



EXTENDING THE REACH OF DEMOCRACY

FY 2004 QUARTERLY REPORT (2ND QUARTER)

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KYRGYZSTAN

Civic Education On-Site Technical Assistance

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

Secondary Education Project in Kyrgyzstan

In the second quarter, IFES has been prevented from printing its textbook by a new Ministry of Education ruling that states that all textbooks must be formatted in particular ways. Compliance with the new ruling would dramatically reduce the effectiveness of the course. USAID has supported IFES to seek an exemption from the new rules. At the end of the quarter, IFES had gained the verbal agreement of the Ministry to be exempted from the new rules prior to the departure of the former Minister. IFES is currently negotiating with the new Minister to gain the same exemption.

IFES has continued its review of the textbooks, incorporating additional improvements and updates. The improvements include providing better vocabulary support for the Kyrgyz version as many words relating to governance are known in only Russian or not known at all. IFES also has added more Kyrgyz specific examples and improved the general graphic layout using "In Design" and updated sections to reflect recent legislative changes. Finally, IFES has been reviewing the 2nd volume so it can also be fully distributed before the end of 2005.

IFES continued to visit more schools, gaining further proof of the popularity and success of the project. IFES also gained additional recommendations from students on how to further improve the text. All these recommendations have been implemented in the Russian edition, which has been finalized and is ready to print. Work on the Kyrgyz final edition is also nearly complete.

The focus of the latest site visits was to examine what study habits students apply and how could IFES better assist teachers with developing them. The visits clearly demonstrated that students like these books and that, with experience, teachers are showing mastery of IFES' teaching techniques. Students are demonstrating proactive study habits and considerable understanding of the material. From one school, the chapter the students liked the best was one of the most complex ones (Local Government) for the best reason possible – "We want to get involved!"

Some of the visits have been to schools which started piloting nearly three years ago and IFES is seeing that the teachers have successfully developed and enhanced their skills in teaching in a participatory manner. Students in one of these schools commented – "IFES civics course is the 'thinking' class." The U.S. Embassy also had a chance to visit one school in a remote area to watch an IFES civic education class. In addition to the school visits, IFES has been running mini teacher conferences, traveling and meeting groups of teachers in very remote rural locations. These events are often the only form of professional development teachers can get from any organization.

IFES continued producing the monthly newsletter which is incorporated into the State Education Newspaper Kut Bilim Sabak. Because of the high level of interest from teachers and from the USAID Education Reform project (PEAKS) in IFES teacher classroom management and evaluation sections of the teacher guide, IFES has been working on setting this up as a stand alone publication that we hope will go to all teachers if funding can be secured.

Textbook Printing

During this quarter, IFES secured commitments of 100,000 euros from the OSCE, six million yen (approx. USD 50,000) from the Japanese Embassy in Bishkek and USD

10,000 from the New Zealand embassy in Moscow in additional funding for the printing of the textbook. These commitments are nearly enough to fund the printing of both volumes and the teacher guides for all the schools in the country. IFES is still seeking support for the cost of the associated teacher training, once the distribution of books begins.

Student Activities

During the second quarter, IFES continued to expand its Student Action Committee trainings. IFES conducted another SAC training for senior students from secondary schools in Issyk-Kul, Osh and Batken Oblasts. One training session was held in the city of Karakol and another three were held in Osh. A total of 165 students and 30 teachers attended the program. Since January 16, SACs are known to have been formed as a result of this training and IFES staff is continuing to contact schools as we suspect more have been formed. IFES is now introducing a SAC registration form that we will ask newly formed SACS to fill in and send to us once they have returned to their school.

In cooperation with CAIP/ACDIVOCA, IFES arranged and conducted SAC training sessions not only for students from the south of Kyrgyzstan, but also for the students of the south of Kazakhstan. Involvement of participants from different countries provided training sessions with broader opportunities to apply SAC program for a larger and more diverse group of participants. Students were given the opportunity to exchange experience and skills as well as different approaches to resolution of issues related to the life of their respective communities. Conducting regional training sessions proved to be useful and successful and now IFES is planning to conduct such activities in the future with involvement of students from Kazakhstan as well. As a next step, IFES, jointly with CAIP/ACDIVOCA, plans to conduct a SAC forum with financial support from AED involving students from different regions.

IFES organized an initial Student Local Government Day (SLGD) project in Talas. Ten students, five teachers, and five local officials participated in this event. During the SLGD, students learned about the role, structure and importance of local government. This experience allowed young people to gain access to local governmental officials, ask questions, and to better comprehend functions of their local government with the hope that they will seek greater transparency from their representatives and possibly themselves seek elected office in the future.

In March, deputies of the parliament and officials from the Kyrgyz Central Elections Commission acted as hosts for the students.

Ms. Nina Muhina, head of the CEC information department, and Ms. Dinara Moldosheva, head of the election technologies department, worked with four students. They were shown around the three departments of the CEC and then met with the Chairman, Mr. Imanbaev. When asked about separation of powers, Mr. Imanbaev explained why he thought the CEC needs to be separate from the state apparatus. Students asked what role youth have played in elections compared to the Soviet period. Mr. Imanbaev said that due to the busy life of students they seem to be less interested and so participate less in the electoral processes. Another student asked about the quality of deputies and Mr. Imanbaev said that he was concerned by the quality of those elected and by what motivated people to vote for them.

Students then went with Ms. Moldosheva and viewed the draft of a training video that is being prepared for the Precinct Election Commissions.

Six more students worked with officials of the support department of the Kyrgyz Parliament. Nurjan Karmanbekovna, head of Inter Parliamentary relations took them around parliament and described her own role. The students also attended the parliament meeting where ecological problems and village cooperatives were discussed. Students commented that the discussion and argument was at a very serious level.

Elections in Kyrgyzstan

In January, a new election code was adopted. It is a clear improvement over the previous code but is flawed in a number of areas, often due to its ambiguity.

During the last quarter, IFES Kyrgyzstan staff attended two Election Project Coordination Meetings with UNDP and the OSCE as well as participating in a regional USAID roundtable on elections.

IFES applied an innovative approach to setting up a series of simulations of polling procedures. These simulations were attended by the CEC staff from all over the country, as well as by the political parties and civil society groups. During the simulation, the CEC representatives were cast as observers and the civil society and political party activists were election commission staff. Not surprisingly many of the CEC staff commented that areas of the code needed clarifying and in some notable cases they agreed that certain procedures needed revision. For example, the CEC Chairman stated that he would issue an order that would allow observers to sit at the table with the precinct commission staff during the counting of ballots.

Recognizing that limited funds are available, IFES and USAID are currently looking at how these trainings could be extended and how the simulation could be used to generate video footage for both training and voter education purposes.

During this reporting period, IFES continued to meet with its partners, representatives of the government and the opposition in evaluating the current political climate.

II. MATERIALS PRODUCED

- Revision to Russian and Kyrgyz Teachers' Guide and Students Textbooks
- Teachers' Newsletter insert included in Kut Bilim Sabak, Kyrgyz government education newspaper (*this publication is provided by Kut Bilim in three languages, Russian, Kyrgyz and Uzbek*).
- Train the Trainers Module for the CEC on the New Election Code

III. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Textbook Printing

The greatest problem has been the delay in getting Ministry of Education approval for the current textbook format. Although it may seem expedient to just abide by the newly adopted standard, it is very likely that it could be changed again and furthermore few in the Ministry really seem committed to it. However, to ignore the rule at this stage would seem highly risky. Additionally, donors expect some assurance that the textbooks will not be rejected due to format issues after the printing is completed.

Staffing

Simon Jenkins has been Acting Country Director with the temporary departure of Chedomir Flego, the Country Program Director. Mr. Flego has been working for the UNDP in Georgia on the parliamentary elections.

Elections Project Funding

One of the challenges IFES currently faces is the uncertainty over the funding of more election related projects with the beginning of the election cycle in less than eight months. This creates difficulties in resource planning and budgeting. In the last quarter, IFES has sought to develop innovative project proposals which are gaining the interest of the prospective donors.