Innovative approaches to digital literacy in Kyrgyzstan

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About Us

The Public Association “Resource Center for the Elderly” (hereinafter RCE) is a non-governmental non-profit organization that has been working since 1991 in the field of social support and protection of the elderly population of Kyrgyzstan.

RCE Mission:
Promoting the formation of a favorable environment that ensures the protection and promotion of the interests of older people, quality of life, institutional development, promotion of civil initiative and fair government policy regarding older people in the Kyrgyz Republic and migration issues.
Main activities:

Since its establishment, the Resource Center for the Elderly has been working in the field of social support and protection of the elderly population of Kyrgyzstan. We widely use an integrated approach to solving the problems of the elderly population of the republic.

The resource center is the author of various innovative models for the development of civil society, mobilization of older people and interaction with authorities. The organization pilots and uses innovative models in its work:

• Self-help groups for older people
• Day care center for the elderly
• Small public councils
• Great Community Council
• And other models
Social mobilization of older people

Thanks to the self-help group (SHG) model introduced by the RCP, the elderly unite, run a common household, organize income-generating activities, take part in trainings to improve legal literacy, learn various types of applied arts, computer skills and much more.

In Kyrgyzstan, today more than 127 SHGs are successfully developing, united in 10 Federations of Self-Help Groups (FGSP) in Osh, Chui, Talas and Issyk-Kul regions.

The organization's activities cover 7 regions of Kyrgyzstan.
On May 7, 2008, the RCP created a Day Care Center for the Elderly (DSC) in the city of Balykchy, Issyk-Kul region. The primary and main goal of creating the CDP is to develop an integrated approach to promoting health and prolonging the active longevity of older people.

At the CDP, 25 elderly people receive daily assistance and 175 elderly people receive patronage support: medical examination, consultations with a lawyer, psychologist, food packages, and humanitarian aid.
INTERNATIONAL GERONTOLOGICAL NETWORK “AGENET INTERNATIONAL” was created in 2005 on the initiative of 21 organizations dealing with aging problems in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The coordinator and initiator of the creation of the Network is the RCE. Currently, the Network includes 52 organizations from 10 countries: Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus. The Network is engaged in monitoring the situation of older people, developing strategies to improve their situation in cross-sectoral interaction, developing and implementing mechanisms to ensure equal access of older people to social services, and promoting the principles of the Madrid Plan of Action in the countries that are members of the Network.
Response to emergencies and the Covid-19 pandemic

RCE is one of the first organizations that began to introduce the innovative practice of live broadcasts to inform the population, especially vulnerable people, about the situation with coronavirus, about methods and means of protection, as well as where and how to get professional medical help.

Since March 2020, during the period of isolation, including with the support of WHO, the RCP has provided humanitarian, social and informational support to more than 2,000 elderly people.

On March 24, 2020, the RCP created an “Online Headquarters” to respond to emergencies and COVID-19. The online headquarters is still active, and its participants receive information about the situation with COVID-19, as well as other important news from all over Kyrgyzstan; today this headquarters includes more than 100 participants.
Paramedic Council

- In 2021, the Council of Paramedics was created to actively interact with local self-government and medical institutions to monitor the number of cases, vaccinated older people, as well as access to vaccination and other medical services for older people. The Council of Paramedics includes 21 members from 7 regions of the Kyrgyz Republic. There are 1,671 older adults in the Paramedic Council database (950 women, 721 men).

- Conducted 11 Paramedic Council meetings with briefings on the COVID-19 situation in their communities.
Development of active longevity in Kyrgyzstan

RCP conducts events aimed at promoting healthy aging and active longevity:

- Health clubs
- Trade fairs
- Fashion show
- Preventive examinations and screening
- Trainings for activists, social workers and older people on healthy aging, disease prevention, access to information, digital literacy, fact-checking.
Digital literacy among older people in Kyrgyzstan
Main problems

Digital literacy among older people in Kyrgyzstan is an important and relevant topic. Recent years have seen an increase in interest in digital skills training among older generations. However, despite the efforts, there are certain challenges and problems.

Main problems:

- **Access to technology**: Many older adults lack access to modern devices and the internet, making it difficult for them to learn and use digital technologies.
- **Low Basic Skills**: Most older adults lack basic computer and internet skills, which requires extra effort to train them.
- **Skepticism and Fear**: Some older adults feel fearful of new technologies and are skeptical about using them.
- **Physical and cognitive limitations**: As people age, they may experience problems with vision, hearing, motor skills, and memory, making it difficult to use digital devices and learn new skills.
- **Lack of motivation**: Older adults may not see the need to learn digital skills, especially if they don't understand how it can improve their daily lives. Lack of motivation can be a serious barrier to learning.
- **Social isolation**: Older adults living in isolation may not have the support of family or friends to help them learn digital skills. This makes it difficult to learn and adapt to new technologies.
Necessary efforts and prospects to improve digital literacy

Efforts to improve the situation:

- **Educational Programs:** Conduct various local educational programs and courses aimed at teaching digital skills to older adults.
- **Family and community support:** Families and community organizations play an important role in supporting older adults to learn new technologies.
- **Government Initiatives:** The Government of Kyrgyzstan should take steps to improve digital literacy among older people, including programs to provide Internet access and education, and the development of mobile applications such as Panic Button and Single Window.

Prospects:

With further developments in technology and increased internet accessibility, digital literacy among older people in Kyrgyzstan is expected to gradually improve. It is important to continue to support and develop educational initiatives to help the older generation adapt to the modern digital world.
Development of innovative approaches

To address the challenges older people face in learning digital skills, innovative approaches need to be developed, such as:

- **Development of specialized devices**: Creating devices with a simplified interface and large controls that are easy to use for older people with physical limitations.
- **Use of voice assistants**: Introducing voice assistants such as Siri, Alexa or Google Assistant, which can help seniors complete tasks without the need for a keyboard or touch screen.
- **Gamification elements Training Programs**: Developing training programs that incorporate game elements to make the learning process more fun and motivating.
- **Mobile Learning Centers**: Creating mobile learning centers that can visit remote and rural areas, providing older adults with access to training and technology.
- **Supported Online Platforms**: Develop online platforms that offer step-by-step instructions and real-time support to help older adults learn digital skills.
- **Social Initiatives and Volunteering**: Encouraging youth and volunteers to become involved in teaching older people, creating intergenerational connections and support.
- **Partnerships with Local Organizations**: Collaborate with local community organizations and libraries to provide regular educational seminars and workshops.
- **Government programs and support**: Development of government programs and provision of subsidies to provide older people with access to modern devices and the Internet.

These innovative approaches can significantly improve older adults' learning and adaptation to the digital world, helping them remain active and independent in today's society.
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