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## International Research & Exchanges Board



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### **Final Program Report**

### Internet Access and Training Program

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## I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From June 2007 – December 2009, the Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) succeeded in leveraging information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) tools to promote democratic reform and the development of local societies in host countries throughout Eurasia. According to analyses of IATP's statistical records, extensive online surveys of its users and trainee base, and a series of focus group sessions with an evaluator carried out throughout the reporting period, IATP met or exceeded nearly all of its goals.

The program served the needs of the local population providing technical training and access to information, as well as ensuring online networking, and thus, contributing to civil society development in the countries of operation.

In addition to highly-rated computer and internet basics training, the program succeeded in espousing Web 2.0 training as one of its core competencies, bringing local content from journalists, activists, experts, and government institutions online. Cooperation with USAID-funded projects was rigorous during the reporting period. IATP collaborated with a number of USAID-funded projects with focuses on e-government, human rights, worker rights, media development, education, medicine and agriculture. Thanks to this joint cooperation, these projects were able to conserve resources and achieve more with the help of IATP's specialized ICT4D expertise.

Throughout the program, IATP built partnerships with local institutions, from government bodies, such as ministries and libraries, to local NGOs. IATP's approach to managing the program involved finding partners to provide free space and utilities for the IATP centers. Initial cost share and the eventual adoption of the center stood as a commitment to sustainability. Local buy-in at the onset of the program further demonstrated partners' commitment to maintaining IATP activities.

Numerous success stories of IATP training graduates demonstrate the importance of the program for developing individuals and organizations professionally, as well as in affecting civil change. Statistics continue to show, however, that only a small number of citizens in Eurasia have adopted the internet – from as little as 1% in Turkmenistan, to only as much as 35% in Ukraine. The average for the region is still in the single digits. There is still great demand for technical assistance to access information through the internet as well as a need for affordable, quality internet access.

Communities in Eurasia without IATP centers stand to be less active, less informed, less empowered, and less skilled. Based on IATP's experience, in low-resource environments, practical, user-oriented resource and training centers have been proven to be an effective tool for encouraging social, economic, and political development.

## II. USERS

*Below are statistics detailing the number of visits, number of users and trainees during program implementation:*

Country	Number of centers during USAID funding	Number of users	Number of trained people	Number of Visits
Azerbaijan	4	18,859	4,893	72,484
Georgia	5	23,303	10,373	90,031
Kazakhstan	2	5,840	784	5,840
Kyrgyzstan	6	8,171	502	88,604
Moldova	3	3,712	1,964	38,099
Tajikistan	7	12,127	3,465	82,693
Turkmenistan	6	5,058	4,682	48,567
Ukraine	11	17,440	5,327	57,375
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>94,510</b>	<b>31,990</b>	<b>483,693</b>

## III. Description of Internet Status & Activities by Country

Below please find descriptions of political, economic, infrastructure or other issues that have hampered or promoted internet access/usage segregated by country, and brief descriptions of activities hosted or facilitated by the centers in each country.

### AZERBAIJAN

#### I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW

At the outset of the IATP project during the summer of 2007, there were 20 ISPs in Azerbaijan, including two state-run companies. Approximately five hundred internet cafes existed in the capital city of Baku and surrounding areas, charging around \$0.47 per hour for internet use. Given these facts, however, only less than ten percent of the overall population had access to IT with sparse access to computers and internet outside of the capital city. Another major challenge in the IT sector was the lack of skilled personnel. Azerbaijan was in need of IT specialists, as well as professionals with the ability to train employees, officials, and students how to use the technology. Several government institutions required employees to have

computer and internet skills but failed to provide IT training programs for their workers. Moreover, officials in some regions resisted IT development as they feared the consequences of citizens' access to information.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the Azerbaijani government has made significant strides in the development of IT and internet access throughout the country as part of its e-government initiative. Through such programs, the government hoped to attract more foreign investment in the IT sector. It was expected that by the end of 2008, internet connection costs would decrease by 30 to 40% in Azerbaijan. Another positive development was the proliferation of registered .az sites. The continued registration of new websites under the .az domain suggests that local language Web content in Azeri has increased rapidly—an important indicator of progress. The population in Azerbaijan, especially those in low-resource areas, are unlikely to speak Russian and even less likely to speak English, making much of the content online inaccessible to them. In response, IATP worked to develop local language content that is relevant to Azerbaijan's users.

The government planned to make wireless internet available throughout the country by May 2009. The quality and availability of internet access in Azerbaijan meant that even IATP's locations in the country's more rural regions possessed stable connectivity throughout the reporting period. Furthermore, the IATP center in Imishli successfully negotiated a discounted rate for internet service from the local ISP, Aztelecom. The ICT industry achieved the status of being Azerbaijan's third largest sector, behind only oil and energy in terms of GDP. The growth of high-speed and wireless internet remained constrained, however, by infrastructure and regulatory hurdles, along with increased government interference with online media, which impeded coverage and drove up costs.

## **II. IATP IN AZERBAIJAN**

IATP began operating in Azerbaijan in 1998. During the USAID funding period, IREX administered four centers located in Baku, Shirvan, Imishli, and Sumgayit. The Baku IIC graduated to independent status in October 2008 and the rest of the centers became IICs by June 2009. From June 2007-June 2009, 2,000 new users were registered and 4,893 people attended IATP training.

Center locations: **Baku, Shirvan, Imishli, and Sumgayit**

# **users** (since June 2007): **18,859**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **4,893**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **72,484**

### **Major accomplishments in Azerbaijan include:**

In addition to serving as community centers and providing training for regular citizens, NGO activists, students, journalists, scientists, workers, and others in Azerbaijan, IATP also engaged in collaborative projects with other international development groups to improve information use, transparency, and constituent communication for political parties. Working with the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) political party assistance program, IATP provided party officials with basic computer training, access to online debates, and Web design instruction. Further, working with Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) and the Media Advancement Project (both funded by USAID), IATP worked to implement the Electronic Parliament of Azerbaijan initiative. This project strengthened good governance in Azerbaijan by improving the IT access and skills of Parliament members and their staffs. The training resulted in websites and blogs that promote communication, information exchange, and political dialogue between

leaders and the public. IATP centers across the country also conducted ICT for development (ICT4D) sessions for target audiences, such as NGO representatives, medical workers, media professionals, and educators. ICT training sessions for public sector employees at the centers in Imishli and Shirvan helped improve the efficiency of hospital staff and power station managers.

**Low-Cost Add-On to USAID Projects:** IREX believes that increased access to and training in information communication technology can help make development organizations and the audiences they serve more effective. To support this goal, IATP worked with other USAID implementing partners. Some of the implementing partners IATP cooperated with include:

- Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI): IATP helped train parliamentarians and their staff to use the internet, to create websites, and to communicate with their constituents in regions outside of Baku.
- National Democratic Institute (NDI): IATP helped train political party representatives to use technology to increase their online presence.

### **Blogging from Baku: Azerbaijani Parliament Gains New Online Presence**

Five officials from Azerbaijan's Parliament created blogs and posted them online as part of a good governance initiative. In cooperation with USAID-funded Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) and the Media Advancement Project, IATP implemented this professional education project to assist members of Parliament and their staffs in Baku, Shirvan, Imishli, and Sumgait in mastering ICT skills and creating their own blogs. This online presence provides constituents with more information about government activities, creates a closer connection between government and citizens and increases the level of transparency in government.

IATP volunteer Samir Yahyayev, who had completed IATP training several years ago, taught the Parliament members and their support staff about creating blogs, posting articles, uploading pictures, internet etiquette, and increasing online visitor traffic. As a result of the training, the Azerbaijani officials' blogs are online and can be found at <http://kamranramazanov.blogmilli.com>, <http://mmehdi.blogmilli.com>, <http://mmfirdovsi.blogmilli.com>, and <http://vuqarqaracayev.blogmilli.com>.

### **Voter Education Promotes More Informed Electorate**

Citizens of Azerbaijan learned more about their country's election laws and their electoral rights in an online forum co-sponsored by IATP and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF). The forum took place from October 9-21, 2008, during the Azerbaijan presidential elections, as part of EPF's USAID-funded High Profile Radio Debates and Web-Based Information Portal Project. The project aimed to inform people about presidential elections, the candidates, and campaigning. It also sought a wider discussion of the electoral process on the internet. These goals stem from the belief that broader education and participation contribute to a strengthened civil society and more transparent electoral processes. In practice, citizens learned about exit polling, the positions of presidential candidates on key issues, the operation of election committees, and voters' electoral responsibilities.

The IATP forum featured the Director of the Institute of Election Technologies and regular participant of the EPF's radio debates Shirzad Mammadli. Mammadli spoke highly of the forum, describing it as a great opportunity for citizens of Azerbaijan. He praised the internet's ability to inform people, especially those in remote regions, of important topics. According to Mammadli, "The forum revealed the level of people's knowledge in the field of electoral rights.

Some of them posted questions like ‘How old must I be to participate in the elections?’ This proves that the citizens of Azerbaijan still need to be educated about the electoral process.”

**Anti-Corruption/Good Governance:** IATP used technological and educational tools to promote citizen involvement and advocacy for good governance and transparency.

- IATP and Transparency International (TI) in Azerbaijan organized an online forum on changing the culture of corruption in society. IATP and TI organized a blog contest, where bloggers from IATP centers discussed corruption and how it could be addressed in Azerbaijan. Two participants from Sumgayit, Javid Mammadov and Aida Sultanova, took first and second place (<http://genclerbirliyi.azeriblog.com> and <http://karrupsiya.azeriblog.com>, respectively), while Arzu Yusifova from Imishli won third (<http://korrupsiya.blog.ru>).

### **Azerbaijani Political Parties Advance Online Outreach Skills at Graduated IATP Center**

Representatives of seven Azerbaijani political parties can now advertise their ideas and policies on the internet. They learned these advanced computer skills through training conducted by IATP and its USAID-funded partner, the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Internet advertising is the second step of the party members’ computer coursework, following productivity and data management training. With ICT rapidly changing the realm of media, NDI asked IATP to train the representatives in developing and managing their party websites. IATP organized the training at the Independent Internet Center (IIC) at Baku City Library.

NDI and IATP invited all of Azerbaijan’s political parties to the training. Seven officials were in attendance, representing the Democratic Reforms Party (<http://www.demreforms.org>), the New Azerbaijan Party, the Azerbaijan National Independence Party (<http://amipmillet.az.iatp.net/>), the Umid Party (<http://umidgencler.az.iatp.net>), the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (<http://axcpgencleri.az.iatp.net>), the Musavat Party, and the Azerbaijan Democratic Party. Director of Sahil Ltd. Vahid Gasymov facilitated the event. Gasymov is also a founder of the BarCamp Conference – an international participatory conference on technology.

During the training, participants learned about how to create internet advertisements, use effective online marketing tools, and monitor their advertisements’ results. As a result of the training, the political party representatives created flash animation Web banner test samples at <http://sahil.az/SIR/> before applying their skills to their parties’ websites. Democratic Reforms Party representative Tahir Balayev remarked, “This program gave me innovative ICT skills to use in my daily work in public relations. Thank you to USAID for supporting such programs that help us learn new IT skills. We are in the process of using our IT skills to develop our official website, such as creating internet banners of our partner organizations.”

**Journalism:** With few role models in the mainstream media and limited access to information technology, journalists in Azerbaijan face significant challenges. Through internet access and training, IATP is worked to improve these conditions.

- Through IATP’s comprehensive training, journalism students developed the technical capacity to write blogs, create wiki content, and research stories that meet international standards of verification.
- In an online forum, students posted questions about freedom of the press in Georgia and inquired whether the government allows journalists to publish the news without any

intimidation.

- Students learned computing and internet search skills, which they used to compete for a slot at an OSCE-sponsored journalism conference in Georgia.
- Imishli, Azerbaijan, IATP user Azer Aliyev received a job as a correspondent for the Baku-based national newspaper *Azadlıq* in January 2009 thanks to skills he developed at IATP.

### **IATP Trains Students to Use Information Technology for Journalism, with Support from OSCE**

From July 24-27, 2007, IATP organized the first in a series of OSCE-sponsored trainings for representatives of youth media from the Caucasus on how to use information technology in analytical journalism.

There are a number of obstacles that stand in the way of young journalists in the Caucasus. Among these hurdles is the region's underdeveloped journalism education. Young reporters have few role models in the mainstream media. Access to information technology is restricted and internet access is limited by high costs and the lack of infrastructure. Affordable internet access is available only in major cities, and not all young journalists have the skills required to use the internet when it is available to them.

To make the training successful, IATP targeted promising young journalists from the three countries of the Caucasus, who have been solicited through a competitive application process. As a result, thirteen young journalists from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia participated in the training, the goals of which were to:

- promote the skilled use of information technology in journalism in the Caucasus
- improve the professional skills of journalists in covering socially important topics
- foster the creation of a network of young, enthusiastic, journalists who contribute regularly to a professional online publication.

The trainer, Danish investigative journalist Michael Andersen, worked with the youngsters on using the internet to research socially sensitive topics, such as violence against women, trafficking in persons, internally displaced persons, and conflict resolution. The trainer also taught the participants how best to handle interviews with traumatized individuals and how to cover these topics with compassion and objectivity. Through IATP's comprehensive training, participating journalists developed the technical capacity to research stories that meet international standards of verification. The young journalists are contributing to the online magazine *Nasha Versia* with their colleagues from Central Asia.

### ***Young People and Education***

- Thanks to IATP training, representatives from the Lotos Educational Center for Disabled People in Baku, Azerbaijan, can now create and update websites. One staff member remarked, "The website contains a lot of information for disabled children and their parents. We needed to add and update information frequently, but did not have a qualified person to do it. Now, thanks to IATP, we can easily do it by ourselves".
- English and Russian language teachers gained computing skills at IATP-sponsored training in Baku. One teacher reported, "We had a computer lab at school but it never functioned since none of us could work on a computer. Now the room is always full of

teachers.”

- When in 2008 State Admission Commission of Azerbaijan (SACA) decreed that all applicants to universities must apply online, IATP provided its young visitors with the necessary skills and information to fulfill their goal of receiving higher education. IATP centers in Azerbaijan have assisted over 250 high school graduates during the application process, with over 160 students submitting their applications from IATP centers.

### **Teachers Master Computers to Impart Information Technology to Disabled Children**

In January 2008, 22 teachers of boarding school #219 in Baku gained essential information technology skills that they now use to teach their students, mobility-impaired children, to work on computers. Although computers had been installed in the school, no opportunities had been provided for teachers or students to learn how to use them. Upon the suggestion of Parviz Heydarov, chairperson of the NGO Social Support for the Disabled, school teachers requested computer training from IATP. Since his first visit to IATP in spring 2007, Heydarov himself has completed IATP computer skills and Web design workshops and participated as a guest speaker in a number of IATP online forums on the problems of the disabled.

From January 7 to 25, 2008, 22 English and Russian language teachers acquired computing skills at an IATP-sponsored training led by Azer Kerimov. School teacher Sabina Aliyeva remarked, “We had a computer class in our school, but, it never functioned since none of us could work on a computer. Since Azer Kerimov came to our school the room is always flocked with teachers.” She continued, “I am very happy that now can help disabled children to make their lives more vivid and interesting”. With the help of IATP, physically-impaired children can access information, education, and employment opportunities.

**Employment:** IATP helped Azerbaijan’s citizens find and access employment opportunities through technology training.

- Professors at the Baku State Foreign Languages University secured their jobs as a result of computer training at their local IATP center. University staff were required to submit all teaching materials and reports in typewritten form or face dismissal. A professor at the university remarked, “Previously, we had to ask somebody – often our students – to type our documents. Due to IATP, I do not need to ask anybody to type my documents anymore.”
- A woman who has been physically handicapped since birth learned to use productivity and internet tools during a series of IATP trainings in Baku. She now works as a high school secretary in Mashraf; she proudly says, “Now I am a member of a big team and people need me. I earn my own salary and solve my financial problems, which was not possible before.”
- On November 23, 2007, ten local police officers concluded computer training at the IATP center in Baku, Azerbaijan, enabling them to meet new reporting requirements in a timely and cost-effective fashion. The Baku police headquarters requested IATP training for its employees after receiving an order to prepare and submit all reports in typewritten form.

### **Doctors Apply IT Skills to Improve their Hospital, Keep their Jobs**

Pediatricians at the Shirvan Regional Children's Hospital in Shirvan, Azerbaijan, now use computer skills they gained at IATP centers to improve the efficiency of hospital administration. Doctors Malahat Aliyeva and Rana Asadova are digitizing the work of the hospital, registering patients, and maintaining a vaccinations database using computer software. The hospital received new computers in March 2008, and its directors mandated that all employees be proficient in computer use in order to utilize the equipment, but made no provisions to train their employees in such skills.

The doctors quickly realized that they would need IT skills to keep their jobs, and turned to their local IATP center as a well-known provider of free training for professionals. Together with IATP, the doctors organized a series of step-by-step training courses for several groups of their peers.

### **III. SUSTAINIBILITY**

The Baku Independent Internet Center (IIC) graduated to independent status in October 2008. Through its partnership with the Central City Library, it serves an average of 200 visitors each month. In addition to offering traditional library services, the center uses its technological equipment to provide free of charge internet access, and space for community meetings, workshops, and seminars. This combination of resources sets the Baku center apart from internet cafes and attracts NGO representatives, university students, scientists, journalists, and schoolchildren. Currently, the center's internet costs are covered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism while the library pays the center Administrator's salary. IATP's partnership with the Baku Central City Library exemplifies the sustainability model that was applied to IATP centers throughout Eurasia.

## **GEORGIA**

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW**

Tensions between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia escalated into a five-day war in August 2008. The aftermath of the war left Georgia with hundreds of civilian casualties, over 10,000 displaced families, damaged infrastructure, and broken lines of communication. Russian media coverage of the recent events was the only source of information available to Russian speakers in Georgia; Georgia attempted to limit the Russian media's presence, restricting access to Russian cable television stations and websites. Until September 11, 2008, Georgian internet service providers (ISPs) blocked websites with Russia's .ru domain. As a result, many Georgians were denied access to their e-mail accounts as there are few Georgian e-mail services, and citizens were unable to contact their friends and relatives during and following the war. Additionally, some ISPs lost service for hours or days, which further limited access to the news and communication resources.

Despite setbacks in Georgia's IT development following the five-day war, the past few years witnessed rapid internet use due to greater access to ICT resources, lowered costs for internet connection, and increased investments by the Georgian government in the IT sector. By 2006, the Ministry of Education and Science's school computerization program provided 6,000 computers with internet connection to 600 high schools. Although the government made efforts to supply schools with computers, low-quality connections and poor infrastructure, an absence of competing ISPs in smaller markets, poverty, and electricity outages leave the majority of the country without computer and internet resources. Georgia's capital city Tbilisi accounts for 80% of the country's internet users. In October 2007, the internet provider *Georgia Online*

cancelled the dial-up connection service. Customers who previously accessed internet through a dial-up connection were required to switch to a DSL connection, unaffordable for many.

Despite government efforts that supported increased exposure to technology, infrastructural, political, and economic issues made working conditions difficult for IATP and hampered the development of internet use and access. Infrastructural problems included a lack of phone lines in Georgia's regions, which made it extremely difficult to provide internet services outside the capital. After the conflict during 2008, these issues were compounded by the fact that already malfunctioning equipment and infrastructure were further damaged. Political instability also hindered IATP's mission in Georgia. The state of emergency declared in 2007 resulted in one of IATP's offices closing, though others remained open and provided Georgian citizens with an alternative news source. Economic conditions in Georgia made it difficult to increase internet access. The near-monopoly of internet service provider (ISP) *Georgia Online* and disputes between telecommunications equipment owners and ISPs caused a reduction in internet service for many people during late 2008. The latter issue, however, was resolved, and government regulation over internet and telecommunications providers resulted in improved quality and access. Over the course of the program, new ISPs were created, with the result of increasing competition and opportunities for internet access through varied providers and technologies.

Other internet developments included the emergence of new ISPs, such as Maximali, and mobile companies offering internet service, such as Geocell. This market diversification will likely promote healthier competition between ISPs and service improvement and price moderation. In October 2008, the Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) set service tariff caps between ISPs; the tariffs are expected to help finalize the enhanced interconnection agreement between the ISPs, guaranteeing quality, stable connections and non-discriminatory access to websites for subscribers of all companies.

## **II. IATP IN GEORGIA**

IATP began its activity in Georgia in 1997. During USAID funding, IREX administered 13 centers located throughout the county. Since June 2007, IATP in Georgia has welcomed over 9,000 visitors to its centers and has trained over 10,000 local residents in ICT skills. Not only do these impressive stats rank Georgia in the top three of all IATP countries in Eurasia for the combined number of visitors and trainees (outpacing even Ukraine, with a population of 45 million), but Georgia ranks first in the number of users who receive technical training from IATP staff. In fact, it is the only country where the number of trainees, on average, exceeds the number of regular visitors at IATP centers. With an excellent record of graduating sustainable IICs, IREX expects these local internet access centers will continue to meet the growing demand for information and technology training in Georgia for years to come.

Center locations: **Gori (2), Tbilisi (3), Telavi, Khashuri, Rustavi, Batumi, Kutaisi (2), Poti, Zugdidi**

# **users** (since June 2007): **23,303**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **10,373**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **90,031**

# **of training sessions** (since June 2007): **1,372**

### **Major accomplishments in Georgia include:**

During the USAID funding period, IATP programs worked jointly with various USAID funded programs, including International Republican Institute (IRI) and Georgia Employment and Infrastructure Initiative (GEII), which is implemented by CHF International. Thanks to IATP, during elections in January 2008 concerned individuals, election observers, and media representatives strengthened their understanding of voting rights, election law, and voting qualification procedures at IATP-hosted events. IATP centers throughout the country also responded during the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia, by becoming essential venues for citizens to access information about the war online and inquire over the fate of their families.

**Improving Government:** With IATP support and training, Georgian officials are increasingly using the internet to enhance their service delivery while citizens turn to internet news websites and forum boards to inform and express their opinions.

- Georgian defense officials developed ICT skills at a joint IATP and Ministry of Defense training in July, learning to maintain their database of former and current soldiers.
- Citizens interacted with presidential candidates in Georgia's only pre-election online forum, discussing the parliamentary elections with the Central Election Committee.
- In a cooperative event IRI, over 20 NGO representatives and election observers learned about election law and voting qualification procedures at a seminar at the Tbilisi center.
- Thirteen women staff members of a number of Georgian political parties, including the Republican Party, the National Movement, the New Right, and the Conservative Party of Georgia received basic computer and Internet training at the IATP center in Tbilisi.

### **Georgian Voters Engage Political Parties Online during Parliamentary Campaign**

More than 200 citizens of Georgia communicated with members of various political parties and blocs in an IATP online forum dedicated to the parliamentary elections of May 2008. In January 2008 in partnership with the Central Election Commission IATP began its campaign to promote fair and democratic presidential elections, when it invited interested Georgian citizens to take part in a series of online forums with the presidential candidates. Within this campaign IATP organized a similar forum on the parliamentary elections in the spring which became the biggest online event ever organized by IATP Georgia. The forum, which took place on May 15 and 16 of that same year, hosted six major political parties and blocs, including the Labor Party of Georgia, the United Opposition, the Traditionalists bloc (the Our Georgia Party and the Women's Party), the Christian-Democrat Party, Georgian Republican Party, and the Rightist Alliance - Topadze Industrialists. It was Georgia's only pre-election online campaign and was considered a watershed for Georgian democratic development, especially when the elections became a subject of intense scrutinizing from international community.

Despite busy election campaign schedules and regular TV appearances, political leaders managed to take part in the forum in order to connect with people and bolster their popularity. Most of the questions during the forum were addressed to representatives of opposition parties and the discussion primarily focused on parties' future plans and strategies to improve the country's economic and political situation. Nino Okroshidze from Batumi asked the representative from the United Opposition about the role of women in today's political arena. In response, United Opposition Movement representative Manana Nachkebia provided statistics that showed that out of 162 candidates for parliament, only 26 are women – four of whom are from the United Opposition.

Later in the forum, the Labor Party gave its plan for improving the Georgian educational system and ensuring that education will be provided by the government. In addition, United

Opposition Movement representative Manana Nachkebia shared her party's attitude toward NATO.

Over 200 people from all over Georgia posted their questions on the forum, and approximately half of them were answered by political party representatives. Over 430 Georgians participated in the six online events held by IATP in the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008.

***Economic Development:*** IATP used technology to enhance business practices and promote private sector innovation in Georgia.

- Building on the IATP places.ge portal, 64 guesthouse owners now have websites linked to the site, the majority of which reported an increase in stays.
- IATP cooperated with the Tbilisi City Government to identify and train small business owners in ICT use, who then created websites for their businesses.
- An IATP trainee from Batumi, Georgia, Lela Verdzadze used her newly acquired ICT skills to plan, market, and run a private driving school with her father.

### **Places Georgia Project Helps to Locate Information on Hotels**

In September 2008, 100 hotel industry staff and small business owners participated in internet and Web design training hosted by IATP, during which participants created over 60 hotel and guesthouse websites. Through their websites, the hotel and business owners have been attracting new clients and expanding their businesses. The majority of the international guests located information on the hotels through the Places websites. "For the first time since the foundation of my hotel, we had tourists from Israel, Poland, and China," commented Tamaz Zoidze, owner of the hotel *llikos*, located in the Adjara region. "They found information about our hotel through the Places website. Currently we are creating new brochures where we intend to add our website address, which hopefully will increase the number of tourists for the next year as well."

As part of the second stage of the Places project, over 400 small business managers in the high mountainous regions of Georgia applied for the first distance learning course, and 51 applicants working in the tourism industry started their studies in September. Participants in the distance learning course expanded their skills in tourism and business management, learned about advertising, customer care, and the provision of online services, so that they could run their businesses more efficiently. Trainer Niko Kvaratskhelia, professor in the department of Tourism Business at Tbilisi State University of Economic Relations, guided trainees through different online training modules covering the role of hotels in tourism development, hotel management structure, and the usage of advertising, commercials, and websites in the tourism industry. During the course, students completed more than 90 assignments and tests and communicated via forums.

***Keeping Georgians Informed and Connected:*** During the military conflict between Georgia and Russia, thousands of Georgian nationals, isolated due to telephone and mobile service failures, immediately turned to IATP centers for information and communication.

- A 34-year-old woman from Kondoli Village utilized the Telavi Center to e-mail her family living in Moscow: "I'm from a low-income family and cannot afford paid internet service centers...You can not imagine how I was worrying about the fate of my relatives."

- An unemployed woman from Tbilisi visited the local IATP center almost every day and updated her relatives in Russia about the situation in Georgia.
- A group of students from Batumi united under and launched an online network at the Batumi IATP Center. The group held a discussion with participants from Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Israel, and the Czech Republic, among other countries. Students used the online forum to express their views on the military conflict, and to discuss the war and its implications.

### **Georgian Government Respond to Humanitarian Needs through Online Forum**

Tea Gogishvili is a young woman from Gori, Georgia, who lost her husband and child during the Russian-Georgian war. Before an IATP-sponsored online forum concerning the needs of Georgian citizens, she had received no government assistance. After sharing her story with the other online forum participants, however, the Georgian government rapidly responded to her basic needs. The forum brought together state officials, NGO leaders, and almost 40 concerned Georgian citizens, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The forum provided an outlet for IDPs to advocate for better conditions and to learn more about available humanitarian assistance. The event, which took place from September 15-19, 2008, included Georgia's Minister for Reintegration Temur Iakobashvili, Justice and Freedom Association Director Irakli Sesiashvili, Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) Director Tamar Kaldani, and Ministry of Refugees and Displacement representative Mariana Nanobashvili.

The online discussion allowed forum participants to hear the guest experts' opinions on the recent conflict, question NGO leaders on their plans for supporting IDPs, and report on those currently housed in Tbilisi shelters.

**Media Development:** IATP works towards developing free media by organizing different online events and training journalists.

- Fifteen journalists from several local TV companies and newspapers in Tbilisi and Telavi started using the computer and internet in their jobs after IATP training in September.
- ICT skills acquired at the IATP center in Khashuri, Georgia, helped Khashuri School No. 2 history teacher, freelance journalist, and active IATP user Jaba Labadze win a national media contest; Lebadze submitted articles on women in elections, domestic violence, problems at school, and gender balance issues in the Georgian Parliament.

### **IATP Expands its Outreach, Broadcasts on Georgian News Outlets**

IATP centers in Tbilisi and Gori are reaching wider audiences in their efforts to promote IATP activities and the opportunities that IT training can provide. This success stems from the centers' new partnership with Georgian television stations, which are broadcasting reports from IATP centers on both local and national channels.

On March 29, 2009, the Tbilisi IATP Center launched a month-long training session for 20 citizens on computer and internet basics, online job search skills, and effective resume writing. The training was a joint effort between IATP, Tbilisi City Hall, and Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC). IREX Education Programs Manager Chris Walters, Tbilisi City Hall Economic Policy Deputy George Gagoshidze, and CRRC Regional Coordinator Aaron Erlich attended the opening session. The event was covered by *Imedi*, a local TV channel, and rebroadcast the following day on Georgian national television (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lEVs-od-Vo>).

On April 1, 2009, the Shida Kartli regional television channel informed residents of IATP's ICT for Journalists presentation, held at the Gori IATP Center for 12 graduating journalism majors from Gori University. The television program highlighted how these aspiring journalists learned about the benefits of applying ICT in their work. Participants were given an overview of simplified data collection and processing, online information access, blogging, and word processing skills that they could use in their career. Following the presentation, Gori student Madona Khetaguri said, "I am a future journalist and all the information I acquired at this presentation will be very useful for me in my professional work. The most interesting was blog technology – that was new for me. I am thinking about enrolling for training in this."

With help of Georgian mass media, IATP centers showcased their work and showcased ICT possibilities to numerous television viewers.

***Building Community:*** IATP is committed to helping civil society actors unite their communities and provide better services to the disabled through technology and ICT training.

- An IATP online forum connected the family of a child suffering from brain cancer in Telavi with a public official in the capital who helped raise money to pay for her life-saving surgery, including a \$1,850 donation from the Open Society Georgia Foundation.
- Representatives of the NGO *GEA*, which serves people with disabilities, completed a grant-writing and fundraising course at the Tbilisi IATP Center; using the newly acquired skills they received \$7,678 in funding from the Open Society Georgia Foundation and the Kashuri Municipality.

### **Georgian NGO Raises over \$7,678 in Grants for Project Focusing on Disabled Children with IATP Assistance**

The NGO "GEA" assists disabled children in Khasuri, Georgia, by training educators to meet the special needs of their students, renovating the kindergarten, and producing a video about the importance of inclusive education. All these activities were made possible due to grants – totaling over \$7,678 – from local and international donors as a result of skills GEA staff acquired from IATP training. Throughout the fall, IATP trained GEA and other NGOs working with the disabled in computer and internet skills. The training culminated in a week-long course, sponsored by the IATP center in Tbilisi in October 2007, where participants learned the fundamentals of fundraising and grant writing.

American fundraising expert Kathy Starostka guided training participants through the entire grant proposal writing process, including setting realistic goals, proper planning and budgeting, and engaging partners to ensure cost-sharing. After GEA representatives completed the course, they started working on an actual proposal for their newly founded NGO, which addresses the problems of the disabled.

GEA searched online for grant opportunities throughout October at the IATP center in Tbilisi. As a result of their work, their project "Development of Inclusive Education for Khashuri Kindergarten # 7" received \$4,358 from the Open Society Georgia Foundation (<http://osgf.ge/>) and \$3,320 from the Kashuri Municipality government.

Kindergarden #7 in Kashuri is slated to become the only inclusive public school in Georgia for children in grades below the first grade. Due to GEA's efforts, 12 disabled children have already been integrated into the general class. To further its mission, GEA researched additional funders at the local IATP center, submitted grant applications, and won a \$1,000 grant from the Rotary Foundation. With the money from the new grant and technical support from IATP, GEA

created a public service announcement (PSA) about the importance of inclusive education, to be shown on Georgian Public Broadcasting starting June 1 – International Children’s Day.

“If it were not for IATP’s effort of organizing the grant writing training, we probably would never be able to receive these grants. We simply could not afford to pay a professional to complete the grant proposals for us. But with the help of Kathy Starostka and IATP we wrote the proposals ourselves and we succeeded,” stated the President of GEA Khatuna Ghavtadze.

### **III. SUSTAINIBILITY**

The Gori IATP Center that opened in January 2008 was graduated on December 10, 2009. The center was opened as a response to meet the evolving needs of those affected by the August 2008 conflict with Russia, including the large new community of IDPs relocated to Gori from South Ossetia. The *Gori State University* which is IATP partner will maintain the program after graduation, continuing to offer free internet access and ICT training not only to university students but to the public as well, with a particular focus on IDPs. The current administrator, who is an IT professor at the university, will be retained as administrator of the center.

Over the last year, IATP successfully graduated four centers in Georgia in Tbilisi, Khashuri, Telavi, and Batumi, and the center in Gori became the final IIC in December. The total number of IICs in Georgia was raised to 13. IICs are mostly housed in universities, NGOs, and public libraries.

A few of particularly successful IICs are located in Batumi and Kutaisi. The Batumi IIC is located in the Batumi Public Library. It is fully funded by the local government budget covering internet costs and staff salary. All services remain free to the public including daily internet access as well as regular training courses in computer basics, internet basics and Microsoft Office suite. The center has about 150-200 users per month. The majority of their users are students, teachers, the unemployed seeking jobs, and entrepreneurs.

The Kutaisi IIC, located in the Academy of Science Library, graduated in September of 2008. It is dedicated to offering free internet access two hours everyday and free ICT training on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in computer and internet basics, MS Office programs, wiki development, blogging, Web design and Adobe Photoshop. They also have introduced paid training to help keep the center sustainable. Due to the high quality training and established reputation, they have been quite successful. They experience 100-120 users per month including many students, teachers, entrepreneurs, and NGO representatives.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW**

During the period of IATP operation in Kazakhstan, the number of internet users in the country significantly grew. In 2007, reportedly 2.7% of the population used the internet and there were approximately 17 computers for every 100 residents in Kazakhstan. IATP also witnessed the increased liberalization of the telecommunications market. As of late 2007, there were five first-tier ISPs that have independent channels to the internet. State-owned Kazakhtelecom was responsible for connecting the country’s major cities and operating the national data transfer network. Unfortunately, the majority of Kazakhstan’s population did not have access to computers or the internet due to the uneven development of cities and rural areas.

The Kazakh government has made critical steps towards its goal of being the main center for internet development in Central Asia. It has also, however, created a complex, multilayered system to regulate and monitor internet use, which hinders further development. The government has also developed strategies to regulate and filter internet activity. Additionally, Kazakhstan's Security Council publishes a list of websites that should be blocked or banned every six months. Further, ISPs have to record customer internet activity and prohibit the transmission of extremist or harmful content.

Recently, the government has demonstrated considerable interest in using the internet as a means to develop government sites and Web portals to provide citizens with information on topics ranging from small business start-up guidelines to health and human service reports. The government also pledged to alter the regulatory structure that gives it great control over internet access and has made it a goal to increase internet access in rural areas. Increased use of the internet by politicians and political parties is an encouraging sign that the government holds a positive view of internet development in Kazakhstan. The private sector has also demonstrated an interest in developing access, forecasting a dramatic increase in the number of internet users in Kazakhstan. As a result, several first-tier ISPs have developed under the liberalization of the country's telecommunications regime.

The internet has been used by different political parties to reach out to the population and advocate important issues. The involvement of politicians and the rising numbers of internet users demonstrated the increasing influence of the internet in the country. In 2008, Kazakhstan developed a tri-lingual e-government portal ([www.e.gov.kz](http://www.e.gov.kz)), which contains information on health and education services, establishing a business, government institutions in Kazakhstan, Kazakh citizenship, and information for foreigners.

## **II. IATP IN KAZAKHSTAN**

IATP began operating in Kazakhstan in 1995. During USAID funding, IREX administrated four centers in Kazakhstan located in Atyrau, Almaty, Kyzyl-Orda, and Petropavlosk. Centers in Kyzyl-Orda and Petropavlosk were graduated in August 2007. During this period 1,563 new users were registered at the IATP centers and 784 attended computer trainings offered free of charge.

IATP activity begins in Kazakhstan: **1995**

Center locations: **Atyrau, Almaty, Kyzyl-Orda and Petropavlosk**

# **users** (since June 2007): **5,840**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **784**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **5,840**

### **Major accomplishments in Kazakhstan include:**

***People with Disabilities:*** IATP knows that seemingly simple tasks, such as basic technological training, can have a big impact on individuals' lives.

- The IATP center in Atyrau trained eight handicapped individuals in basic computer and internet skills. The training session was part of an IATP project which aims to guarantee equal rights for the disabled through greater knowledge about IT. Participants received certifications, found employment, and created websites.

## **Afghan Veterans Use IT Training in Community**

Ten disabled veterans of the Voluntary Society of Veterans of War in Afghanistan are using their ICT skills to build and serve their community in Almaty, Kazakhstan, following a series of IATP computer and internet courses from February 4 to 16, 2008. “Our improved IT skills help to fulfill our mission for disabled people. Now we can interact with each other using email,” commented the organization’s director Sergey Turumkulovich Mahashev. He added, “Using internet resources, we manage to coordinate our work better and find useful information for our activities.”

**Media:** Through technical training efforts, IATP helped journalists to do a better job reporting on important information and reaching out to their constituents.

## **Journalists Improve Ability to Conduct Research and Share Information**

As the first outcome of collaboration between IATP and the EC-funded MediaNet project, young journalists in Kazakhstan created blogs and learned computer skills at the IATP center in Almaty, Kazakhstan in late 2007.

Eleven young journalists from the Media School at the MediaNet International Center of Journalism completed a course on internet and blogging conducted by MediaNet trainer Erkimbay Askhat at the IATP center in Almaty from November 12 to 16, 2007. Askhat commented, “The training helped our young journalists to improve their knowledge of using internet, because we want to produce well-educated journalists possessing the ability to use new media tools in Kazakhstan.”

As a result of the seminar “How to Manage Your Own Kazakh Blog,” several journalists started their own blogs (<http://kenzhebek.wordpress.com/>), (<http://aleymet.blogspot.com/>), (<http://yesengul.wordpress.com/>), and (<http://kamshat.blogspot.com/>). Fifteen journalists attended the seminar conducted by journalist Erkimbay Askhat at the IATP center in Almaty on November 23, 2007. The journalists were from *Azzatyq*, the Kazakh Service of Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, and the *Turkystan, Ana Tili*, and *Aikyn* newspapers. Askhat introduced participants to his own blog and taught them to create and maintain their own blogs. Astana TV covered the event on November 26, 2007.

**Health Promotion:** Technology can play a valuable role in disseminating critical health information in rural areas.

- Doctors and nurses in Almaty participated in computer and internet training and in a workshop on Moodle, an open-source e-learning platform. Workshop participants visited various medical portals, learned how to get a consultation online, and read about different types of medicines and prescription drugs.
- The IATP center in Almaty responded to a request from the Almaty Medical College to retrain their nursing students in the use of technology for medical research and hospital administration. IATP training has significantly improved the nurses’ qualifications and made sure that the latest methods and information on medical care are key components of the learning process at one of the country’s premier medical training institutes.

## **Distance Learning Brings Modern Treatment Techniques to Hospitals in Almaty**

As the first outcome of collaboration between IATP and the Educational Information Center of the Almaty Medical College and ZdravPlus, more than 110 doctors and nurses from Almaty hospitals learned computing and internet search skills at the IATP center in Almaty through

distance learning technology since June 2007. “Nowadays, most medical institutions use computers to diagnose their patients and file the case story,” remarked Gulnar Erdesova, Head of the Center of Retraining for nurses, on the importance of computer literacy. “The IATP training helped our medical staff to improve information technology skills and use distance learning for improving their qualifications to better serve the community.”

### **Users Search for Information and Answers in IATP Initiatives on Domestic Violence and Medicine**

In October 2007, specialists and non-specialists alike utilized online technology to access and share information to help women combat domestic violence and medical professionals to improve the services they provide.

Government officials, specialists, and the general public shared their thoughts on domestic violence, and suggestions for addressing it, in an online discussion entitled, “Violence in the Family: A Crime without Punishment?” Communicating from the IATP centers in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Atyrau, and Almaty on October 30, 2007, participants debated a number of important questions, including why many women do not report problems and are reluctant to obtain assistance from appropriate institutions. They also discussed how to improve general awareness of the issue of domestic violence, to expand the work of existing crisis centers, and to lobby for necessary changes in relevant laws.

Nineteen medical professionals from Almaty hospitals have access to a wider array of medical resources, thanks to a course they completed at the IATP center in Almaty in October 2007. As part of their training, participants explored various relevant websites, such as the Russian Medical Portal, Kazakhstan’s Medical-Pharmaceutical Portal, and the Medical Affairs Center in the Office of the President of Kazakhstan. They also attended a workshop on Moodle, an open source e-learning platform. The event was part of IATP’s Med initiative implemented in cooperation with the Educational-Information Center of Almaty Medical College and ZdravPlus, a USAID funded consortium which provided over 75 medical professionals with courses in information technology and internet access.

### ***Youth and Education***

- Thirty educators from different regions of Kazakhstan are now proficient in using computers to create documents, search for information online, and introduce information technology into their teaching after attending training led by the Republican Institute of Capacity Building of Educators at the IATP center in Almaty.
- Two IATP center volunteers in Atyrau and two employees of IATP’s partner Regional Scientific Universal Library organized an online exhibition of books and publications on several themes related to Kazakhstan after attending a course on graphics editing and presentation software at the IATP center in Atyrau.

### **Independent Internet Center in Ust-Kamenogorsk Hosts Online Conference on Web 2.0**

Librarians, students, and university tutors discussed Web 2.0, which is used to describe collaborative and interactive uses of the Web, in an online conference at a sustainable former IATP center in Ust-Kamenogorsk. Since becoming self-sustaining in 2005, the Independent Internet Center (IIC) located at the East Kazakhstan Regional Library has been a hub of information and communications technology development activity in the region.

In the discussion, moderated by IIC Administrator Zhanna Tsenova, 12 participants from Ust-Kamenogorsk, Zyryanovsk, Shemonaikha and Beskaragai regions shared their opinions on the

uses, advantages, and disadvantages of Web 2.0. University student Yerzhan Kairbekov described Web 2.0 as “a new stage of the World Wide Web, which allows users to do more than just retrieve information.” Oleg Khagai, assistant professor of East-Kazakhstan State Technical University in Ust-Kamenogorsk, contributed to the discussion, noting “I am very pleased that during the last years internet technologies have become very popular and useful.” He continued, “With this new stage of Web development people now have more abilities in using the internet in various spheres.” Conference participants commented on their experience using Web 2.0 in study, work and everyday life. Despite varying opinions, participants concluded that Web 2.0 is ushering in a new era, when the Internet consists not only of sites, but contributes to people’s skills, experience and interaction.

### **III. SUSTAINIBILITY**

Two core IATP centers were maintained in Almaty and Atyrau during IATP’s operation in Kazakhstan. The two centers became Independent Internet Centers (IICs) with the program’s conclusion in June 2008. The center in Almaty was housed at the State Children’s Library, which covers all costs and maintains the center within its budget. The partner will continued to provide all free services, and has plans to bring in teachers from area libraries and send their staff (who have been working with our staff and using our training modules) to train other librarians outside Almaty. The partner organization also plans to conduct outreach to students from orphanages and parents of library users to participate in training at the center in Almaty.

Kazakhstan’s other IICs are among the most active and successful among the IATP network. IICs that participated in IATP programs are located in Karaganda, Kyzylorda, Petropavlovsk, Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, and Uralsk.

## **KYRGYZSTAN**

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW**

Internet technology in Kyrgyzstan has been rapidly growing during these past few years. According to the International Development Research Center, the main factors of development included the expansion of the private sector’s demand for access to ICT to promote business growth, improvements in IT infrastructure due to loans received from international organizations, and the high intellectual potential of the citizenry – one out of eight Kyrgyzstan adults has a university degree. During the early phase of IATP in Kyrgyzstan, there were several telecom operators who offer television, mobile, paging, and traditional telephone communication services. The country has ten commercial and four non-commercial ISPs, and the ISPs’ backbone information infrastructure constantly expanded. A national strategy on ICT’s role in Kyrgyzstan’s development was established, and this strategy sets the basic priorities, tasks, and objectives for governmental policy in the ICT sector. Despite those improvements, however outside of the capital city, Kyrgyz Telecom remains the sole internet provider.

Although at times it seemed that Kyrgyzstan’s government restricted and regulated the internet, this did not occur, and politically, developments regarding ICT and internet connectivity were positive. The government continued to display a strong interest in IT and e-government initiatives, which will help to facilitate future cooperation, as well as provide information to citizens. The country still lacks legislature addressing issues, such as non-authorized access to information via the internet, and the use of pirated software, but it is hoped that this will be addressed in the future. ICT infrastructure needs to be further developed so that reliable and

affordable internet service can be provided to rural or mountainous regions, but this will take increased investment by local and international businesses and development groups.

## **II. IATP IN KYRGYZSTAN**

IATP began operating in Kyrgyzstan in 1995. At the time of USAID funding, six centers were administered by IREX in Balykchy, Bishkek, Jalalabad, Karakol, Nookat, and Talas. IATP centers offered hands-on training, internet access, and a variety of technology-related events to citizens. IATP program ended in Kyrgyzstan by May 2008. Between June 2007 and May 2008 2,181 number of new users were registered and 502 number attended free trainings offered by IATP.

IATP activity begins in Kyrgyzstan: **1995**

Center locations: **Balykchy, Bishkek, Jalalabad, Karakol, Nookat, Talas**

# **users** (since June 2007): **8,171**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **502**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **88,604**

### **Major accomplishments in Kyrgyzstan include:**

From 2007-2008, IATP made significant strides in providing internet access to a growing number of Kyrgyzstan's citizens. Interest in internet access and training on how to use ICT was high in Kyrgyzstan and as a result, IATP found its centers and services in high demand. Together with a network of already established local Independent Internet Centers (IICs) across the country, IATP and its partners provided information on unemployment to citizens and the means to improve their job marketability with technology training. This training was expanded upon in teaching citizens how to use technology to learn how to develop a small business, which was especially important in rural areas where unemployment is proportionally higher. Other achievements include increasing the role and participation of women in government, increasing interest in civil society, providing technology training to healthcare professionals, and promoting the use of ICT for youth development and in the media.

**Women and Government:** IREX coordinated a series of online forums during which participants addressed effective mechanisms for achieving equity in government representation.

- Discussions hosted on IATP servers helped the League of Female Voters of Bishkek (LFVB) mobilize advocates throughout the country, reach out to potential supporters, and coordinate their efforts.
- After the online conversations, the Parliamentary Committee on Social and Gender Policies approved amendments to Kyrgyzstan's Election Code that would introduce a political party quota system for female parliamentary candidates.
- Twenty female leaders from Karakol, Bishkek, Jalalabad, Nookat and Balykchi met with Zamira Akbagysheva, the President of the Congress of Women in Kyrgyzstan on March 4 for an online discussion of current issues concerning women and politics, economics, and culture.

## **Movements toward Achieving Equity in Government Representation**

In spring 2007, more than sixty women leaders, government officials, journalists and community activists joined together online to coordinate and discuss a campaign promoting gender balance in Kyrgyzstan's government. IREX has coordinated a series of online meetings in which participants addressed effective mechanisms for achieving equity in government representation.

IREX partnered with the League of Female Voters of Bishkek (LFVB) to support this advocacy initiative aimed at promoting changes in the country's election code. Hosted on IATP servers, discussions have been moderated by LFVB Board of Trustees director Gulia Riskulova. These online discussions have helped the LFVB to mobilize advocates throughout the country in reaching out to potential supporters, and to coordinate their efforts.

The advocacy campaign demonstrated the effectiveness of online coordination and discussion. In June 2007, after these discussions, the Parliamentary Committee on Social and Gender Policies approved amendments into Kyrgyzstan's Election Code that would introduce a political party quota system for women running for the country's Parliament.

The forum served as a launching point for a series of discussions on mechanisms for establishing a gender balance in Kyrgyzstan's political system and brought together nearly thirty women leaders from six cities throughout the country.

**Unemployment:** IATP used its centers, training sessions, and events to promote new skill development and discussions about employment conditions.

- As a result of IATP computer courses, residents of Nookat found employment with local organizations, while residents from Bishkek, Balykchy, Nookat, Karakol, and Talas improved their resume writing and job search skills.
- IATP organized an online discussion centered on the issue of unemployment. Discussion participants shared knowledge on applying for jobs, writing effective resumes, and interviewing well.

## **Unemployed Citizens of Kyrgyzstan Find Work after Training**

In February 2008, 27 individuals from across Kyrgyzstan improved their job search skills with the assistance of IATP courses, resulting in new employment opportunities for five individuals in Nookat.

Five residents of Nookat found employment with local organizations thanks to the knowledge and skills gained at IATP computer courses held from February 11-15, 2008. In particular, Meerim Kochonova was hired by the Nookat Regional Department of Agriculture and Gulida Kalandarova became an administrator of the Center for Civic Support.

Twenty-two residents from Bishkek, Balykchy, Nookat, Karakol, and Talas improved their resume writing and job search skills in courses at local IATP centers and online discussions February 15 and 18 of that same year. During the resume writing session, Balykchy IATP Center Administrator Sergei Erlih commented on the importance of volunteer work and inclusion of information on paid and unpaid internships on resumes. Participants learned about labor codes and the rights and responsibilities of the unemployed from Ainura Hashimova, a lawyer and instructor at Kyrgyzstan Law Academy. On February 18, Stella Bilalova, the co-author of a recent publication, *Job Search, Career and Professional Growth*, shared job search information and tips on organization databases, resume writing and interviewing. Bilalova also gave

recommendations on using the internet in the job search and links to websites containing vacancy announcements.

**Health Care:** IATP is committed to helping enhance Kyrgyz health services through technology.

- Nearly 30 doctors and nurses completed online courses as part of a collaborative initiative to support ZdravPlus, a USAID-funded program in Kyrgyzstan that aims to improve the financial sustainability, efficiency, equity of access, and quality of their health care.
- IATP assisted a health-focused NGO in developing seven more distance learning courses for medical professionals through IATP's network of centers and in transforming their website into a more dynamic and up-to-date information resource for doctors and nurses.

### **Health Care Providers Update Skills Online, Improve Medical Services to Rural Areas**

At an IATP-sponsored training, eighty-seven doctors and nurses from the rural care provider network Family Medicine Group (FMG) acquired computer skills needed to complete distance learning courses on topics from anatomy and care of bronchial asthma patients to up-to-date diagnosis and treatment methods. Medical services are improving as a result of the training, which was offered from April through December 2007 in cooperation with family medicine consultants STLI and the local NGO Family Medicine Specialists, and has contributed to the goals of the USAID-funded *ZdravPlus* Initiative. Distance learning is proving to be an effective and cost efficient way to train health care specialists, nearly 60 of whom have already completed online courses. Additionally, preliminary results of an ongoing study has found distance learning courses to be comparable in value to more logistically difficult and expensive in-person retraining.

In April 2008, IATP completed its Continuing Medical Education initiative to train medical specialists in rural areas in computer skills and in distance learning. Over ten months, the project, which was conducted jointly with the USAID funded Zdrav-PLUS consortium, trained over 100 doctors across Kyrgyzstan to use ICT to access medical information online and create their own online resources.

**Small Business Development:** Small business throughout Kyrgyzstan have benefitted from ICT skills training with individualized development and exposure to best media practices.

- In 2007, over 50 farmers across Kyrgyzstan attended IATP courses on spreadsheet calculations, internet searches, and e-mail. One farmer concluded, "Our website will help us develop and simplify our communication with Kyrgyz and foreign farmers."
- In an online discussion, students and representatives of the business community gathered at IATP centers for an online discussion with the chief executive of a microcredit agency. Participants learned about the necessity of small business growth and government programs designed to support such progress.

### **IATP Adds Technology Components to Business and Farming Development Initiatives**

Farmers in Kyrgyzstan can reach potential partners and customers through a new website and future business managers in Turkmenistan are poised to more efficiently manage their accounts as a result of IATP-sponsored training in November 2007.

Irina Bolotbekova, a representative of the USAID-funded Farmer-to-Farmer Program administered by Winrock International (WI), developed an official website for the organization ([www.winrock.kg](http://www.winrock.kg)) after completing a Web design course at the IATP center in Bishkek from November 19 to 23, 2007. The website is a result of an IATP initiative implemented in cooperation with WI and the Kyrgyz Farmers' Association to help farmers improve the way they sell produce and understand the market using information technology. Bolotbekova learned to set up a website with the User Friendly Content Management system in order to make website maintenance easier and more convenient. In 2007, over 50 farmers throughout Kyrgyzstan attended IATP courses on spreadsheet calculations, internet searching, and e-mail. Bolotbekova concluded, "Our website will help us develop and simplify our communication with Kyrgyz and foreign farmers."

### **III. SUSTAINIBILITY**

In April 2008, the IATP centers in Kyrgyzstan prepared for transition to Independent Internet Centers (IICs). IATP staff prepared lists of inventory to be handed over to partner organizations, and in May 2008, all the IATP centers and equipment were successfully transferred to the partners. In Balykchy, the partner organization, the Umut-Balykchy Resource Center for the Elderly, worked with IATP staff to apply for and receive a grant from the Social Integration and Security of the Elderly program, which is financed by ICCO (Netherlands) and DCA (Denmark). The grant provides funding to maintain and staff the center, which offers computer services, training, and social activities to the region's elderly population. The partner in Balykchy also began a new project geared at volunteers to help support the center. The center in Bishkek rendered fee-based services in the amount of 856 soms (approximately \$24).

By the end of March 2008, telephone lines and internet service at all of the IATP centers were reregistered under the partner's name. Beginning in April, internet and phone bills were to be fully or partially paid by the partner organizations. The partner in Bishkek already covered internet and phone expenses for the IATP center and continued to do so. The IATP center in Jalalabat moved to the premises of the Jalalabat State University and the new partner installed a high-speed internet connection and phone lines. They also covered all of the costs of the center as part of its budget, and provided greater public access to its resources at the center. In March 2008, the center in Karakol earned money from paid services and began paying the center's phone bill and created a sustainability plan. The Talas State University has divided its resources and will be using the experience they gained working with IATP to open an internet access center with a computer classroom.

## **MOLDOVA**

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW**

Internet access increased rapidly in Moldova in the fall of 2007, though it remained well behind neighboring countries. The number of users in Moldova was set to double in 2007, and reached a penetration rate of about 23.4% by the end of September, over the previous year's 11.6%. This preliminary data has been provided by the National Regulatory Agency for Telecommunications and Informatics (ANRTI). According to ANRTI, Moldovan citizens primarily connect to the internet via mobile phone technology, followed by dial-up connections and broadband access. The state-owned MoldTelecom currently holds 59% of the internet market, while Starnet and

Sun Communications hold 13% and 12% of the market respectively.

Moldova has seven first-tier ISPs, and there are eleven ISPs that operate outside of the capital city, Chisinau. The telecommunications sector was liberalized in 2004 due to requirements set by the World Trade Organization, and the state has formally committed itself to developing Moldova's information resources. The government adopted a national ICT strategy with the European Union, and with pressure from the large diaspora, who wanted better channels for communication and for sending remittances. Additionally, laws have been drafted on creating broader access to the internet.

Although technology development has been a government priority, Moldova has one of the lowest levels of internet development in Eastern Europe. Despite efforts to further expand the country's IT sector, Moldova faces many challenges for future growth. First and foremost, the IT sector suffers from poor infrastructure and high costs. The country's telecommunications sector is dominated by MoldTelecom, and most internet service providers (ISPs) rely on Moldtelecom's infrastructure and use it as an internet exchange point. Further, the majority of the population is unable to afford access to the internet.

A survey conducted among more than 600 businesses determined that less than half of the businesses surveyed had internet connection. The survey also revealed that businesses in urban areas use the internet three times more often than businesses in rural areas. Overall, 52.6% of the businesses surveyed used dial-up connections and 39.7% used broadband technologies to access the internet. The year 2009 saw heightened government attention to and involvement in ICT development discussions. Minister of Information Development Pavel Buceatchi chaired a roundtable at the ICT conference "COMINFO Moldova 2009" in April 2009 to explore the role of state structures, educational institutions, organizations and enterprises, private companies, and civil society in developing an information society in Moldova.

## II. IATP IN MOLDOVA

IATP began operating in Moldova in 1998. During USAID funding, program sustained three core IATP centers and one Independent Internet Center (IIC) to train users in ICT skills and provide access to the internet free of charge. A new IATP center was opened in Tiraspol – the capital city of the separatist region Transnistria - in May 2008. There were some initial concerns about the stability of the Tiraspol center, as IATP's partner office was repossessed by the local authorities. Despite this hurdle, the IATP partner continued to meet its support obligations. IATP expanded to new areas in Moldova and officially opened a new center on December 19, 2008, in Comrat with support from USAID and Gagauzia's Department of Education. Comrat is located in the region of Gagauzia, which has semi-independent status within Moldova. Representatives from USAID, local authorities, IATP, and the media from Comrat and Chisinau participated in the official opening of the Comrat IATP Center.

IATP activity begins in Moldova: **1998**

Center locations: **Chisinau, Comrat, Tiraspol, Causeni**

# **users** (since June 2007): **3,712**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **1,964**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **38,099**

# **of training sessions** (since June 2007): **366**

### **Major accomplishments in Moldova include:**

During the USAID funded period, IATP in Moldova worked with various stakeholders, conducted training for different focus groups and administered several special projects. In collaboration with Moldova's Ministry of the Education, IATP implemented the country-wide project Information Technologies Applied to Librarians' Activities (ICT4Librarians). The project was implemented in Chisinau, Soroca, and Cahul. IATP also administered the Tech Age Girls project, which gave a selected group of girls from vulnerable communities the chance to gain advanced IT and leadership skills. Additionally, through IATP's MedIT Project, IATP and Moldova's Ministry of Health Care and Social Protection worked together to build the capacity of the country's medical services staff.

**Combating Human Trafficking:** According to the International Organization for Migration, of the nation's 4.5 million citizens, unofficial figures estimate that over 600,000 Moldovan nationals work abroad – many of whom are employed illegally in Western Europe. Women and minors are considered the most vulnerable groups and suffer from high levels of economic impoverishment and often lack access to information. IATP thus worked with vulnerable populations to raise awareness of the dangers of human trafficking:

- Students from Moldova State University broadened their awareness of human trafficking issues and anti-trafficking resources at a seminar hosted by the Chisinau IATP Center in collaboration with the anti-trafficking NGO La Strada.
- Twelve orphaned girls learned computing and internet search skills, with a focus on trafficking prevention materials, at a series of courses from March 3 to 13, 2008, at the IATP center in Chisinau as part of the Tech Age Girls (TAG) project.

### **Young Moldovan Women Newly Armed with IT Skills Learn Risks of Human Trafficking**

On June 3, 2008 IATP's Tech Age Girls (TAG) program in Moldova partnered with the USAID-funded New Perspectives for Women program to host a seminar to raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking geared towards TAG participants, all of whom are from disadvantaged families. The TAG program in Moldova was designed to equip young and underprivileged women with the tools necessary to overcome economic disparities, bridge the digital divide, and secure a brighter future.

New Perspectives for Women trainers Olga Pilipciuc, Vica Tozlovanu, and Constantin Bulbas organized a presentation about the risks of human trafficking in Moldova. TAG participants learned the importance of researching recruiters and potential employers as some of the trainer's relatives were victims of trafficking and labor exploitation after agreeing to work abroad. During the presentation, trainees utilized IATP center resources and surveyed anti-trafficking legislation such as the National Anti-Trafficking Plan of Action ([www.osce.org/documents/pdf\\_documents/2005/02/13429-1.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/pdf_documents/2005/02/13429-1.pdf)) and the United Nations' Convention against Transnational Organized Crime ([www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_eng.pdf)).

After reviewing official legislation on trafficking, the TAG participants discussed measures the government should take to avoid trafficking, including instituting harsher punishments for perpetrators, providing free legal aid for victims, and collaborating with other countries in the implementation of anti-trafficking activities. Some participants mentioned that they were planning to find a job abroad but after participating in the seminar, they would try to realize

their potential in Moldova and would educate their friends on the risks of foreign employment. Natalia Suveica commented, "It is very important to know about the dangers of trafficking and I think that people should pay more attention to this so we can contribute to preventing it."

**Youth:** Access to the internet has a profound effect on youth, enabling them to connect to family and friends and providing positive outlets and skills to disadvantaged populations.

- Through IATP's Tech Age Girls (TAG) project nearly 100 young women in Chisinau, Balti, Ungheni, Comrat, Cauşeni, and Soroca benefited from in-depth ICT skills and leadership training. Four countrywide online discussions introduced the Tech Age Girls to prominent women and gave them the opportunity to apply their skills in their communities. The participants created their own blogs and websites, giving a voice to young rural women while offering them the skills to find job and educational opportunities.
- IATP staff helped a TAG participant reconnect with her mother who is living abroad; estrange for seven years the participant used e-mail and internet resources at the IATP center to contact her mother, and send photos of herself and her brothers.
- University students learned about tolerance towards those infected with HIV/AIDS during role-playing exercises at the IATP center in Chisinau. With IATP internet resources and expertise from the Youth for Right to Life Association (YRTL), the event covered HIV/AIDS prevention and shared information about HIV testing centers.
- Seventeen-year-old TAG participant Nina Ivanova implemented the "New Generation in the Field of Computer Technologies" project in her community of Chisinau, Moldova.

### **Young People Improve Academic Performance and Public Activism Skills**

State University of Moldova students Elena Balatel, Olesea Miriuta, and Zinaida Covalji are now better students and more active public citizens thanks to IATP.

Balatel and Miriuta used their new skills to participate in a grant proposal competition conducted by the International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF) Moldova – but they did more than participate. These young women won a grant to support creation of a youth newspaper called "Megaphone." Another training, jointly organized by IATP and the International Republican Institute (IRI), equipped them with the knowledge to become politically active.

The two young women are members of Moldova's Liberal Party and used the IATP training opportunities to learn how to create and register a political organization, as well as how to convey ideas to a public audience. Balatel commented, "Participating in this program is still showing us the way to new opportunities. At present, in addition to this [political activity] and our social life, we are working towards degrees in plant and animal physiology using the resources of the IATP center."

Foreign language student Zinaida Covalji organized a week of language training sessions using resources from IATP to teach her skills to others. Language skills are an important need for young Moldovans, many of whom seek to utilize their skills outside the small domestic market.

**Promoting Legal Rights:** IATP helped citizens use technology to learn about their rights.

- A college student from Chisinau succeeded in defending her legal rights to purchase an apartment after attending an IATP awareness-raising seminar that focused on the content and protection of students' rights and construct a secure and legal contract.
- IATP in cooperation with USAID-funded Winrock International implemented the New Perspectives for Women project to provide technology-related skills for women.
- A group of young women in Comrat, Moldova, united their efforts in the struggle against family violence to raise awareness of the problem among local residents; student and Tech Age Girls (TAG) project finalist Tatiana Turcan initiated an anti-violence project.
- After completing an IATP workshop in January, a woman in Chisinau began training disabled children and adults who are members of the NGO *Motivatia*. The NGO was created in 2007 to unite people with physical disabilities, help them protect their rights, and provide them with legal and educational support.

### **Student Defends Her Legal Rights Following Seminar**

Irina Betianu, a college student from Chisinau, succeeded in defending her legal rights in purchasing an apartment due to an awareness raising seminar at the IATP center on December 21, 2008. The seminar, led by Moldova State University law professor Vasilie Fotescu and organized by IATP, focused on the content and protection of students' legal and human rights. Betianu drew upon the seminar in order to complete a transparent purchase of an apartment, despite the attempts of the owner to ignore some steps of the process and gloss over some facts, while writing the agreement in difficult language and delaying signing without stating a reason. Using the knowledge she acquired at the seminar, and with additional help from Fotescu, Betianu found out how to construct a secure and legal contract, where to get assistance with legal questions, and how to use her rights to her advantage. Betianu commented, "I'm very glad that I attended this seminar and could find a way of solving my problem. In our country not many know their rights. This is why they are often violated."

***Economic Development:*** IATP is contributing to the development of small businesses in Moldova by giving citizens necessary tools and skills to succeed.

- IATP's MedIT Project, IATP and Moldova's Ministry of Health Care and Social Protection is building the capacity of the country's medical services staff; over 350 medical professionals from Chisinau, Balti, Ungheni, Comrat, Orhei, and Soroca accessed the country's latest medical techniques, created websites for their institutions, and participated in countrywide online discussions to share best practices.
- Local administrations in four Moldovan districts improved the quality and efficiency of their work due to newly obtained skills from a training series co-sponsored by the IATP center in Chisinau and the NGO Center for Assistance to Public Authorities (CAAP).
- Following training in Chisinau, 35 medical doctors from city hospitals and medical centers created four wiki pages dedicated to current issues in the field of medicine.
- Moldovan NGO Biaz Gul (White Rose) won a second project grant with assistance from IATP. The NGO advocates for the rights and social reintegration of people living with HIV/AIDS. The \$3,000 grant was provided by the Soros Foundation.
- IATP trainee Andrei Borshevski launched a website for the NGO Equality in April 2009, seeking to defend women's legal rights, promote greater female representation in government, increase women's access to education, and combat human trafficking.

### **Internet Helps Farmers in Moldova Work Efficiently, Cut Costs**

As a result of IATP training, farmers in Comrat, Moldova, are using the internet to improve their supply chain management skills and to advertise their services. The farmers reported that at the IATP center, they were able to find raw goods suppliers online and post announcements about their own goods at no cost. Using the internet in their work is helping the farmers save money on advertising and devote more funds to their goods.

Training participant Vasily Kylchik commented, "Having become acquainted with the internet, after only few lessons we could gather information on new technologies, the cultivation of agricultural crops, and successful experiences of other farmers. Even the weather forecast for the nearest ten days received in proper time helps our organization work more effectively."

Through follow-on training, the farmers learned how to create their own websites, which allow potential investors and individuals to receive information on goods and services offered by their farms, and also provide a platform to discuss the latest developments in agriculture in Moldova.

**ICT4Librarians:** Moldovan librarians improved the quality of their work by introducing modern technology into library services with the help of IATP.

- The ICT4Librarians project (<http://it4librarians.blogspot.com/>) co-implemented by the USAID-funded IATP program and the Ministry of Education of Moldova trained 50 librarians from Chisinau, Cahul, and Soroca.
- At the end of the five-week working session, the librarians acquired the skills and confidence to create a blog (<http://biblioteca-amtap.blogspot.com>) and wiki (<http://biblioteca-amtap.wikidot.com/start>) to exchange opinions and news.

### **Librarian's Persistence and Innovation brings Technology to Chisinau School**

A graduate of the IT4Librarians Project, Tatiana Cucereavii applied her new ICT skills to improve services at the Traian High School's library in Chisinau. After successfully completing the program in May, Cucereavii wasted no time demonstrating her new ICT skills to the school principal and successfully lobbying to have the school equipped with a brand new computer and an internet connection.

Cucereavii then worked throughout the summer vacation to create a temporary database for the library books using the knowledge of MS Excel she acquired through IATP training. Cucereavii explained that the Ministry of Education officials are planning to provide special database software for school libraries in Moldova but until then she plans to use the MS Excel database she created herself to check out books to students. The database allowed Cucereavii to spend more of her time on other duties.

"I was so happy to see that the director appreciated my new skills and trusted me enough to offer me a brand new computer for the library. This summer, I didn't waste any time and made great efforts to improve my work processes so that my job would be easier for me in the future."

Her colleagues, and fellow IATP trainees, Elena Cortac and Nadejda Pruteanu also received computers for their school libraries after following Cucereavii's lead in demonstrating their new ICT skills and advocating for the importance of technology in libraries.

## **III. SUSTAINIBILITY**

Moldova State University is IATP's partner organization in Chisinau. The university continued to operate the center after it graduated in December 2009. The partner agreed divide the center's time among the University's faculty and students and regular IATP operations.

The program in Moldova was scheduled to close on June 10, 2009, but the USAID Mission in Moldova suggested that additional funding could be available after IATP closed, and thus the program in Moldova was extended until December 10, 2009. The IATP center in Comrat is housed by the Gagauzian Department of Education and center in Tiraspol is housed by the NGO Information for Youth World Window. Both centers will continue operating for another year with additional USAID funding beginning in March 2010.

## TAJIKISTAN

### I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT – OVERVIEW

From 2007-2009, IATP has worked to train hundreds of Tajikistan citizens in information technology and access. Progress was difficult to achieve at times, due to infrastructure issues, but dedicated staff and a population, which stood to benefit kept training sessions and classes full of interested citizens. Partnerships among IATP's network of five centers throughout the country provided the program with considerable opportunities to reach out to populations across Tajikistan to offer technology skills development. Further, coordination with USAID and USAID-sponsored groups enabled IATP staff to target services to groups that could benefit most from training.

The political climate in Tajikistan allowed IATP to promote ICT development. The government demonstrated significant interest in improving ICT in educational institutions and at the government level. The government showed its interest in developing the country's ICT sector by activating the once dormant ICT Council in the Office of the President, opening a modern, electronic library in Dushanbe, and sending significant numbers of government employees to IATP-related training and events during the program period. The government's liberal approach to ICT also promoted the development and interest in e-government programs, enabling citizens to access information online and increasing the transparency of Tajikistan's government. Cooperation between the government and IATP was strong, and in the future, could result in increased IT access and expansion.

The IT sector in Tajikistan, while not developed to the fullest extent, is competitive and provides the population with consistent service. In Tajikistan, 11 internet service providers (ISPs) exist, alongside 11 mobile phone carriers. Legislation to place the mobile phone operators and the state telecommunications company on an equal price footing was passed in 2007. The IT sector also has an interest in improving quality of service, and has worked with the government to invest in new fiber optic lines to provide service to remote areas of the country. Infrastructure remains the largest obstacle to the expansion of IT and internet access in Tajikistan. Problems with electrical power service, amplified by difficult winter conditions, meant that in order to keep IATP centers open, electrical generators, fuel, and heating materials had to be acquired. This problem must be addressed so that Tajikistan's ISPs and their customers may enjoy consistent internet and ICT access.

Potential for continued work in Tajikistan is great and much could be accomplished with renewed funding for IATP programs. Funding would allow more IT training for target groups, such as migrants, which need access to information about migration services and law as they leave Tajikistan to work abroad. The program could increase its coordination with Tajikistan's government and play a key role in shaping and developing the government's largely

undetermined ICT policy. Likewise, expanding rural and remote access to training and information could also be accomplished with further funding, allowing citizens outside cities to learn about small business practices, how to improve agricultural production, and ensure that their rights are observed through increased government transparency and the ability to find information online. The establishment of a modern ICT center in Dushanbe would also be an outstanding result of continued IATP programming in Tajikistan, as it could work with journalists to improve their research and technical skills, train government employees to use technology to be more productive and responsive to their constituents, and also provide IATP with the opportunity to continue cooperating with and training USAID affiliated groups in need of computer access and skills.

Although much remains to be done in Tajikistan, a much has already been achieved. The narrative below demonstrates the progress of the IATP program in Tajikistan and illustrates the program's successful endeavors.

## **II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

IATP began operating in Tajikistan in 1999. As a result of funding from USAID, IATP supported six centers throughout the country. From June 2007-December 2009, approximately 82,693 citizens visited IATP centers and 624 attended IATP-sponsored training.

Center locations: **Dushanbe, Garm, Khorog, Khujand, Kulyab, and Kanibadam**

# **users** (since June 2007): **12,127**

# **trained** (since June 2007): **3,465**

# **of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **82,693**

# **of training sessions** (since June 2007): **624**

### **Major accomplishments in Tajikistan include:**

IATP's activities in Tajikistan supported the use of technology in several sectors, including government, civil society, health, migration, education, and rights. Throughout the program, IATP built partnerships with government and non-governmental organizations to ensure that the results achieved and products created would continue beyond the life of the program.

***Working with government institutions:*** Throughout the program, IATP continued to build partnerships with Tajikistan's government institutions. In particular, IATP concentrated its efforts on working with the government bodies relating to migration and health – two of Tajikistan's most critical issues.

- Every year, approximately 600,000 Tajiks, or 18% of the adult population, leave their country to seek seasonal or long-term work. IATP's Migration Management initiative improved opportunities and conditions for Tajik labor migrants by promoting IT education and public awareness of migration issues through online resources.
- Over 50 representatives of state and private job placement companies, officials of the Ministries of Education, Health, Labor, and Social Protection, as well as the National Bank of Tajikistan, discussed legal aspects and new legislature regarding labor migration

during a country-wide conference sponsored by IATP and the Migration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan (MSMIA).

- Officials of the Khujand City Health Center learned about electronic patient data storage, database creation, and Web design.
- With IATP training, city governments throughout Tajikistan launched valuable websites. As one city official noted, “These websites will enable local governments to disseminate information more efficiently to the public and will improve our communication with our population.”

### **Migration Officials Develop ICT Skills, Enhance Effectiveness at Work**

Government offices at the Migration Service in Tajikistan ([www.migratsiya.freenet.tj](http://www.migratsiya.freenet.tj)) do not suffer from lack of computers, modern office equipment, or internet connection. The problem, however, is that most of their employees do not know how to use the technology in front of them. Thus, IATP Tajikistan has been partnering with the Service over the last several years and in September, 13 more officials graduated from ICT training and are now better equipped to function in their modernized environment.

“Our offices have modern technology – each room has at least one printer and other technical equipment. Many of these officials, however, cannot effectively use them due to a lack of IT skills,” explains Senior Lieutenant Istat Shomirzoeva. “A few of our employees do possess ICT skills but when they are away, other staff members are not able to carry out the simplest tasks, such as typing a text.”

The 13 participants in September learned computer and internet basics, as well as MS Office applications. Following IATP training, the Service employees can now utilize the computers and other equipment, enhancing their overall efficiency in the organization. Their newly developed ICT skills make them more efficient at work and give them more time for other priorities.

Shomirzoeva, an IATP graduate herself, explains how much of her work has become much more efficient thanks to ICT knowledge. One of her duties is to prepare official responses from the Service and have the senior officer sign them. Before being trained in ICT, she said this whole process took her almost an hour. She had to hand-write the letter, then wait for it to be typed up by another, and then get it signed by the appropriate official. “Now that I can use the computer myself, it only takes me 20-30 minutes to complete this process – less than half the time it used to take.”

The internet basics training is also opening up new opportunities for government workers to establish online correspondence via e-mail with customers and colleagues in other locations, including abroad. Sergeant Ismoil Zokirov remarked, “We work with citizens on passport-related matters and closely cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other state bodies, and international organizations. Before attending training, we would receive an inquiry, for example, from Russia and have to use much more time consuming means such as the mail, fax, or telephone to respond to even the simplest of questions. Now, those of us that have ICT skills can respond immediately to requests and questions with a simple, quick e-mail.”

Between June 2007 and October 2009, more than 250 officials have completed IATP trainings within the framework of the Migration Management project.

**Journalism:** IATP trained journalists and media representatives in ICT skills to help them better inform their communities and create local content.

- A Radio *Ozodi* journalist and active IATP user received US Embassy funding for a \$1,600 project to improve journalism education in Khorog with a computer, printer, and training on IT tools in journalism.
- Journalists created a Wikipedia page for the newspaper *Jumhuriyat* after completing wiki courses at the IATP center in Dushanbe. The *Jumhuriyat* Deputy Editor-in-Chief remarked, “Thanks to IATP, we acquired computer skills that will assist us in our daily work. In addition, our newspaper went online.”
- More than 35 participants throughout Tajikistan participated in an online conference with the Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Dushanbe dedicated to World Press Freedom Day, which is commemorated every year on May 3.
- Young journalists from Khorog State University learned how to create blogs and online journals using the online platform WordPress during training conducted at the Khorog IATP Center.

### **Young Journalists Create Online Blogs and Journals**

Four young journalists from Khorog State University in Khorog, Tajikistan, learned how to create blogs and online journals using the web-based publishing platform WordPress during training conducted at the Khorog IATP Center from June 23-27, 2008. The training entitled “New Media Instruments: Blogs” was led by journalism professor at Khorog State University Vafo Safarov. Safarov had recently participated in Open Society Institute-sponsored training where he gained knowledge about information communication technologies techniques for journalism. As he noted, “I have been working as a journalist for two years. Most of the media groups in Tajikistan are still using the traditional way of disseminating information through newspapers...it is time for change and I decided to share my knowledge with young journalists because I believe that new method will develop journalism in Tajikistan.”

The training was divided into two parts. During the first part, Safarov explained the term “blog”, the difference between websites and blogs, and how journalists could utilize blogs in their work. The second part of the training, participants created their own blogs using WordPress. Training participants also created a new blog on the Pamir region, which feature news articles on the region collected from various online resources using Really Simple Syndication (RSS) technology (<http://pamirswakhi.wordpress.com/>).

**Small Business Development:** IATP promoted efforts to build small businesses throughout Tajikistan. IATP offered entrepreneurs training in ICT skills to enhance their services, secure funding, and promote their work.

- A university student used what he learned from IATP training to start his own business, which now provides services, such as photo printing, CD copying, photocopying, and world processing. After completing IATP Web design training, the young man created a website for his service center to promote his business.
- The director of Lola Farming House created a website for his organization with the skills he obtained from IATP. This online resource contains information about the farming

house and useful materials and tips for farmers, as well as a photo gallery, and allows him to communicate with his colleagues abroad.

- An honored scientist in Tajikistan credited IATP for providing her with computer skills and access to ICT resources at the IATP center in Dushanbe. IATP assisted the scientist and her colleagues in receiving \$633,000 in funding for their work.

### **IATP User Establishes His Own Business**

A student at the Institute of Languages at Kulyab State University in Tajikistan, Jovidon Pochoev completed basic computing, internet, graphics editing, and Web design courses since his first visit to the IATP center in Kulyab, Tajikistan in 2005. In late 2007, Pochoev utilized his new skills and started his own business, Jovid Service Center, which provides services including photo printing, CD copying, photocopying, and word processing. After completing IATP Web design training, Pochoev created a website for his service center (<http://jovid.freenet.tj>) to promote his business. “Thanks to IATP, I acquired information and technology skills and opened my business. Today many people go abroad as labor migrants. I think with the necessary knowledge and skills, it is possible to find a job or create your own [job],” remarked Pochoev. The new business owner is grateful for the training he received and volunteered to conduct a graphics editing course at the Kulyab IATP Center.

**Citizens’ Rights:** Participants came together at IATP centers throughout Tajikistan to express their opinions on the topics of women and religion, the rights of people with disabilities, access to education, and the prevention of torture.

- In the forum “Women and Religion: Problems and Prospects,” religious leaders, psychologists, NGO representatives, teachers, and students from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the United States, exchanged their thoughts and views on the subject.
- Participants in an IATP forum on preventing torture heard from a journalist and member of the Coalition Network Preventing Torture in Central Asia. The journalist provided participants with a definition of torture and shared information about relevant legislation on the topic in Central Asian countries.
- Through a series of IATP online forums, over 60 citizens, lawyers, advocates, nonprofit representatives, teachers, and students from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan shared their views on children’s rights and access to justice.

### **Woman with Disabilities from Tajikistan Uses ICT to Improve Her Life**

Sitora Kurbanova, a paraplegic, credits staff from IATP’s Independent Internet Center (IIC) in Kanibadam, Tajikistan, for teaching her the ICT skills that brought a positive change to her life. Kurbanova is one of thousands of disabled citizens in Eurasia who have grown personally and professionally thanks to information communication technology. Once lacking a career in Kandibadam, where economic conditions are poor, Kurbanova now leads a more fulfilling life in Russia working as an internet-based sales manager, teaching the children of Tajik migrant workers to use computers, and supporting her extended family in Tajikistan.

In November 2003, Kurbanova completed IATP’s step-by-step training and a few months later developed her own website (<http://skurbanova.freenet.tj/index.htm>), as well as a resource on the 80th anniversary of Dushanbe (<http://dushanbe80.freenet.tj/>). Her ICT skills brought Kurbanova to the People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan, where she landed a job as an administrative secretary in June 2004.

While a student at the Kanibadam Pedagogical College, Kurbanova applied for Russian distance learning courses. In January 2006, she was admitted to the psychology department of an accredited Russian online institute. Upon graduation from the institute, Kurbanova worked as a trainer at the NGO Civil Bridges – IATP’s partner in Kandibadam – and taught computer literacy to children with physical and mental disabilities.

In 2009 Sitora Kurbanova and her family transitioned to living in St. Petersburg, Russia, for half of the year, where she found a position as a sales manager at an engineering company. Kurbanova also makes a living by teaching computer literacy to children of Tajik labor migrants using her home computer. Kurbanova recently contacted IATP staff to report on her transition to Russia, “I am very thankful to the NGO Civil Bridges and to IATP, which provided me with the opportunity to learn information technologies. Without ICT skills, it would have been difficult for me to achieve anything in my life.”

### **III. SUSTAINABILITY**

IATP graduated its remaining three centers in Dushanbe, Garm, and Khorog in December 2009 as Independent Internet Centers (IICs). The IIC in Dushanbe will be operated by IATP’s partner – the Science Academy Library. After many attempts, however, the partner has yet to secure funding to sustain the center themselves. Library staff has spoken with several other organizations including American Corner (AC), GTZ, and the World Bank. At the moment, the most promising collaboration seems to be with American Corner. AC desires to provide free internet service to the general public on at least two or three computers. If the partner secures additional funds, they will hire the current IATP administrator to conduct ICT training, otherwise, they are requesting IATP train the AC coordinator to conduct ICT courses.

In Garm, the IIC will be maintained by the NGO Rasht, which will implement some paid services to help cover costs. They do plan, however, to continue to offer some free internet and computer training. In addition, they already secured grant funds to cover internet costs for at least three additional years.

IATP’s partner in Khorog, the Khorog State University, plans to continue offering free internet access and training and cover all costs.

In addition to the abovementioned centers, Tajikistan has two IICs that graduated in June located in Kulyab housed at the Kulyab branch of Tajikistan’s Technological University and in Khujand at Pulatov’s Private School. There is also a third IIC located in Kanibadam, which has been operating since 2005 at the NGO Civil Bridges. All three continue to offer free internet and training services to date.

## **TURKMENISTAN**

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT - OVERVIEW**

Under the leadership of the current Turkmen president Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, Turkmenistan attempted to lift the tight restrictions placed on its society. Such reforms included the development of an IT sector. Turkmenistan started by opening new government-sponsored internet cafes within the first few months of the new regime, but potential customers were deterred by the poor and erratic internet connection, exorbitant prices (initially \$6 per hour), and the requirement of presenting a passport upon use.

Turkmen Telecom, the country's sole provider of internet, was ordered to open access to the general public, but has thus far failed to do so. In November 2007, the Ministry of Communications purchased \$1.8 million worth of equipment for new servers and wiring infrastructure for internet connectivity and several hundred thousand dollars more in early 2008. During the summer of 2008, Turkmen Telecom announced online that dial-up accounts will be offered to the public, but no announcement was made locally, and no further action has taken place. Connectivity in the regions is even worse; interviews in Mary and Dashoguz proved that there is essentially no internet connectivity there. Dial-up access to local Telecom branches is so poor that a single email may take 45 minutes or more to download.

Challenges to launch IT initiatives in Turkmenistan were also hampered by the lack of IT education and knowledge on how to use computer-related technology. Further, the general population appeared unaware of resources currently available, such as internet centers. The current president promised future internet access for every school in the country, but his statements were met with skepticism, as the government feared the consequences of citizens' greater access to information. Although the cost of internet connection dramatically dropped in April 2008, internet speed was still slow and was only available through a dial-up connection. Russian mobile phone providers, however, began to provide general packet radio service (GPRS) connection to the internet for GSM mobile phones, which remained very expensive for average citizens at \$0.50 per 1Mb.

Internet penetration in Turkmenistan increased from 0.1% in 2000 to 0.9% in 2007 and the number of internet users has reached 64,800. Among internet users, 16,000 individuals used IATP resources and attended IATP training sessions. Internet penetration remains low, however, due to the high price of connectivity, the unavailability of internet accounts, slow internet speed, and the lack of awareness among citizens of ICT resources.

Launching successful ICT initiatives in Turkmenistan is also hampered by the lack of technology education. Government agencies often require employees to computerize their work without providing necessary training on basic computer skills. While paid computer training services exist, they are expensive. Thus, the demand for IATP's services is increasing as the need for ICT skills grows. IATP centers in Turkmenistan remained one of the only spaces in the country where citizens have free access to internet and computer skills training, especially in remote areas. The government is also making increased demands that state run agencies have websites for public information – a need that will be left unfulfilled by an underdeveloped private market.

## **II. IATP IN TURKMENISTAN**

IATP began operating in Turkmenistan in 2000. During the USAID-funded IATP program, there were six centers operating throughout the country. From June 2007 to December 2009, nearly 48,567 citizens visited IATP centers and 4,682 people attended training courses.

<p>Center locations: <b>Ashgabat, Turkmenabat, Dashoguz, Mary, Balkanabat</b> # <b>users</b> (since June 2007): <b>5,058</b> # <b>trained</b> (since June 2007): <b>4,682</b> # <b>of visits to IATP centers</b> (since June 2007): <b>48,567</b> # <b>of training sessions</b> (since June 2007): <b>1,637</b></p>
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### **Major accomplishments in Turkmenistan include:**

IATP in Turkmenistan assists in several arenas critical to the sustainable progress of the country. The program encourages the use of technology in medical advancement, initiates joint efforts that involve international organization and government participation, provides improved

resources to individuals with disabilities, and aids in the continued growth of employment and business initiatives.

***Working with USAID partners:*** IATP in Turkmenistan has filled a need among USAID partners for enhanced technological assistance, responding to officially stated government priorities. During the funding period IATP assisted USAID partners in the following initiatives:

- ABA/CEELI in creating a database of Turkmen laws for use by the Turkmen government.
- Project HOPE by training doctors and nurses to use the internet to find information about tuberculosis.
- CAPACITY HIV/AIDS project by providing training of trainers (TOT) for youth volunteers at its HIV/AIDS awareness center.
- Junior Achievement (JA) by teaching economics teachers and students to use computers and the internet, in order to utilize JA's computer-based learning materials.

### **Doctors in Turkmenistan Create a Public Service Announcement on TB**

After undergoing training at the local IATP center, medical specialists from the National Tuberculosis Prevention Center (TPC) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, created a public service announcement (PSA) on preventing tuberculosis (TB). The PSA was part of the USAID-funded Project HOPE's joint initiative with the Press Center of Turkmenistan's Ministry of Health to raise awareness of the disease, its causes, and ways to avoid contracting it. The announcement aired during the Saglyk (Health) program on the national TV channel Altyn Asyr. Broadcasting began July 6, 2008, and continued for the following six months on Thursdays and Sundays.

From January to April 2008, 18 TPC doctors participated in IATP training for medical professionals, focused on using the internet to find resources on TB treatment and to conduct research on the disease. In late June, ten TPC specialists created a video on preventing pulmonary TB after completing courses on graphic editing and digital movie-making at the Ashgabat IATP Center. Social Mobilization Coordinator Maya Nedirova remarked, "Thanks to IATP, we reinforced the achievement of Project HOPE's goals and raised the technical proficiency doctors through ICT usage. Presently, medical professionals use this knowledge in their daily work with patients, improving the effectiveness of our services in general."

***Working with government institutions:*** Despite the difficulties of working with government institutions in Turkmenistan, IATP has made efforts to reach out to various government-controlled agencies, providing them with information and communication skills to improve the efficiency of their work and better serve their constituents.

- Employees of the Turkmen Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR) learned computer and internet skills, preparing them to utilize a database of Turkmen laws.
- IATP extended its services to a government media outlet and provided ICT training for staff of a national newspaper.
- IATP trained medical professionals in internet search skills to help them locate medical resources online on tuberculosis prevention and utilize data collection software.

- Employees of local government construction and capabilities by learning to digitize documents, and use data management and design software through IATP.

### **Turkmenistan Ministry of Energy Officials Learn to Work Efficiently Online**

Officials from the Turkmenistan Ministry of Energy learned how to use computers and the internet at the IATP center in Ashgabat to conduct low-cost but effective online marketing research.

After the Turkmen Ministry of Energy was computerized and all its departments were connected to the internet in 2008, it requested IATP to train its employees in ICT skills since most of them had neither experience nor skills in using ICT in their work. In January and February 2009, 15 employees from the Ministry's departments, including mechanical engineering, power-supervision, petroleum-based fuels and transport, and instrument construction became familiar with the internet for the first time.

Since the training, the officials used the internet to learn more about the electric power industry in other countries, contact international suppliers, and establish the internet as the primary means of communication with international partners, saving money for their departments. For example, engineer Shageldy Karajayev reached a number of Russian suppliers through online communication. Karajayev remarked, "Conducting market research online and receiving business offers via the internet is very fast and convenient, as compared to making expensive international calls and using postal services. Beginning in February, I stopped making international calls and using postal services for marketing purposes, which has saved a lot of my work time and money for the Ministry."

As a result of the Ministry's employees' ability to conduct marketing research online and follow up with international suppliers, the Ministry is now acquiring better quality electricity supply meters from a factory in Nizhgorod, Russia.

***Supporting Marginalized Populations:*** IATP has been supporting marginalized populations throughout Turkmenistan by providing ICT training and connecting individuals with sponsors that provide relevant services.

- IATP co-sponsored a pilot project that provides computer and internet training for the visually impaired with the Turkmen Society for the Blind and Deaf, helping them to win a grant to establish their own computer center based on IATP's model and materials.
- Two IATP users who suffer from cerebral palsy applied for, and won, a grant through the USAID-funded and locally administered Local Development Initiatives Grant Program, receiving \$4,000 to open a laundromat after acquiring computer skills at IATP training.
- In cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), IATP trained refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan in ICT skills.

### **Marginalized Groups Receive and Conduct Training through IATP**

Computer and internet training of refugees and the visually impaired contributed toward improved professional resources and the reduction of isolation that is sometimes inherent in refugees' situation.

At IATP courses in Ashgabat and Turkmenabat throughout October 2007, a group of 32 refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan gained valuable word processing and internet search and communication skills. In November of the same year participants from the course,

which was conducted in cooperation with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) took part in photo editing and Web design courses.

On October 15, 2007, Turkmenistan's first visually-impaired computer trainers, Timur Mamedov and Kerim Aydogdyev, taught the first computer course for four visually impaired women under the auspices of a pilot project which has been carried out by IATP in partnership with the Turkmen Association of the Blind and Deaf (TABD) since February 2007.

As part of a larger program through which 12,000 new computers were purchased for secondary schools in Turkmenabat, three schools received ten new workstations for information science classes. The teachers, however, lacked knowledge of and experience working with modern computer software. In order to keep up with these advances, six computer science teachers from several secondary schools in Turkmenabat completed computer basics training at the IATP center. The teachers became proficient in using computers and in creating documents that are essential to lesson planning and tracking students' progress.

**Securing Employment:** The unemployment rate in Turkmenistan is high especially among youth, people with disabilities, and residents in rural areas. Skills gained through IATP workshops and courses helped the unemployed secure jobs and others to increase their efficiency at work.

- A young mother from Balkanabat was able to keep her job after returning from maternity leave due to the skills she acquired after training at the local IATP center.
- With skills learned in IATP training, a formerly unemployed young woman with cerebral palsy from Turkmenabat began offering commercial word processing services.
- Trade union accountants in Turkmenabat and Balkanabat improved the efficiency of their work following advanced spreadsheet and data management courses at IATP.

### **Student Lands Job Thanks to ICT Skills Gained at IATP Center in Turkmenabat**

Twenty-one-year-old business student Timur Saparov received a job as an advertising designer at the private company Shohle-Express, which specializes in outdoor banner advertisements in Turkmenabat.

Saparov completed advanced training in graphic design for twelve students at IATP's partner organization and local training firm Hemayat Economic Association in March 2009. Over the course of four weeks, Saparov and his peers acquired graphics editing and internet research skills and developed slogans, trademarks, and presentations as part of their business projects at the Turkmenabat IATP Center.

Hemayat offers ten-month courses on management, marketing, and accounting, promoting business education and teaching entrepreneurship to local youth. Thanks to the partnership with Hemayat, IATP was able to provide ICT courses to large numbers of aspiring entrepreneurs. This group used their improved ICT skills to complete their projects and pass their first final exam on April 11.

Timur Saparov remarked, "Having completed IATP training, I realized that I would like to make my career in computer graphics and design. Now, I am confident in my skills in designing advertisements [for billboards], logos, and banners. After all, my supervisors and clients are satisfied with the results of my creative work." Saparov received his job offer soon after he completed the IATP training course.

**Small Business Development:** Establishing small enterprises in Turkmenistan is still a relatively new concept for the predominantly agrarian country. ICT skills training allowed budding entrepreneurs to improve the quality and efficiency of their work.

- IATP added an essential information and communications technology element to the Union of Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan’s (UET) business education activities, offering training for students of its School of Entrepreneurs – primarily young people from rural areas planning to launch their own small businesses.
- Students of the School of Entrepreneurs completed IATP training and successfully passed an exam required for graduation from UET – an important indicator of the students’ business-related computing skills.

### **Turkmenistan’s Small Businesses Modernize, Increasing Profits and Salaries**

When the CEO of Melhem, a firm specializing in the shipment of building materials, decided to send his employees to ICT training, he had no idea how quickly it could improve their overall efficiency or that it would quadruple company sales.

Melhem employees attended ICT training at the IATP center in Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan. The employees learned basic computer and internet skills and achieved proficiency in various MS Office applications. Throughout the process, participants focused on how to apply their ICT skills in their jobs and realized how much it could improve business operations. Not long after the training, the company invested in three computers and connected them all to the internet.

Now the company keeps track of their clients through e-databases and finds and maintains new contacts online. Thanks to the modernized system, the company estimates it has improved its efficiency by almost 70 percent. The majority of employees’ time is now spent developing the company, which suits workers well, as their salaries are based on a percentage of the company’s profits. Melhem accountant Margarita Hemraeva explains, “Before learning IT skills, we spent most of our time doing paperwork and did not have as much time to seek out new clients. Our new IT skills are allowing us to spend our efforts in achieving our real goals—to expand our customer base and increase profits.”

### **III. SUSTAINABILITY**

In December 2009, four IATP centers in Turkmenistan graduated as Independent Internet Centers (IICs), each with a unique local partner and sustainability plan. The IIC in Balkanabat will be run by the local NGO Turkmen Society for the Deaf and Blind, which is also collaborating with American Councils in Balkanabat to support the fledgling independent center. The partner will continue to provide free training in computer and internet basics and offer free internet access, while American Councils will cover administrative costs and retain the current IATP administrator. In exchange, the center will offer consultations and information for users about American Councils’ exchange programs and other information about studying in the US. American Councils will also fund the new IIC in Dashoguz.

Under a different model, the IICs in Turkmenabat and Mary partnered with local economic associations (Hemayat and Gulnahal, respectively) to provide free internet access that is subsidized by offering low-cost technical training. The Turkmenabat IIC will continue to focus services on youth, low-income families, and people living with disabilities. All four of the newly-graduated centers will strive to support IATP’s mission of providing free internet access and ICT resources to support the personal and professional development of members of their local communities.

IREX formed effective partnerships with a range of Turkmen institutions including the National Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan (NAS, formerly the SCST) and was able to open Interactive Multimedia Learning Internet Center (ICIML) on its premises. Through IATP, IREX has established a positive working relationship with NAS. The center received additional funding from USAID and will continue operating after IATP ends.

## UKRAINE

### **I. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT - OVERVIEW**

When IATP began receiving USAID funding for its work in Ukraine, internet penetration was greater there than any of the other countries where IATP operates. During the program, the rate of internet usage doubled, and some Ukrainian sources estimate that the country has over 16 million internet users. IATP training sessions were well attended throughout Ukraine (with the exception of the Crimea) and citizen interest in developing ICT skills was high. This interest was initially demonstrated by the number of Ukrainians accessing published information on ICT and further reinforced by the projects Ukrainian officials, NGOs and individual citizens engaged in after receiving IATP training.

Politically, there was little hindering IATP's work in Ukraine, and the government did not attempt to obstruct the program. The government and its officials were aware of the power of ICT but did not fear it, instead viewing it as a tool for the country's economic progress. The government did not attempt to regulate internet activity or access, and on the whole, maintained an unrestrictive environment with regard to the internet, and endeavored to introduce wireless internet access in the country. Although a state-owned company dominated the telecommunications industry, the government deregulated the market in order to allow for increased ISP growth. The government's recognition of the importance of information technology is also shown through its e-government outreach efforts and the high rate of participation in IATP trainings by local government officials.

As a result of the government's deregulation, ISPs are strong and competitive in Ukraine, there are about 60 ISPs, providing service mostly to cities. Whether this is due to demand or infrastructure, the number of telephones and telephone lines is much smaller in rural areas than in the cities.

During IATP's work in Ukraine, significant inroads were made in providing needed training to a variety of groups. Local government officials used training to improve their efficiency and the ability of their constituents to communicate with them. IATP training was also valuable to educators, librarians, journalists, doctors, and others who provide information and information services to their communities. NGOs representatives also benefitted from IATP training, learning how to organize, publicize their interests, disseminate information on social issues, and assist disadvantaged groups, such as the disabled. IATP training also assisted Ukrainians in learning more about diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and provided leadership training and learning opportunities for young women through the Tech Age Girls project.

Although a great deal was accomplished in Ukraine, and all IATP centers have graduated to becoming successful and sustainable Independent Internet Centers (IICs), there is still much that could be achieved in Ukraine. Internet usage is far less common in the Crimea, and hostility towards the United States (as well as suspicion towards IATP's work) is prevalent. Despite such attitudes, interest in training and technology development exists in Crimea, and will be sought in the wake of government plans to increase technology and development spending in the region. IATP would provide much needed training in Crimea, and the public display of

diplomacy such assistance would represent is a valuable benefit to the continuation of IATP programming in Ukraine.

Details of IATP's work and projects resulting from IATP training and outreach are reported below.

## **II. IATP IN UKRAINE**

IATP began operating in Ukraine in 1998. Under USAID funding, IATP supported 25 centers throughout the country. From June 2007 through December 2009, approximately 2,930 new users were registered at the IATP centers and 5,327 people attended IATP trainings.

Center Locations: **Dnipropetrovsk, Sevastopol, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, Zaporizhya, Zhytomyr, Cerkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Khmelnytsky, Kirovohrad, Kryvy Rih, Kyiv, Luhansk, Lutsk, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Odessa, Poltava, Rivne, Sumy, Uzhhorod**

**# users** (since June 2007): **17,440**

**# trained** (since June 2007): **5,327**

**# of visits to IATP centers** (since June 2007): **57,375**

### **Major accomplishments in Ukraine include:**

Throughout the program, IATP in Ukraine provided training to a variety of groups – from local government officials and NGO representatives to people with disabilities. These groups benefitted from the services IATP offered and used their ICT skills to improve their professional development, outreach to constituents, ability to meet citizens' needs, and access critical information to improve their lives.

***Working with local governments to improve service delivery:*** Throughout the program, IATP worked with Ukraine's civil servants and local government representatives to enhance their ability to deliver needed services and to improve citizens' access to them. As a result of IATP's basic computer, internet, and Web 2.0 training:

- 18 heads of district departments of culture and tourism and rural libraries in Vinnytsia submitted proposals for community projects
- The Poltava City Council created a website for its organization where citizens can access resolutions and government-approved documents, and participate in online forums with City Council officials
- The Dnipropetrovsk Regional Universal Scientific Library became known as a modern information center after librarians underwent intensive training
- The Regional Center of Social Services for Family Children and Youth in Dnipropetrovsk created a website where economically disadvantaged families with members who have disabilities can easily access information about its services

- The Zaporizhia Family Issues and Adoption Department is streamlining its services by digitizing its operations

### **Social Services Become More Accessible for Vulnerable Groups in Ukraine**

Economically disadvantaged families with members having disabilities can now more easily access social services 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 presented in late October 2008 at a press conference for 17 local mass media representatives, organized by the USAID-funded Ukrainian Reform of Education Program (UREP). The website is currently being promoted by local TV and newspapers through public service announcements, as well as by city social services, and IATP's NGO and library partners in Dnipropetrovsk. UREP facilitates the development of civil society and a market economy in Ukraine (<http://urep.cure.org.ua/projects/urep>).

Since October, the website has been upgraded with new information on the organization and the social services it provides. The online resource is a hub of important information for people living in remote towns and villages and for people with disabilities. Website visitors can view the network of city, district, and village centers of social services for the Dnipropetrovsk region. The website also offers tools for interactive communication between visitors and social workers. Handicapped IATP participant Dmytro Krasniuk asked social workers about state support services for handicapped children in Ukraine. The social workers gave him detailed descriptions of the state services offered and links to official websites to access them. Krasniuk commented, "The development of online resources of this type proves the effectiveness of e-government projects. State bodies are becoming more open and transparent, which allows for better communication with community members."

***Training for professional groups:*** In Ukraine, IATP provided professionals –from educators to health care professionals – training in ICT skills to help them advance their careers and improve the important services they provide for communities throughout the country.

- After IATP training, a Zhytomyr State University professor developed a series of interactive workshops for more than 120 students throughout Ukraine, during which students are required to use online resources to conduct case studies and research.
- The Chief hematologist of the Vinnytsia Department of Health participated in international medical professional development opportunities thanks to IATP training and introduced new treatment methods and medications to improve patient care in her region.
- A public health expert and active IATP user created a collaborative blog on public health issues, which is widely used by Ukrainian citizens and was rated sixth out of 30 nominees for "Best Professional Blog" in October 2008.
- A visually impaired journalist from Zhytomyr learned about specially designed software for people with disabilities through IATP and has been training others with similar disabilities in ICT skills.

### **Visually Impaired Journalist Gives Disabled Young People the Skills to Succeed**

In November 2008, radio journalist from **Zhytomyr, Ukraine**, Sergiy Cherevko began conducting ICT skills training for five visually impaired IATP users. After participating in IATP's Sense Online project in 2007, Cherevko, himself visually impaired, was impressed by the opportunities ICT offers to blind and disabled individuals. When IATP's trainer moved to another city, Cherevko decided to apply his knowledge and new skills to lead the project himself.

Through his own IATP training, Cherevko learned about specially designed voice tools that facilitate the social and professional integration of visually impaired people, such as the Job Access with Speech (JAWS) voice-activated interface and the MaxReader audio library. Cherevko commented, "These programs helped not only in my life, but also with my profession. I can edit and compile my radio interviews and news briefs more efficiently."

One of Cherevko's trainees, student Viktoriya Matviyenko, successfully passed her winter session exams at Zhytomyr State University's Mathematics Department using her ICT skills. Cherevko commented, "I am pleased to know that my trainees can work with computers and the internet. They can create files and work with them, they can use the internet to search for books and other information, and they work with e-mail and make virtual friends. I realize that everyday, the visually impaired are better able to integrate into Ukraine's civil society and my efforts are rewarded."

***Working with Ukraine's Civil Society:*** Throughout the program, IATP provided training for NGO and civil society representatives to help them better advocate for citizens' needs, and to help them unite their efforts, share best practices, and raise awareness of critical issues facing Ukrainian society. Through IATP's efforts:

- NGOs working with people with disabilities received training in ICT skills to help them access information on the latest resources, communicate with leading professionals abroad, search online libraries, and explore fundraising opportunities. IATP also reached out to the visually impaired directly through its **Sense Online** project, through which Ukrainians with visual impairments learned technology skills to help them improve their lives and advocate for their needs.
- Human rights activists were brought together with experts to share information and best practices regarding the rights of refugees and how to coordinate efforts to protect vulnerable populations.
- Environmentally-focused NGOs and environmental activists learned how to organize media campaigns and community drives to spread information about the importance of environmental protection at the IATP center in Dnipropetrovsk.
- International elections observers, journalists, and NGO representatives learned improved their ability to monitor Ukraine's political processes using skills they learned at the IATP center in Vinnytsia.
- Local NGOs learned how to use mobile technology to better reach their constituents and to promote social change.

### **Local NGOs in Dnipropetrovsk Use Mobile Technology to Disseminate Important Information**

The local NGO Tamarisk (<http://tamarisk.org.ua>) was among several local NGOs in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine, that launched pilot projects in cooperation with IATP using mobile phone technology to promote social change. At the beginning of 2009, IATP began conducting

training for local NGOs on mobile technology and the use of *FrontlineSMS* (<http://frontlinesms.com>)—open source software developed specifically for the non-governmental sector.

Tamarisk serves as an information and resource center for other NGOs in the region. It manages an online portal on citizens' initiatives in Dnipropetrovsk (<http://cso.dp.ua>), runs a media center for NGOs, and regularly organizes training sessions, roundtables, and other events for representatives of local NGOs and media outlets. FrontlineSMS has become a valuable resource for organizations such as Tamarisk, enabling distribution of important information to large numbers of recipients. Tamarisk staff found that FrontlineSMS was helpful for contacting their target audience in Dnipropetrovsk, as well as surrounding rural areas. Having mastered the software, Tamarisk staff compiled an SMS mailing list with 50 mobile phone numbers of local NGO representatives to send SMS notifications of events. The staff was impressed by their ability to inform dozens of people in a few minutes instead of spending half a day or more to contact them by phone.

Tamarisk also uses e-mail to send the same information, but not all NGOs and citizen activists have access to e-mail, especially in rural areas. More people have mobile phones and are likely to read messages they receive immediately. Disseminating information using FrontlineSMS has had a positive impact on Tamarisk's ability to reach its target audiences. For instance, at an April 2009 event held at Tamarisk's office, 60 percent of attendees reported learning about the event via SMS. Participants expressed their gratitude to Tamarisk for using a convenient form of outreach, allowing them to get timely information and facilitating their participation in what became an important event for the local civil society community.

Tamarisk is constantly adding new contacts to their SMS mailing list and plans to divide it into several sub-lists for NGOs working in different fields. Tamarisk President Tatyana Barashkova commented, "We started working with IATP less than a year ago. Since that time, they have introduced us to a number of new and useful technologies. First, we participated in a series of training on Web 2.0 applications, and organized other NGOs to take this training at IATP. Now we learned about a new opportunity to increase the effectiveness of our work through mobile technology. We are sure that the positive impact of IATP activities on our local community will be noticeable for years after IATP is officially closed in Ukraine."

***HIV/AIDS prevention:*** One of the most pressing public health challenges facing Ukraine is the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic. IATP helped civil society representatives and HIV/AIDS experts disseminate information and better reach vulnerable populations.

- IATP hosted a series of initiatives and online discussions to help IATP users and communities gain access to information on HIV/AIDS and disease prevention.
- Local physicians, civil society members, and HIV/AIDS victims learned ICT skills to help build awareness of the disease and to spread tolerance of those currently affected by it.
- Ukrainian NGOs that offer support to people living with HIV/AIDS learned how to use mobile technology to help patients better adhere to their treatment regimens.

### **Health Initiatives Make Most of Access to Information about HIV/AIDS through IATP**

In October 2007, IATP continued to help users and communities gain access to information on AIDS prevention and the promotion of tolerance toward people infected with HIV, through a series of initiatives hosted at IATP centers. Through IATP training, local physicians, NGO

employees, volunteers, youth, and people living with AIDS are mastering information technology skills for their professional and personal development, learning to plan and implement initiatives for AIDS prevention, and fostering tolerance towards victims of the disease.

Five people living with HIV in Sevastopol used their new online communications skills to locate and contact physicians in the US regarding HIV treatment during a seminar and online forum held from October 15 to 19 at the IATP center in Sevastopol. During the seminar, offered by IATP Trainer Antuanetta Lukianenko, participants explored the website of *Havan Plus*, a local charity organization working with HIV-infected people and took part in a forum on anti-retroviral drug therapy (<http://www.eurasiahealth.org/phpbb/viewtopic.php?t=90>). In addition to the skills they gained, Tetiana Yevko, administrative director of *Havan Plus*, noted that communicating with others living with AIDS “is very important for such people, who often feel isolated from the community.”

Building upon the computer and internet skills from a previous IATP training, six local high school students explored information on AIDS prevention and resources for those living with HIV at an October 4 seminar entitled “Internet Resources on AIDS for Schoolchildren” at the IATP center in Vinnytsia. IATP Site Administrator Oksana Bondar introduced websites, such as the Coalition of HIV-Service Organizations, and others which offer statistics on people living with AIDS in Ukraine and in the Vinnytsia region in particular.

In that same year, four employees of local NGOs serving people living with HIV increased their organizations’ ability to effectively reach their target population through improved websites and communication skills. During the step-by-step training at the IATP center in Sevastopol, participants gained word processing, Web design, and internet communication and search skills. After learning the basics of Web design from IATP Trainer Antuanetta Lukianenko, Anna Kudrynska, deputy head of *Havan Plus*, a local charity organization working with people living with HIV, plans to update the *Havan Plus* website herself, utilizing her new skills to make it more effective and user-friendly.

### **III. SUSTAINABILITY**

In June 2008, the remaining six IATP centers joined the 18 operating Independent Internet Centers (IICs) as graduated IATP centers. Ten of the 25 centers have been IICs since 2007.

IATP’s graduated IICs across Ukraine receive the majority of their funding from partner organizations, local administrations, and educational institutions; partner support ranges between \$450 and \$800 each month. This income is supplemented by paid services, which provide between 15 and 50% of center operating costs. The Donetsk IIC exemplifies this model through its partnership with the Donetsk Scientific Library and its additional revenue from printing, scanning, and copying services. A wide cross-section of the local population frequents the center. Library regulars, teachers, professors, students, journalists, NGO representatives, and disabled individuals are among the 500-600 monthly visitors.

The synergy between local needs and IIC resources is further exemplified by a visually-impaired Donetsk resident who is the president of the city’s English Speaking Club. Equipped with ICT skills gained through IATP trainings, she began the Sense Online project. As part of the project, she meets with a group of visually impaired young people at the IIC facility after school, training them in new technologies and professional skills. Equipped with her personal story and new technical abilities, she is empowering these young people to take control of their future careers.