

**Narrative Report for Scott Kloeck-Jenson International Internship Fellowship**  
*Internship with CASE-Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, June 13, 2003 to August 13, 2003*  
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*Representatives from CASE-Kyrgyzstan met me as I exited customs in Bishkek at 3:30 in the morning after 32 hours of traveling. Evgenni drove me to the apartment the organization had secured for me, and as we made our way down the bumpy highway, I could just make out the outline of the highest Tien Shen peaks in the distance. I had returned to Central Asia after three years, and the familiarity of the region and the language spoken there came flooding back.*

The primary purpose of this internship was to assist with a case study of farmer managers in Kyrgyzstan in order to explain variation in farmer response to agricultural reform. A secondary purpose was to learn what methods are used to assess agricultural reform in a Central Asian country by observing my Kyrgyzstani counterparts. I achieved both of these objectives, in addition to assisting CASE organize an international seminar. A brief description of what was achieved follows below.

### *The Case Study*

My involvement with the case study occurred in three stages. In the first stage, I was introduced to the oblast-level (regional) interviewers coordinated by one of my colleagues. This gave me a chance to introduce myself to the people with whom I would be working. I was impressed with how the case study implementation hierarchy was organized. Irina, a macro-economist on staff and professor at a local university, knew all of the interviewers personally and managed to coordinate their activities through structured meetings that occurred periodically throughout the summer.

During the second stage of my involvement in the case study, I assisted with a site visit to Osh, an oblast (region) distant from Bishkek. This site visit to Osh provided an opportunity for CASE to monitor progress of the case study in Osh, in turn providing the novice interviewers in Osh with an opportunity to bring any concerns to our attention while we were present. For example, the batteries of one of the interviewer's tape recorder had run out, and she lacked the money with which to purchase new ones. Over the course of the next few days, we visited seven farm enterprises in four villages. At each farm we were welcomed with tea and lepushki, a local flat bread, fresh honey, and sometimes broth with lamb. These informal visits gave us a chance to determine if the interviewers were selecting the most appropriate cases given the objectives of the study. In all but one instance, the farm enterprises selected matched the objectives of the case study.

The third stage of my involvement in the case study consisted of translating interview texts from Russian to English together with another colleague at CASE. One of my colleagues would

translate the texts from Kyrgyz into Russian, and then pass the drafts to me and another colleague for translation to English and final editing. These drafts were compiled for later analysis.

### *Local Methods*

Most of the local methods I picked up this summer were obtained while observing my colleagues manage the case study. Two specific lessons were learned. First, in a country whose population has little experience implementing case study interviews, selecting and training interviewers from within target agricultural communities can work. In combination with selecting interviewers from within the community, because of their first-hand knowledge with community members, it also became clear that identifying female interviewers over males made the most sense for two reasons: 1) there is a disproportionate number of single, female-headed households, and 2) directly supporting women financially ensured that the additional income generated from participating in the case study would go towards increasing the welfare of the household.

Second, I learned what the culturally sensitive response was to things that did not exactly go according to plan. For example, during our site visit to Osh, ~~when~~ it became clear that one of the interviewers had selected a farming group that was organized around concerns other than joint production, per the parameters of the case study. In response, my colleague waited until we had returned to the local extension office, which served as a regional office for the duration of the case study, to discuss the discrepancy. Even then the discrepancy was never identified as a mistake per se, but instead plans were carefully discussed for performing another consistent with the objectives of the study, and of course the interviewer would be financially compensated accordingly. Throughout the discussion, it was clear that this novice interviewer was doing her best to meet expectations, and was concerned about receiving disapproval, not only because she cared about performing the job she was hired to do correctly, but also because she did not want to jeopardize the possibility of being hired to perform these functions again in the future. Like many of the case study interviewers hired for this study, she also worked on a subsistence-style farm. Observing the management style of my colleague heightened my awareness of why developing cultural sensitivity is critical to the work of a development practitioner.

### *Other – Seminar*

It turned out that my internship coincided with a four-day seminar on Kyrgyzstan's accession into the World Trade Organization organized by CASE-Kyrgyzstan in collaboration with

the World Trade Institute of Switzerland. I assisted my CASE colleagues with the organization and administration of this seminar. Together we prepared seminar materials, developed participant lists and schedules of seminar proceedings in Russian and English, translated other materials when needed, and arranged press releases to announce the event. During the seminar I helped “trouble-shoot” and ensure that things went smoothly. Also, because I owned a camera, I took pictures of the event that were then scanned and posted on a website along with seminar proceedings for accessibility by the general public.

#### *Next Steps*

This internship experience was instrumental in guiding my dissertation proposal ideas. On a daily basis, my summer colleagues at CASE engaged me in discussions of the highest academic interest to me. We discussed the nuances and paradoxes of foreign-directed agricultural reform in Kyrgyzstan. Issues of trust and ethnic conflict were raised, and on occasion played out in rural communities over the course of the summer. At the urging my colleagues at CASE, my research question has expanded to include an examination of the role of inter-ethnic trust in agricultural reform, and the research will likely take a regional comparative perspective.