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Office of Transition Initiatives

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

PROGRAM UPDATE: October 4, 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 **154 activities** for **\$10,064,179** including the following recent activities:

1. *Civil society seeks greater judicial transparency:*

In September, with support from USAID/OTI, the Citizen's Council to Control Court System (CCCCS), an ad hoc union of 14 civic activists, entrepreneurs, and lawyers, launched a nation-wide telephone hotline, in order to solicit public concerns over the ethical behavior of judges nominated for positions on the local, supreme and constitutional courts. In recent months, a Judges Screening Committee (JSC) was formed to administer the process of nominating and selecting judges at all levels. After members of the JSC both failed to convince the public of transparent selection practices and allegedly violated a number of Kyrgyz laws, there has been public criticism of incompetence and impartiality in the JSC. To respond to this crisis of trust, on 22 July 2011, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Coalition for Democracy



and Civil Society established the Citizen's Council to Control Court System (CCCCS). The hotline is one component of a larger advocacy campaign to encourage citizens across the country to report alleged abuses and other concerns about judges that have been nominated for positions to ensure the vetting process is thorough.

- 2. *Support for election observation:*** USAID/OTI recently committed resources to assist with two national election observation missions. The first activity will help the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society to carry out a robust domestic election observation effort that includes strengthened long-term observation and statistically based observations (SBO) in 500 locations during the campaign and election period. The assistance will widen the scope, strengthen the veracity, and improve citizen confidence in the observation results. The second project will allow *Taza Shailoo*, one of the leading local NGOs, to replace a stock of vital computer and other equipment lost during an office break-in during the month of July. This equipment is critical to the successful implementation of their large-scale observation mission funded by the European Commission.
- 3. *Improving Access to Irrigation Water in the South:*** In September USAID/OTI initiated two projects to minimize local tensions over access to limited water resources, while improving local government's longer-term capacity to more effectively manage water supply. The first project will support the Kara-Suu Water Management Department to revitalize the carrying capacity of the canal's main artery and reinforce it along the Taldik-Sai river bank to

prevent future flood damage. It will also leverage the expertise of Foundation for International Tolerance (FTI) to organize and deliver five peace building and conflict resolution trainings with local water authorities. The second project will restore irrigation water running through the Kokjar irrigation canal that was damaged by spring floods in 2009 and 2010 resulting in a complete halt of water for residents of the village called “May 1” in Kara-Kulja rayon. By strengthening one of the key entry points and rehabilitating a sediment tank, the project will ensure equitable distribution vital to the cultivation of 303 hectares of land used by the mono-ethnic Kyrgyz residents.

4. **Reaching Youth through Sports:** At the end of August, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, with support from USAID/OTI, completed a month-long sports tournament in Naryn oblast. Approximately 250 young soccer, volleyball and basketball players from various communities within Naryn city competed in sports matches. In addition to helping encourage trust and relations between youth and the local and national government, this activity aims to promote healthy lifestyles. Also in September, USAID/OTI initiated a project with the sport instructors in local government offices (MTCs) of Bishkek to conduct a soccer tournament for youth from 21 neighborhoods on Bishkek’s socio-economically marginalized periphery, known as the *novostroiki*. This project will build trust between youth from different groups, as well as local and national government entities. Additionally it will reduce the likelihood that disaffected youth from these areas may become embroiled in potential violence before, during and after Presidential elections

5. **Supporting Youth in Osh with Renovation of Kelechek Youth Center:** On September 7, 2011, residents of Osh celebrated the reopening of the rehabilitated Kelechek Youth Center. In partnership with USAID/OTI, the Osh municipal government identified the rehabilitation of the Kelechek Youth Center as a priority project to involve youth and foster positive community interaction. USAID allocated funds to renovate the center and purchase new furniture, complementing the efforts of the Osh city government to restore the center’s external walls, perimeter fencing, brick tiles leading to the entrance. “Before the reconstruction, only 8 out of 25 rooms were usable. Now, with the improved infrastructure office, we have opportunities to diversify, increase the number of study groups, and better serve the youth community,” said Turat Muratov, director of Kelechek.



6. **Ensuring diversity of local Public Advisory Boards in the South:** With support from USAID/OTI, the local organization Abad recently launched an information campaign and training project across southern Kyrgyzstan about the role of local public advisory boards. These recently established bodies aim to facilitate interaction between government and civil society and encourage democratic decision-making at the community level. This grant will improve the awareness, effectiveness, and ethnic diversity of 80 local government public advisory boards in 14 multi-ethnic districts across the south. The project includes 40 workshops for local governments and community members focusing on inclusivity and transparency in decision-making.
7. **Improving Facilities in Kelechek Orphanage:** On August 18, U.S. Ambassador Pamela L. Spratlen joined children, community members and local authorities from the Kirgshelk village near Bishkek to celebrate the reopening of the newly renovated Kelechek Orphanage. This project, supported by USAID/OTI and the Peace Corps, was identified by community members as a priority need for their village and is part of an ongoing USAID campaign to support local community initiatives and revitalize important shared community spaces as well as foster constructive dialogue and interaction with local government. In addition to the Kelechek Orphanage project, communities partnered with USAID and Peace Corps to identify and renovate four area schools.
8. **Improving public literacy regarding new internet and mobile media technologies:** In September, USAID/OTI initiated a project to increase the capacity of citizens to access diverse sources of news and information through the Internet and mobile communication channels. The television program “Chekit.kg”, broadcast in primetime on Saturday night on the national broadcaster, provides audiences with vital news on mobile networks, social media, and the Internet. This activity will fund the procurement of production equipment and support production of twenty episodes of “Chekit.kg” between October and March, allowing a growing audience to become informed about internet and social media outlets in their search for credible sources of news. The program is currently one of the most popular shows on KTR.

FAST FACTS

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