# **Community Projects and Outreach**

Being Seneca’s first ever intern for an internship in Kyrgyzstan, it was an experience of a life time. With the help of student volunteers, UCA staff and faculty and local people, I started several projects in the field of Academia, Environment, Life Skills, Sports, Culture and Women Empowerment. All these projects aimed at helping the local community and contributing to the growth of Naryn region. Around 20 projects were started in the region and our outreach programs reached the local schools, businesses, financially weak families and general public. The best part was that the local community was involved in organizing many of the projects, thus improving the working relationship of UCA and the community.

## Academic Projects:

1. Math Teaching: This project was started in School #7 in Naryn. The selected volunteers from UCA taught grade 10 and grade 11 students every weekend for 6 hours. The teaching curriculum was developed with the help of UCA faculty. This project aimed at supplementing the Math training so that the students can improve in this subject and pass their university entrance exams.
2. English Teaching: To improve the English language of the local students, this project was initiated at the School #2 in Naryn. An English language test was organized for the students to assess their level and command on English. Based on results of the test, an English curriculum was prepared which was delivered by the selected UCA volunteers. English, being an international language, is an important skill to have and this project aimed at enhancing the English language skills of local students. The volunteers taught for 6 hours every week.
3. MS Office: During my meetings with the local schools, it was found that the students don’t learn MS Office after grade 8and by the time they graduate from high school, their knowledge is long gone. So, we decided to train the grade 8th and 9th students at School #7 in Naryn. 6 hours of training per week was given to the students and lessons on Excel, Word and PowerPoint were delivered.
4. Math Olympiad: With the help of UCA volunteers, a Math Olympiad was organized for the high school students of Naryn. This provided an opportunity to the students to test their knowledge. Prizes were given to the top 5 students.

In all the Academic Projects, regular topic tests were conducted to evaluate the students’ knowledge and their progress.

## Environment Projects:

1. Cleanup Drives: To create awareness among the locals and the UCA students about environment cleanup, I organized two cleanup drives in the community during my internship. We spent 2 hours on each drive and gathered paper, plastic, glass along with other material during the cleanups.
2. Composting: This project was started in UCA to teach the students on how to make compost. A local expert (Eleman) served as our guide in this project and with his help, we made compost on UCA campus from food waste. The volunteers involved in this project gained practical skill of making compost.
3. Recycling: This was one of the main projects that spread throughout the community. After visiting the garbage dumping site, I saw that the community has not been segregating the waste. Even at UCA, there were no bins for waste segregation. With the help of some dedicated students, we started with only 4 bins on campus to collect paper, plastic and carboard separately. Then with the help of Public Affair department at UCA, I met a local guy who is an Administrator at Naryn Bazaar. He was very much interested in this project and has been trying to implement the same kind of project. He provided us with 28 more bins for free for UCA campus and agreed to buy the recyclable material from us which he further sells to a recycling company in Bishkek. Next, I met with the Deputy Mayor of the town and proposed to start this project in their building which has more than 13 office rooms. The Deputy Mayor agreed to put the bins at their own expense and started this project. There are 12 schools in Naryn and I met with the directors of all the schools and presented this project. They all were in favor of starting this project in their schools but were relying on me to install the bins and cover the cost. By the time, I finished my internship, I was working on getting some free bins and use the money that we made from selling the waste material, to buy some more bins for the schools. A formal club has also been setup by the student volunteers on campus which will be responsible for taking care of this project.

## Life Skills Projects:

1. Leadership Course: One of my observation was lack of student leaders in the community and the school curriculum doesn’t provide any training on how to be a leader and bring the change. So, I decided to deliver a leadership course to the high school students. I contacted the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE) in Naryn which is also a part of UCA and volunteer once a week for 2 hours and provided leadership lectures to their students. The reason I chose SPCE was because the students at SPCE are intermediate English speaker. SPCE provide paid English training to the high school students after school hours. During my classes, I inspired the students to do community work as well.
2. Resume Preparation Training: I provided training to the high school students at SPCE on how to make a resume and apply for jobs. Two sessions of 2 hours each were provided to the students
3. Job Interview: I collaborated with the Kultur Café in Naryn and organized an event at the café. UCA students and students from the community participated in it. In this event, they answer the questions like a real job interview but in a fun way. This event helped them to improve their speaking skills, be confident in front of others and prepared them for a job interview
4. English Club: Students of the Naryn State University organized an English-Speaking Club once a week at Kultur Café. I participated in the club every week and assisted them in their goal of improving the skills of the participants.
5. Jylgyz Terek Village Project: Jylgyz Terek is a village close to Naryn. I was invited for an open house at the only school in the village and during that open house, the head of the school requested to provide sessions on improving English Speaking of the students. So, along with 3 student volunteers from Naryn community, I started 1-hour weekly session for the students of the school. In these sessions, conversational English of the students were improved.

## Sports Projects:

1. Soccer Tournament: To advance the relation of the community with the UCA, with the help of UCA staff, I organized a friendly soccer match between UCA players and players from the community. A potential coach was also identified for the UCA team. Several matches have been played between UCA and community since then.
2. Chess Tournament: During my internship, I helped forming a Chess Club on campus and organized two internal tournaments. The club also held weekly training meetings. I also organized a tournament with the community as well. The community players were invited to the UCA. This helped to improve the bond of the local community with UCA.

## Charity Projects:

1. Biweekly visit to the Needy Families: We identified over 400 financially weak families in the town with the help of a charity. Most of them are single mothers. I visited 3-4 families on a biweekly basis and donated household items to them. I also took these visits as an opportunity to assess the needs of the families, their view about UCA and reasons behind their weak economic situations.
2. School #2 Event: With the help of local students, an event was organized at School #2. This school is a boarding school and many students are orphans. We donated books and toys to the school. In addition, we took this opportunity to educate the students about UCA, USA FLEX program and how to get admission in to the universities.

## Women Empowerment Projects:

1. Fundraising Music Festival: During my visits to the local families with financially weak background, I found that some of the women have sewing skills and want to start their own business and become independent. So, I decided to do a fundraising event in the town for them. With the help of the volunteers from the local community and UCA, an event was organized at the Smart Park in Naryn. It was one of its kind and around 500 people attended this festival. There were games, performances and food at the event and deputy mayor was invited as a chief guest for this event. This event also got media coverage.
2. Fundraising Committee- As my internship was getting over and it was time to go back to Canada, I formed a committee on campus which includes UCA staff and students. All the money raised from the Fundraising festival has been handed over to them. The committee will be responsible for selecting women from the community and using the funds to assist them in starting their own business.

## Miscellaneous Projects:

1. Music Night: This event was organized at Kultur Café in Naryn. The purpose of the event was to promote the café. UCA students and local community attended this event and music performances were given. It was a perfect blend of cultures as the participants sang in their mother tongue including Russian, Kyrgyz, Urdu, English and Hindi. Even I gave a performance at this event. This event helped in increased sales for the café.
2. Creative Recycling Exhibition: I was invited by School #8 to attend an event on products made from waste material. As I was already running a recycling projects at UCA, I asked the students from School #8 to come to UCA and organized an exhibition for them. These students displayed their products at UCA and put them on sale. The exhibition motivated the school students and made them realize that their products are of value. The exhibition was educational for UCA students as well as they saw how the waste material can be converted into valuable products.
3. Let’s Talk Edition: It is an internal UCA newsletter. I arranged an interview of the local guy who helped us with recycling, to be published in this newsletter. Students involved with this newsletter have taken the interview and promised to publish it. This will help in giving credits to the locals helping UCA and ultimately will improve the UCA connection with the local community.

## Impact of the Projects

The above projects impacted many people. There were various stakeholders involved including UCA, local schools, government officials, volunteers and many more. Not only I was able to improve the community outreach through these projects but at the same time I was able to engage the local people to achieve the common goal i.e. improving the Naryn region. These projects did change the perception of many locals regarding UCA. I was interviewed thrice by Naryn Media and one time by Naryn radio broadcaster. This helped in spreading the word about these projects to a larger audience. Just before the end of my internship, I was invited in the Naryn Bazar for a farewell dinner by the community people. This is a proof that people did appreciate the efforts we put in through our projects and they are thankful to UCA for its contribution through these community outreach programs. Please refer to **Appendix 1** to find the impact made by individual projects.

# **Appendix 1**

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| **Project** | **Category** | **Impact Made** |
| English Teaching | Academic | More than 50 students have benefitted from this project and  improved their English language skills |
| Math Teaching | Academic | Around 80 students from the community have been impacted  and improved their math’s skill |
| MS Office | Academic | 18 students from the community learned MS Office and  improved their computer skills. |
| Math Olympiad | Academic | Around 40 students from the local school participated and the top 5 were given prizes. This Olympiad helped the students to practice their mental math |
| Cleanup Drives | Environment | Around 60 bags of plastic and glass were gathered from these cleanups |
| Composting | Environment | Recycled food waste and converted it into fertilizer. This project provided hands on experience to UCA students on how to make compost |
| Recycling | Environment | We collected and sold 18 kg plastic,82 kg paper and 39kg cardboard to the recycling company and earned 1500 KGS from it. This project has started in the Mayor's building as well |
| Leadership Course | Life Skills | Around 10 students from the community were being taught about the basics of leadership, how to lead; how to influence others and they were inspired to do community work to improve our societies |
| Resume Preparation | Life Skills | 10 students gained the knowledge of resume preparation from this project |
| Job Interview | Life Skills | Around 18 students learned about job interview questions, how to answer them and improved their public speaking skills |
| English Club | Life Skills | Close to 10 students attended this club and improved their public speaking and English language skills |
| Jylgyz Terek | Life Skills | Jylygyz Terek is a village in Naryn Oblast. An English-speaking club was organized at a school in the village on a weekly basis. 10 students were impacted by this project |
| Soccer Match | Sports | This event brought UCA team and team from the community together and provided them with a chance to showcase their talent and practice their soccer |
| Chess Match | Sports | Two internal and one external tournament were held and around 30 students participated in these tournaments |
| Visit to Needy Families  Charity | Charity | Local families with weak financial background were visited and  around 3000 KGS were donated |
| School # 2 Event | Charity | 27 students attended this event and learned about FLEX program and how to apply to universities. Books and toys were donated to the school |
| Fundraising | Charity | A fundraising music festival was organized in the local community and it was attended by more than 500 people. 33,000 KGS were raised |
| Music Night | Miscellaneous | This event helped in the promotion of the local business, "Kultur Café". Around 30 people from the community participated in this event and showcased their singing talent and collaborated with each other |
| Creative Recycling Exhibition | Miscellaneous | 15 students from a local school got a chance to showcase and sell their products at the UCA campus. This event encouraged them to do more of creative recycling and reduce waste |