



EXTENDING THE REACH OF DEMOCRACY

FY 2004 QUARTERLY REPORT (1ST QUARTER)

Cooperative Agreement No. 119-A-00-00-00039-00

**KYRGYZSTAN
Civic Education On-Site Technical Assistance**

**Submitted to the
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
By the International Foundation for Election Systems
(IFES)**

October 1 – December 31, 2003

I. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Secondary Education Project in Kyrgyzstan

In the first quarter of FY 2004, IFES reviewed and revised part I of its civics education textbook, Citizenship, Governance and Participation, The Role of a Kyrgyz Citizen in the 21st Century, which is being used in over 200 schools across the country. IFES worked to review the textbook with a linguistic expert as well as a group of students to assess translation accurateness. IFES staff reviewed chapters which needed to be amended due to new provisions and structures introduced by the new constitution adopted in February 2003. IFES will continue with the crosschecking of all three-language translations of the civic education textbook to ensure a high standard and quality in the final translations. IFES staff have also updated the schools database showing the numbers of students in grades 9 through 11 participating in IFES' civic education course, and for all other schools including vocational schools; this research was used as a planning tool for textbook printing and teacher training.

During this quarter IFES Kyrgyzstan selected and trained new teacher-trainers, three trainers were from the Northern and four trainers in the Southern part of the country. They will be assisting IFES to conduct teacher trainings in 2004.

IFES modified and updated the textbook distribution formula. The new formula allows schools with up to 30 students in 10th grade to be provided with books for each student (i.e. 100%); however schools with larger classes will be averaging at approximately 70% of students receiving textbooks.

To date IFES has provided 4266 copies of the textbook in the Kyrgyz language, 1164 in the Russian language, and 424 in the Uzbek language. In addition to schools, textbooks have been provided to some international and domestic partners including the NDI resource centers, ABA\CEELI support groups, Counterpart resource centers, and etc. Currently IFES Kyrgyzstan has 714 textbooks in Kyrgyz and 145 Russian available in stock, but none in the Uzbek language.

Textbook Printing

IFES presented a proposal and supporting documents to the 2nd secretary of the Japanese Embassy, Hideto Watanabe, and had further discussions regarding the IFES application to their GPP fund for a grant to fund the printing of textbooks. IFES applied for the full grant of \$24,000, and is awaiting a decision from the Japanese ambassador. In addition, IFES submitted funding requests to other organizations including, the embassies of Germany and New Zealand, the OSCE, and the State Department.

Student Action Committees and Student Local Government Days

During the first quarter, the primary student activity IFES undertook was Student Action Committee trainings and Student Local Government Days.

The Student Action Committee (SAC) program aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Build bridges of partnerships with different organizations, such as local governmental bodies, NGOs, and public organizations.
- Students realize the importance of socially active positions, while participating in socially important decision making.
- Learning and putting the basics of democracy into practice.
- Help students to research their local community and its problems.

- Having gained practical skills in joint team activities, SAC participants work on community problems.

IFES conducted one SAC training for senior students from secondary schools in Bishkek and Chui Oblast during the first quarter. The training was held in the city of Bishkek. A total of 28 students and 7 teachers attended the program. The SAC training is a prelude to students forming groups, under the tutelage of teacher-mentors, to work together on solving schools and community problems.

IFES provided training in specific topics such as fundraising, PR and information collection and analysis. Participants of the SAC training identified the following list of topics or rather, a list of issues that students consider to be urgent and more importantly, which the students think they will be able to tackle themselves:

- Extortion at schools
- Fights between students in schools
- Poor academic preparation of teachers who teach lessons
- Lack of academic materials and supplies in schools

At the end of the training program, students developed the following topics they wanted to see resolved by their own efforts:

- Identify a list of local issues that existed in their respective schools
- Select two urgent issues with regard to the life in the students' respective schools, and
- Develop an action plan so these issues could be tackled.

IFES also conducted the first Student Local Government Day under the new corporative agreement in Talas. Ten students, five teachers and five local officials took part in this event.

IFES believes these projects strongly support the USAID objective of "Strengthened democratic culture among citizens and target institutions" as it builds on the IFES civics education courses and textbooks. The workshop trainings have proven to be very useful in encouraging young people to take a greater interest in their community and their government through hands-on exposure to democracy activism. Such activities promote USAID Intermediate Results of "Increased availability of information on civic rights and domestic public issues as well as enhanced opportunities for citizen participation in governance" by immediately activating student interest in Kyrgyzstan's evolving democratic institutions and alerting them to continuing problems as well as the solutions to current crises such as elections law and procedural reform and acquaintance with international standards for these activities.

Elections in Kyrgyzstan

Continuing through to the end of December, IFES contributed ideas for further amendments to the draft election code. ODIHR also presented their extensive and well written report and recommendations on the draft election code proposals. IFES held further discussions with the CEC, as part of its regular contract with that governmental body, and held five technical trainings after official business hours and on weekends for parliamentary staff, deputies and CEC members to discuss the elements of the new provisions and procedures at local elections and debate international election standards. All information gained from this event was shared with the U.S. Embassy as per their request.

The new code is expected to introduce improved new provisions including a new composition of the Precinct Electoral Commissions (PECs), now to comprise one third memberships from Political parties, NGOs and the balance from the executive branch provided by the CEC. PECs are currently fully comprised of government officials, so this reform is welcome and may create a considerable difference in the management of polling places.

II. MATERIALS PRODUCED

- Teachers' Guide in Kyrgyz language – 50 copies
- Teachers' Guide in Russian language – 27 copies
- Teachers' Newsletter insert included in *Kut Bilim*, Kyrgyz government education newspaper (*this publication is provided by Kut Bilim in three languages, Russian, Kyrgyz and Uzbek*).

III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Textbook Printing

IFES encountered several problems with the Al-Salam printers in printing the Kyrgyz and Uzbek language versions of the books as their system did not recognize some of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek fonts. Subsequently IFES had to make changes to the respective fonts. Secondly, to overcome Al-Salam's computer problems, IFES awaited technical repairs and changes that were made necessary following the omission of the printing house source data on the Russian- and Kyrgyz-language textbooks. Al-Salam re-printed these pages at their own cost; however, IFES has decided the best way to overcome some of these technical and managerial problems was to undertake the preparation of the textbooks in the format used by the publishing house. IFES staff are now learning and preparing the next version of the textbook in the "InDesign" program used by the printing house.

Elections Code Reform

Following the successful outcome of negotiations between the government and opposition, a new draft of the elections code was prepared and submitted to the parliament. IFES has maintained contact with all stakeholders, with Project Manager Ched Flego conducting meetings during off-hours and on weekends. IFES currently is awaiting translation of the changes made by the parliament and will review the changes and discuss the new procedures with respective deputies and the CEC. Although in the final elections code the parliament appears to have taken note of important recommendations in the ODIHR report and recommendations, IFES remains concerned with important human rights violations included in the code.

IFES remains of the view that this new code contains important advancements in election processes but we also remain concerned that the new code will further restrict freedom of speech, in particular the foreign media circulating in the country and restrictions of the activities of the NGO sector as well as introducing new restrictions on political party activity.