UCA and GIZ bring mobile digital library to Naryn and Ak-Talaa districts in the Kyrgyz Republic

Naryn, Kyrgyz Republic, 12 December 2013 – The eBilim mobile digital library was inaugurated today at University of Central Asia’s (UCA) School for Professional and Continuing Education, Naryn. The moving library, which is on a refurbished minibus, is designed to bring knowledge and resources to the people of Naryn Oblast.

The initiative is a one-year pilot project, designed and implemented through a partnership between UCA’s Mountain Societies Research Institute and the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP KG), with financial support from the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The vehicle is equipped with laptops and a database of over 2,000 text, audio and video resources. It will travel on a regular schedule to remote villages. It will serve as a dynamic platform which will be adapted to the changing needs and interests of remote mountain communities. Through regular visits to selected villages, eBilim will also assess the information and other needs of mountain communities.

“Despite a lack of leisure activities in our communities, libraries are not utilised as much as they could be. We need to offer services and materials which reflect the needs and interests of the next generation of library users. We are pleased that Naryn was selected to pilot eBilim, cleverly using technology to address local needs,” said Dinara Junusova, Head of Social Monitoring and Development, Naryn Province Administration.

“In recent years large amounts of digital information has been produced in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia, by government institutions, civil society, universities and the media. It is a challenge to make this information available to residents of remote areas. eBilim can contribute to overcoming this centre-periphery information gap by connecting people to the world of digital knowledge,” said Anara Orozbaeva from GIZ.

The eBilim vehicle will visit 10 villages in Naryn and Ak-Talaa districts for one full day each month. The residents of Tash-Bashat, Dobolu, Jan Bulak, Kulanak, Jylan-Aryk, Ak-Tal, Jany-Talap, Ak-Kiya, Kara-Oi, and Konorchok villages will be the first beneficiaries of the project.

eBilim will be implemented as a feasibility study, testing innovative information distribution and collection methods in remote mountain communities. Its database will allow users to print and download information to USB, DVDs, cell phones or other devices. The database includes thematic areas ranging from agriculture, health, education, law, literature, movies, news to learning resources for teachers.
Besides digital resources, eBilim will also house a set of children’s books and information resources, which can be directly used by the villagers. Based on feedback, the database will expand and include resources tailored to the information needs of the pilot areas. In summer months, there will be additional visits to Jailoo summer pastures, and open-air movie screenings will take place.

“A challenge was ensuring access to digital information in areas with limited access to the internet. eBilim is unique in that it operates from an offline database with the capacity to grow when internet connection improves. Our success will heavily depend on partner and community response. This pilot will help us understand information needs and adapt our scope to ensure this travelling library makes a difference to the people living in remote areas,” said Aline Rosset, eBilim project manager.

Community partners include the province library as well as district and local libraries in Naryn, schools and local self-government bodies. Additional partners include www.bizdin.kg; Radio Azattyk; FAO; the NGOs Bir Duino, AgroLead, Aigine, CAMP Alatoo and Novaya Literatura Kyrgyzstana, as well as the Tenir Too and Ayil Demi newspapers.

For more information, please contact:

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Partner Institutions

The University of Central Asia (UCA) was founded in 2000. The Presidents of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan and His Highness the Aga Khan signed the International Treaty and Charter establishing this secular and private University, which was ratified by the respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations. UCA was established to offer an internationally recognised standard of higher education in Central Asia and prepare graduates to contribute leadership, ideas and innovation to the economies and communities of the region. UCA brings with it the commitment and partnership of the Aga Khan Development Network. For more information on UCA, please visit: www.ucentralasia.org.

GIZ – Broad-based expertise for sustainable development: The services delivered by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (German federal enterprise for international cooperation) draw on a wealth of regional and technical expertise and tried and tested management know-how. As a federal enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and is also engaged in international education work around the globe. GIZ has been active in Kyrgyzstan since 1992.

The Kyrgyzstan Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP KG), an initiative of Aga Khan Foundation, is a locally registered public foundation which seeks to improve the livelihoods of select communities in Kyrgyzstan’s mountain areas. To this end, MSDSP KG implements a range of integrated interventions in rural development,
education, and health which converge in villages and are implemented in collaboration with and between community-based groups and local government authorities. Disaster risk reduction, enhancing local governance, and improving climate change resilience are cross-cutting themes across MSDSP KG’s work. MSDSP KG’s core programme area includes the mountainous districts of Alai, Chong-Alai, and Kara-Kulja in Osh oblast as well as Naryn and At-Bashy districts in Naryn oblast, where more than 320,000 people live.