgyz State University)</td>
<td>171.80</td>
<td>179.70</td>
<td>199.00</td>
<td>184.30</td>
<td>180.60</td>
<td>174.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #4 (Kyrgyz State University of Architecture)</td>
<td>134.80</td>
<td>152.80</td>
<td>143.00</td>
<td>141.00</td>
<td>149.70</td>
<td>135.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #5 (Bishkek Polytechnical University)</td>
<td>142.90</td>
<td>168.60</td>
<td>163.00</td>
<td>159.20</td>
<td>167.40</td>
<td>144.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #6 (Military Institute)</td>
<td>108.90</td>
<td>123.00</td>
<td>98.00</td>
<td>123.40</td>
<td>110.90</td>
<td>109.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #7 (Academy of Ministry of Internal Affairs)</td>
<td>114.90</td>
<td>137.30</td>
<td>104.00</td>
<td>125.70</td>
<td>129.10</td>
<td>123.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #8 (Academy of State Governanc)</td>
<td>191.80</td>
<td>201.80</td>
<td>198.00</td>
<td>189.90</td>
<td>186.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #9 (Batken State University)</td>
<td>124.90</td>
<td>136.00</td>
<td>131.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #10 (Bishkek Humanities)</td>
<td>141.90</td>
<td>128.60</td>
<td>122.00</td>
<td>143.10</td>
<td>159.70</td>
<td>138.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #11 (Jalalabad State University)</td>
<td>125.10</td>
<td>135.80</td>
<td>116.00</td>
<td>126.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #12 (Yssykul State University)</td>
<td>132.60</td>
<td>133.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>142.40</td>
<td>124.00</td>
<td>133.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #13 (Kyrgyz State Medical Academy)</td>
<td>178.40</td>
<td>189.20</td>
<td>176.40</td>
<td>189.40</td>
<td>198.10</td>
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<td>University #14 (Kyrgyz State University)</td>
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<td>147.00</td>
<td>144.00</td>
<td>147.30</td>
<td>130.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #15 (Kyrgyz National Academy of Governance)</td>
<td>117.40</td>
<td>130.00</td>
<td>106.00</td>
<td>122.70</td>
<td>130.30</td>
<td>115.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #16 (Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University)</td>
<td>166.80</td>
<td>176.70</td>
<td>192.00</td>
<td>177.20</td>
<td>198.70</td>
<td>166.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #17 (former Kyrgyz-Uzbek University)</td>
<td>126.40</td>
<td>136.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>122.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>University #18 (Naryn State University)</td>
<td>119.00</td>
<td>123.00</td>
<td>144.00</td>
<td>141.80</td>
<td>127.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #19 (Osh State University)</td>
<td>141.00</td>
<td>163.00</td>
<td>123.00</td>
<td>153.60</td>
<td>163.70</td>
<td>133.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University #20 (Osh Technical University)</td>
<td>126.90</td>
<td>137.40</td>
<td>123.00</td>
<td>124.60</td>
<td>141.50</td>
<td>125.30</td>
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</table>

**AVERAGE NAT SCORE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Oblast Center</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Small Towns</th>
<th>Bishkek</th>
<th>Mountainous Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138.23</td>
<td>150.43</td>
<td>139.87</td>
<td>147.38</td>
<td>156.08</td>
<td>138.47</td>
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</table>

Source: CEATM 2013 Report
Chart 17. Percentage of NAT Test Takers Receiving Scholarships, by Language.

### Chart 18. English and Math Subject Matter (SM) Test Results by Sex (2012 and 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5,890</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>6,343</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>5,971</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>5,899</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>5,327</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>5,822</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,981</td>
<td>11,670</td>
<td>11,721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Chart 19. Math NAT and Math Subject Matter Test Results by Sex (2012 and 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30,593</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>6,343</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>28,614</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>5,899</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24,953</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>5,327</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>24,163</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>5,822</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55,546</td>
<td>11,670</td>
<td>53,227</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11,721</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Chart 20. Biology and Chemistry Subject Matter Test Results by Sex (2012 and 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11,124</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>8,628</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>11,974</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>9,515</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4,952</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>3,793</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>5,971</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>4,685</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,976</td>
<td>12,421</td>
<td>12,715</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14,190</td>
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</table>

ANNEX VII: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nancy Horn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Consultant to DevTech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Position?</td>
<td>☒ Team Leader ☐ Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</td>
<td>PCSC - AID-OAA-M-11-000026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</td>
<td>National Admissions Test (NAT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☒ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:
Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest that is direct, or a significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: March 18, 2014
Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lacy Kilraine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>USAID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Position?</td>
<td>□ Team Leader □ Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</td>
<td>PCSC-AID-OAA-M-11-000026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID Project(s) Evaluated ( Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic National Admissions Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</td>
<td>□ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>[Signature]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>3-31-2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Marc Bonnenfant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>USAID/Central Asian Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Position?</td>
<td>Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</td>
<td>PCSC-AID-OAA-M-AA-000026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:
1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
2. Financial interest: that is direct, or is significant through indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.
3. Current or previous direct or significant through indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.
4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.
6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.

I currently work with USAID/CAR, leading the education portfolio for the region which includes Kyrgyzstan, where this project is based. I was involved in all stages of this evaluation, excluding two weeks of fieldwork. It may be that regarding point 6, I had/have preconceived notions regarding the capabilities of CEATM.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 4-7-2012
Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Corey Hancock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>USAID/CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Position?</td>
<td>□ Team Leader  ■ Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</td>
<td>PCSC-AID-OAA-M-11-000026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic National Admissions Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.</td>
<td>■ Yes □ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:

I was involved in writing the SOW for the evaluation.

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature

Date April 02, 2014
Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Vepe Berdiyey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Program Development Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>USAID/Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Position?</td>
<td>Team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)</td>
<td>PCSC-AID-OAA-M-11-000026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID Project(s) Evaluated (include project name(s); implemementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)</td>
<td>Kyrgyz Republic National Admissions Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose:</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</td>
<td>Currently, I work in USAID/Turkmenistan country office. I was involved in all stages of evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: April 01, 2014
This page is intentionally left blank.
For more information, contact:

Program Cycle Service Center
1201 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W. Suite 315
Washington, D.C 20004
Tel: 202-347-1420

DevTech Systems, Inc.
1700 North Moore St.
Suite 1720
Arlington, Virginia 22209
703-312-6038
www.devtechsys.com