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## **Final Report**

### **“Lack of Education Today - Unemployment Tomorrow”**

*By International and Comparative Politics students:*

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*Supported by the Alumni Grant Program of the Foundation Open Society Institute (“OSI-Zug”*

**Bishkek - 2011**

## **Summary**

Low quality education and high unemployment in the new settlements of Bishkek have become more and more problematic in recent years. Since the majority of those living in the new settlements are from the rural areas of Kyrgyzstan they tend to be uneducated, making it hard or even impossible for them to get highly-paid work, so they tend to work long hours in menial, low-paid, labour-intensive, physically-demanding jobs. This means they struggle to bring up their children, especially with regards to their education. So there are two major problems - unemployment and effective secondary education. The main purpose of this research is to discover the key factors affecting unemployment and low standards of education of school children. The primary hypothesis for education is: low incomes of families leads to ineffective education and for unemployment the lack of education causes unemployment for those living in the new settlements around Bishkek. Cluster sampling was used to choose 10 new settlements and random sampling in order to choose 400 people from those 10 new settlements. Our hypothesis both on education and unemployment was proved. Thus low incomes affected the quality of secondary education and poor education in its turn resulted in unemployment, creating a cycle where unemployment leads to low incomes, low incomes lead to poor education and poor education results in unemployment. Obviously it is necessary to solve these problems immediately otherwise they will get even worse, because the new settlements are expanding daily.

## **Introduction**

According to the statistics, in the Kyrgyz Republic 53.3 % of the unemployed are aged 15 to 29. Lack of access to education and poor knowledge, are the main factors influencing unemployment, particularly for those in the new settlements around Bishkek who tend to be unskilled, on low incomes or unemployed. This means that children suffer from lack of attention from their parents and they are poorly-educated. There are 49 new settlements around Bishkek, each of which has its own set of problems ranging from social to economic and two of the most important problems are secondary education and unemployment. Why unemployment? The reason is that most of the residents of the new settlements are labour migrants from rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, and the vast majority have no higher education. Even if they have it is difficult for them to get a good job because there are far more unemployed than job vacancies around Bishkek, so they turn their hand to anything from small businesses in Dordoi and Osh bazaars, drive taxis or work as seamstresses, but most of them recycle paper, cardboard, plastic bags and bottles. Working all hours just or scrape a living affects their children's education, as they are

exhausted and pay little or no attention to their children's education. There is also a severe shortage of places in schools for children, especially in elementary schools. Thus the children are poorly-educated and so are likely to turn out like their parents, locked in the vicious circle of unemployment - poor education - unemployment. Therefore the government, along with educational institutions, NGOs and international organisations, needs to urgently address this problem.

## **Methodology**

There are 49 new settlements in Bishkek, of which 10 were chosen by cluster sampling for our research. Cluster sampling was the most appropriate method as the social status of the new settlements varies. We divided the new settlements into 3 categories: first- developed, second-average and third - disadvantaged. This method was used in order to make sure that all the categories were represented and to avoid bias. Next, 400 respondents were chosen from the selected new settlements by random sampling.

The questionnaire used various types of questions, including open-ended ones, as the respondents might have had too many different answers and close-ended in order to take up less time and get certain data that can be analyzed quantitatively.

Key informants such as officials from the educational and employment sectors, unemployed and employed residents of new settlements, principals and teachers from schools in new settlements, parents of children living in the suburbs, were interviewed using unstructured and follow-up questions.

## **Body**

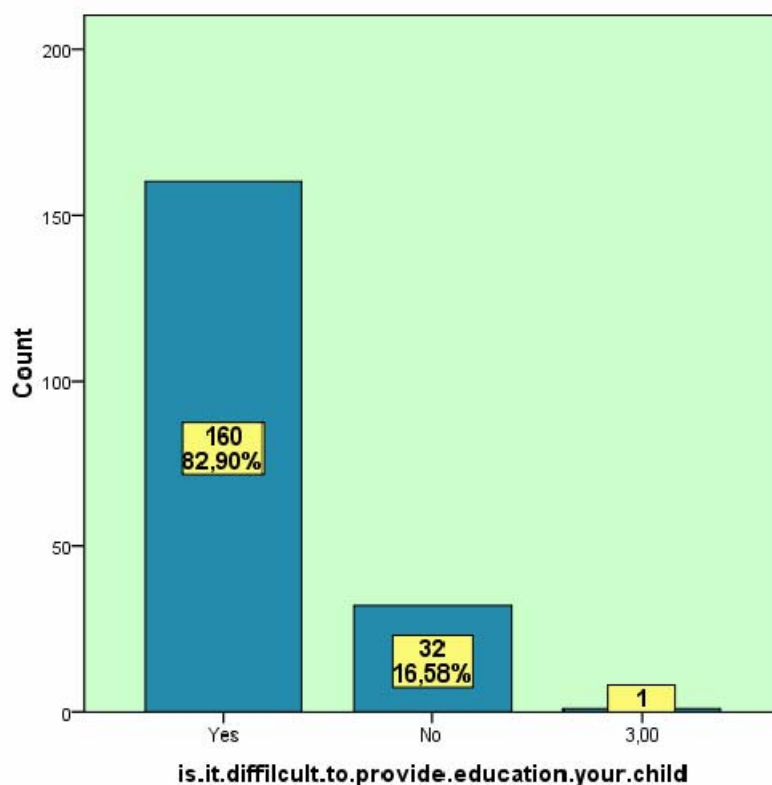
### **Analysis of Education:**

The main hypothesis of this research was that Low Incomes lead to a Lack of Education. So let's look at the respondents' answers.

### **Is it difficult to provide your child with an education?**

Fig. 1 shows that the vast majority of parents 82.90% answered "Yes" versus 16.58% who said "No".

**Fig. 1**



Is it difficult to provide your child with an education?

Table 1 shows the answers by settlement:

**Table 1**

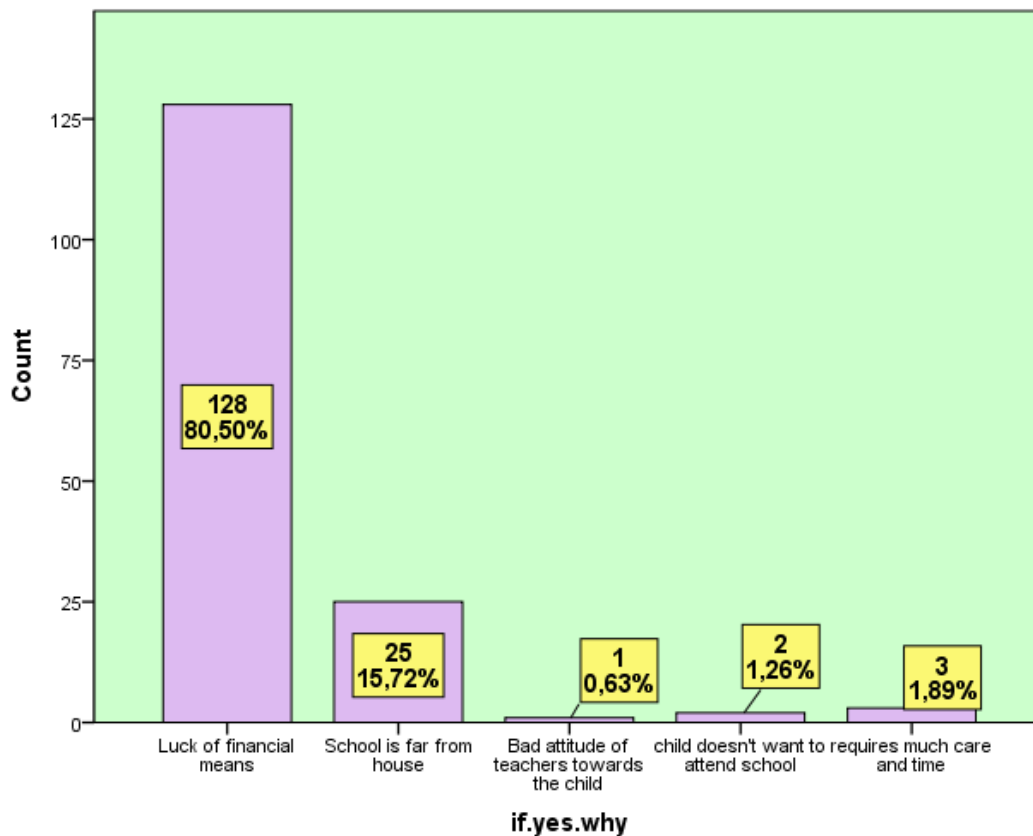
**New settlements\* Is it difficult to Provide your child with an education? Cross-tabulation**

		Is it.difficult to provide your child with an education			
		Yes	No	3	Total
	Asyl-Tash	40	10	0	50
	Ak-Bosogo	38	11	1	50
	Ak-Jar	46	4	0	50
	Dordoï	36	7	0	43
<b>Total</b>		<b>160</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>193</b>

In Asyl-Tash of 50 respondents, 40 or 80% answered “Yes” it is difficult to provide their child with an education only 10 or 20% of respondents answered “No”. In Ak-Bosogo of 50 respondents, 38 answered “Yes” and 11, “No”. In Ak-Jar 46 or 92% answered “Yes” and 4 or 8% answered “No”. Finally in Dordoi 36 or 73% answered “Yes” and 7 or 14% answered “No”. When asked why it is difficult to provide their children with an education, the parents answered:

## Why it is difficult to educate you child(ren)?

**Fig. 2**



Lack of money

The school is a long way from our house

The teachers treat my child badly

My child doesn't want to go to school

It takes up too much time

This clearly shows that 80.50% of families living in the new settlements are on low incomes and cannot really afford to send their child to school. The parents complain that they do not have enough money to cover even the basics such as school uniform, stationery, lunch, and school fees. Many parents were upset because they could not afford to send their children to various educational clubs such as English, Russian, computer, art, , singing, music, dancing etc.

In terms of the secondary hypothesis that poorly-educated parents mean their children are also poorly-educated we looked at the families in new settlements to see if this was true:

## Education level of one parent

**Table 2**

**edu.of.one.parent**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High	23	11,5	11,6	11,6
	unfinished high	18	9,0	9,0	20,6
	middle technical	52	26,0	26,1	46,7
	secondary	93	46,5	46,7	93,5
	completed ninth grade	10	5,0	5,0	98,5
	incomplete ninth grade	3	1,5	1,5	100,0
	Total	199	99,5	100,0	
Missing	System	1	,5		
Total		200	100,0		

## Education level of the second parent

**Table 3**

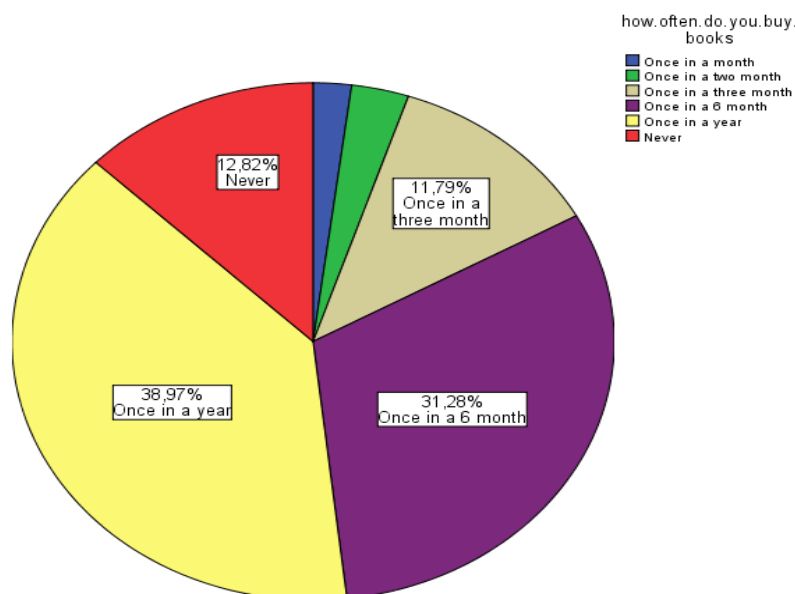
**edu.of.second.parent**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	High	30	15,0	15,8	15,8
	unfinished high	7	3,5	3,7	19,5
	middle technical	40	20,0	21,1	40,5
	secondary	99	49,5	52,1	92,6
	completed ninth grade	11	5,5	5,8	98,4
	incomplete ninth grade	3	1,5	1,6	100,0
	Total	190	95,0	100,0	
Missing	System	10	5,0		
Total		200	100,0		

53 (13.2%) out of 389 parents are highly educated, 25 had not finished university, 92 (23%) have middle technical knowledge, 192 (48%) had finished secondary school, 21 (5.2%) of parents had completed ninth grade, and 6 (1.5%) had not even completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Even though only 13.2 % of parents had higher education, 23% middle technical and 6.3% unfinished higher education, it would be fair to say that they are relatively well educated and probably also want their children to be educated. But what about the other parents who have only secondary, ninth grade and unfinished ninth grade education? During interviews conducted with parents one of the questions was devoted to identifying how they see the importance of education today? The unanimous answer was that it key to their children’s future and parents would rather go without food than deprive their children of an education so that they won’t face the same fate as their uneducated parents. On the other hand in interviews conducted with school principals and teachers the answer was quite different. They complained about the indifferent and irresponsible attitude of parents. “Many pupils, especially in elementary school, often miss school, are late to classes, or come to school improperly dressed and unprepared for lessons. When they are asked why, their answer is that “my mother said she is tired, she was too busy or was asleep”. So because of parents who have other priorities than education, standards are dropping”- said the experienced principal of elementary school #87 in Ak-Bosogo. Another indicator of the level of attention parents pay to their children can be seen in the chart below, which shows how often parents buy books for their children.

### How often do you buy books for your child(ren)?

Fig. 3



Once a month

Once every 2 months

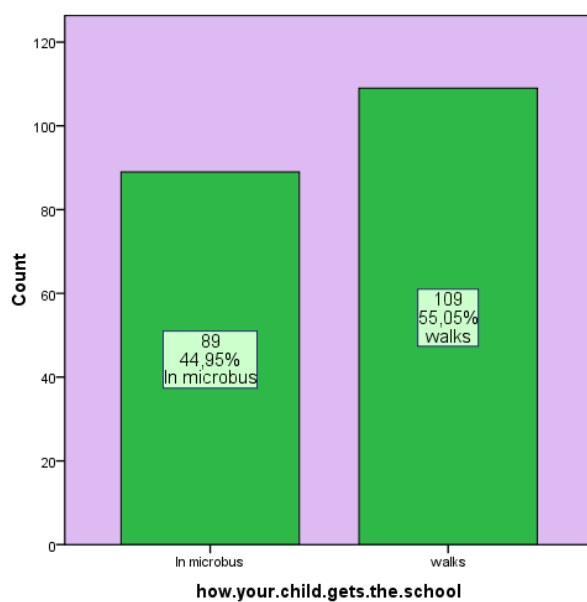
Once every 3 months

Once every 6 months

Once a year

As Fig. 3 shows, 39.97% of parents buy books just once a year only because they have to, as there are not enough books to go around, 31.28% buy once every 6 months, 11.79% once every three months and 12.82% never buy books for their children.

Another secondary hypothesis was that the school's location or lack of schools is another reason for a poor or non-existent education. Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 shows how many children walk to school and how many go by minibus and to what extent this influences their education.



**Fig. 4**

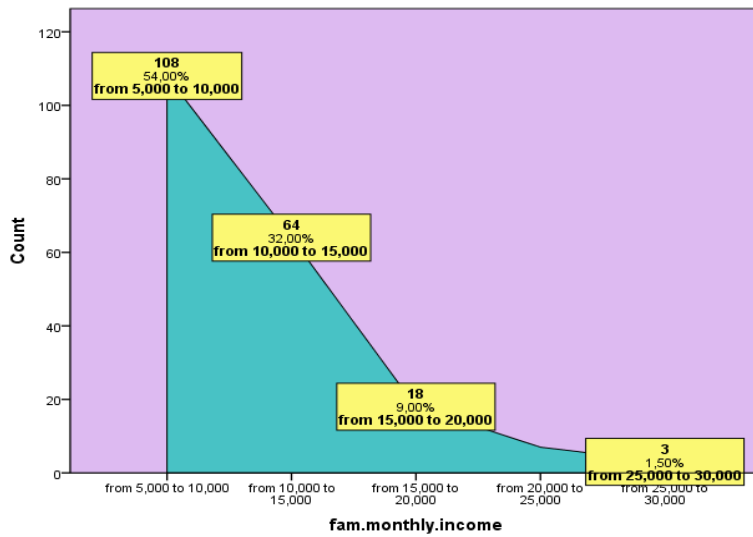
By minibus

### **How does your child go to school?**

Almost half of all families spent 16 soms a day or 320 soms per month/per child on schooling. Fig 5 shows what percentage of their income families spend to send their children to school by minibus:

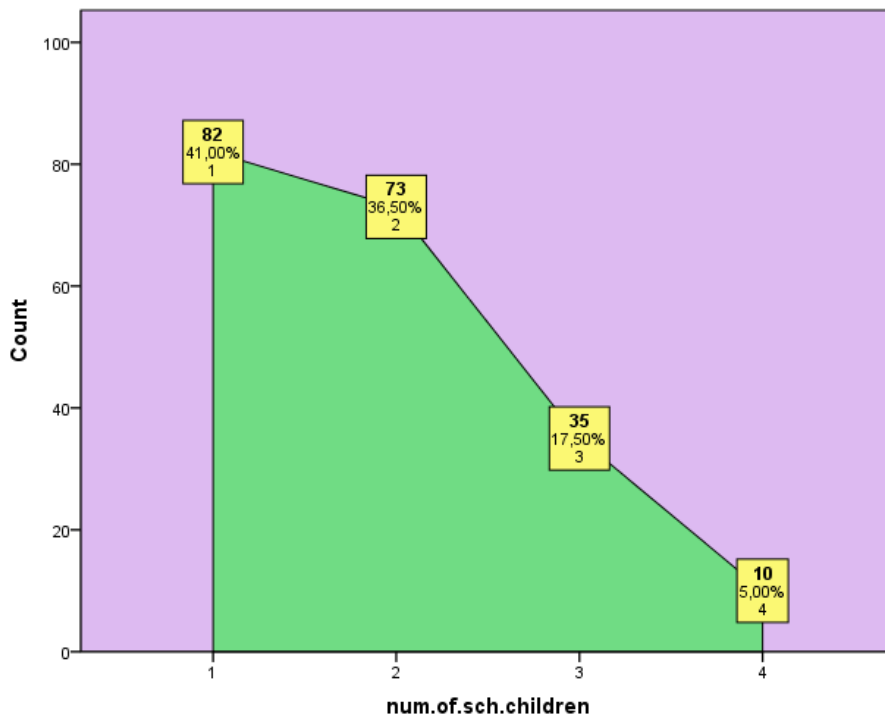


**Fig. 5**



54% of families earn from 5,000 to 10,000 som and if they have two school-age children, transport to and from school alone costs 8% of the family's monthly income if they earn 8,000 som per month – a huge percentage given that the cost of food, clothing etc. is constantly increasing due to inflation. Fig. 6 shows the number of schoolchildren per family:

**Fig. 6**



Number of schoolchildren per family

While transport costs are extra spending for impoverished families, another problem is that because of the lack of schools in some new settlements such as Ak-Jar, schools in neighbouring new settlements are overcrowded with up to 42 pupils in each class. This is problematic, especially in elementary schools, as those living in the new settlements tend to be comparatively young families. For example, according to the principal of School #87 in the Kelechek new settlement, children from 4 other new settlements also study there. Consequently there are about 1,800 pupils studying in a school designed to take just 754.

The other secondary hypotheses were:

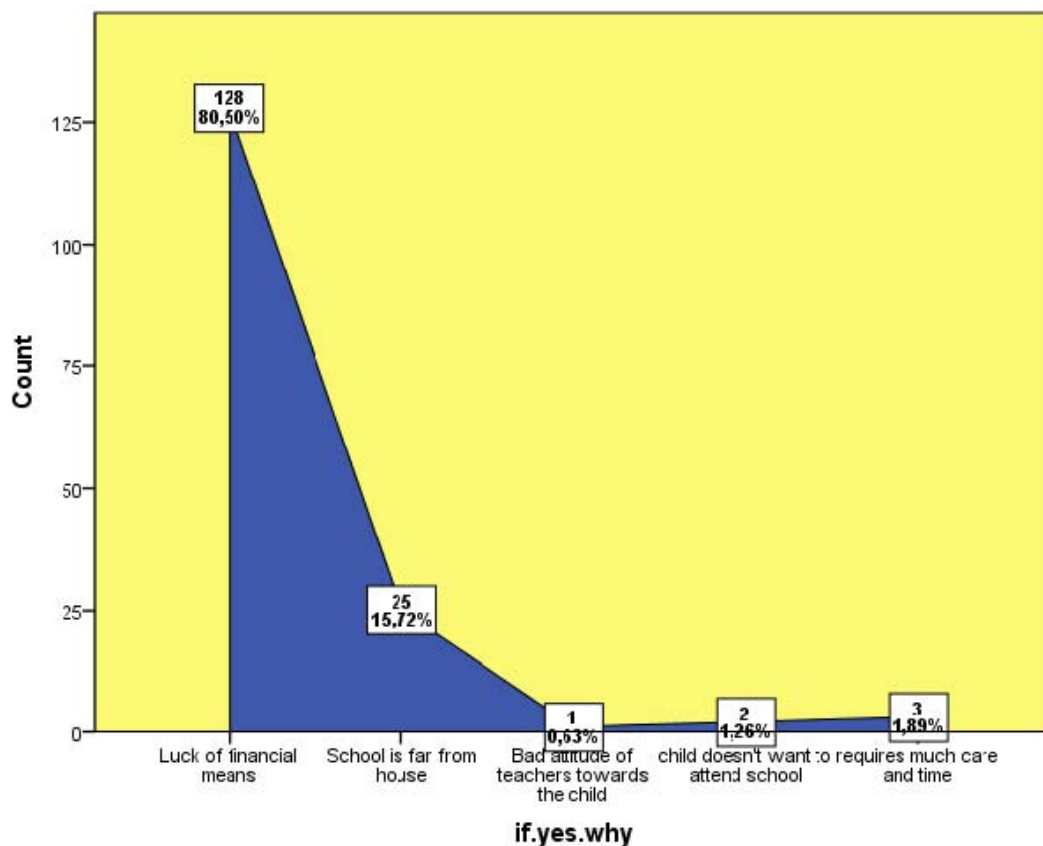
School location →

Registration →

The relationship between teachers and children →

These all contribute to pupils getting a poor education and dropping out of school, but they proved to be unimportant as is shown in Fig. 7.

**Fig. 7**



Lack of money

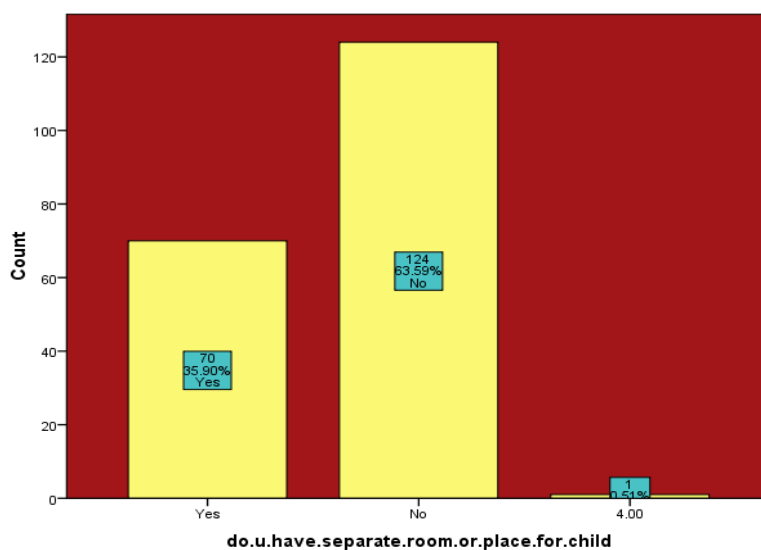
The school is a long way from our house

The teachers treat my child badly

My child doesn't want to go to school

It takes up too much time

**Fig. 8 Do you have a separate room where your child/ren can do their homework?**



Other important results include whether or not parents were able to provide good conditions, such as a separate room for children to do their homework in, because it is extremely important that they are not distracted.

35% answered “Yes” which is good but the majority or 63.59% of parents answered “No” which means doing homework properly is a problem. The biggest problem of all is that in Ak-Jar more than half of the families have no electricity or running water. While their parents are at work the children have to fetch water in buckets, look after their younger siblings and do household chores. By the time it gets dark they have to do their homework by candlelight, which is reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



### Analysis of Unemployment:

In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis the “the lower the level of education, the more likely one is to be unemployed”, a survey was conducted. These are the main findings from the survey results. The target population was people residing in the new settlements around Bishkek. The first question was to define the gender of the respondents. There were 95 men and 105 women. (Table 4)

**Table 4**

#### Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	95	47.5	47.5	47.5
	women	105	52.5	52.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

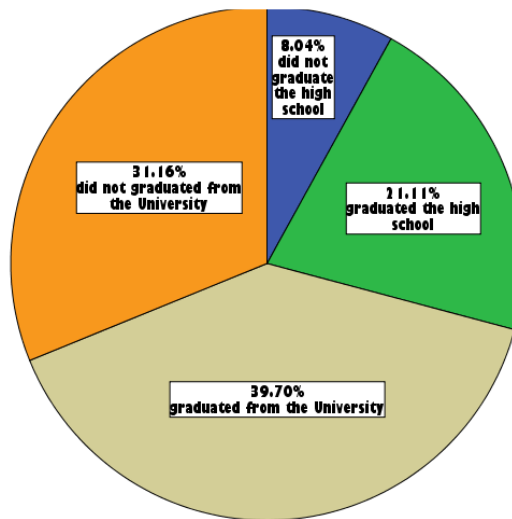
Frequency - Number

Percent - Percentage

The other crucial question was whether or not the respondents finished school or university. In short, the question was designed to find out what education people living in the new settlements had gained. (Fig. 9)

**Fig. 9**

**Education level**



8.04% did not finish secondary school

21.11% finished secondary school

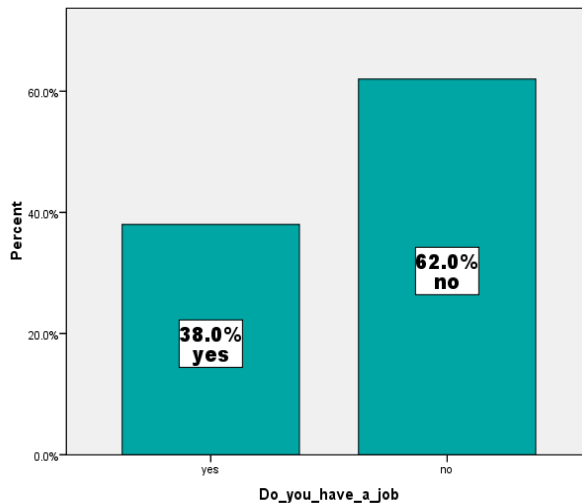
39.70% graduated University

31.16% did not finish University

Only 39.7% of respondents graduated University, 31.16% did not finish University, 21.11% finished secondary school and the other 8.04% did not even finish secondary school. The reasons for not finishing school or university vary - some could not afford to study while others did not really want to study.

The other main question was designed to divide the respondents into two groups: employed and unemployed. Fig. 10 shows that in the new settlements 625 are unemployed. Apparently, people who had graduated university are most likely to have a job. However, some people who do have a university diploma are unemployed, as are those who did not finish school and university.

**Fig. 10**

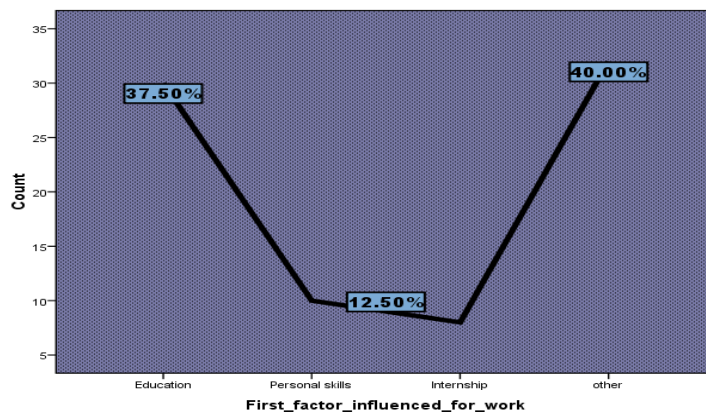


Furthermore, goes the description of employed respondents whether they work on their specialization or not. As shown on the graph, the majority, which is 61% of employed people, do not work on their specialization. This represents that most people who have job now, do not actually work on their specialization.

Next, the intention of the survey was to find out the factors, which had influenced the employed to work in their current job. From the given alternatives, such as education, personal skills and internship, 37% chose the first option whereas the next two alternatives were chosen by 12.50 %. The majority, or 40 % of all respondents chose “others” (Fig 11). This means that most employed people do not work in their chosen speciality and got their jobs through relatives or friends.

**Fig. 11**

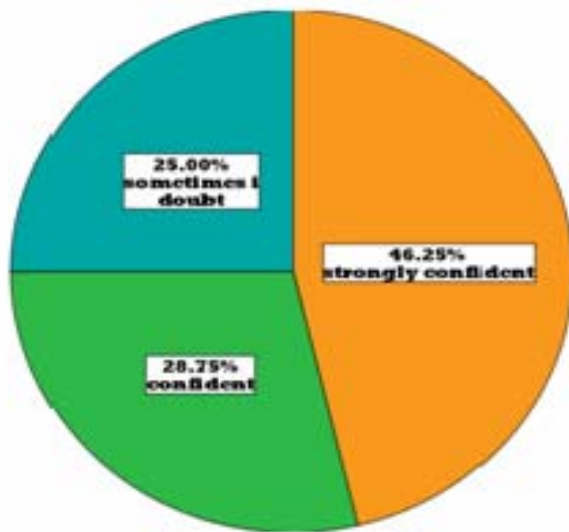
**First factor influenced on getting a job**



So, less than half of the respondents have jobs but whether or not they are secure is unknown, as the chaos of recent events ranging from the revolution, change of government, new political system and the world economic crisis, have weakened the economy and jobs have been lost. However, 46.25 %, of those in work are convinced that their jobs are secure, 25 % are reasonably certain and 25 % feel their jobs are not safe. (Fig.12)

**Fig. 12**

**Extent of confidence in job security**



**46.25% are very confident**

**28.75% are confident**

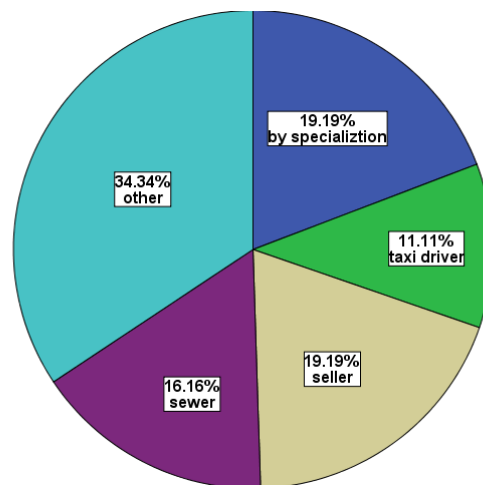
**25.00% are uncertain**

**Reasons for unemployment**

The first and most important reason for people being unemployed is lack of education. As we all know education is the most important thing in life, as it shapes our future. Most employed people say their education is th main reason they have their job and those who think otherwise are mistaken. Alibek Mukambaev, the Deputy Director of “Consulting Media” Ltd. says: “Students make a big mistake, when they put education second, work part time while studying, then give up studying. Lots of people do not look at job prospects before choosing a career – for example, in Kyrgyzstan there are lots of accountants and lawyers – far more than there are

vacancies for them. Apparently, those lacking a proper education tend to become unemployed.”<sup>1</sup> So there are two problems regarding education. First, University students drop out because they lack motivation or have chosen the wrong or unwanted in the job market subject to study due to peer or family pressure. Another major problem is that there is no careers advice service for pupils or students so they do not know where to look for work or who to ask for advice. They often end up with a diploma but no job. On the contrary, people who are currently unemployed say that education is not important and the state should offer more jobs and raise wages. There are unemployed people with one or even two university degrees – for example Aigul Torokulova, who lives in the Ala-Too settlement says: “I spent a lot of money studying tourism for 5 years ,but, I cannot work as a tourism office manager in a Government office because my expenditure on transport and food alone would be more than my salary.” She also adds, that she made a mistake when choosing her course, as she does not like her profession and wished her parents or teachers had advised her what to do when she was still at school.<sup>2</sup> There are many more like her who face the same problem.

**Fig. 13**  
**What people do**



19.19% work in their chosen career

19.19% work in sales

16.16% work as seamstresses

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<sup>1</sup> Alibek Muanbev, interviewed by Rysgul Nazarbekova

<sup>2</sup> Aigul Torokulova, interviewed by Rysgul Nazarbekova



Only 19.19 % of employed respondents work in their chosen career. Most of those who do not are accountants, lawyers and other government workers who say that the wages in their chosen careers are too low.

Furthermore, education is needed in order to find a high paid job. 87.32 % of employed respondents said that they got their job because they had a degree. On the contrary, unemployed people claim that education level did not affect them being unemployed. For example, Kasym Osmonov, who lives in the Dordoi new settlement, said: “I know people who have two degrees but what are they doing? I have friends who graduated university but we all work together in Dordoi market and there are many educated people who are unemployed. So, I do not think, that studying is the most important thing in getting a job.<sup>3</sup>” There are two opposing views - the unemployed think that education is not important in getting a job while the employed say that education is the most important quality. Successful people say that in order to become a successful employer education is actually the most important attribute.

**Table 5**

**Education \* Is education the most important attribute? Crosstabulation**

Count		Is education the most important attribute		Total
		yes	no	
		Education	did not graduate secondary school	
	graduated secondary school	11	3	14
	graduated University	36	2	38
	did not graduate University	11	3	14
Total		61	9	70

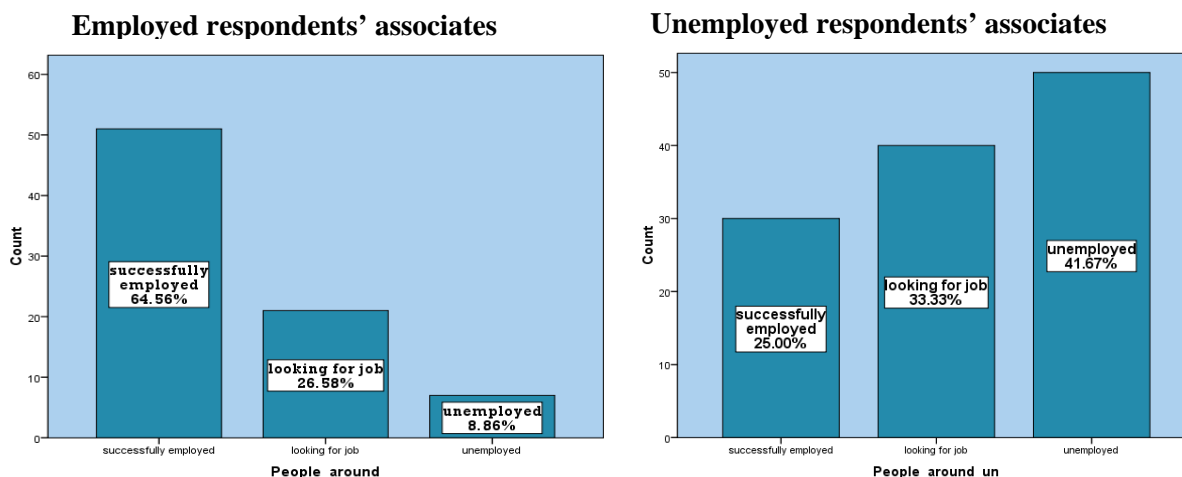
In general, the majority of respondents agree that education plays the most important role in finding a job (Table 5)

The other important and interesting finding was that the social position of a person is related to the position of the people they associate with. People, who mix with successful

<sup>3</sup> Kasym Osmonov, interviewed by Rysgul Nazarbekova

employed people, tend to be more successful in finding a job, whereas, people who associate mainly with unemployed people, tend also to be unemployed. In the two tables in Fig 14, the left hand one shows the employed respondents' answers and the right hand one shows the answers of the unemployed respondents. 64.56 % of those employed respondents associate with are successfully employed and only 8.86 % are unemployed, whereas 41.67 % of those unemployed respondents associate with are unemployed and just 25 % are successfully employed.

**Fig. 14**



Employed respondents' associates

Unemployed respondents' associates

The people one associates with influence the social position of that person and if the majority are employed then it is more likely the person themselves will find a job – and vice versa for the unemployed.

There are other causes of unemployment, some of which are shown in Table 6 and include low wages and lack of jobs. 55 % of all respondents say that wages are low and 37% say there are not enough jobs. There are jobs in Bishkek, but most are in the service sector (Table 6)

**Table 6**

**The\_other\_influencing\_to\_unemployment**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	low wages	66	33.0	55.0	55.0
	deficit of jobs	45	22.5	37.5	92.5
	no desire	4	2.0	3.3	95.8
	other	5	2.5	4.2	100.0
	Total	120	60.0	100.0	
Missing	System	80	40.0		
Total		200	100.0		

Other causes of unemployment

Percent – percentage

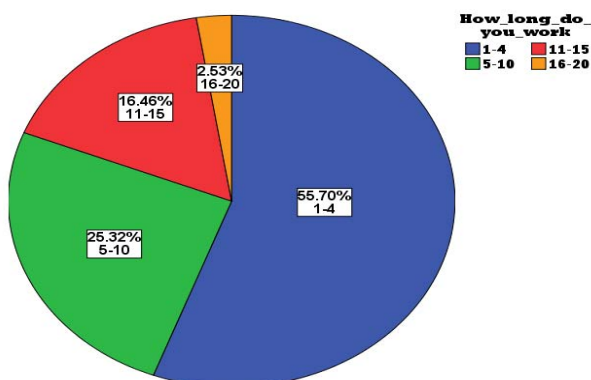
Lack of jobs

The other interesting finding was that people in the new settlements tend to work short-term. According to the results of the survey, 55.7 % have been working for one to four months and 25.32 % for 5 to 10 months. Only 16.46 % have been employed for more than a year, and only 2.53 % have been working from 16 to 20 years (Fig. 15)

There are two reasons for this - firstly the labour migrants move into the new settlements from all over the country and are seeking new beginnings.

**Fig. 15**

**How long have you been working for?**



Secondly, low wages make them look for other jobs.

## **Conclusion:**

The above analysis shows that the population of the new settlements in Bishkek, the majority of who are labour migrants from different regions of Kyrgyzstan, have two major problems. Firstly, finding highly-paid or any job and secondly, educating their children effectively. The main cause of unemployment is poor education, which leads to low incomes, leading to the vicious cycle of low income leads to poor education and poor education in its turn leads to unemployment. In order to solve this ongoing cycle, various initiatives need to be taken, primarily by the government, with the assistance of NGOs, international organizations, and international donors.

## **Recommendations:**

### **For education:**

1. The Ministry of Education together with the City Department of Education should run information campaigns among parents stressing the importance of educating and bringing up their children properly.
2. The Ministry of Education should, together with the City Department of Education, run information campaigns among school children showing them what can be achieved by studying hard, using examples of successful students throughout Kyrgyzstan, explaining the crucial role of education not only for their personal careers but also for the future of Kyrgyzstan, and how education can open the way to a bright future.
3. The Government with the help of international organizations such USAID, should build schools where they are most needed, so that schoolchildren can walk to school and do not need to spend extra money on transport and can study in classes that are not overcrowded, improving the standard of education.
4. NGOs committed to improving education and the Ministry of Education should run additional courses in Russian and English, Mathematics, Computers, and various sports and arts clubs because lessons in the new settlements tend to be only in Kyrgyz, whereas a knowledge of Russian is one of the primary requirements in getting job nowadays in Bishkek and taking part in sports and games is also important in being successful.
5. The Government should provide electricity and running water to the new settlements.

6. The Ministry of Education, City Department of Education and the Government should set up programmes that will inspire students to study well, such as: scholarships to various universities, especially prestigious ones, covering all tuition fees and a living allowance, grants, free summer holidays in Issyk-Kul, etc. as they can effectively motivate school children to study hard and generate an environment where many pupils will compete to win such awards.
7. The Ministry of Education together with the City Department of Education and the Government should motivate teachers to teach well by also offering benefits in kind, tickets to various places and various teaching aids, such as: TVs and DVDs, Computers, Projectors for Power Point Presentations and the internet.
8. The Ministry of Education together with the City Department of Education and the Government should increase demand for education by constantly checking pupils' knowledge by testing them on various subjects – in particular by conducting spot checks. Every 3 months they should also conduct surveys about how good teachers are, how satisfied pupils are with what they are studying and whether or not classes are interesting and then fix teachers' salaries based on the results obtained.

**For unemployment:**

1. Introduce a mandatory careers advice service for all schoolchildren because
  - Firstly, without assistance it is difficult to decide what they should study
  - Secondly pupils and students tend to choose more prestigious rather than more required specialties in Kyrgyzstan as a result of which they cannot find work

The Ministry of Education should be responsible for running the careers advice service.
2. Put more effort into restarting old factories and farms. The projects regarding these problems could be run by the Ministry of Employment and NGOs working on social issues in our country.

Develop spheres such as the meat industry via the Ministries for the Economy and Employment. This will not only create jobs, but also will develop the national economy.