



USAID Newsletter

May 22, 2009

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Hot News

USAID Celebrates Its Programs In Turkmenistan

On May 6, over 200 representatives from government, counterpart, implementer, and beneficiary organizations attended a festive event that celebrated USAID's work in Turkmenistan. Participants saw presentations and exhibitions about USAID's work, as well as had an opportunity to hear information from USAID staff. The event was generously covered by the print, internet, and TV outlets. USAID programs in Turkmenistan were launched in 1992 and have worked on health care, education, economic growth, and community development. Economic programs have focused on the development of the banking sector, small business, and agriculture; adoption of international financial reporting standards; and business education for youth. Healthcare programs have helped fight such infectious diseases as malaria, polio, diphtheria, HIV, and TB; worked to improve the quality of medical services. Numerous communities received grants to improve local infrastructure and services.



A USAID anniversary event generated a lot of visibility for the American assistance in Turkmenistan. Photo: USAID

Kazakhstan

GDAs Improve Maternal, Child Health in Astana

In April, USAID and ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc. have completed their fifth one-year Global Development Alliance focused on health care in the Kazakhstan's capital Astana. Due to this partnership, 12,000 women annually give birth in maternity wards that implement safer practices, and many more mothers and children receive better primary health care. Since 2004, the GDAs have worked with the Astana medical professionals to decrease the mortality among children through prevention of the most common childhood diseases and helped health care facilities adopt less medicalized and more patient-centered care. The GDAs trained doctors and nurses from all Astana maternity hospitals and primary health care facilities, ran information campaigns, set up schools for patients, and worked with medical faculty on incorporation of international principles in medical school curricula.



This little girl is one of the thousands of children benefiting from safer practices in Astana hospitals. Photo: USAID

Agreement with the Ministry of Health to Serve as a Foundation for USAID's Programs

In April USAID and the Kazakhstani Ministry of Health signed a Memorandum of Understanding on healthcare cooperation through 2013. Under this agreement, USAID will help the Government of Kazakhstan meet its healthcare goals, carry out healthcare reforms, and improve medical care. USAID will focus on tuberculosis control, response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and quality assurance for health services. Since 1992, USAID programs have helped Kazakhstan design and implement its



Under the MOU, USAID will help improve health care in Kazakhstan. Photo: Project HOPE



national healthcare reform program, pilot family medicine, introduce new methods for tuberculosis treatment, and institute international healthcare standards such as the live-birth definition, pre- and antenatal care standards.

The Government to Reconsider Restrictive Internet Law

With funding from USAID, Freedom House recently held a round-table on a draft law that, if adopted as is, will significantly restrict the freedom of opinion on the Internet, including chat rooms and blogs. The event was co-hosted by Adil Soz, OSCE, the Union of Journalists, and the State Agency on Information and Statistics and generated several recommendations to improve the draft. The Kazakhstani Government took note of the recommendations and suggested a follow-up discussion to further clarify the objectionable provisions.



USAID's grantee helped postpone a restrictive law on internet use. Photo: IREX

Civil Society Organizations Receiving Foreign Aid Enjoy Simpler Reporting Requirements

Starting this year, civil society organizations receiving foreign aid will only report on total expenditures for major categories, such as salary, travel. In the past these organizations were required to report to the tax authorities on every transaction, which created a huge burden and expense for them. This change has resulted from the intensive efforts of the USAID Central Asia NGO and Media Legal Framework Program, implemented by ICNL. The program carried out an advocacy campaign on the experience from other countries and was able to convince the Kazakhstani Government that these complex requirements were not an efficient use of the government's resources.

Kyrgyzstan

USAID Beneficiary Enhances Women's Rights

The Kyrgyz Parliament passed a new law that will allow women to participate in the *Aksakal* (Honored Men) Courts. Aksakal Courts act as mediation mechanism in Kyrgyz communities and usually consider such cases as domestic violence, robbery, and other small crimes. Inclusion of women among the jury of the Aksakal Court will expand the ability of women to address issues of their importance and enhance the equality of representation. This change was achieved at the initiative of Gulnara Derbisheva, an alumna of the USAID Community Connections program who was subsequently elected to the Parliament. Ms. Derbisheva had participated in a USAID-sponsored study tour to the United States where she learned about the NGO development and advocacy from her American colleagues.



The changed law expands women's representation in traditional Kyrgyz courts. Photo: Mercy Corps

New Legislation Removes Trade Barriers

Kyrgyz Parliament has passed several pieces of legislation developed with USAID's assistance that will simplify import and export and improve country's rating in the World Bank's Doing Business Report. Kyrgyzstan is currently at the very bottom of the Trading Across Borders indicator of this report, due to the country's remoteness from ports and also because of the cumbersome and lengthy exports and imports procedures. February 2009 amendments to the Law on Pharmaceuticals and to the Customs Code enable suppliers of pharmaceuticals to self-certify their compliance with technical regulations and limit the requirement to prepare an Inspection Report to cases of



New legislation simplifies import and export procedures. Photo: USAID



discrepancies or fraud. Furthermore, the Government passed a resolution that simplifies the certification and declaration of goods, as well as reduces the list of goods subject to mandatory certification by 60%.

Kyrgyzstan Simplifies Property Registration

The Kyrgyz Government has signed several business-related laws developed with support from a USAID project that significantly reduce the time and costs for property registration. The USAID Business Environment Improvement project helped prepare recommendations and amendments for the Law on State Registration of Property Rights and Transactions as well as the Civil Code. These changes will reduce registration time from 8 to 2 days and the costs from 3.9% to 0.9% of property value, producing estimated \$6.1 million savings for 43,000 registrations per year. The laws will also improve the country's rating in the World Bank's Doing Business Report in keeping with Kyrgyzstan's goal to join the top 50 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business ranking this year. These laws will likely move Kyrgyzstan to 4th place (by 48 places) in the Property Registration indicator of the 2010 Doing Business Report.



Simpler property registration will save some \$6.1 million a year. Photo: Lamar Cravens

Generators to Alleviate Energy Shortages at Hospitals

Last winter, USAID provided 59 generators to 58 key hospitals across Kyrgyzstan to ensure that they have an independent electricity source in case of power outages. The generators were delivered, installed at maternity wards, emergency, and surgery departments. The same hospitals also received 29 transformers and various spare parts, as well as training for their staff for maintenance of the generators. This equipment saves has already saved hundreds of lives and will continue safeguarding the doctors and patients from energy losses throughout the year.



USAID's country representative (on the left) at the generator hand-over ceremony at one of the hospitals. Photo: USAID

Kyrgyz Judiciary Moves towards Greater Independence

The Kyrgyz Republic adopted a budget amendment for the judiciary promoted in the framework of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Threshold Program. The amendment was based on the draft recommendations prepared by the MCA and USAID Judicial Reform Assistance Project. The Kyrgyz Parliament approved the suggested amendment to the law, and the President is expected to sign the measure into law in the nearest future. The law would allow the judiciary to present its budget directly to the Parliament without going first through the Ministry of Finance which would become a significant step toward a fully independent judiciary.

Tajikistan

The Center of Excellence Produced Its First Family Doctors

In April, USAID and local government representatives presented diplomas to the first eight graduates of the Family Medicine Center of Excellence in Panjakent, Sughd Oblast. The center in Panjakent was established in 2008 in collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the USAID ZdravPlus Project, the Sughd Oblast Health Department, and the Panjakent City Municipality. A second six-month re-training course has already begun; after this training course is complete, the Panjakent center will operate as a family medicine practice. Strengthening primary health care and introducing family medicine are priorities of



Centers of Excellence model patient-centered medical services throughout Tajikistan. Photo: Abt Associates



Tajikistan’s National Health Reform and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Ministry of Health estimates that the expansion of primary health care services across the country will require 4000 family physicians.

Turkmenistan

Students Enter International Economics Competition

This spring USAID sponsored 15 alumni and students (five groups) of the Junior Achievement Program from Turkmenistan in the international economics and management competition “Hewlett-Packard Global Business Challenge”. This was the first time that Turkmen students have entered this competition. During the course of the contest, 300 teams representing 30 countries competed from February to May 2009 in managing virtual companies in an environment reflecting the real business world. Youth from Turkmenistan competed against groups from the United States, Peru, Canada, Mexico, Denmark, Moldova, and China. The first-round results have ranked Turkmen youth 3rd to 5th in their groups, which were considered excellent results for first-time participants.



Through Junior Achievement programs Turkmen youth learns business basics. Photo: Junior Achievement

Laboratory Supplies and Reagents to Fight Tuberculosis

Recently, USAID and its grantee Project HOPE presented a supply of consumables and reagents for tuberculosis microscopy laboratories to the Ministry of Health of Turkmenistan. The supply will be distributed to TB laboratories nationwide in support of the National Tuberculosis Program to provide for the needs of these facilities for one year. USAID through Project HOPE has previously provided 40 microscopes to outfit various laboratories and trained laboratory specialists to use them. The new donation will assure that laboratories can use the microscopes to make accurate and timely diagnoses of TB in every district. Such diagnoses are essential for the proper implementation of the WHO-recommended STOP TB strategy to improve treatment outcomes for TB patients and prevent the further spread of TB.



USAID and Project HOPE are Turkmenistan’s long-term partners in fighting TB. Photo: Project HOPE

Uzbekistan

USAID Opens “Export Window” for Farmers

A Samarkand-based agrifirm “Istiklol meva sabzavot” recently signed a \$7.9 million contract to supply fresh fruits and vegetables to Russia during the 2009 growing season. Previous efforts by the agrifirm in 2007 and 2008 to find external buyers for their farmers’ produce had been unsuccessful. But this year, staff of the USAID AgLinks project arranged a trip for this and other agrifirms to the Food Ingredients trade show in Moscow and facilitated their negotiations. The project introduced the Uzbeks to the Russian “AgrolImport” and supported their negotiations that resulted in a successful contract. The first Uzbek shipment to the Russian consumers was scheduled for late April and was valued at \$1.9 million.



AgLinks Staff and a client sign supplier agreement at Moscow trade show. Photo: DAI