



USAID newsletter

Kazakhstan



Loan applicants at one of the AMFOK member organizations. Photo: USAID

USAID-supported Microfinance Organizations Service 64% of the Market

USAID has played a key role over the years in creating a vibrant microfinance industry in Kazakhstan. USAID helped revise the microcredit law, establish the Association of Microfinance Organizations of Kazakhstan (AMFOK), and found a number of key institutions, including KazMicroFinance, named by Forbes magazine one of the world's best microfinance institutions in 2006. AMFOK members currently service 64% of the country's microfinance market.



A teacher (in the center) is showcasing her KAB training certificate. Photo: Pragma

Vocational Schools Introduce Business Courses

This September, over 20,000 (approx. 3% of the total) Kazakh vocational school students will be able to learn business basics, thanks to the USAID public-private partnership between USAID, Chevron, and Baker Hughes. The partnership trains vocational school teachers to run the *Know About Business* course that will enable students to open their own business or serve as managers in other companies, thus improving employment opportunities for youth. By 2010, this partnership will have trained enough teachers to provide these courses at nearly 40% of all vocational schools in the country.

Kazakhstan Takes a Big Step to Protect Investors

In July, President Nazarbayev signed a law amendment developed with USAID assistance that improves reporting requirements for joint stock companies. Previously, joint stock companies were not required to publish their full annual reports in mass media, and it was difficult for shareholders, investors, and the public to obtain information about related-party transactions by the company and conflicts of interest of managers, officers, and Board members. Now directors must disclose their annual reports, including any related-party transactions in mass media. These new reporting requirements were developed with support from the USAID Business Environment Improvement Project to increase transparency, enhance protection of minority shareholders, and attract investment into the country.



Family medicine uses more family-oriented approach to health care. Photo: Abt Associates

Family Physicians Celebrate Their 20th Anniversary

This year, Kazakhstan marks 20th anniversary since family medicine was introduced in the country. USAID has played a significant role in facilitating the country's transition from narrowly specialized services to family-oriented approach. USAID helped integrate services at the country's first family medicine centers, change related government policies, educate population, and retrain doctors. The postgraduate program USAID helped create at a local medical institute, currently serves as a hub for producing family doctors for the country.



Kyrgyzstan



Each year, thousands of Kyrgyz youths take a USAID-supported test to win scholarships for higher education. Photo: USAID

Students Take USAID-Supported Scholarship Tests

This summer, nearly 36,000 Kyrgyz high-school graduates participated in the USAID-supported National Scholarship Test to compete for government-funded university scholarships. This test, launched by USAID and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education in 2002, aims to provide Kyrgyz youth, especially those living in rural areas, with equal and transparent opportunity to receive scholarships for university education. Since its launch, over 250,000 youth have taken the USAID-supported test; 45,000 of them have received government scholarships and an opportunity to study at any school of their choice. The test is annually conducted in three key languages at 90 testing centers throughout the country.



A closeout event reviewed CAPACITY's inputs in HIV/AIDS prevention in Kyrgyzstan. Photo: JSI

USAID's HIV/AIDS Prevention Project Has Ended Its Work

The USAID-funded five-year project "CAPACITY" worked to enhance the local skills for the implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention activities. CAPACITY helped 110 AIDS-service organizations improve their work and raise funds for HIV prevention among vulnerable populations. To model TB/HIV co-infection management, CAPACITY trained over 70 health specialists, helped provide TB/HIV prevention and treatment services to 1,000 citizens, and facilitated HIV counseling and testing for 1,300 people in Osh Province. The USAID-funded project also strengthened the work of a multi-sectoral coordination committee for socially important and highly dangerous infectious diseases. The committee has produced such important documents as the national HIV communication strategy and a national plan for HIV monitoring and evaluation.



Osh Oblast Governor greets citizens at the opening of the new Pazilet commercial center in Uzgen. Photo: Urban Institute

USAID Helped Uzgen City Open a Commercial Complex

The city of Uzgen in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan recently celebrated the opening of a new commercial complex, the result of land management practices developed in partnership with USAID. In cooperation with USAID's Decentralization and Local Government Program, the city prepared its municipal land management plan. Following this plan, the city made some of its land available for investment offers, which has resulted in the construction of the commercial complex. The complex has already provided jobs for 20 people during its construction. Once it is fully operational, the complex will employ approximately 30 people and bolster the city's budget with additional tax revenue.



Representatives of USAID and the Karabalta Municipality at the official opening of the one-stop shop. Photo: Urban Institute

One-Stop Simplifies Land Transactions in Karabalta City

USAID and the City of Karabalta in the north of the country have recently opened an innovative Land One-Stop Shop where residents can complete all administrative procedures for land transactions. The one-stop shop was developed with support from the USAID local governance project. While previously land-related transactions took at least 35 days and 10 visits to various government offices located all over the city, now they will take only 14 days and 2-3 visits to a single location. This change will also improve the investment climate, stimulate business development, job creation, and higher tax revenues for the city, as well as ensure a better quality of life for Karabalta residents.



Kyrgyzstan Adopts a New Law on Normative Legal Acts

The Kyrgyz Government recently adopted a new Law on Normative Legal Acts, developed with USAID support. This law establishes a clear hierarchy of normative legal acts and the extent of their legal validity; defines mechanisms for the use of the regulatory reform; restricts rule-making power to the Government, Supreme Court, President, and Parliament; defines an order for arbitration between conflicting legal acts; voids all legal acts from the Soviet period as of 2010; and creates mandatory registers for legal acts and subordinate legislation on enterprise activity. This law was developed with assistance from the USAID Business Environment Improvement project. The project will also help implement the law.

Tajikistan



Now Somoniyon residents have access to clean running water. Photo: Urban Institute

USAID Helps Tajik Township Install Potable Water System

Over 3,000 residents in the township of Somoniyon, Rudaki District are enjoying clean potable water again, thanks to USAID support. With the complete breakdown of the Soviet-era water supply system over six years ago, these villagers were forced to use water from open irrigation canals for drinking, food preparation, and all other domestic needs. Despite all attempts to clean water, the rates of gastro-enteritic diseases have sky-rocketed. Last year, USAID's Local Governance and Citizen Participation project provided a \$9,500 grant to the township for the renovation of the water system. The project also trained municipal personnel to maintain the water system and helped educate residents on water conservation, health, and hygiene. The new system provides better access to clean, safe drinking water and has significantly improved sanitation and health.

Turkmenistan



Representatives of USAID and the Turkmen government open the drop-in center. Photo: JSI

USAID Helps Open a Drop-in Center for Drug Users in Ashgabat

Recently, USAID's HIV/AIDS prevention program "CAPACITY," together with the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opened the first Center for HIV prevention among drug abusers. The Drop-In Center will support HIV prevention by providing medical and social services for drug users, and conducting educational discussions and consultations. The center will also offer those counseled the opportunity to take a shower, wash and iron clothes.



Turkmen Specialists visit the National Bank of Kazakhstan. Photo: BearingPoint

Study Tour Facilitates Country's Transition to International Accounting Standards

A group of four specialists from the Central Bank of Turkmenistan have recently spent a week studying the work of the National Bank of Kazakhstan. The visit was organized by USAID's Project for Economic Reforms to Enhance Competitiveness to facilitate Turkmenistan's transition to International Financial Reporting Standards from the Soviet-era accounting system. Through the same project, USAID has already helped open a training center that teaches international accounting standards to local specialists; provided copies of the official Russian translation of the standards for key government institutions, and is facilitating development of modern accounting curriculum at the country's educational institutions.



USAID-funded centers provide computer and internet training courses. Photo: IREX

USAID-Funded Computer Centers Offer New Opportunities

Over the past 12 months, over 26,000 Turkmen have used the USAID-funded Internet Access and Training Centers throughout Turkmenistan. The four centers, operated by IREX as part of the USAID Internet Access and Training Program, have been offering computer and internet access, as well as a variety of training courses on related topics, since 2000, and enjoy great demand among the local population. The program now hosts 230 non-commercial websites developed by its participants, while trainees are enjoying from improved job skills and employment opportunities.



A student during the Job Shadow Day at a local cheese factory. Photo: Junior Achievement

Turkmen Youths Learn About Business

In July, twenty best students of the USAID-funded Junior Achievement Program took part in the Job Shadow Day that allowed them to visit business companies and observe the work of their management. Almost 19,000 students have participated in Junior Achievement activities, funded by USAID, since 1994. These students have learned about economics and entrepreneurship through training courses, practical activities, and simulation exercises. The program has also trained nearly 500 teachers from 184 secondary and professional schools to teach courses entrepreneurship and economics. Junior Achievement programs are approved by the Turkmenistan's Ministry of Education as an official elective course and are the only market economics courses available to Turkmenistan's students.

Uzbekistan



Though a contest, USAID's project promotes new agricultural techniques. Photo: Winrock

USAID's Project Promotes Agricultural Know-How

This summer, USAID's AgLinks project became an official participant of an agricultural held in Tashkent by an influential local nongovernmental organization "Social Initiatives Support Fund". At the exhibition, women farmers from various provinces demonstrated their products: fresh and processed crops, dairy products, and handicrafts such as carpets, embroidery or shoes. Among the participants were women farmers from Payariq and Samarkand districts that had been trained by the AgLinks project in productivity-enhancing agricultural techniques. More recently, Aglinks, in cooperation with Torakorgon District government, Shreder institute, and a local processing company "Torakorgon Shirinliklari" organized an apricot contest in Namangan Province. The contest aimed to identify the best varieties of apricot in the region and share best practices on apricot growing.

For more information on USAID programs in Central Asia, please visit our website:

<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>