



## USAID Newsletter

### Regional News

September-October 2011



**USAID/Central Asian Republics Launches New Website.** USAID/Central Asian Republics launched its new, informative and easy-to-use website, with information on USAID’s work in Central Asia in English and Russian. The website covers Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and is linked to its sister site USAID/Kyrgyzstan. The website contains links to news articles on USAID’s work in the region, videos, success stories going back several years, newsletters, photo galleries, and much more. The website’s address is: <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>. *Photo: Screen shot of USAID/Central Asian Republics’ new website*



**USAID to Help Central Asian and Afghan Firms Trade along Modern Silk Road.** Afghanistan should benefit from robust Central Asian economies and increased trade with its northern neighbors. Kicking off at the beginning of October, USAID’s Regional Economic Integration Activity is a two-year, \$2.3 million project aimed at helping Central Asian and Afghanistan firms export and grow. The activity will result in hundreds of firms networking, establishing joint ventures, entering new markets and creating value. By the end of the project, at least two Central Asian agribusinesses will have become suppliers of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. *Photo: A truck loaded with Afghan goods-credit: USAID/Afghanistan, TAFE project*



**USAID/Central Asian Republics Celebrates USAID’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.** USAID’s Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator Denise Rollins was in Almaty for a reception hosted by Erin McKee, Regional Mission Director for USAID/Central Asian Republics. Partners were invited to the reception at her residence, including local government officials, other donors and USAID’s implementing partners. Over 100 people attended the event.

### Kazakhstan



**USAID Advances WTO Accession in Kazakhstan.** A distinguished professor of International Law and member of the World Trade Organization’s (WTO’s) Appellate Body visited Kazakhstan on September 2 to present the Russian translation of his book “Law and Policy of WTO” at the Kazakh University of Law and Humanities in Astana. This textbook, one of the finest in the world devoted to WTO law, was translated for the first time into Russian with the support of USAID’s Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs Project. The professor visited Minister of Economic Integration and Chief WTO Negotiator Zhanar Aitzhanova to discuss challenges related to Kazakhstan’s WTO accession. The USAID Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs Project distributed 500 copies of the textbook to leading universities across Central Asia and to government agencies involved in trade negotiations on accession to the

WTO. *Photo: Russian version of the book “Law and Policy of WTO”*

**USAID Contributes to Civil Society Development in Kazakhstan.** The practice of “social contracting” – the government provision of competitive grants to NGOs to carry out social support programming – is fundamental to the growth of civil society organizations in Kazakhstan. Experts from the USAID Legal Support to Civil Society Project were appointed as members of the Parliamentary working group to develop draft legislation to amendments related to the Law on State Social Contracting. USAID advocacy and efforts were rewarded as the law passed the Majilis (lower chamber of Parliament) and were referred to the Senate, where the law is expected to pass. Several of the amendments advocated by USAID will open the door to long-term financing of social projects by civil society organizations, improve the transparency of the award process, and authorize the use of independent experts to monitor contract performance.



**Kazakhstan Courts Sustain Project's Work.** The Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan announced that it continues to benefit from USAID's judicial reform project completed two years ago. The Kazakhstan Judicial Assistance Program introduced modern technology to courtrooms in Kazakhstan. Through the procurement and installation of audio and video recording equipment the Supreme Court (in partnership with USAID) enhanced transparency, ensured witness protection, and provided professional development. The USAID funded project finished in 2009, and outfitted just six courtrooms in Kazakhstan.

However, the enhanced public trust and decreased instances of procedural appeals in those courtrooms with the technology persuaded the Supreme Court to continue the project on its own. To date, it has installed audio and video recording equipment in an additional 99 courtrooms throughout the country. *Photo: Mr. Vladimir Borissov, Chief of Union of Judges of the Republic of Kazakhstan*



**USAID Participates in Organization for Islamic Co-operation (OIC) Health Ministerial Conference.** Kazakhstan, as the Chairman-in-Office for the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, hosted the Third Islamic Conference of Ministers of Health in Astana in September. USAID was invited to showcase the partnership with the OIC in reducing maternal and newborn mortality. The presentation, delivered by the acting director of the USAID/CAR Health and Education Office, discussed USAID's approach in strengthening health systems and preventing the causes of maternal and neonatal death. USAID also called on OIC members' commitment to reach the Millennium Development Goals to reduce maternal and child deaths. USAID is active in 10 high burden countries that are OIC member states. *Photo: Ministers and delegates at OIC conference*



**USAID Trains Health Care Staff on Improved TB Control.** In September and October, the USAID Quality Health Care Project and the Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians continued to work with primary health care facility staff in pilot sites in Almaty and East Kazakhstan Oblasts to implement Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) methodologies for tuberculosis (TB) control. By building the capacity of facility staff, USAID is working to improve TB detection and treatment by introducing the CQI approach, which emphasizes critical thinking, promotes the use of objective data in decision-making, and encourages regular internal monitoring. Initial results from CQI activities in Talgar Rayon pilot sites indicate that the screening of patients with cough has increased from around 30% to over 80%.

Increased screening for TB is an important step in identifying infected patients and preventing further spread of the disease. Over the next four years, USAID will work to roll out and institutionalize CQI at primary health care facilities throughout Kazakhstan to drive rapid change and improvement in health care service delivery. *Photo: participant explaining his point of view at the training*

**Private Sector Roundtable.** On October 18, USAID/Central Asian Republics held a private sector GDA roundtable meeting to celebrate Public-Private Partnership Week. USAID's Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia, Denise Rollins hosted the roundtable in Almaty, Kazakhstan that attracted 10 companies. During the roundtable, USAID staff briefed participants on the health and education, democracy and governance and economic development portfolios. Participants engaged in a lively discussion about their operating challenges in Kazakhstan and the opportunities they see in the near-to-mid-term. Several concrete GDA ideas emerged around civil society strengthening and local procurement for the mission to pursue.



**Kazakhstan Investigates Endangered Species Die-off.** The Ustyurt Landscape Conservation Initiative under the SCAPES LWA investigated the puzzling die-off of over 12,000 endangered saiga antelope, an ungulate species native to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The SCAPES project in Kazakhstan successfully leveraged the resources and expertise from a series of international conservation groups to invite internationally recognized wildlife disease expert, Richard Kock from the Royal Veterinary College, London. Dr. Kock held a workshop in Kazakhstan to analyze the

evidence of pasteurellosis as the official cause of death and determined that the deaths were caused primarily by the dysfunction of the animals' digestive tract. The workshop was part of a larger initiative to develop standardized protocols to counteract mass mortality events among the saiga. The Morris Animal Foundation, the Betty White Wildlife Rapid Response Fund, and the Frankfurt Zoological Society contributed to this workshop coordinated by USAID. *Photo: Saiga antelope – credit: PACT SCAPES Initiative*



**Combating Diphtheria.** According to a World Health Organization and Center for Disease Control study, the recent polio and MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination campaigns in Tajikistan were highly successful. The study showed sufficient immunity among the population for those diseases as well as tetanus. However, the same study showed that the country is at risk for diphtheria as more than half of the children aged 1-24 years were not fully protected, and more than 20% of the overall population showed no diphtheria antibodies at all. In order to prevent an outbreak, the Ministry of Health is proposing to conduct an immunization campaign for diphtheria, for which they have requested approximately \$1 million of additional funds to supplement the almost \$1 million that the Ministry of Health has already dedicated to the campaign. *Photo: Children receiving the polio vaccination during the 2010 polio campaign*



**Tajik Civil Society Meets with Secretary Clinton:** On October 22, Secretary Clinton participated in a town hall meeting with 500 representatives of Tajik civil society organizations and youth leaders – including many of USAID's primary contacts. During the event, which was covered widely by the local media, Secretary Clinton answered questions on a wide range of topics, including U.S. policy Afghanistan and the region, human rights, prospects for foreign investment in Tajikistan, and Tajikistan's energy potential. This was the largest gathering of Tajik civil society and youth in several years, and also provided an important opportunity for networking. Before the Town Hall meeting, Secretary Clinton met with the Tajikistan delegation from the July Central Asia and Afghanistan Women's Economic Symposium. *Photo: Secretary Clinton meets with Tajik civil society organizations and youth leaders*



**Innovative Teaching Demonstrates Results in Varzob.** Denise Rollins, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Bureau and Erin McKee, Regional Mission Director of USAID/Central Asian Republics visited school # 40 in Varzob, a community near Dushanbe, to observe lessons of teachers who are using interactive, child-centered teaching techniques after training from USAID's Quality Learning Program. The school's principal noted that students are now learning in an exciting and friendly atmosphere that improves their learning outcomes. The cases of absenteeism and drop outs have been improved from 90% to 99%. He noted that last year two students received silver medals in the Republican Olympiads owing to improved teaching and methodological support by USAID. *Photo: Denise Rollins and Erin McKee visiting School #40 in Varzob*



**USAID Provides ICT to Academy of Education and Pedagogical Universities in Dushanbe and Kurghon-teppa.** The USAID Quality Learning Project provided internet-enabled computers and printers to the Tajik pedagogical universities in Dushanbe and Kurghon-teppa and the national Academy of Education to assist their efforts to reform curriculum standards for secondary and high schools. This equipment and internet access will strengthen the ability of staff to



access, share and disseminate information, prepare modern teaching materials, and to facilitate interaction with colleagues in other universities both in Tajikistan and internationally. *Photo left: Rector of Tajik State Pedagogical University Zarif Sharipov receives IT equipment; photo right: President of the Academy of Education Irina Karimova accepts IT equipment from Terry Giles, Chief of Party of USAID's Quality Learning Project*



**USAID Strengthens Teacher Training Curriculum.** The USAID Quality Learning Project (QLP) gathered 70 educators from teacher training institutes across Tajikistan to discuss the updated in-service teacher training curricula developed by USAID. The new curricula reflect modern teaching techniques to foster interactive learning and improve access and quality of education. Participants noted that the curriculum helps teachers strengthen their skills and knowledge and better prepare students. Irina Karimova, President of the Academy of Education, commented, "The USAID product is successfully accepted by our government and now it's our turn to spread and disseminate this knowledge and experience to other teachers. The improvement of teaching process is in our hands." *Photo: Furaimon Rahimov, Primary In-service Training Specialist, explaining modern training approaches to colleagues*



**Ambassador Discusses Challenges Facing Independent Broadcasters with Media Representatives.** Ambassador Ken Gross met with representatives of radio and TV stations that partner with the USAID-supported Media Support Initiative project to discuss the current challenges facing independent media. Discussion centered on licensing procedures for broadcast media and the upcoming transition to digital broadcasting. Ambassador Gross inquired about the plans of the new Association of Independent Broadcasters of Tajikistan, recently created with USAID's support after a USAID Community Connections exchange to the United

States to address these issues. The media representatives stressed the significance of the association in lobbying for the interests of independent media in Tajikistan. *Photo: Ambassador Ken Gross (right) speaks with Tajik media representatives*



**Cross-Border Events Bring Kyrgyz and Tajik Youth Together to Discuss Common Issues.** Youth drama clubs from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan held a joint Forum Theater event in the Kyrgyz village of Andarak. Over 200 school students, teachers, parents, village leaders, and other local officials attended. The drama clubs were founded and trained under USAID-funded Youth Theater for Peace programs in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Andarak Drama Club performed a play about a young man whose parents prohibited him from attending school so that he could work on the family farm. The guest youth theater group from Tajikistan presented the story of a Tajik migrant working illegally in Russia who is exploited by his employer. Both plays were based on real stories that resonated with rural communities on both sides of the border and sparked active discussion around the causes and possible

solutions to each problem. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen cross-border relationships between participants and communities, which have seen tensions over land, water and demarcation issues in the past several years. *Photo: the Youth Theater for Peace project participants*



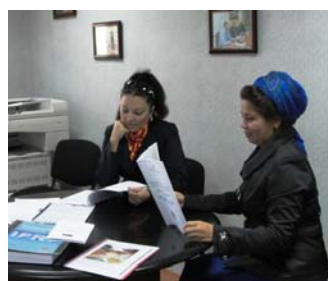
**USAID Quality Health Care Project Conducts Workshop for Community Nurses.** The USAID Quality Health Care Project conducted a workshop for 20 community nurses from Vakhdat Rayon on the World Health Organization's Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) program. Tajikistan has one of the highest child mortality rates in the region, with mortality largely attributable to preventable causes. The IMCI program was developed to improve health care providers' knowledge and skills to manage common but potentially serious childhood illnesses, including diarrhea, respiratory problems, fever, malnutrition and anemia. During the four-day training, participants learned and practiced skills on counseling parents on child care including breastfeeding, nutrition, child development, home care for a sick child and danger signs. After the training, these nurses will conduct community activities in 13 localities in Vakhdat Rayon. Over the next four years, USAID will improve the continuum of care of infants and children by strengthening IMCI at the primary health care level, expanding IMCI to hospitals, and working at

the community level to raise awareness of child health issues. *Photo: Training participants during a practical session*

## Turkmenistan



**USAID and WHO Introduce Evidence-Based Medicine.** On September 19, USAID and the WHO organized a conference in Ashgabat to introduce evidence-based medicine. Although Turkmenistan has adopted new protocols on a case-by-case basis – most notably TB directly observed treatment short course (DOTS) – the purpose of this conference was to help Turkmenistan to develop its own capacity to identify and adopt evidence-based medicine protocols. The USAID Quality Health Care Project co-sponsored the conference and provided WHO expert speakers on how Turkmenistan can find data on evidence-based medicine, analyze data, and adopt this data for use. *Photo: Facilitator and local participants at the conference*



**USAID Publishes Financial Reporting Standards Glossary in Turkmenistan.** The USAID Economic Reforms to Enhance Competitiveness project, together with the Turkmenistan Union of Economists, published print and electronic formats of a Glossary of Accounting Terms, based on the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in Turkmen and Russian languages. Copies of the Accounting Terms Glossary will be distributed among accountants and specialists including teachers. The glossary will provide definitions and translations of the key terms used in IFRS, into Turkmen from Russian and English languages and will serve as an important tool in national adoption, and effort to promote more government transparency. *Photo: Representatives of Union of Economists revising Accounting Terms Glossary*



**Ambassador Opens USAID Youth Center:** Ambassador Patterson opened a USAID-supported Youth Center in Ashgabat, which will provide peer-to-peer mentoring and education, consultations with health care professionals, and alternative entertainment activities to prevent young people (aged 15-24) from taking part in risky behavior such as crime, drug use and unsafe sexual practices. The project is implemented in cooperation with UNFPA and with the financial support of Chevron Nebitgaz B. V. Turkmenistan (through a Private Sector Alliance).



The Youth Center expects to provide outreach and training to over 25,000 young people, with another 25,000 youth reached through a second Youth Center in Mary city. *Photo left: Youth Center classroom; photo right: girls from the Youth Center*

## Uzbekistan



**USAID Introduces New Raisin Production Methods.** USAID introduced an advanced raisin production method that has not previously been used in Uzbekistan. The new method uses a cold dipping process and is being compared to traditional methods that use heat. Developed in Australia and used throughout India, the new method employs a food quality “dipping oil” that interacts with the skin on grapes and facilitates drying. A total of 55 grape farmers were trained in the technique in Uzbekistan’s largest raisin producing region. Two training sessions were held with comparative studies between the two methods. The advantages of the “dipping oil” method include accelerated drying, reduced cracking of the grape skins, more uniform and higher quality raisins, reduced fuel consumption, and less chemical exposure. Independent analysis of the quality difference between the new and old raisins was obtained from the largest private raisin exporter in Uzbekistan. Their technicians rated the new raisins as “more plump, with better color, easier to process and no mold.”

*Photo: Raisin production using new technique*



**USAID Initiates New Agricultural Program.** USAID awarded a four-year \$12.1 million contract to Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) this week for its “Agricultural Linkages Plus” (AgLinks Plus) project in Uzbekistan. This project will build upon the successes and lessons learned from its predecessor “AgLinks” and expand the work to include a wider variety of crops and two additional provinces.. AgLinks Plus will focus not only on increasing farmer productivity but also on the entire agricultural value-chain of high-value fruits, vegetables and nuts including production, processing, research and extension, on-farm water efficiency, food safety and international standards, marketing and export. With support from the Ministry of Agriculture, activities will focus on providing relevant information on best practices, new technologies and markets to participants in the horticultural sector.

*Photo: Uzbek agronomist with farmers*



**Secretary Clinton Visits Women’s Wellness Center.** Secretary Clinton visited the former USAID-funded Women’s Wellness Center in Tashkent. Secretary Clinton opened the first public Women’s Wellness Center in Uzbekistan during her 1997 trip as First Lady while Secretary of State Albright opened the first private Women Wellness Center. The Women’s Wellness Center is a developmental success story—demonstrating USAID’s commitment to global health and women’s issues—given that it is financially self-sustainable, a national center of excellence on women’s health and screening for cervical cancer, trains health specialists from across Uzbekistan and the region, and operates as an implementing partner for other international and bilateral organizations.

*Photo: Secretary Clinton at Women’s Wellness Center*

**For more information about USAID in Central Asia go to:**

**Website:** <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/USAID.Central.Asian.Republics>

**YouTube:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/USAIDCentralAsianRep>

**Flickr:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usaidcentralasianrepublics/>

**Foreign Assistance Dashboard:** <http://www.foreignassistance.gov>

Or, contact Leanne MacDougall, Regional Development Outreach and Communications Specialist at: [Imacdougall@usaid.gov](mailto:Imacdougall@usaid.gov)