



**FY 2004 QUARTERLY REPORT (2ND QUARTER)**

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

**REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

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

**January 1 – March 31, 2004**

## **I. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **General**

IFES-Kazakhstan embarked on a new programmatic strategy to maximize gender equality and afford students an equal chance at participating in IFES-sponsored activities. During the quarter, IFES worked to identify and address any gender imbalances within its school-related activities as well as examine ways in which it can increase and enhance the participation of girls. IFES found it could increase the quality of girls' experiences in Student Local Government Days by working with decision-making officials to grant more equal access to girls as well as boys. During an observation of the Student Local Government Day project, IFES discovered that female students are often sent to lower-level administrative offices rather than to the offices of high level officials. Since a high level official usually accepts two students into his/her office, IFES mandated that the team should consist of one boy and girl each. The pairing afforded girls equal opportunities to meet higher-ranking officials and learn the duties and responsibilities of those serving in the highest echelon of local government. Once female officials learned of the gender disparity in placement among students during the SLGD, they advocated having girls be given an equal place when pairing was decided upon. The experience taught the girls that they need to stand up for their rights, and proved to the local officials that girls are every bit as engaged and interested in matters of local government, if not more so, than their male counterparts.

### **Civic Education Activities**

#### *IFES Hosts State Department Delegation*

In January, IFES-Kazakhstan Project Manager Bradley Austin escorted a delegation representing various U.S. Government Agencies to a school in Taldy-Kurghon participating in the IFES' civic education course and textbook project. The American guests sat in on a class studying a lesson on human rights and met the students involved in a Student Action Committee project. State Department Coordinator for US Assistance to Europe and Eurasia Ambassador Carlos Pasqual agreed to conduct a twenty-minute lesson on the relationship between democracy, rights, and the responsibility of the government to observe and ensure those rights. Appreciating the lecture by Ambassador Pasqual, the SAC Student President approached the delegation and gave an impassioned speech on the merits of a course on civics, such as the one being piloted by IFES in his and 667 schools throughout the country during the 2003-04 school year. Students completed three-fourths of the course during this Quarter and will finish all lessons when the school year ends in May.

IFES routinely visited its participating schools throughout the second quarter as part of its emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. Although the schools are spread out across the vast territory of Kazakhstan, IFES staff and regional coordinators dropped in on schools to see first-hand how the civics course was being conducted and take note of any

problems, either in the students' understanding of the textbook or the approach taken by teachers to teaching each lesson. All teachers participated in a teacher-training seminar prior to beginning the course, and all understand their accountability before the students to teach the civics course based on the principle of interactive classroom management.

#### *Teacher Training Partnership*

During the Second Quarter IFES reached out to local and international organizations supporting education projects in Kazakhstan to build partnerships and to increase the effectiveness of IFES' civic education program. In January, one such partnership with AED and the Eurasia Foundation's Community Action Investment Project (CAIP) in South Kazakhstan culminated in a successful teacher-training program for schoolteachers in Shymkent. This event exposed 33 teachers, who mainly came from rural areas, to IFES' interactive classroom management methodology, Student Action Committees, and the Student Local Government Day project. The partnership in training afforded each organization the opportunity to employ best practices based on lessons learned and share successful approaches employed in teaching civic education in Kazakhstan. IFES regional coordinators will maintain contact with the teachers throughout the remainder of the school year to provide additional support and follow-up materials.

IFES also held two additional teacher-training sessions in the cities of Karaganda and Aktobe in February. Over forty teachers received training in how to instruct the IFES civics textbook, with the help of a teachers' manual, and how to integrate the material into the existing curriculum. Each teacher was provided with sufficient quantities of the IFES textbook, in either Russian or Kazakh, to take back to their students.

#### *Civics Education Course and Textbook*

During Second Quarter, IFES embarked on a project to update the Civics Education textbook, An Introduction to Civic Education, and to enhance its overall visual appeal. IFES solicited assistance to edit and update the civic education textbook from both local Kazakhstani experts and the students using the books in school. This project, which will continue throughout the remainder of the school year, employs a team of editors who will examine each chapter methodically and make recommendations for improvement.

IFES received illustration submissions from students for possible inclusion in future editions in order to augment the visual appeal of the text. IFES also asked students using the textbook in the IFES pilot schools to provide comments and criticisms. Student involvement and contribution provides a sense of ownership in the programs while helping the editorial team improve the textbook. This is particularly valuable because several terms and concepts in the Kazakh language are still fairly new, and Kazakh-speaking students sometimes find certain chapters and concepts more difficult to comprehend than others. Thus, student involvement in the editing process enables IFES to identify the concepts most difficult to grasp.

#### *National Civics Tournament*

In March, IFES took a major step forward in addressing the Kazakh language aspect of its civic education work. For the first time, IFES conducted parallel Kazakh- and

Russian-language Civics Tournaments for students from around the country. Students competed for two days in a variety of contests that tested their knowledge of democracy based on lessons from the IFES textbook and civics course learned so far during the current school year. Rather than only testing individual knowledge, the tournaments this year included events that stressed teamwork and focused on creative thinking and problem solving. This included a role-playing electioneering event and group work on media and human rights issues.

Pairs of students, one Kazakh speaking and the other Russian, represented each of Kazakhstan's sixteen Oblasts and Oblast-level cities. Sixteen students qualified for each of the tournaments by winning their city or Oblast-level competition. Conducting a tournament in the Kazakh language afforded Kazakh-speaking students the same opportunities to compete and demonstrate their knowledge and skills as it does Russian-speaking students. In the past, IFES conducted primarily Russian-speaking Civics Tournaments and provided translation into Kazakh for Kazakh-speakers.

Unlike in previous years, all students competing in the tournaments participated in all the activities of the two-day event rather than being progressively disqualified. This allowed them to present the individual civics projects they conducted in their communities on an equal basis. Student presentations ranged from those addressing ecological problems to others raising issues in contemporary international affairs; students employed all manner of visual aids, from 'old fashioned' posters to modern PowerPoint presentations.

USAID and Ministry of Education representatives in attendance expressed their enthusiasm for the tournament. Mr. Mark Asquino, the U.S. Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, awarded prizes and met with the top students. ExxonMobil Corporation made the Kazakh language event possible with a generous donation, while Motorola provided prizes that reflected the winning students' efforts and achievements.

IFES has held civics tournaments for students from participating pilot schools every year since 1999.

#### *Ministry of Education Reiterates Strong Support for IFES Programs*

After fruitful negotiations with the Ministry of Education, IFES anticipates the continuation of a close and cooperative working relationship. A primary IFES goal concerns the inclusion into the national curriculum of the IFES-designed civic education course as a separate course for all students in secondary schools of the republic, though such a commitment takes time to develop and discuss. Before the recent series of negotiations, IFES had expected that at best, the civic education course would become part of another course, such as the Soviet-era "Man in Society," Kazakh History or even Law.

The Ministry's support of IFES was enhanced greatly after a Ministry official attended the National Civics Tournament, which showcased top students from the civic education program. Impressed with the performance of students participating in the IFES pilot schools as well as the level of student and teacher support, the official was eager to

expand cooperation with IFES and increase the Ministry's role in and ownership of the project. The official told IFES staff that she would brief the Minister on the success of the Tournament and the IFES course. Furthermore, she took copies of the Protocol of Understanding that IFES signed back to Astana with her, saying that she would present them to the Minister with the recommendation to sign immediately. The Protocol calls for expanded IFES-Ministry cooperation in all spheres of civic education, with the goal of institutionalizing the IFES-designed civics course into the national curriculum and graduating the course and related extracurricular activities to sustainability by 2006. The official even volunteered office space in the local Education Department to IFES, which would further enhance the partnership between the two institutions and allow for a more day-to-day involvement of the Ministry in IFES' projects.

### *Student Action Committees*

During the Second Quarter, IFES conducted trainings for the Student Action Committee (SAC) project in Petropavlovsk, located in North Kazakhstan Oblast. The local Teacher's Institute, twenty-four students and seven teachers from eight different schools participated in the two-day training event. The training began with a discussion of program concepts and theory, concluding with an overview of the ideas and goals of SACs. Participants took part in role-playing games to better understand the role and practical work of the SACs. One such exercise involved a make-believe city with real problems presented to the students. Adult participants play-acting as city officials, businessmen, other authority figures or pensioners, helped or 'hindered' the students efforts in tackling these problems. This exercise demonstrated to the participants the myriad of obstacles and possibilities the SACs must consider as they strive to address local issues in their community and school. The SAC program continues to expand and reach new communities since its inception in 2000.

## **Elections Issues**

### *Election Assistance Activities on the Horizon*

Legislative proposals on amending the election law passed through the Majilis in March and were signed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April. Although the law still had several shortcomings, it does, for the first time, allow for diversity in the composition of local election commissions based on party affiliation. In addition, the Central Election Commission (CEC) has indicated its intention to introduce a partial system of electronic voting for the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for October 2004. Both initiatives will require significant training for all stakeholders, and IFES sent a concept paper on these and other possible electoral assistance activities to the State Department and USAID in anticipation of a decision on U.S. electoral strategy in Kazakhstan. IFES participated with colleagues from its other offices in an all-region elections assistance discussion in February and presented its views on priorities for election technical and political party development assistance.

Also in February, IFES received a letter from the CEC requesting specific assistance in advance of the October elections to the Majilis. In addition to a request to send

observers, the CEC asked for support in training local election commissions, promoting voter awareness, and assisting in the implementation of new, experimental voting technology. At the request of the CEC, IFES sent a letter on its current programs and a capabilities statement on IFES capacity to carry out a variety of technical assistance projects. IFES made it clear that any and all assistance efforts would be based solely on receiving support and funding from USAID and the U.S. Embassy/Almaty. Working through USAID and the Embassy, IFES stands ready to assist the CEC, political parties, NGOs and other, independent actors should a viable opportunity present itself and the “enabling environment” prove conducive.

## **II. MATERIALS PRODUCED**

- 2004 All-Republic Civics Tournament Report (March)
- 2004 Tournament Glossy Reports in Russian and English (March)
- Tournament Brochures in English, Kazakh and Russian (March)
- Student Action Committee Training Report (March)
- SAC training report for Petropavlovsk (February)
- Shymkent Teacher Training Report (January)
- Revised Student Action Committee Manual, Kazakh language version (January)

## **III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**

IFES-Kazakhstan Chief of Party Bradley Austin completed his tour of duty with IFES and will return to IFES-Washington early in April. Mr. Austin served his second stint as the IFES Chief of Party in Almaty, beginning his tenure in 2001. During his time in country, he has overseen the growth of the IFES civics textbook and course project from 34 schools to 667. His efforts have also led to an exponential growth in the SAC and SLGD projects, while setting a standard for Democracy Summer Camps emulated by IFES in other republics. Mr. Austin was able to successfully raise funds from international donors and private corporations to print textbooks for schools and expand the IFES civics tournament project. As the Second Quarter drew to a close, IFES was in the process of identifying Mr. Austin’s replacement.

Efforts to identify funding for the printing of textbooks continued during the Quarter. Though due not to lack of effort, IFES struggled to raise sufficient funds for the printing of enough books in Russian and Kazakh to cover the growing list of participating schools throughout the country. IFES received funding through USAID to provide for a nominal printing of books during the current school year, but was nonetheless compelled to search for additional funding to meet demand and expectations. Without new partners, grants or donations, IFES’ cornerstone project, the textbook “An Introduction to Civics Education” and accompanying course, will have a tough time meeting minimum quotas, let alone the kind of volume that is expected to create a sustainable momentum for the future of the program.

IFES received a severe critique on of its textbook from Dr. Evgyeni Zhovtis, a leading Kazakh Human Rights Activist. Zhovtis challenged the IFES approach to teaching law

and human rights, and made suggestions on how to better present those concepts. Much of the critique had to do with the level of language in the textbook, which he viewed as too complex in areas for students studying in 10th and 11th grades. Dr. Zhovtis also provided comments critical of the design and outlay of the book. IFES thanked Dr. Zhovtis for his comments and indicated that it strives to improve the quality of the book every year thanks to the feedback from students, teachers, and practitioners.