



SUCCESS STORY

New Technology Aids in Transparency

High-tech video systems bring verbatim records to country's courtrooms



Photo: Chemonics/Andrey Feodorov

Video recording systems installed by USAID mean judges hearing cases at Almaty's Bostandyk District Court can refer now to verbatim records versus handwritten summaries.

Chief Justice Kairat Mami of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan called the video recording system USAID installed at the court “a tool to increase transparency and the administration of justice in Kazakhstan.”

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Court recordings of judicial proceedings provide a record of trial events. While a verbatim record is typical in many Western countries, in Kazakhstan, where a court secretary typically handwrites court proceedings, these records are not verbatim transcripts, but essentially only summaries of the case. Some courts also use audio recording, but this system produces transcripts of imperfect quality and is itself prone to manipulation.

USAID, in cooperation with Kazakhstan's Supreme Court, launched a 12-month pilot initiative to introduce new ways of increasing the quality and accuracy of transcripts in the country's courts. USAID's project installed a high-tech video recording system at the Bostandyk District Court in Almaty. Two civil and two criminal courtrooms were equipped with a unique system of four video cameras and up to six microphones that thoroughly and accurately captured all aspects of a court case and provided a verbatim record.

The new system has already made a positive impact in the court's work. According to monitoring results, the rate of filed appeals and complaints for recorded cases is significantly lower than that for non-recorded cases, indicating the increased public trust in the trial and the improved quality of the court's work. The equipment's capabilities have already generated intense interest in other district courts, with several requesting that they be the next to receive it. The media is also widely publicizing the video recording technology, contributing to the debate within the judicial system of its future possibilities.

Building on the initiative's success and the interest from Kazakhstan's judiciary, USAID is currently helping Kazakhstan's Supreme Court to install similar systems in 27 courtrooms around the country, including the city courts of Astana and Almaty, 14 provincial courts, and several district-level courts.