

Republic of Kazakhstan

**FY 2003 QUARTERLY REPORT (4th Quarter)
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**Submitted to the
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)**

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I. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

Civic Education Activities

Democracy Summer Camps

During the fourth quarter of 2003, IFES and its local partner organization, the Association of Young Leaders (AYL), completed the two scheduled Democracy Summer Camps of 2003. The first Camp of the year, which took place in Almaty, concluded as a great success with students giving high marks to the Camp and its organizers. Students demonstrated the success of the Camp by their remarkably improved scores on an exit examination each student took at the conclusion of the Camp. The Summer Camp, which focused on student volunteerism and civic responsibility, drew over seventy students from several surrounding communities. Yvgenia Kozyeva, the President of the Feminist League addressed the Camp about gender awareness and equality. Her presentation was very lively and informative for the students. Many of the girls came away from it with a new sense of empowerment and a few of the boys with new insights about women's roles in society. On the Camp's last day, a reporter came from the English language newspaper *Almaty Herald* and interviewed IFES Project Manager, Bradley Austin, several students, trainers and teachers about the Camp and its goals. An article appeared soon thereafter describing the methodology of IFES Summer Camps and detailing the proceedings. The journalist later expressed an interest in writing a story about all of IFES' work in Kazakhstan. Representatives from USAID also visited the Camp. Mike Fritz (acting Mission Director) Igor Tupitsyn (Democracy & Media program officer) and Jennifer Ragland (from USAID Washington) saw the students in their working groups talking about the thoughts on the gender presentation and future plans for the SACs.

Limpopo Sports, Motorola and Hewlett Packard provided donations and in-kind support for the Almaty Camp.

The second Summer Camp in Astana, Borovoe had seventy three participants. The SAC (Student Action Committee) in Action Day was an effective exercise in community action for the students. The students demonstrated very good presentation skills and quickly grasped the tasks at hand. The Director of the Feminist League in Kokshetau made a presentation on gender in Kazakhstan and the Local Deputy Akim (mayor) gave a presentation to the students about his role in the city and how to work with an office such as his. The students were very engaged with this interesting presentation, asking many SAC relevant questions.

In September to finish off the excellent work at the IFES Democracy Summer Camps, the staff in Almaty produced a one-page report, complete with images, program information and success stories. This report is a useful, quick, informative and engaging document that IFES can provide as a program synopsis and for public relations information.

Training and Publications

Early in the quarter, Project Manager, Austin, and staff made a presentation on IFES' civic education programs to education trainers from around Central Asia for Junior Achievement International. Twenty-seven trainers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan attended. They received informational materials about IFES' programs in Kazakhstan, digital copies of the text and manuals and contact information for the IFES offices in Almaty, Bishkek and Dushanbe.

In September 2003, IFES Kazakhstan moved forward with several printing projects, including, textbooks, Newsletters, Democracy Summer Camp reports and survey reports. Having these documents available provides IFES with valuable tools to illustrate the program work and effects. Exxon-Mobil Kazakhstan continued their generous association with IFES, donating US\$5,000 as to IFES' textbook program. These funds allow IFES to more readily provide textbooks to schools during the first part of the 2003/4 academic year.

September also saw IFES introducing a new publication to its schools and partners, "The Forum for Civic Education." IFES' initial distribution for the newsletter was to more than 250 schools, NGOs, partners and interested organizations. IFES hopes that through this publication, they will be able to communicate directly with everyone who is involved in the programs.

Survey

IFES finished the long and involved process of producing the Civic Education Course Evaluation Survey report in September with the printing and binding of the document into three languages. This in-depth report explains the utility and function of the civic education course, textbook and supporting programs. It provides quantitative and qualitative data showing that the IFES course is reaching its intended audience, inspiring critical thought and civic action among Kazakhstani youth. With the document available in English, Russian and Kazakh, it is readily available to all of IFES partners: USAID, the Ministry of Education, local and international NGOs.

Ministry of Education Strengthening Development Concerns

By invitation of the Minister of Education IFES staff attended a gathering of all international organizations working on education in Kazakhstan to discuss and comment on new Ministry's education strategy and reforms and to identify main education problems where international organization could support the Government. While the Minister himself could not attend Mr. Gamarnik, the Vice-Minister hosted the event. He provided the audience with information about the current situation for all education levels, new education reforms, the Ministry's short and long term plans (2006 and 2015) and highlighted international support. In particular he commented on IFES civic education activities, the Ministry's gratitude for the work and the need for such successful projects in Kazakhstan.

The Ministry's continued support for IFES' curriculum development project is timely, as IFES must negotiate a new Protocol of Understanding with the Ministry. At this meeting,

IFES staff submitted a draft Protocol for the Ministry's review and gave them the recently produced IFES reports.

While such vocal support from the Ministry for IFES projects is not new, their proactive gathering of all Education development concerns is and it indicates a new attitude at the Ministry. IFES will work to continue to provide needed, valued projects that have Ministry support.

Elections Issues

IFES Project Manager, Bradley Austin, participated in the CEC-OSCE-NDI Round Table discussion on Election Law. At this event, several active players in the forthcoming elections spoke and raised issues about the coming elections. In August Austin met with the Chairwoman of the Central Election Commission and later attended a pre-local government election event at her invitation. While IFES is not conducting any direct election related work at this time, IFES has received numerous requests to provide training and assistance for domestic election observers in advance of the elections. IFES is open to the possibility of conducting training for observers as well as election officials should USAID and the Embassy deem such projects valuable and a part of their strategic assistance plan.

IFES Senior Project Coordinator, Marat Bigaliev, received two proposals, one from Dos Kushim, President of the Independent Network of Domestic Monitors, called "Democracy Lessons" and a second one from Natalya Chumakova, Director of the Center for Support of Democracy (CSD), on a project called "The League of Voters". Briefly, the aim of the first proposal is to improve public awareness, develop civic society, and increase voter turnout and citizens' knowledge on voter rights through developing and broadcasting TV video spots. The second proposal from CSD is to protect voters' rights through their education and through participation of citizens as observers from social organizations at upcoming elections. This proposal included activities such as training of trainers (ToT) for training of voters in regions, ToT for observers, active participation on emending of the election legislation, work with voters and monitoring elections. Both proposals were warmly received by IFES and discussed with USAID to assess the possibility of lending support.

IFES Observes Election Programs

In September the Central Election Commission (CEC) invited IFES staff to observe the taping of a TV program devoted to introduce candidates running in the Almaty city Maslikhat local elections. This program was the first of its kind and came in advance of the local government elections in September. IFES attended the events at the invitation of CEC Chairwoman, Zagipa Balieva, who moderated the programs and received the IFES staff, listening to their constructive criticism on the event.

IFES staff also observed the Republican Network of Independent Monitors (RNIM) pre-election monitoring Press Conference for the same elections. At the event RNIM

presented their third report analyzing the political process in Kazakhstan and reporting on the elections monitoring training. In particular, they commented on their methodology for long-term election observation and the minor pre-election violations by candidates and local election bodies, mostly regarding candidate finances.

The local NGO, Center for Support of Social and Civic Development had IFES staff come to their meeting with the CEC, OSCE, NDI, political parties, local NGOs, media representatives and all 247 candidates running in Almaty. The theme of the meeting was “Election legislation violations” with a question and answer session. But mostly, the meeting was devoted to a presentation on the Almaty Election Commission report on violations. However, after the presentation the meeting turned out to be an arena for mutual confrontation of candidates, as they blamed one another of holding a “black PR” campaign in front of the media.

The important aspect of all these events is that even while IFES does not have an official elections program in Kazakhstan, the organization stays active in the field and retains its reputation as an expert in the field.

II. MATERIALS PRODUCED

- Final Report on Democracy Summer Camps, 2003.
- Final Civic Education Textbook/Course Survey report, in English, Russian and Kazakh.
- *Forum for Civic Education* newsletter.

III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

IFES/Kazakhstan completed its workplan and contractual obligations for the 2003 fiscal year by completing the last of its two Democracy Summer Camps. IFES also prepared for the new contract concluded with USAID during late summer by maintaining contact with the Ministry of Education, schools, teachers, students, and international donors. One ongoing issue is the need to raise outside funds in order to pay for printing and distribution of the Kazakh- and Russian-language textbooks and teacher’s manuals. During the summer IFES considered additional edits and improvements to its textbook, using feedback provided through a survey conducted in over 100 schools nationwide and through discussions held with students and teachers at the annual Civic Education Tournament held in late March.

The only limits to the expansion of the student civics course and textbook is funding, and the ability to print enough materials to meet the demand of schools across the country. Should the project become sustainable and eventually reach a stage in three years to be turned over to the Ministry, more schools will need to participate in the program before that time in order for it to gain the necessary momentum to propel it to greater prominence. USAID kindly awarded IFES a new, three-year Cooperative Agreement to continue its work in the area of civic education, asking IFES to focus primarily on the textbook project and opening an office in Astana to help facilitate relations with the Ministry. The funding allotted, however, fell a bit short in providing IFES with the necessary support to expand the number of participating schools to meet previously set

goals (of reaching 4000 by 2006) and to open an office in Astana. As it stands now, IFES projects being able to introduce the civics course and textbook to an additional 320 new schools before 2006, raising the total of participating schools to just under 1000. There are 8000 secondary schools in Kazakhstan. This places burdens on IFES to seek outside donations, which has its own draw on the time and resources of IFES staff in Almaty.

In order to facilitate expansion of the textbook and course project for the 2003-2004 school year and gain necessary support for the other school-based activities, IFES will be signing new Protocols of Understanding with the Ministry of Education in Astana as well as regional Education Ministries in each of the 14 Oblasts and two major cities.

IFES believes that greater emphasis should also be given on preparation for the autumn 2004 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan. While election technical assistance was not made an official part of IFES' mandate under the new 2003-2006 Cooperative Agreement, there are many forms of targeted electoral sector assistance that should be considered that can be highly effective in positively influencing the process. Such projects will be submitted by IFES and ideally considered seriously by USAID on a case-by-case basis. Given the tight electoral timeline, decisions on election assistance activities of longer duration should be made in a relatively expeditious manner. While past electoral history and experience of Kazakhstan may serve as a deterrence factor in considering new assistance activities, targeted programs in the area of electoral management, training of observers, and voter education can still contribute effectively toward the improvement of the conduct of elections and increased transparency of the process. Moreover, there exists today a relative increase in overall political activity in the country, of which independent monitoring and watchdog groups are at the center, and who must be supported in order to serve as effective counterweights to the government and CEC.