

# NEWSLETTER

## for the Research Project

# “Economic Transformation, Household Behaviour and Well-Being in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan”

Issue #1  
 January 2011

### Major news:

- The field works for the first wave of data collection completed
- First results to be shared in September 2011 in Bishkek
- Data access to wider research community to come

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## 1. About the Project

The project “Economic Transformation, Household Behaviour and Well-Being in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan” funded by Volkswagen Foundation aims (1) to collect nationally representative panel survey data in Kyrgyzstan, (2) to investigate well-being and household behavior in this country, and (3) to improve research capacity within the Central

Asian region. The project runs from January 2010 through December 2012. The project is a collaborative endeavour of DIW Berlin, Humboldt University of Berlin, the Center for Social and Economic Research (CASE-Kyrgyzstan), and the American University of Central Asia (AUCA), the latter two being based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

## 2. The “Life in Kyrgyzstan” Panel Survey

The “Life in Kyrgyzstan” panel survey collects data of 3,000 households annually over a period of three years (2010-2012).

Interviews for the first wave of this survey were held in October-December 2010. Data entry is currently done in Kyrgyzstan.

### 2.1. Household Sample

The Kyrgyz National Statistics Committee (NSC) provided a household survey sample of 3,000 households based on the 2009 Population census data. The sampling was a stratified two-stage random sampling approach. The strata were formed by the rural and urban areas of the seven oblasts, and the urban areas

of the two cities, amounting to a maximum of 16 strata in total. For each of these strata, sub-samples were formed according to the probabilities proportionate to population size.

The survey is representative at the national as well as the urban and rural levels.

## 2.2. Questionnaire Development

*“Our panel survey collects data of 3,000 households annually over a period of three years (2010-2012).”*

In early 2010, the project consortium started to draft the questionnaires for the panel household survey, which is named “Life in Kyrgyzstan”. The topics and content of the questionnaires were developed in broad consultation with colleagues at DIW Berlin and international research institutions. We used the survey methodology guidelines of the World Bank (for Living Standard Measurement Surveys) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP).

The survey consists of a household questionnaire (to be filled in by the most informed household member), an individual questionnaire (to be filled in by all adults of the sampled households), and a community questionnaire (to be filled in by a representative of local administration). Each of them consists of a number of modules, some of which will be incorporated in every wave of the

three-year panel (core modules) and others will be incorporated only once (special topic modules). They can be accessed on the project website (<http://www.diw.de/kyrgyzstan>).

The questionnaires comprise a combination of standard modules, which are part of many household surveys in developing countries (for example, housing and assets, consumption and expenditure), and of modules, which focus on specific questions in line with our research interests (for example, migration, security and violence, subjective well-being).

The questionnaires include a number of retrospective questions concerning work history and parental education and occupation, so that the first wave of the survey allows for taking advantage of certain panel components of the data.

## 2.3. Pilot Survey

The field works for the pilot test took place in September 2010 in Bishkek (for urban population) and Chui oblast (rural population). In total, 30 households were interviewed with the Russian version of the questionnaires.

Two members of the project team, Antje Kröger and Damir Esenaliev, led the pilot process in Kyrgyzstan. Based on the pilot test results (including visits to households) and consultations with the project management and local partners, the questionnaires were optimized to make them clear and shorter.



*Surveying a household during the pilot phase Bishkek, September 2010*

## 2.4. Organization of the Field Works

Data collection, i.e. the conduct of interviews, began on 15 October 2010 and ended in mid-December 2010. Under the supervision of CASE-Kyrgyzstan, the survey was implemented by the Bishkek-based Sotseconik company. This company has an excellent reputation in the region in conducting household surveys.

The interviews were held by around 120 recruited interviewers, who were supervised by 40 field supervisors. The field supervisors along with the regional supervisors were responsible for logistical and administrative issues, as well as for

counseling and data quality checks. They were also responsible for collecting information in the community questionnaire.

The average workload per interviewer was around 25 households, but the actual time spent for interviews differed depending on the size of households. All interviewers and field supervisors were equipped with the Manual for field works with explanations of the field works process and the survey questions.

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*During the training of the field staff, Bishkek October 2010*

The data quality check was initially done by field supervisors when interviewers submitted the completed questionnaires to them. The field supervisors also re-interviewed about 5 percent of the households covered under their supervision.

The second quality check is being done at the (ongoing) data entry level, and if there are major inconsistencies and missing information, the interviewers are asked to visit the same household again.

### **3. Data Analysis**

#### **3.1. Analysis by the Project Team**

Data analysis will begin shortly after the release of the first wave of the “Life in Kyrgyzstan” panel data in January/February of 2011. The preliminary list of research topics cover a wide range of topics, for example

the effect of migration and remittances on human capital formation, the linkage between agricultural trade and poverty, the extent of social cohesion in communities with high numbers of migrants, and the impact of cash transfer programs.

#### **3.2. Analysis by Other Researchers**

The “Life in Kyrgyzstan” panel survey data can be used for scientific research purposes by the wider research community. It will be made available in the course of the

project. The project team is currently working on a process that allows for easy access to the data and complies with data protection regulations. Further information on how to get access will be placed on the project website.

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*“Our panel survey data can be used for scientific research purposes by the wider research community.”*

### **4. Capacity Building and Networking**

Capacity building for Central Asian researchers and related support staff plays an integral role in the project. A first form of capacity building is the training of two Central Asian doctoral students (Damir Esenaliev and Bakhrom Mirkasimov) who are both enrolled at Humboldt University. Both students are part of the project team and receive their scholarship from Volkswagen Foundation. They are based in Berlin for a period of up to three years.

“Life in Kyrgyzstan” panel survey was another form of capacity building. Training was conducted in the first two weeks of October 2010, right before the start of data collection. In overall, three trainings were conducted, one for all northern oblasts and two for the southern oblasts. The structure of the training consisted of explaining the goals of the project, in-class study of questionnaires, and in-class exercises.

The research assistant Zalina Skarkaeva, who is based at CASE-Kyrgyzstan, was invited for a one-month research visit to Berlin in May of 2010. Ms. Sharkaeva supported the project team in designing the questionnaire and she learned to use the statistical software package STATA.

Networking is essential. The main Kyrgyz partners of the project, Mr. Roman Mogilevsky and Prof. Zarylbek Kudabaev, travelled to Berlin in November of 2010 and participated in a workshop organized by the SOEP department. They had been very keen on learning more about panel surveys and it was a good opportunity to make them familiar with the German SOEP.

The training of field staff, i.e. interviewers, field supervisors, and regional supervisors, who conducted the

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*“Capacity building for Central Asian researchers plays an integral role in the project.”*

## 5. Political Situation in Kyrgyzstan

One aspect of great concern for the project was and still is the unstable political situation in Kyrgyzstan. After the riots in June of 2010, it was unsure whether field work could be conducted in autumn. As the survey was planned to start right after the parliamentary elections held on 10th October 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, there were serious risks that the post-election political and security situation would inhibit the interviews.

Nevertheless, the project team decided to prepare for the best scenario, which was one of no outbreak of violence after the elections, but to develop Safety Guidelines for field staff. In these guidelines, it was specified how the interviewers and supervisors should behave in different settings of violence. Gladly, the post-election situation was calm and field work could be undertaken without any disturbance.



*Jeti-Oguz – one of the sites of our survey*

## 6. Outlook for 2011

In 2011, the project team will concentrate on the analysis of the “Life in Kyrgyzstan” panel survey data. It is planned to write several papers, present them at conferences and submit them to international refereed journals.

Furthermore, the second wave of the survey will be prepared, which will be collected exactly one year after the first wave, i.e. October-December 2011. Questionnaire amendments and module changes will be finalized by July.

The project will host a project workshop in September in Bishkek. This workshop will present the first findings from our survey with the aim to show the relevance of panel household survey data to researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners in Kyrgyzstan as well as the wider research community in the region.

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*“A workshop to present the initial findings of the survey will be held in September 2011 in Bishkek.”*

## Funding of the Project

This project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation which is a nonprofit foundation under private law. With a funding volume of up to 100 million euros per year, it is the largest private science funder and one of the major foundations in Germany.

The grant is received within the funding initiative “Between Europe and the Orient - A Focus on Research and Higher Education in/on Central Asia and the Caucasus”. For further information:

<http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de>



## For More Information on the Project:

**VISIT THE PROJECT WEBSITE AT**

<http://www.diw.de/kyrgyzstan>

OR

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