

A young woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a white school uniform shirt and a dark tie, is focused on typing on a laptop. She is wearing a blue lanyard around her neck. The background is a blurred classroom setting with other students and a teacher.

Imagine
life in 2020
without a laptop

Message from the founders of Connect-Ed

2020 was a difficult year for everyone, especially for children and teachers, who urgently switched to distance learning. This shortage has a particular impact on children from villages and with special educational needs. More than 10% of all schoolchildren, or 300,000 children, do not have computers at home. This happened at the time when having advanced skills in working with gadgets is a basic necessity for work and self-development.

For us, it was a clear signal that we need to act so that as many children as possible can reach their full potential. In a short time, Connect-Ed was able to unite people who are not indifferent to the future of children. Someone helped the children with an equipment, someone helped to conduct lessons, and someone simply supported us mentally! At the moment, by joint efforts, we have provided more than 200 pieces of equipment to children from all over Kazakhstan. Along with technology, children have hope and access to education, and therefore opportunities.

In addition to helping hundreds of children, an equally important achievement for our team is that we raised awareness of the digital divide. Awareness that, unfortunately, by 2020, having access to technology remains a privilege, but at the same time, together we were able to show that as a society we can help each other!

What's next?

The pandemic has shown the importance of digital skills for both children and adults in all areas of life. Now, in order for a child to receive a full-fledged and high-quality education, they must have technology and the ability to competently use it. Unfortunately, the digital divide, exacerbated by the pandemic, continues to widen, which directly affects the quality of life of children and the economy of our country.

Connect-Ed will continue to work on its mission to provide equal educational opportunities for every child! We will work to strengthen partnerships with the corporate sector, provide quality and free digital literacy courses, and conduct educational research.

We are grateful to each of you for continuing the path to digital equality with us! After all, a smile and hope in the eyes of a child for a quality education is our common merit!



Gulnaz Kordanova
Co-founder, CEO

Daniyar Kussainov
Co-founder, CDO

There is a support for person burning with idea

Saule Kalikova - representative of the Soros Foundation Kazakhstan

One of the projects supported by the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan during the COVID-19 pandemic was the Connect-Ed project. The forced massive transition to distance learning has become a huge challenge for the education system, revealing those aspects of it that previously had to exist "by default", postponing the solution until better times.

Now it has become clear to everyone that a significant part of families with school-age children do not have the basic conditions for providing them with access to online education; that parents themselves are not quite ready to help their children; that some teachers have a very limited set of ICT skills to deliver lessons in the new environment.

Of course, the set of these problems is not unique - during the pandemic, they were encountered in most countries of the world. But the main thing now is what lessons this or that country will learn from this.

And here I would like to refer to the Connect-Ed project.

Aimed at solving the problems of digital inequality by supporting children from vulnerable groups, the project successfully coped with this task, providing even a few (if viewed on a national scale), but specifically 747 children from 146 families not only laptops, but also free courses on improvement of digital literacy. And this approach (expressed in the motto of the project "We give children a fishing rod") is the **first lesson that deserves to be taken into account** by those who are somehow connected with solving the problem of providing children from vulnerable groups with technical means of education. It is not enough just to hand over equipment - be it a computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet. It is important to integrate measures into this policy and provide appropriate means to ensure that all this works for its intended purpose and for the benefit of children.

The second lesson that can be learned from the experience of implementing the Connect-Ed project is unleashing the power and potential of cooperation, mutual assistance and support of different groups of people who share common values: civic activists, experts, representatives of the business environment, volunteers. The authors of the project, young people who themselves once studied and worked in the most ordinary schools, were able to rally around their project people who are not indifferent, sympathetic and, most importantly, actively believe in what they are doing: donate equipment to those who need it; develop courses and educate children and their parents; create videos and write stories of children and families, inspiring both their heroes and those who read these stories ...

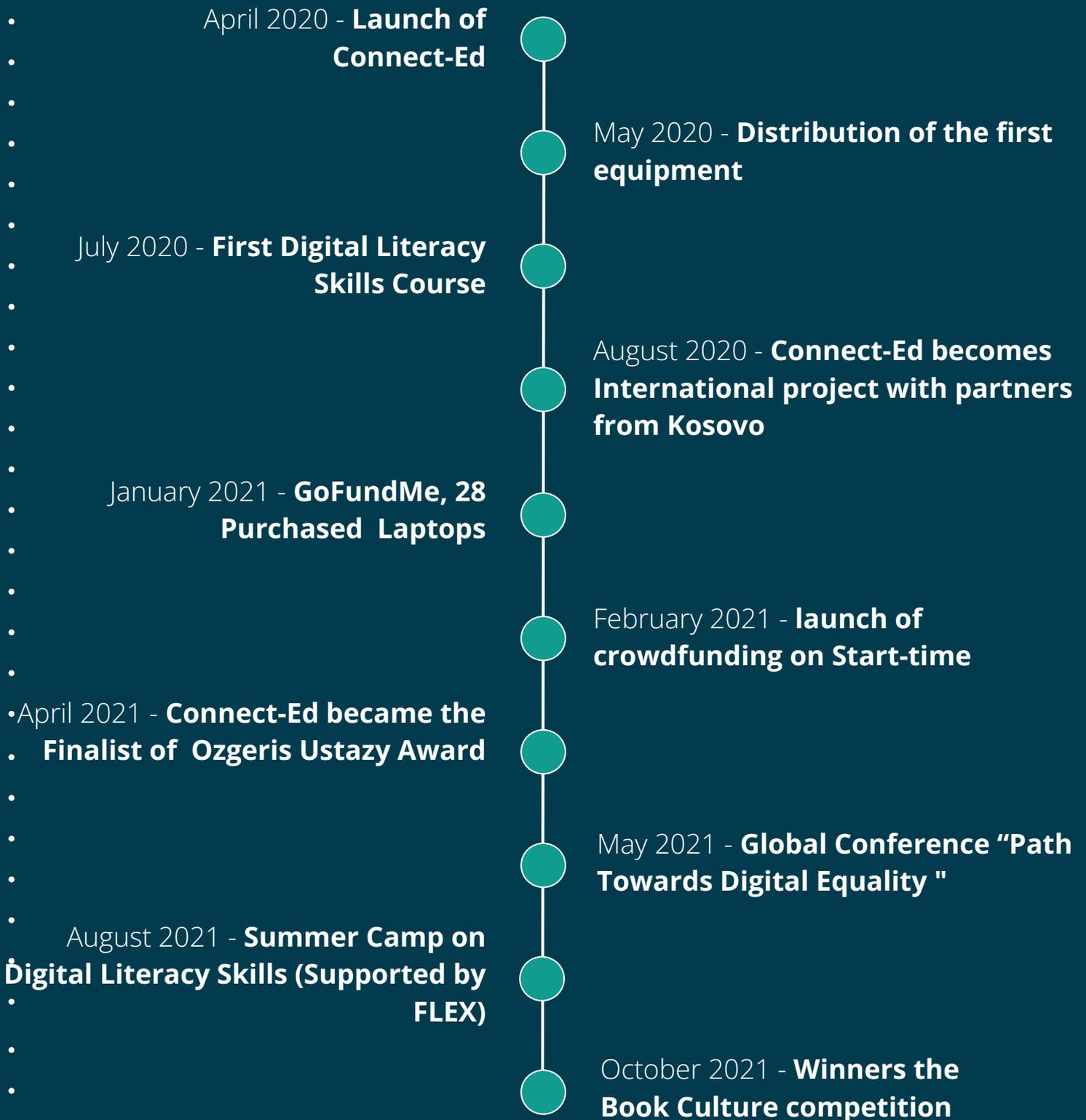
And, finally, **the third lesson**, which today sounds more like a recommendation: the state should work more effectively and precisely with such initiatives. The pandemic has shown, among other things, to all of us that initiatives from individuals and communities are something that governments need to learn to work with, taking them into their orbit and amplifying this positive force in favor of more people.

I am glad that the Soros Foundation Kazakhstan was among those who gave impetus to the development of the Connect-Ed project and I believe that it will live and develop, finding new friends and like-minded people.



Saule Kalikova
Public Policy Advisor, Soros
Foundation-Kazakhstan

The main stages of development



Our contribution

During pandemic that has exacerbated the digital divide, Connect-Ed is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for every child's development. We provide digital literacy techniques and lessons for children from rural areas and with special educational needs to continue their education online.

Connect-Ed is committed to digital equality since May 2020

216

Units of equipment were given to children

700+

Children now have access to the equipment

31%

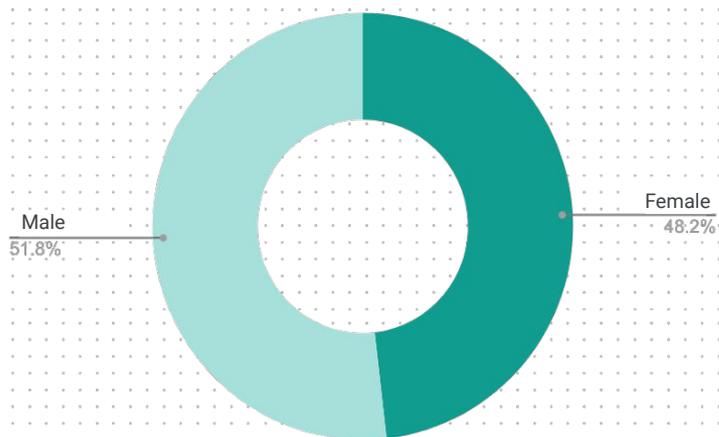
Of the beneficiaries live in rural areas



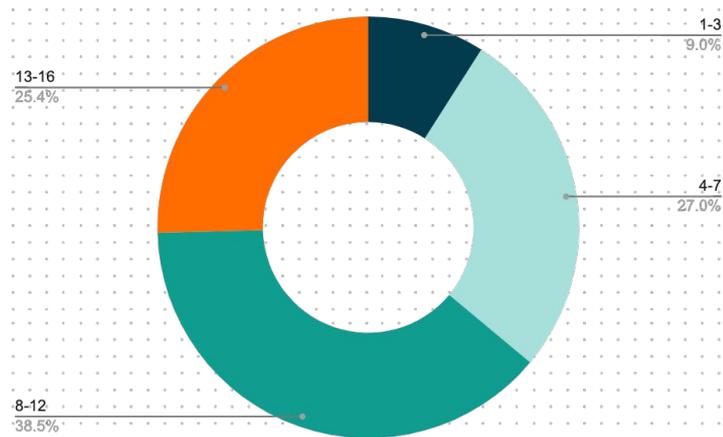
Whom do we help?

Connect-Ed works with families in all regions of Kazakhstan, helping children from rural areas, low-income families and children with special educational needs.

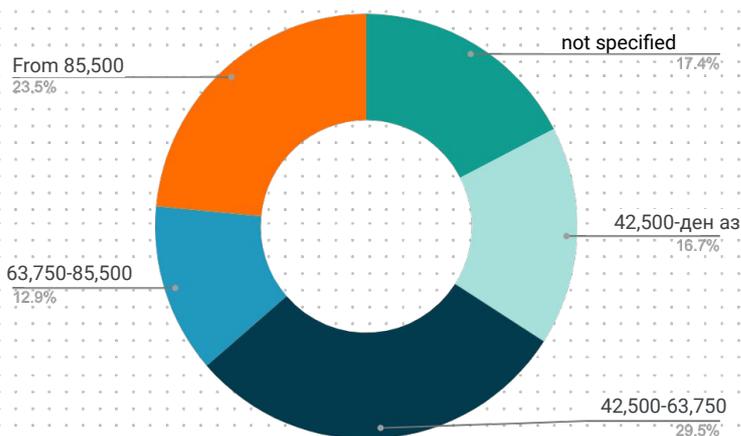
Gender



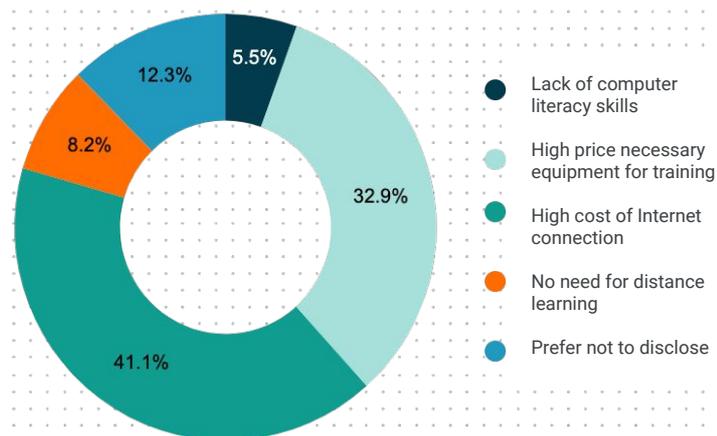
Age



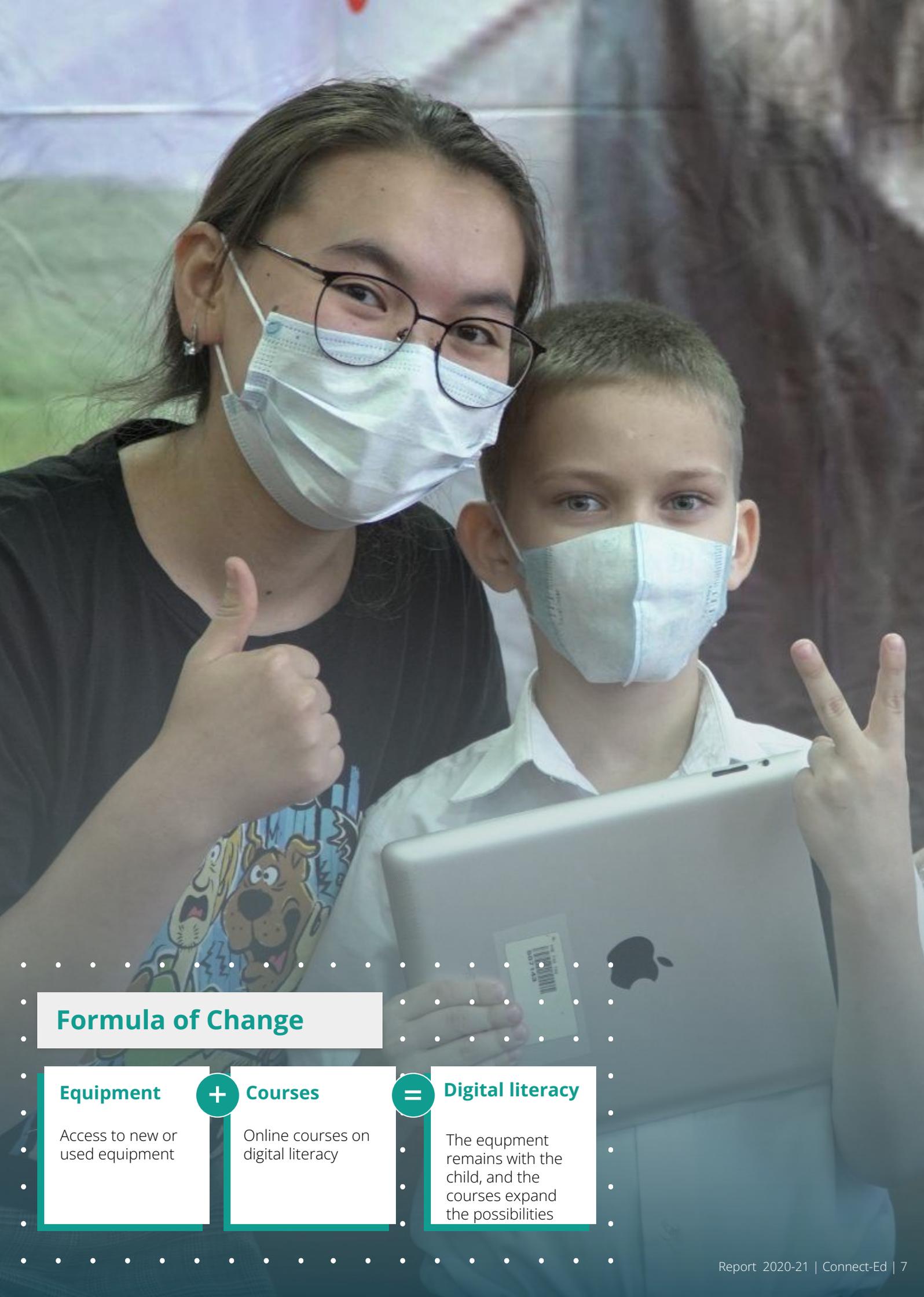
Monthly income of a family



The hindrance that prevents children from learning remotely



“My dream is to contribute to the digitalization of the world so that everyone can use technology. And I also want to do charity work so that other people do not suffer from poverty and hunger ”- 7th grade student



Formula of Change

Equipment

Access to new or used equipment

+

Courses

Online courses on digital literacy

=

Digital literacy

The equipment remains with the child, and the courses expand the possibilities

“Your course was very educational and I learned a lot of information! The course is very useful, I would recommend them to everyone!”

- 4th grade student

In partnership with BeyondCurriculum, we have trained

74

children

38

parents

Parents' literacy directly affects the academic performance and quality of education of the child



Removing barriers to digital equality

Connect-Ed team stays in touch with children and their parents who received the equipment. In digital literacy courses, children learn how to use technology sustainably, learn to program, and learn basic software techniques. For parents, we have prepared courses on Digital Documents, using eGov, MS Suite, Kасpi and others.

Upon completion of the course, course participants receive a certificate from us and small gifts, and also become part of our community.

Connect-Ed Global: Message from Connect-Ed Kosova

Various global initiatives have been launched since 2004 to close the digital divide (such as the global organization Close the Gap), but there were also regional or local initiatives such as the Connect-Ed that took off during the pandemic.

With the gradual closure of schools around the world, many countries quickly shifted from traditional to distance education. All over the world, education systems have found it impossible to ensure continuity and inclusion in the educational process for all because of the pandemic, allowing for "1.53 billion out-of-school students, or 87.6 percent of students worldwide." (UNESCO, 2020).

Many cases of dropping-out due to lack of digital equipment or internet were also reported in Kosovo. Children have experienced and still are experiencing a massive digital divide. In response to this, we built Connect-ed Kosova Tracking System, a system that was influenced by the movement originally initiated in Kazakhstan with the aim to close the gap through collecting and distributing assets to children in need.

Gulnaz, who is a friend of our organization, and her team inspired us (KCDE) with their commitment to join efforts towards building a better and more equal future, and ensuring that children's rights were fulfilled even in the most unprecedented times. In fact, it was ConnectEd program which brought back the Kosova Center for Distance Education to being.

We have followed almost every acceptance of the equipment, and the feeling that this experience gives you is extremely fulfilling. Through the eyes of children we understand that equipping them with digital tools represents a sense of belonging, especially for children who have been left-out. To date, through ConnectEd Kosova tracking system there have been identified 6 thousand 954 cases of children who do not possess digital devices. With the help of our tracking system, several devices have already been collected and children from 6 municipalities have benefited.

Further steps

Today, digital equity is also known as human right. There are many stakeholders who are trying to adopt this right. The pedagogical crises during pandemic have only highlighted the need for digital equity. Even according to the United Nations, the issue of digital equity constitutes a new civil right: the right to digital equality; the right to connect to the necessary digital resources for all to have access to educational, cultural and any other recreational events. Therefore, KCDE and Connect-Ed Kosova program will continue its mission towards identifying and narrowing the gap of digital equity in the country.

Antigona Uka

Executive Director





Friends of Connect-Ed

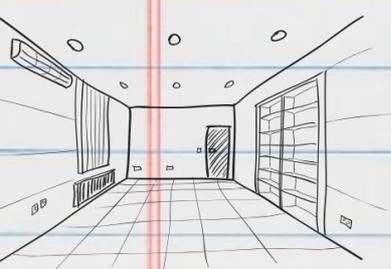
I got acquainted with the Connect-Ed project through Gulnaz, the founder of this project. The reason I decided to support this project is my personal acquaintance with Gulnaz and the idea to support children without access to the digital world.

By supporting this project, I share our common mission in striving for digital equality in Kazakhstan. And I am not the only one who believes in Connect-Ed, I see how the world around me responds to the idea and supports this initiative. In my case, I supported the project financially, but Connect-Ed can be helped in many other ways: donate an equipment, support financially, and tell your friends about the project.

In conclusion, I believe that inequality, in general, is not very a good phenomenon that prevents the world from developing sustainably.

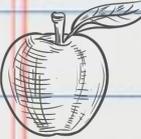
Alexander Lee

Executive-coach in education
School of Zhania Aubakirova,
High Tech Academy



Friends Connect-Ed

Our company is always happy to support important social initiatives. Connect-Ed, not only create awareness about this issue, but also provides both expertise and research, so necessary for the education sector in Kazakhstan. We've been in collaboration with Connect-Ed for over a year, Lincoln Company provides PR support. I believe that the team is very professionally and comprehensively help children and their parents to achieve digital literacy in rural areas.



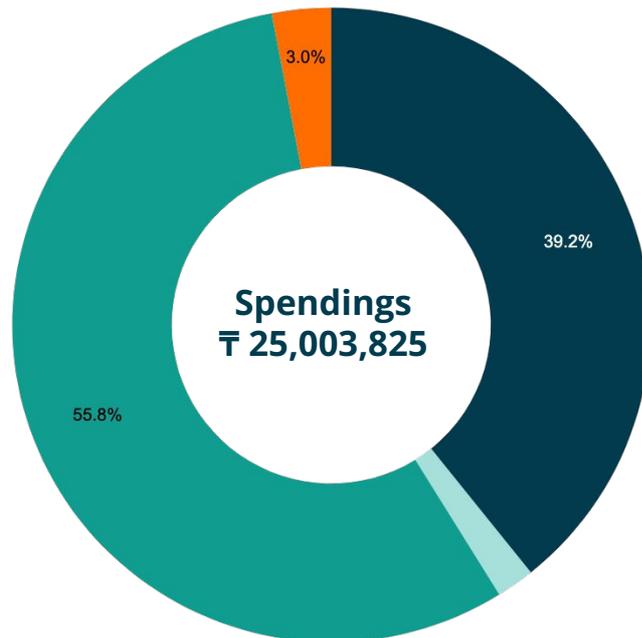
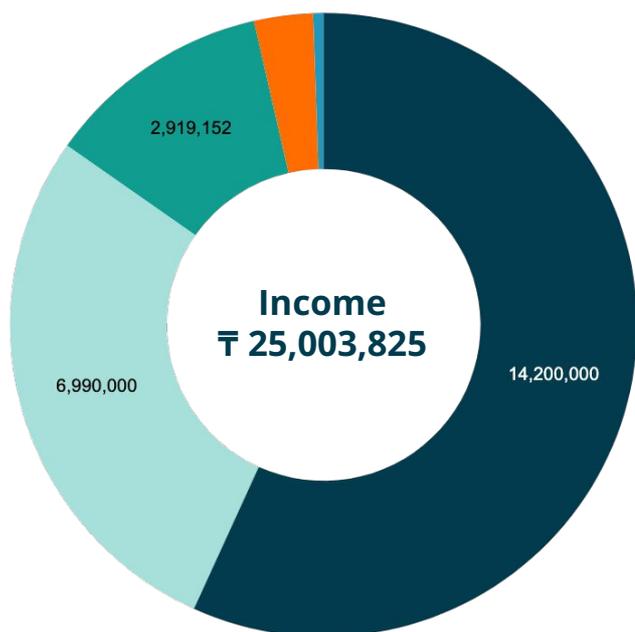
Sergey Sek

Director of Lincoln Company



Financial report

We are grateful for the financial support provided to our initiative. Our project has a comprehensive approach in achieving the goal of digital equality. For this, the organization needs a sustainable financial model, which we build through crowdfunding, CSR, and grants.



- SFK: Connect-Ed 2020 - 56.8%
- SFK: Connect-Ed 2021 - 28%
- Crowdfunding: GoFundMe - 11.7%
- Crowdfunding: Start-Time.kz - 3.0%
- Individual donors (CloudPayments) - 0.5%

- New laptops/equipment purchase - 39.2%
- Logistics (courier service, community visits) - 1.9%
- Administrative costs (online platform, outsourcing) - 55.8%
- Digital literacy - 3.0%

The largest share of financial receipts for the period 2020-2021 amounted to grant funds from the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan (FSK). We became recipients of the Emergency Fund, specially created by the Federal Grid Company to respond to the consequences of COVID-19. We also raised 3.8 million tenge thanks to crowdfunding and individual donations from our caring friends, partners and allies.

Almost 40% of all funds went to the purchase of new laptops for children with special educational needs and left without parental care. Slightly more than half of the funds received were directed to the development, launch and support of the online platform, including setting up a donation system, promotion in social networks, as well as paying the fees of attracted specialists. 3% of the funds were spent on developing online digital literacy courses. Almost 2% - for courier and logistics services for the delivery of equipment to children throughout Kazakhstan.

“I studied in 5 schools across Kazakhstan, which had different levels of access to technology and learning. Even though I had the necessary resources, for many students this was not the case. Access to education is a fundamental human right, and technology is an integral part of it. I believe and fully support Connect-Ed's goals of ensuring that all children have access to quality education in Kazakhstan. And also, I'm glad to be part of such a great team!” - Gaukhar Aliyeva, member of the Connect-Ed team

Our supporters



Our team

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Co-founder, CEO

Daniyar Kusainov
Co-founder, Development Director

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Partner Relations Specialist

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IT specialist

Balnur Tazhihan
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