PN-ACQ-807

International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)

Final Project Report
REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
October 1, 1997 – September 30, 2002
USAID Cooperative Agreement EE-A-00-97-00034-00

Nukus Democracy Summer Camp (DSC)
Report (in English)

Nukus DSC Exit Exam Questionnaire
and Results (in English)

A

Christoph Stefes
Project Coordinator

July 25, 2000

Report on the
IFES 2000 Democracy Summer Camp
Nukus, Uzbekistan: 17-23 July, 2000

Almost forty students from the Karakalpak region, Buxara and Kolkant gathered for seven days at the 'Altin Dan' recreational facility, thirty minutes outside of Nukus. During this time, the students—with the support of our two local coordinators, Remma Gabitova and Muhhabat Shlimbetova, six teachers, and eight student facilitators—build a state. They agreed on a name, flag and constitution for their "country," named the representatives of a temporary governmental body, appointed a Central Election Commission, formed four political parties, passed a law on elections, and eventually elected a president. Moreover, the students discussed a variety of political issues, such as the pros and cons of democratic governance, as well as issues concerning political rights and civil liberties. Finally, they participated in two workshops, dealing with environmental and children rights issues, organized by two local NGOs, 'Wild Nature of the Aral Sea Region' and 'Shagala.'

Unfortunately, twelve students that we expected to participate in the camp did not arrive in Nukus. According to Palmurza Khojabekov, Representative of the local Counterpart Consortium, these students were held back by the *hakims* (mayors) of their cities, who had preferred other students (I assume the hakims' pet students) to attend the camp.

I. Evaluation of Participating Students

All students were highly motivated and showed great enthusiasm in taking part in the camp activities (with the exception of one student who left us on the very first day of the camp). The age difference was of little concern to the students, and younger and older students worked closely together. In fact, two of the youngest students were elected president and vice-president at the end of the camp.

The ethnic composition of the participants, however, created a few problems. First, there were some (though not serious) tensions between the students from Karakalpakstan and those from outside of the region. Second, since students with different language backgrounds were put together in the groups, the need to translate all speeches, comments, and documents into Russian, Uzbek, and/or Karakalpak deprived the student activities of a lot of time, energy, and spontaneity. Since the issues of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism were not addressed at the camp, the attempt to build bridges between the different ethnic groups was not very convincing.

The student tests that are currently translated into Russian might show the participants' learning experience. However, since the tests had not been administered before the camp, we cannot be sure if the tests reflect the impact of the camp or previously acquired knowledge. Nevertheless, one incident that occurred during the first run of the presidential elections showed that the students understood the democratic rules of the game, which later allowed them to take full advantage of their democratic rights.

A majority of the students abstained from casting their votes in the first run of the presidential elections, because they argued that the Central Election Commission was incompetent and biased. Thereby, these students forced the temporary government to

annul the results of the first elections (a 50% voter turnout was required by the electoral law) and appoint a new CEC--this time, consisting of representatives of all parties.

II. Evaluation of Coordinators, Teachers, and Student Volunteers

The local coordinators were outstanding, showing a great deal of motivation, enthusiasm, flexibility, and pedagogical experience. Remma treated the students with respect and allowed them to take certain issues in their own hands (e.g., changing the daily schedules according to their own needs). She was less flexible, however, in regard to the other coordinator, Muhhabat, and the teachers/trainers and volunteers. Her authoritarian and not always cooperative style led to tensions, especially, between her and Muhhabat. Yet it seemed that at the end of the camp they had been able to overcome their animosities.

Muhhabat, who served both as a trainer and coordinator, showed admirable enthusiasm and professionalism. She did everything possible to make this camp a success story. She also expressed her willingness to support IFES projects in the future (e.g., by making arrangements for the teachers training in August).

The trainers and the student volunteers likewise proved to be very motivated and skilled. The students respected all of them and developed close ties especially with the volunteers, who worked very hard throughout the seven days of the camp.

Unfortunately, it was obvious that the coordinators, trainers and volunteers lacked a sufficient background in civic education. They were rather unfamiliar with the underlying values of democracy and civil liberties, and the concept of free and fair elections. To their credit it must be said that IFES could not have expected more from

them given the fact that we had scheduled only one day of training for not even all of the trainers and volunteers. The coordinators therefore suggested that the preparation for next year's summer camp should include at least four to five training sessions.

III. Evaluation of Workshops and NGOs

The workshops certainly enriched the summer camp. The NGO representatives were able to involve the students in all workshop activities and communicate the subjects of the workshops in a comprehensible matter. I was especially impressed by the 'Wild Nature of the Aral Sea Region' NGO that is run by professional scientists, who nevertheless showed that they could relate even to the youngest students. They also provided all students with informational material and a group picture of the workshop participants. Moreover, the 'Wild Nature of the Aral Sea Region' stayed well below their proposed budget. They also did not demand from IFES to provide them with up-front payments. In fact, they had borrowed money from friends and relatives to pay for all workshop expenses (this is admirable, but shouldn't be the rule).

The performance of 'Shagala,' on the other hand, was a different story. In the weeks preceding the camp, Makset, the chairman of 'Shagala,' put a lot of pressure on our local representative, Iulia Dashkevich. Up to the last minute, he tried to add items to the proposed budget and was rather unwilling to make compromises. There is no doubt that 'Shagala's' workshop was well prepared and implemented. However, the benefits of this workshop hardly justified the costs and problems that accompanied them. For example, 'Shagala' built a labyrinth, consisting of almost sixty 2x3-meter stands that cost IFES roughly $260. It was not clear how the labyrinth contributed to the workshop. Yet

it was very obvious that 'Shagala' is going to use these stands for later activities that are not related to IFES projects.

IV. Evaluation of IFES' Representatives

Iulia and Dimitry Shevkun did an outstanding job before, during, and after the camp. They handled the financial and administrative issues in a timely and accurate way, demonstrating great professionalism, motivation, and enthusiasm. Both worked very hard—up to fourteen hours a day during the camp—to make this project a success.

As about myself, I was in the fortunate position to enjoy the full support of Iulia, Dimitry, and the two local coordinators, allowing me to focus on only a few administrative and programmatic issues, such as negotiating with the 'Altin Dan' administration and solving some of the problems and tensions that surfaced during the seven days of the camp.

V. Evaluation of Infrastructure

The 'Altin Dan' has turned out to be an almost perfect location for the camp. Located outside of Nukus—but connected to the city by a regular bus service—'Altin Dan' is a very quite facility. It offers various buildings and rooms for presentations and meetings. In- and outside pools entertained students during their breaks. The sleeping facilities were decent, with six to eight students sharing one room. The food could have been better, but was of acceptable quality.

The director of the camp was very supportive and was willing to help out whenever she could. She also participated in some of the camp activities (e.g., serving as

an election observer). Moreover, the deputy director of the flour factory, which owns the facilities, agreed that IFES would only have to pay for the 53 participants actually present, and not the 65 people that we had anticipated.

The participants voiced only three concerns. First, the camp lacked sufficient security measures. At several occasions, a couple of drunken men from the nearby town were able to enter the camp, harassing the students (unfortunately, this was only brought to my attention at the last day of the camp). Second, the stereo equipment of the camp was—even by Uzbek standards—of very poor quality, which kind of limited the student activities in the evening. Finally, staff and students had no access to a computer and printer at the camp. To my knowledge, IFES had turned down a previous request for computer equipment. This was an unfortunate decision, because the equipment would have saved Iulia, who shuttled back and force between the camp and a computer lab located in Nukus, and the student volunteers, who had to write all documents and announcements by hand, a lot of time and energy. Moreover, a computer would have allowed the students to publish a daily newsletter that would have certainly enriched the activities of the camp (after all, the media is an elementary part of civil society).

VI. The Issue of Self-Sustainability

Having seen the performance of the local coordinators, I am convinced that IFES could leave most of the administrative work to the local NGOs that Remma and Muhhabat represent (assuming that prior to the camp, IFES would provide them with sufficient training). Financially, however, there is little hope that this camp could be run in the near future without the support of Western organizations. Karakalpastan is a very

poor region, and the local NGOs have no experience in soliciting funding from governmental and private institutions. This does not necessarily imply that IFES would have to cover all expenses of future camps. For example, a Peace Corps Volunteer, Amy Wright, who I had invited to the camp, expressed her willingness to work with Remma and Muhhabat on developing a budget plan and applying for additional funding.

VII. Financial Issues

For several reasons, IFES stayed well within the proposed budget. First, instead of ten, we only employed six trainers (which were sufficient). Second, 'Wild Nature of the Aral Sea Region' asked for less money than IFES had initially agreed on paying them. Third, IFES only paid for 53 participants, instead of the anticipated 65 participants. Finally, we were able to keep unexpected additional costs at a minimum (roughly $10).

According to Dimitry's preliminary calculations, the costs of the camp (including accommodation and transportation for Dimitry and myself) add up to just over $3.800.

VIII. Suggestions

For next year's summer camp—leaving aside financial issues and concerns, at this point—I suggest the following:

- Continuation of cooperation with Remma and Muhhabat
- Transferring more responsibility to both coordinators
- Continuation of cooperation with trainers and student volunteers
- A competitive selection process for the appointment of NGOs that conduct workshops ('Wild Nature of the Aral Sea Region' should definitely be considered)

- Further, more detailed consideration of the student selection process
- No further cooperation with 'Shagala'
- Unless the number of next year's summer camp participants exceeds fifty students and the administration would be unwilling to increase security measures, 'Altin Dan' should again be considered for the location of the camp
- More training sessions for coordinators, trainers, and student volunteers
- Increasing the number of student participants to fifty
- Instead of seven days, the camp should at least last ten days (all staff members agreed that there was too little time to handle the material)
- Providing students with more leisure time and entertainment (books, games, etc.)
- Being more conscious about the problems of ethnicity and language barriers
- Follow-up meetings, involving students, student volunteers, and trainers after the end of the camp (e.g., building student councils)

Exit Exam for participants of Karakalpakstan Summer Camp, 2000

1. What type of political system exists in Uzbekistan?

2. Describe the structure of the Uzbekistani government. Name the different branches of government and briefly describe what they do.

3. What are the term limits of those elected to Parliament?

4. In what ways can a candidate by nominated to run for office?

5. What are the functions of an elections monitor?

6. What characterizes a free election?

7. Who can file a complaint concerning an election violation?

8. List the requirements needed to become a registered voter.

9. What are the rights and responsibilities of each voter during an election?

10. What role do political parties play in the election process?

11. How are political parties financed in Uzbekistan?

12. What is an interest group?

13. Briefly describe five human rights that are afforded to citizens of Uzbekistan, in order of importance to you?

14. What is the main function of the media?

15. Using your own words, define 'rule of law'. Why is it important?

16. What are the main ecological problems facing the citizens of Karakalpakstan?

17. Name at least three factors contributing to the ecological crisis in the Aral Sea Basin.

18. Briefly describe the rights that are enumerated in the International Convention on Children's Rights?

19. How is the convention enforced?

Essay questions:

20. How may NGOs contribute to society? Do you think NGOs could be a useful way to participate in the political development of Uzbekistan? Why or why not?

21. What are the main responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy?

22. Pretend you are the president of an environmental NGO. Using the concepts you have learned during this camp, suggest a proposal for improving the environmental or health conditions of the Aral Sea basin. What sort of role could your NGO play in this proposal?

23. What are some specific ways that the rights of children could be promoted?

24. What qualities make a good leader?

25. Describe the differences between proportional representation and single-mandate voting. Which, in your view, is better?

26. Based on what you knew before the camp, which issue area do you feel you have gained the most knowledge on?

27. Do you feel more prepared to discuss issues relating to democracy as a result of the camp?

28. Has your understanding of the electoral process increased as a result of the camp?

IFES' 2nd Democracy Summer Camp (Nukus; July 2000)

Student Test Results

The test was divided into two parts. In the first part, students were asked to give short answers to ten questions of a total of fifteen questions. The second part consisted of three essay questions of which one was supposed to be picked by each individual student. 37 students participated in the test.

I. Part

Q. 1: Which political system do you see today in Uzbekistan?

25 students answered this question. Most students (13) believed that Uzbekistan had a multi-party system, competing in regularly-held elections. No student, however, believed that Uzbekistan was a democracy.

Q. 2: Describe the structure of the Uzbek government.

Only 8 students were able to answer this question. Nevertheless, most students rightly stated that Uzbekistan's government was based on a presidential system.

Q. 3: Focus on a few governmental bodies and describe their functions.

Again, only 8 students tackled the question. Half of them were able to name the three state powers (executive, legislate, and jurisdiction). One student stated that this division of power was rather superficial in as much as the president held all power in his hands.

Q. 4: Why are elections necessary?

Of a total of 29 students answering the question, 8 argued that elections would make for better governmental leaders. The other students tautologically argued that elections were good for electing the president and the parliament.

Q. 5: What are democratic elections?

All 24 students, who answered the question, argued that only free elections could be called democratic elections. 'Free' thereby meant for the students that citizens could vote for anyone who deemed capable to occupy a political office.

Q. 6: What are the procedures that guarantee secret elections?

21 students answered this question. Most of them (14) argued that voters needed a place where they could cast their vote without any intervention and supervision from other citizens and the staff of the polling station.

Q. 7: What are the rights and responsibilities of voters during elections?
Of the 23 students, who answered this question, only few knew more than one right (and/or responsibility). Most students, however, knew that voters needed to present proper documentation to the staff of the polling station.

Q. 8: What is the role of political parties during elections?

Almost all 18 students answering the question argued that political parties appointed electoral candidates and formulated a political platform. A few students also knew that parties had the right to monitor the election process.

Q. 9: What is an NGO?

Only 8 students answered this question, and only one student knew that an NGO was an organization working within the realm of civil society, representing the interests of citizens to the state.

Q. 10: Briefly summarize five human rights, and explain why these are important to you.

Of the 19 students answering this question, most argued that the right to life, education, and labor, as well as freedom of speech, and the right to vote are among the most important human rights.

Q. 11: What are the most important skills of political leaders?

Among the 26 answers received, honesty, intelligence, and compassion figured prominently.

Q. 12: What is main ecological problem of Karakalpastan?

All 28 students who answered this question argued that the main ecological problems of Karakalpastan (deprivation of water quality and wild life) are related to the pollution and decreasing water levels of the Aral Sea.

Q. 13: List at least three factors that contributed to the Aral Sea disaster?

23 students answered the question. Most argued that people were using too much of the water of the rivers flowing into the Aral Sea. A few students explicitly stated that people were unwisely using the water resources in the region.

Q. 14: Briefly outline the rights of children that are mentioned in the International Convention of Children Rights.

Only 14 students answered this question. 10 argued that personal freedom was among those rights. In addition, students listed the right to life, medical care, and rest as important rights of children.

Q. 15: What are the most important rights listed by this convention?

Only 10 students answered this question. Most listed the right to life and education as the most important rights.

Part II.

Essay 1: What are the main responsibilities of citizens in democratic societies?

Two students responded to this essay question. They argued that among the many responsibilities were:
to know one's rights, treat the environment with care, participate in elections, observe all laws, work for the good of the country, respect each other, pay taxes, participate in protecting the rights of children, and generally participate in political life (e.g., by forming political parties and interest groups).

Essay 2: What did you learn from the mock election in the summer camp?

23 students responded to this essay question. Most students mentioned that they learned how to
participate the elections. Others argued that they learned more about the process of elections, including how election campaign was run. They all have appreciated that they learned about different human rights.
They have found out that there shouldn't be any agitation during the elections, that a person had the responsibility to participate in elections, but also would be allowed to cross out all the names on the ballot.
One student mentioned that although many people gave their passport to another person (their wife or husband or neighbor), each person should vote privately. Some of the children mentioned the work of the Central Election Committee, listing the responsibilities of this institution. Many of them said that they had realized how important elections were in the lives of people, and that they would vote once they turned 18. They learned that each person could become a member of a political party, and that each political party had the right to nominate its candidates for the elections.

Essay 3: Please write a letter to your imaginary brother in Tashkent and tell him about the most important insights you have got from the democracy camp and why these insights are important to you.

Of the five students that responded to this question, all pointed out that it would be very important to know more about politics and the rights of citizens.
They also argued that the camp helped them to get to know people better, to understand the laws written in the Constitution, and to gain some knowledge about children right.

They said that it was good to know that there should not be more than 5 political parties in Uzbekistan. What they very much appreciated was that they were allowed to discuss the problems themselves and look for solutions. One student wrote that should such problems occur in their lives in the future (for example violation of their rights), they would know to which institution they could turn to. Generally speaking, they have gained some new insights about life. They were also given an understanding about what it means to be a member of a political party.