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## International Research & Exchanges Board



Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report  
for the period  
June 2007 – December 2008

## Internet Access and Training Program

**REE-A-00-07-00037-00**

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this evaluation period, the Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) successfully employed information and communication for development (ICT4D) tools to promote democratic reform and localized development in host countries throughout Eurasia. As part of its monitoring and evaluation efforts, IATP conducted extensive online surveys and in-depth focus group discussions, soliciting responses from users and trainees from across the region. According to these efforts' results, IATP met or exceeded nearly all of the deliverables set out in the Year One Workplan.

IATP outreach and empowerment efforts pertaining to Objective 1 continue to succeed. During the reporting period, IATP centers logged nearly **485,000** visits from over **72,000** individuals. Of those people, almost **30,000** were new users, and a slightly larger number also participated in IATP's **5,700** technical training sessions. Internet access proved to be IATP's most popular service, used by **96%** of all IATP users, **91%** of whom reported satisfaction with the service. Internet access was applied by users in a variety of ways, chief among them education, professional development, correspondence, and keeping abreast of news. One hundred percent of those surveyed described the IATP trainings they attended as useful. In addition to its diverse services, IATP also reached out to an array of public, private, and civil society sector representatives. The program provided training to **2,500** local government representatives, **1,600** librarians, **600** NGO officials, **600** entrepreneurs, and **170** members of the media.

In accordance with Objective 2, IATP efforts advanced civil society networks in Eurasia. **Sixteen hundred** citizens participated in IATP's online events that linked rural communities, professional specialists, and civil society activists from different countries. Notably, the program succeeded in extending Web 2.0 training as one of its core competencies, significantly outpacing all Objective 3 targets in bringing local content from journalists, activists, experts, and governments online. Achievements toward this end include the launching of 546 new locally-focused Web resources, including 128 blogs, 23 wikis, and 40 local government sites. Cooperation with USAID-funded projects was rigorous during the reporting period. These initiatives promoting e-government, human and labor rights, professional media, education, medicine, agriculture, benefited from IATP expertise in online publication, distance learning, website development, and internet research.

Response to IATP's core services—internet access, technical training, informational events, and civil society networking support—has been strong. IATP's survey and focus group results indicate a satisfied or more than satisfied user base. IATP staff should, however, continue to be vigilant of new opportunities—offering new courses in response to user interests, increasing internet speed, and, most importantly, expanding services to individuals within target populations. This evaluation found receptive audiences, community needs, and strong prospects for ICT4D programming in IATP host countries. Survey results indicate that IATP has positively affected these Eurasian nations' social, economic, and political development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) uses information access to link local communities with a larger world and technology to support local initiatives. IATP applies this synergy of access, technology, and relevant training to advance community development in its host countries. The program provides the resources and training for citizens to use technological tools that facilitate information exchanges, build associations, and create change in their communities and societies.

In its first year of operation, the USAID-funded IATP network consisted of 58 IATP-administered and more than 40 independently-administered internet centers (IICs) in ten countries. By the end of that first year, IATP became an **eight-country network of 46 IATP-administered centers and more than 60 IICs**. The IICs, housed in local partners such as universities, libraries, and NGOs, provide free walk-in internet access for about 25 hours a week in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. For 15 or more additional hours per week, these centers provide free courses on topics ranging from computer basics to Web design, serving targeted institutions and demographic groups. Online meetings, community events, and partnership initiatives are also planned during this time. In this way, IATP connects experts, activists, academics, and professionals by providing innovative forums for the exchange of creative ideas, opinions, and cultural perspectives.

This IATP Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report evaluates the following three program objectives:

1. Citizens are empowered to utilize free access to information to promote democratic reform.
2. Civil society representatives are networked with local, regional, and international partners and resources.
3. Targeted development projects are supported through trainings of select community members in the use of vanguard technologies and solutions.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Tools of Evaluation

Evaluation of the first year of the program implementation was based on several key tools that assessed the fulfillment of IATP objectives based upon quantitative and qualitative research:

#### *Statistics*

Activity logs are a monitoring tool that aid statistical data collection, reflecting the outputs and outcomes of program activities throughout the countries of operation. Each IATP center keeps an attendance sheet of all those accessing the internet and attending training sessions and networking events. This record includes a short description of the training or event's content and each of its participants—their name, profession, organizational affiliation, gender, age, and previous IATP experiences.

Statistical data are kept by IATP management, which registers the quantitative outputs and outcomes of IATP activities, such as the number of websites, wiki resources and blogs created by IATP users after training, and the number and attendance levels of online events.

#### *Online surveys*

IATP online surveys provide another mechanism for assessing program activities. These surveys include four basic questionnaires on IATP users, training, forums, and Web content development. They provide quantitative data indicative of program outcomes for each IATP center. The surveys are conducted online, allowing IATP users to submit information privately and at their convenience.

After IATP's first year in operation, the program conducted an overall monitoring and evaluation process. IATP users visiting centers in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine were asked to take part in online surveys.

- IATP carried out its Users Online Survey in September 2008, seeking IATP users' needs, opinions, and comments regarding the quality of center services. It also explored information access opportunities in rural regions and sought information on user successes and impacts made possible by center technical resources.
- IATP conducted its Trainees Online Survey in November 2008, assessing trainee perspectives on the quality of IATP technical training, how it contributed to their personal and professional development, and to what extent applying the knowledge and skills they acquired did or could promote democratic and civil society development.
- IATP conducted its Forum Online Survey in December 2008, evaluating the effectiveness of IATP efforts in establishing links between Eurasian specialists and experts. It also investigated the impact of IATP-provided communication and networking opportunities.
- IATP carried out its Web Content Online Survey in January 2009, exploring IATP's contribution to locally-relevant Web content.

#### *Focus group discussions*

Focus group discussions collect qualitative data reflective of IATP users' ideas, opinions and success stories. This tool allows IATP to assess program outcomes and impacts in relation to specific IATP centers.

Thus far, focus group discussions have been carried out in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Tajikistan's were carried out in October 2008, soliciting the opinions of Dushanbe, Kulyab, and Garm residents. IATP conducted Turkmenistan's focus groups in November and December 2008, drawing participants from Ashgabat, Balkanabat, and Turkmenabat. Two to three more focus group discussions in other host countries are planned for the spring of 2009.

## **IATP Services Evaluated**

**Internet Access** – Free computer and internet access available at IATP centers help bridge the digital divide and provide new sources of information and knowledge.

According to the IATP Users Online Survey, internet access is the most popular IATP service, used by 96% of IATP users (616 out of 642). Eighty-six percent of those (554 respondents) indicated that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with this service. According to the survey, most of the respondents use the internet at the IATP centers for reasons of personal interest (73%), education (62%) and professional development (54%). Seventy-four percent of respondents use the internet for e-mail correspondence. Fifty-seven

percent of IATP users also recognize the internet's capacity as a news source while another 18% view the internet as a tool for advancing their careers.

**User survey data, figure 1**

What do you use the internet for?	Search for professional information	Search for educational information	News
Azerbaijan	43%	39%	43%
Georgia	27%	36%	48%
Moldova	57%	68%	55%
Tajikistan	46%	49%	44%
Turkmenistan	22%	64%	48%
Ukraine	91%	91%	79%

**Technical Training** – IATP’s catalogue of over a dozen training modules, including basic computer literacy, Web design, internet research, blogging, and wiki creation, is tailored to meet the institutional needs of those attending each session. Technical training enjoys considerable popularity among IATP users. Sixty-nine percent of IATP users surveyed (446 respondents out of 642 surveyed) participated in technical training at least once. Ninety percent of those reported satisfaction or high satisfaction with the training. Based on the IATP Trainees Online Survey, all of those surveyed (376 respondents) found technical training either useful or very useful. Nearly all, 97%, found IATP training materials effective and in line with their personal and professional needs.

*100% of those surveyed described the IATP training sessions they attended as useful.*

**Web Content Development** – Through IATP, civil society organizations and individuals have created websites and resources after completing IATP courses. New Web resources increase local-language content, making the internet more accessible and useful to local users. According to the IATP Users Online Survey, 50% of IATP users (324 out of 642) were involved in IATP activities to develop local Web content; 81% of those (262 respondents) found the experience satisfactory or highly satisfactory.

**Online Forums** – IATP hosts online discussions on a variety of social, professional and public issues, from treating tuberculosis to protecting the environment. The online format allows individuals to connect and share ideas with others who may live in different regions or countries. In particular, these efforts help residents of rural areas access information resources and expertise they may have otherwise struggled to find. Based on the IATP Users Online Survey, 59% of IATP users (377 out of 642) participated in IATP-organized online events, with 83% of them (320) ranking the events highly or very highly useful. Twenty-seven percent of surveyed IATP users participate in an IATP online forums one or more times per month.

**Community Events** – Citizens use IATP centers as meeting places to organize community initiatives. They also employ IATP-provided technology and expertise to strengthen these projects. According to the IATP Users Online Survey, 60% of the surveyed users (384 out of 642) had participated in IATP organized community events and 89% of those (340 respondents) said they were satisfied or highly satisfied.

# IV. OBJECTIVE 1: Citizens are Empowered to Utilize Free Access to Information to Promote Democratic Reform

During the reporting period IATP continued to reach out to those civil society representatives promoting democratic reform in IATP host countries. IATP provided these individuals with free computer training, enabling them to use ICT technologies in their efforts towards democratic change.

*The program provided training to 2,500 local government representatives, 1,600 librarians, 600 NGO officials, 600 entrepreneurs, and 170 members of the media.*

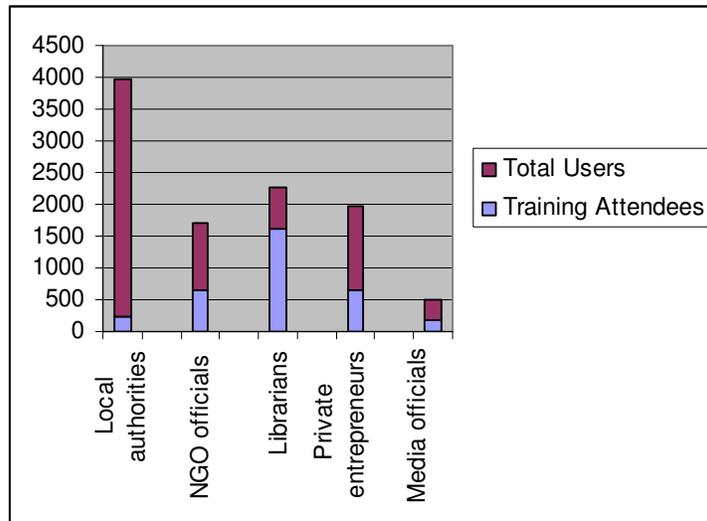
## A. Outputs and Target Groups

Target groups for this objective were identified as both those looking to access information and those working to disseminate it. During the reporting period, IATP planned to empower and provide access to the following target groups:

- 3,500 local government representatives
- 2,000 NGO representatives
- 2,000 librarians
- 1,000 entrepreneurs
- 500 media representatives

**Objective 1 Outputs:** IATP met or exceeded four of five targeted outcomes for Objective 1.

- 3,976 local government representatives used IATP, with 2491 completing training
- 1,692 NGO officials used IATP services, with 656 completing training
- 2,266 librarians used IATP services, with 1607 completing training
- 1,964 private entrepreneurs used IATP services, with 643 completing training
- 506 media officials used IATP services, with 173 completing training



### **Government representatives**

Cooperation with local governments enables officials to respond better to citizen needs and increase government transparency. Beginning in June 2007, 3,976 local government representatives used IATP's facilities and 2,491 completed IATP technical training. These individuals are now better equipped to share information about government activities and respond to inquiries concerning them.

### **NGO officials**

IATP equipped NGO officials with the knowledge and tools to elicit citizen opinions, promote their initiatives, and push them to achieve common goals. During the reporting period, 1,692 NGO officials visited IATP centers and 656 of them participated in IATP training.

### **Media workers**

As promoters of information access and democratic change, journalists are a key target demographic for IATP services and training. During this reporting period, 506 media representatives visited IATP centers throughout Eurasia and 173 participated in IATP-organized technical training.

### **Teachers and Librarians**

IATP recognizes teachers and librarians as vital sources of information and change in their communities. Thanks to IATP outreach efforts, 5,691 teachers and 2,266 librarians used IATP center facilities for professional development and information access. Another 2,052 teachers and 1,607 librarians received IATP training.

### **Entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurs are an important vehicle of change, supporting openness, reform, and accountability in the community. In addition, these individuals are critical agents of economic growth and thus citizen empowerment. Between June 2007 and December 2008, 1,964 private entrepreneurs in all countries of IATP operation accessed IATP center resources while 643 attended IATP training.

## **B. Analysis of Objective 1 Impact**

IATP registered the following output totals during the reporting period across its host countries:

- 72,560 unique users visited IATP centers 484,005 times;
- 29,523 new users were among those visitors, beginning their relationships with IATP;
- 30,730 IATP users participated in 5,723 IATP technical training sessions.

*99% of users said they would recommend IATP training to other people.*

According to the IATP Users Online Survey, nearly all respondents reported that they acquired skills useful for their personal and professional development thanks to IATP. Eighty-six percent of IATP participants used knowledge and skills they acquired at IATP centers in their education and/or in their career frequently or from time to time. Ninety-four percent of IATP participants used the knowledge and skills they gained at IATP centers at least once; another 91% indicated that IATP-sponsored activities helped them to accomplish things they might never have been able to accomplish without IATP support. The majority of respondents cited a specific contribution of IATP-sponsored activities to their personal lives – 60% found a new hobby, 56% established new contacts, and 49% became more self-confident. Eighty-eight percent reported undertaking an initiative that was informed and/or encouraged by their participation in online IATP sponsored activities.

**User survey data, figure 2**

Respondents reported that they:	Regularly used skills learned at IATP	Accomplished something they would not have without IATP help	Undertook a new initiative	Learned new ideas	Believed IATP offered new access to information and promoted transparency	Now understand that the internet can help them in their work and research
Azerbaijan	100%	100%	100%	96%	100%	100%
Georgia	91%	90%	88%	85%	82%	85%
Moldova	82%	96%	71%	89%	71%	88%
Tajikistan	78%	97%	93%	73%	82%	85%
Turkmenistan	65%	92%	96%	68%	74%	86%
Ukraine	94%	93%	92%	70%	83%	73%

The IATP Trainees Online Survey explored the effectiveness of IATP technical training. The survey revealed that 100% of IATP training participants found the knowledge and experience they acquired at IATP training useful or very useful for their academic and professional activities.

In total, 367 respondents said they could apply knowledge and skills acquired at IATP training in at least one sphere of their lives. Fifty-eight percent of participants used the skills in their professional lives, while 51% implemented new knowledge and skills in their personal development. Thirty-eight percent stated that knowledge and skills from IATP helped them academically and 25% used them socially. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents reported that skills and knowledge gained through IATP training enhanced the effectiveness of their cooperation with other people or organizations.

**User survey data, figure 3**

Where do you turn for information sources?	Use IATP centers more than other sources of information	Use IATP centers the same amount as other sources of information	Use IATP centers less often than other information sources
Azerbaijan	96%	4%	0%
Georgia	80%	15%	4%
Moldova	46%	42%	12%
Tajikistan	76%	22%	2%
Turkmenistan	60%	28%	12%
Ukraine	61%	26%	13%

Finally, although IATP users did attract younger demographics generally—largely due to student needs and interests—middle-aged and senior citizen populations also took advantage of an array of IATP services.

**User survey data, figure 4**

Breakdown by age	TOTAL	
20 and younger	32%	212
21-25	21%	141
26-30	9%	59
31-35	9%	61
36-40	9%	57
41-45	6%	37
46-50	6%	41
51 and older	8%	55
<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>663</b>

### C. Evaluating IATP Internet Access and Technical Training

IATP technical assistance and internet access services have helped citizens increase their leadership skills, enhance their professional and research potential, and promote democratic change in their communities. Nearly half of surveyed IATP users (47%) could not use a computer and the internet before coming to an IATP center. Moreover, nearly all of the respondents (81%) said IATP demonstrated the scope and value of the internet, reporting that before IATP they had no clear idea what the internet was and believed it was just for e-mail correspondence.

IATP users consider technical training provided at IATP centers a unique source of IT skills that are gaining more importance in their countries. IATP users in Balkanabat, Turkmenistan, mentioned that the IATP center is the only place where local residents can acquire IT skills for free. Comparatively, public training centers offer computer courses as well, but at a rate of \$50 per person, making them unaffordable for the majority of local residents.

The availability of free IT training at IATP centers makes the program unique and in demand among actual and prospective IATP users. Eighty-eight percent of IATP training participants did not know of any other places offering free training. Ninety-nine percent said they would recommend IATP training to other people.

Additionally, focus group discussions revealed that IATP technical training distinguishes its centers from other training centers, commercial internet cafes, and schools. Balkanabat, Turkmenistan, radio technician Pavel Polyakov noted, “In internet cafes we can’t learn how to use the internet or computer software.” Turkmenabat’s Shirin Ataeva said, “We had computer classes at school, but it was mainly about theory. We wrote down lecture notes and had laboratory sessions approximately once a month. Only during laboratory periods were we allowed to use computers. At IATP we practiced much more.” Focus group discussions also proved that IATP technical training is a significant reason why IATP users continue to regularly visit their IATP center.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As indicated in the Methodology section, online surveys solicited and compiled responses from IATP users in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. The Users Online Survey took place in September 2008; the Trainees Online Survey in November 2008; the Forum Online Survey in December 2008; and the Web Content Online Survey in January 2009. The focus group discussions cited in this report were conducted in Tajikistan (October 2008) and Turkmenistan (November and December 2008). Those discussions in Tajikistan sought the opinions of Dushanbe, Kulyab, and Garm, while those in Turkmenistan drew participants from Ashgabat, Balkanabat, and Turkmenabat.

*User survey data, figure 5*

Where did you learn to use a computer and the internet?	At IATP	At school/at university	At work	Learned themselves	From friends
Azerbaijan	96%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Georgia	60%	15%	4%	6%	4%
Moldova	23%	47%	6%	21%	4%
Tajikistan	29%	39%	3%	24%	3%
Turkmenistan	50%	8%	0%	24%	12%
Ukraine	58%	13%	5%	19%	2%

## D. IATP Centers as Communication and Information Resources

Free, unfettered information is essential to promoting open dialogue, government transparency, and public accountability. With this in mind, IATP centers serve as unique providers of information resources in the countries where they operate.

*44% of IATP users in Azerbaijan and Georgia reported that IATP offers the only means of accessing certain forms of information, from unbiased news to current job vacancies.*

Surveyed IATP users indicated that they perceive the internet as a source of global information. Focus groups found that IATP users in communities with restricted information access, such as Turkmenistan, and those with limited access, such as Tajikistan’s remote mountainous regions, called IATP centers “communication centers.” This title reflects their key role in disseminating accurate information and

facilitating open communication. Garm, Tajikistan doctor Iqbola Alijeva reported that “there is only one local newspaper published [in Garm]. 1,000 copies are issued for [a population of] approximately 90,000. Only a few community members can afford to buy newspapers on a regular basis.”

## V. OBJECTIVE 2: Civil Society Representatives are Networked with Local, Regional, and International Partners and Resources

### A. Networking Targets and Outputs

During the reporting period, IATP promoted links between local, regional, and international partners and organizations; these links were made possible by internet tools. IATP centers hosted online events that connected civil society actors to their counterparts in other regions, helping them gain new insights, access best practices, and share their opinions. IATP also provided networking opportunities to target groups that benefited from sharing professional knowledge, personal experience, and reliable information. These discussions linked civil society representatives, educators, health professionals, and government officials from different regions and countries as they worked on similar issues. Exchanges concerning such topics as corruption, environmental degradation, civic education, and human and labor rights, help these individuals implement civil society initiatives in their communities.

**Objective 2 Targets:** During the reporting period, IATP planned to achieve the following objectives indicating the advance of professional networking through online discussions:

- 50 national online discussions within each country for target audiences

- 18 international online discussions
- 1,000 participants in online networking events

**Objective 2 Outputs:** From June 2007 to December 2008, IATP played integral roles in:

- 61 in-country online events linking 967 remotely located citizens
- 83 online events for specialists from across the region
- 36 international networking events connecting 654 participants worldwide
- 1,621 citizens' participation in online networking events

## B. Online Networking Facilitated by IATP

From June 2007 to December 2008, IATP supported 61 in-country online events that linked 967 remotely located specialists to one another's expertise.

*1,600 citizens participated in IATP's online events that linked rural communities, professional specialists, and civil society activists from different countries.*

In total, IATP organized 36 international online events that connected 654 participants to international experts. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents (142 of 155) found IATP forums useful. Eighty percent (123 of 153) found that information they had obtained at IATP-organized online forums and discussions contributed to their personal, social, and professional development. The IATP Users Online Survey indicates that 72% of users who participated in at least one online forum learned new ideas or information as a result of the virtual discussion. Seventy-nine percent agree that online networking events and discussions are useful mechanisms for informing and improving work. IATP online events served an array of social purposes. Forum topics included local election reforms, women's rights advocacy, environmental protection, and microfinance opportunities.

## C. E-mail Communication for Networking

IATP supports several means of online communication, including e-mail. After participating in IATP technical training, IATP users are able to utilize e-mail for professional and personal correspondence and, according to the IATP Users Online Survey, 74% (469 of 638) do so. The majority of those surveyed regularly contact relatives and friends living abroad, apply to foreign universities, or seek medical advice from foreign medical specialists online.

# VI. OBJECTIVE 3: Targeted Development Projects are Supported through Training for Select Community Members in the Use of Vanguard Technologies and Solutions

## A. Targets and Outcomes

IATP trained civil society and government actors in ten countries in internet-based technologies, helping them achieve their goals and provide better services. IATP taught target audiences to use relevant applications, such as blogs and wikis, to improve the way people and organizations communicate and collaborate with one another.

**Objective 3 Targets:** To meet its third objective, IATP planned to reach the following outcomes in its Year One Workplan:

- No fewer than 50 active blogs, updated at least weekly for six months

- No fewer than four publicly-accessible wikis that support collaboration on important issues
- No fewer than seven organizations that consistently use RSS feeds to update websites for their target audiences
- No fewer than 15 local government websites that are actively updated for at least six months

**Objective 3 Outcomes:** In total, during the reporting period,

- 128 active blogs were created by IATP trainees
- 23 wiki resources were developed
- 34 organizations were trained to use RSS
- 40 regularly-updated websites were created by local government officials
- 546 regularly updated websites were created in total

### **Vanguard IT technology with IATP**

IATP designed dynamic training and technical assistance programs for specific target groups. Below are some of the tools IATP offers:

**Blogs:** These simple tools offer an immediate internet presence to groups that otherwise lack access to traditional publishing media. Blogs provide civil society organizations, local authorities, and citizens with an accessible platform for posting new developments, sharing perspectives, and coordinating activities. During the reporting period, IATP training participants created 128 blogs.

**Wikis:** These internet tools offer unprecedented opportunities for real-time collaboration on documents, projects, and resources between people in different, remote locations. During the reporting period, IATP users developed 23 wiki resources after taking part in IATP wiki training. Ninety wikis are now updated regularly.

**RSS Feeds:** Really Simple Syndication (RSS) tools allow beneficiaries working on specific issues to notify interested parties about the latest content and updates on their websites without having to rely on individuals to visit their sites. Because of IATP activities, 34 organizations were trained to use RSS and use it regularly. During these trainings, IATP introduced its users to online media, particularly local-language internet publications that present diverse and alternative information.

**User-Friendly Website Design:** IATP helps local governments, NGOs and youth groups design and update websites through a WYSIWYG (“what you see is what you get”) editor. Without requiring any prior knowledge of computer programming, this tool helps local activists connect to their communities. Due to IATP training, from June 2007 to December 2008, IATP users launched 546 regularly updated websites. Moreover, local authorities created and now regularly update 40 government websites in cooperation with IATP.

During the reporting period, IATP trained civil society organizations and government actors from ten countries in online technologies, helping them achieve their goals and provide better services. Many IATP users expressed a belief that there is greater transparency and information available on the internet from local sources because of IATP. The majority of surveyed IATP users were disappointed by the number of websites in their local language. Rural populations in particular need professional and educational information in their own languages. IATP is committed to developing locally-generated, local-language content in all its host countries by providing populations with technical training, free internet access, and free non-commercial website hosting.

## **B. Cooperation with USAID-funded projects**

Since June 2007, IATP made a concerted effort to reach out to potential civil society sector partners, offering them internet access, training services, and consultations on using vanguard technologies in their activities. This effort resulted in community development programs responding more effectively to local needs.

**E-Government.** Economically disadvantaged families with members who have disabilities can now access social services more easily, thanks to an online resource developed by government officials, who were participants of ICT training in October and November as part of IATP's ongoing e-government initiative in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine. The official site of the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Center of Social Services for Family Children and Youth was launched in late October with assistance from IATP and the USAID-funded **Ukrainian Reform of Education Program** (UREP). The online resource is a hub of important information for people living in remote towns and villages and for people with disabilities. IATP users are already taking advantage of the site's tools for interactive communication between visitors and social workers.

**Democracy.** IATP has collaborated extensively with democracy implementers in the Caucasus, conducting technical training for political parties in cooperation with the **National Democratic Institute** and the **International Republican Institute** in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and training parliamentary staff to communicate online with constituents as part of the USAID-funded **Parliamentary Reform Project** in Azerbaijan.

**Health Care.** With the NGO Family Medicine Specialists and the Scientific Technology and Language Institute, both supported through USAID-funded **ZdravPlus** Health Reform project in Kyrgyzstan, IATP trained more than 85 doctors and nurses in vital technology tools in Karakol, Talas, and Bishkek. Through IATP's distance learning course, the doctors learned to treat ear infections while nurses learned more about diagnosing and treating bronchial asthma. IATP also taught tuberculosis care providers from USAID-funded **Project HOPE** in Turkmenistan to use technology in preparing and submitting reports, and to conduct research on treatment options.

**Anti-Trafficking.** IATP implemented the **New Perspectives for Women** project in Moldova through a joint effort with USAID-funded **Winrock International**. The project provides technology-related skills that help protect young women from trafficking and find reputable work online.

**Education.** In conjunction with USAID-funded **Junior Achievement** (JA) project, IATP trained teachers in Kyrgyzstan to use the internet to participate in the project's programming. JA's coordinator described IATP's assistance as instrumental to their success. For USAID's **PEAKS** project, IATP created a website to promote its curriculum development efforts.

**Media.** IATP worked with **Internews** in Tajikistan, training regional radio broadcast journalists to use the internet to conduct research for stories and gain access to professional resources.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

## **A. Summary of Findings**

During the reporting period, IATP fulfilled the objectives set out in its Year One Workplan. An analysis of statistics, survey data, and a series of focus groups with IATP users indicates that IATP has empowered individuals and organizations to utilize the internet to promote democratic reform; networked civil society representatives with local, regional, and international partners and resources; and supported local and USAID-funded development initiatives with vanguard technologies and solutions.

The number of active IATP users benefiting from access to free, unfettered information provided by IATP has increased significantly during the program's first year, and should continue through the next. IATP centers throughout Eurasia now constitute a network of popular information and communication points that provide local populations with opportunities for professional, social, and leadership development. The IATP centers continue to attract new users—nearly 30,000 since the start of USAID funding—through outreach efforts conducted by IATP staff. This new level of information access helped local community members obtain new knowledge integral to their efforts to promote democratic reform.

Organizations and individuals who have participated in IATP activities constitute a strong core of empowered professionals benefited by unrestricted access to information, international professional expertise, and best practices. They also obtained skills and taken advantage of opportunities for professional and social communication. E-government initiatives that incorporated vanguard IT technologies into local governmental services established effective communication tools, contributing to greater transparency and accountability. Their success stories are an important, yet still initial, step towards reform and progress in their communities.

During the reporting period, IATP expanded its capacity by introducing innovative IT technologies into its training, increasing local Web content. Civil society organizations are now using advanced ICT technologies, enhancing their networking and information sharing processes.

## **B. Going Forward: Suggestions for Improvement**

Despite IATP's successes in its host countries, there are a few areas that merit attention.

### **IATP Centers**

One of the main purposes of this evaluation's focus groups and online surveys was to solicit user assessments of IATP center effectiveness and assess their recommendations. The results of the survey show that nearly half of IATP users (45%) learn of the IATP center and its services from friends, a process that cannot be directly influenced and stimulated by IATP. This means that IATP must strengthen other information sources in order to attract more people to IATP centers. IATP administrator presentations are the second leading way people discover IATP centers (21%). A larger number of IATP administrator presentations emphasizing the uses of ICT for specific fields could increase the number of people who visit IATP centers.

### **IATP Technical Training**

All focus group participants and IATP Trainees Online Survey respondents found the training useful, 64% of those (241 of 376) found it very useful. Eighty-seven percent of the surveyed IATP trainees liked every component of the training; however, 12% (46 out of 386) said there

were technical problems that hampered the training process. IATP management regularly monitors and renovates the technical equipment of all IATP centers. IATP regularly tests the quality and speed of internet connectivity and constantly examines ways of improving them. IATP is also committed to increasing staff qualifications by providing distance learning opportunities for IATP trainers and management personnel.

The duration of the IATP technical training was considered sufficient by 77% of surveyed IATP trainees. Twenty-two percent of respondents pointed out that the training they participated in was not long enough, leaving them insufficient time to practice their skills. The IATP training program was developed to be intense and compact, helping trainees obtain necessary skills in a short period of time. On the other hand, the survey results indicate that IATP trainers should schedule extra time in case trainees need more practice to what they have learned.

To broaden the scope of its training, IATP asked the respondents to note other trainings they would like to see offered. The most popular courses not yet available at IATP centers were speed typing (43% showed interest) and forum administration (20% showed interest). Focus group discussions revealed the need for in hardware training, computer based TOEFL and English language courses, and office equipment management. These courses could be offered by the centers, and perhaps by partners on a fee-for-service basis for sustainability purposes.

### C. Final Comments

Focus groups conducted during this evaluation showed the extent to which citizens continually benefit from access to public internet access. Active internet users, most of whom were former IATP trainees continuing to use their ICT skills, were far more successful as professionals and community change agents. Statistics, however, continue to demonstrate that only a small number of citizens in Eurasia have embraced the internet—from as little as 1% in Turkmenistan, and only as high as 30% in Ukraine. Thus, Eurasian residents would continue to benefit from ICT training. The high degree of satisfaction reported by users and trainees suggests that the program continues to bring real benefits to the average citizens of these communities—**99% of participants would recommend IATP's services to others.**

Without IATP, survey and focus group participants agree that their communities would lose an important resource. Only 11% of respondents reported that they could find free ICT training elsewhere. Over 60% of respondents perceive IATP as a contributor to greater transparency by fostering local internet content. While most users report that information could be obtained through other sources, the IATP center's professional and socially-active environment makes it the preferred choice for information access in surveyed communities. IATP-facilitated online networking was found to be effective at disseminating information and sharing ideas. Nearly 90% of users report being involved in an initiative that was informed or encouraged by participation in IATP.

**This evaluation indicates that a community without IATP would be less active, less informed, and less empowered.** In low resource environments, practical, user-oriented resources and training centers are effective tools for encouraging social, economic, and political development.