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Office of Transition Initiatives

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

PROGRAM UPDATE: August 16, 2011

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Kyrgyz Republic Transition Initiative (KTI) is supporting the country's efforts to establish a more stable and secure democracy. It provides small grants to civil society, government, and private sector partners to implement high-impact, short-term projects in volatile communities. The targeted assistance supports the ongoing democratic political transition, while addressing emerging sources of instability and drivers of conflict at the community level. The USAID/OTI model is designed to be fast, flexible, and responsive to a dynamic environment. It allows partners to respond to short-term crises as they arise, which could further destabilize the fragile situation. Projects can implement pilot initiatives that act as a catalyst long-term development activities. As a whole, the activities are working to encourage democratic processes and build trust both within communities and between citizens and government during the critical period of transition.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

To date, OTI has completed or initiated a total of **143 activities** for **\$9,611,837** including the following recent activities:

1. Celebrating diversity in the Kyrgyz Republic

In July, USAID/OTI presented a new series of multi-language children's books developed in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation, the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Osh and Jalalabad city administrations. Through a series of dialogues and workshops with parents and teachers, the Aga Khan Foundation produced dual language children's books (Kyrgyz-Uzbek, Kyrgyz-Russian, Kyrgyz-Tajik, and Kyrgyz-English) aimed at promoting peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. As part of the initiative, the Aga Khan School organized an art competition among students from 29 schools in Osh City on themes related to peace, harmony and friendship. The winning exhibits will be published together as a book. Copies of books will be distributed



to schools and libraries across the country. Concurrently, this partnership also supported community infrastructure efforts to rehabilitate nine kindergartens in mixed neighborhoods of Osh, Nookat, Uzgen and Kara-Suu. These efforts aim to create a more accessible and positive educational environment for children from multi-ethnic communities. Approximately 1,900 ethnic Uzbek and ethnic Kyrgyz children will benefit from this activity.

2. Increasing Access to Irrigation Water in Alay Rayon

Last week USAID/OTI initiated a project with local authorities in the Alay district of Osh, to increase the capacity of irrigation water and agricultural output on 55 hectares of agriculture fields used by Kyrgyz farmers in Lenin *ayil okmotu*. Deteriorating infrastructure and lack of economic opportunities in mono-ethnic rural areas in the south has bred considerable resentment toward both the urban residences who they perceive as "privileged" and the national government for not improving rural services and opportunities. This grant will support an ongoing initiative of the Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) to increase agricultural yield in Kun-Elek Village, one of the most impoverished rural communities in Alay rayon. This support from USAID/OTI will double the gauge of pipe planned under the current MSDSP budget, effectively quadrupling the maximum possible flow of water. This activity will improve basic irrigation services, increase economic activity in Alay rayon, and reduce one flashpoint of tension.

3. *Facilitating the Replacement of Critical Documents for Citizens in Osh Province*

In partnership with local authorities in Mady Municipality, USAID/OTI initiated a project to reduce the obstacles and time it takes citizens in the Kara-Suu rayon to obtain replacement internal passports and other key documents necessary for accessing critical government services and participating in elections. The destruction and looting during the June 2010 violence affected nearly 2,800 homes, businesses, government offices in Osh and Jalalabad. Unfortunately, many of the vital personal documents needed by citizens as well as the municipal office that issues such documents, were also destroyed which has created a legal impediment to reconstruction. The grant from USAID/OTI will rehabilitate a public building and provide office equipment in order to establish a passport office in the Mady municipality. This activity will hasten recovery efforts, reduce tensions in the Osh oblast, improve government capacity to deliver critical public services more effectively, and strengthen constituents' confidence in their government.

4. *Improving Access to Community Space for At-Risk Youth*

USAID/OTI initiated a project in July to provide meeting and work space for young people engaged in the Youth Livelihood and Peace Promotion Project initiated by UNICEF. Youth across the south lack opportunities for employment, education, participation in political affairs, and empowerment processes which was one driver of the conflicts in spring and summer of last year. The conflict itself exacerbated mistrust between youth from different ethnic communities and, as a result, there are fewer opportunities for youth from different groups to interact and play a constructive role in promoting inter-ethnic peace and reconciliation. The support from USAID/OTI will rehabilitate a building in Osh City and another facilitate in Jalalabad in order to magnify the UNICEF project by providing a functional and safe space for youth from different groups to interact and play a constructive role in promoting inter-ethnic peace and reconciliation.

5. *Promoting freedom of expression through support to an independent printing press*

In the run up to the October 30 presidential elections, USAID/OTI launched an activity to ensure independent media outlets and candidates would have access to printing presses to allow a more evenly competitive environment. At present, the only alternative to the state run printing press is the Media Support Center Foundation (MCSF), but capacity has been limited due to deterioration of equipment. Through equipment provided by USAID/OTI, MCSF will now have expanded capacity during the election cycle to allow a broader base of voices to be heard, thus enhancing the legitimacy of the democratic process.

6. *Giving Entrepreneurs a Voice: Study on Economic Recovery of Southern Kyrgyzstan*

In July the University of Central Asia presented the main findings of their research analysis of entrepreneurship and economic recovery in the southern Kyrgyzstan. The research, funded through a grant from USAID/OTI, identifies challenges to the economic progress of the region, while trying to identify opportunities for targeted policy interventions by the government or other actors. The conclusions were developed in consultation with local entrepreneurs. Economic stagnation and poverty are an ongoing source of tension in the south, and the information and analysis will allow policy makers to better address grievances and provide opportunities.



7. *USAID/OTI supports Improved Access to Electricity in Suzak Rayon*

On July 15, USAID/OTI awarded a grant to the Suzak Rayon Administration to install power lines and transformers in five villages of the Suzak district in Jalalabad province. The last year saw a substantial increase in electric power demands in Suzak as a result of the movement of people from areas in the south affected by the events of last June, and more recently by ethnic Kyrgyz citizens in Uzbekistan who emigrated to the Suzak area. This provide additional strain on the already weak electricity infrastructure and resulted in resentment towards migrants and frustration among existing Suzak residents. By supporting the Suzak district government's efforts to provide increased access to electric power, this activity will help mitigate an emerging source of tension and support the peaceful resettlement of displaced citizens in Jalalabad province. More than 23,000 residents from the villages of Gazprom, Socialism, Tosh, Munduz and Jangy-Chek in Suzak rayon will benefit from this partnership.

FAST FACTS

Start Date: May 2010
Budget: \$21 million
Partner: International Resources Group (IRG)
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