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YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

**FINAL PROJECT REPORT
USAID COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT
No. EE-A-00-97-00034-00**

**May 9-11, 2002
Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan**

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MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

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International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)

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Young Women's Leadership Conference
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INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTION SYSTEMS

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

Final Project Report

Young Women's Leadership Conference

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I. INTRODUCTION

From May 9-11, twenty young women representing four Central Asian countries gathered at the Aurora Sanatorium at Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan to discuss leadership and gender equality issues and explore how they could become more effective women's advocates in their societies. Five students each from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the conference, representing diverse regions of each country. Two instructors and one teacher-mentor from each country also took part, accompanied by an IFES gender specialist from each of its offices. Students received training through interactive activities designed to promote understanding of gender equality issues, leadership, and a woman's role in a democratic society. The students also enhanced their communications and public-speaking skills through personal development modules. Students were provided with computer training and obtained free email accounts to promote their correspondence and continued networking after the conference. The event afforded the girls the opportunity to develop new friendships, enhance their leadership skills, improve their communications abilities, and strengthen their knowledge in and advocacy skills of gender equality.

IFES/Kyrgyzstan, together with the Institute of Equal Rights and Opportunities and Altnay Karasaeva's School of Women Political Leadership, organized the event, which was officially called "Women Political Leadership in a New Dimension." Participating girls represented the 10th and 11th grades of secondary schools.

In accordance with reporting requirements, a final program report will be completed and distributed by October 30, 2002.

II. OFFICE AND PERSONNEL

The IFES/Kyrgyzstan office in Bishkek, led by Project Manager Chedomir Flego, was responsible for administrative and logistical support for the project. IFES field staff from Dushanbe and Almaty assisted in facilitating the travel and participation of trainers, teachers and students from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. An IFES staff person based in Bishkek traveled to

Uzbekistan to interview prospective conference candidates from that country as well as select teacher-mentors and trainers to comprise the Uzbekistani delegation.

IFES Project Manager Flego and other international guest speakers provided computer and internet training as well as led one-on-one discussions on the status and role of women in western democracies. The main part of the training was led by local women's NGO leaders and other key women's rights advocates from each of the countries involved.

III. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES

The conference focused on leadership training, skill building, communications and civic advocacy. The agenda and resulting activities, conducted by highly qualified local and international experts, were designed to provide participants with knowledge and experience in each of these areas. Equal focus was put on teaching and knowledge acquisition as on personal skills development, including public speaking, computer training, and leadership skills. A copy of the conference's agenda can be found as an attachment.

IV. IMPACT & EVALUATION

Participants of the Conference came away with a better understanding of the importance of equal rights for women in society, and through interactive training enhanced their skill as potential advocates and activists for women's rights. Personal and professional skills were enhanced through leadership training, public speaking, computer instruction and communications training. The girls also had an opportunity to network with peers from other countries and establish newfound relationships. The girls' were encouraged to take their skills and apply them through IFES' school-based civic education network via the Student Action Committees, which IFES will monitor periodically. In addition, a hyperlink was created on the IFES Central Asia website (ifescentralasia.kg) that will serve as a message board for participants to use on an ongoing basis to exchange information and stay in contact. IFES is committed to providing additional opportunities for young women's leaders on both a national and regional basis through its civic education program.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS & CHALLENGES

The Young Women's Leadership Conference was completed successful due to good planning and teamwork of IFES' country offices in Central Asia. There were many lessons learned nonetheless that can and will be applied to future events of this type. These lessons included ways to improve communications between office and transportation of participants between countries. Uzbek exit visa requirements complicated the travel of participants and instructors from Uzbekistan, while a limited flight schedule meant that participants from Tajikistan had to fly first to Almaty and then drive onto Bishkek and Issyk-Kul.

In addition, poor telephone communications with some villages made it difficult to connect all of the trainers with each other far enough in advance of the event. As a result, there were some

event coordination issues that had to be resolved the evening prior to the Conference's commencement.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Young Women's Leadership Conference was the first such event to bring together high-school aged girls from different countries in Central Asia together to meet and develop their abilities as gender advocates. The event was marked with great enthusiasm from the participants and trainers alike, and IFES worked to keep in touch with all the students by creating special email accounts for them through the Internet and setting up a special post-conference message board on the IFES server for the girls to use to stay in touch with each other. As IFES has been expanding its student programs around the region and paying special attention to issues of gender equality, it was hoped that the event could serve as the first in a series of regularly-scheduled events to bring together young, dynamic women's leaders to train them in advocacy techniques and assist in their personal development to help them become active supporters of women's rights in their home countries.

Conference for Regional Election Administrators of the Central Asian States

hosted by United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and the SOROS Foundation (SOROS), with participation of the Central Election Commission, Republic of Kazakhstan

Election Administration: Regional Experience and Comparative Perspectives

November 17-20, 1998

AGENDA

Tuesday, November 17

Participants arrive at conference site and check into hotel rooms.

19:00 Welcoming reception for participants,
Organized by the International Organizers

Wednesday, November 18

9:00-10:00 Participant Registration

9:30-10:00 Press conference
Participants include the Central Asian CECs, UN, OSCE/ODIHR, IFES and SOROS.

Representatives of the media will be permitted to stay through the first break at 11:00

10:00-10:40 Opening Plenary Session

Brief welcome on behalf of all international participants by Ambassador Gantcho Gantchev, Head of the OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia.

Introductory remarks from Chairwoman Zagipa Balieva, Chairwoman, CEC of Kazakhstan

Welcoming remarks from Abish Kekelbaev, State Secretary of Kazakhstan

Welcoming remarks from Erlan Idrisov, First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan

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Report on Conference Agenda by Ambassador Leon Weil, IFES Board of Directors

10:40-11:00 **Keynote Address: The role of constitutional and electoral legislation in ensuring transparency in the electoral process at the regional and local level**
Speaker: Ambassador Julian Santamaria, Spain

11:00-11:15 **Break**

Display of comparative election official training materials (videos, handbooks/manuals, flipcharts, etc) placed outside of meeting room.

11:15-12:40 **Session 1: Increasing Professional Standards of Election Administration**

Panel on Election Administration

What information (legislation) should every election official know?
Constitutions, Election laws and other pertinent legislation related to elections, international standards, relevant administrative regulations, and areas of ambiguity in electoral codes of the region.

Moderator: Tom Leckinger, IFES/Central Asia Regional Project Manager
Presenters: -Dr. Vladimir Lysenko, Member of the Scientific Board of the CEC of the Russian Federation (15 min)
-Central Election Commission of Turkmenistan (15 min)

How can this information be conveyed to commissioners?
Different approaches to increasing the capacity of commissioners to effectively administer elections through bulletins/newsletters, periodic training seminars, manuals and handbooks tailored for specific elections or commission levels. Idea of NGOs or political party representatives invited to observe training sessions.

Presenter: -Linda Edgeworth, IFES/Sarajevo Elections Consultant (15 min)
-Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan (15 min)
-Prof. Rafael Lopez-Pintor, United Nations Development Program (15 min)

12:40-13:00 **Question and Answer Session**

Moderator: Tom Leckinger, IFES/Central Asia Regional Project Manager

13:00-14:30 **Lunch**

14:30-16:00 **Professional Development Workshop #1**

These sessions are intended to allow participants to share experiences regarding areas in need of particular attention. Participants will receive questionnaire to mark preferences for attending

development sessions. All participants will be able to attend two discussion groups.

A. Discussion Group - Vote Counting

Procedures instituted to ensure accurate and transparent tabulation. Particular attention paid to determining valid/invalid ballots, access to protocols and transfer of vote tallies.

Moderator: Mariela Lopez-Vargas, IFES Elections Specialist

B. Discussion Group - Maintaining Voter Registries

Public access to the voter registry and communication between level of government in maintaining an accurate voter registry

Moderator: Ron Gould, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Canada

C. Discussion Group - Special Voting Procedures

Good practices for using special voting procedures such as early voting, mobile ballot box, military voting, etc.

Moderator: Linda Edgeworth, IFES/Sarajevo Elections Consultant

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-17:45 Rotate Discussion Groups

17:45 Adjourn for the day

18:30-20:00 Dinner sponsored by the International Organizers and CEC of Kazakhstan

Thursday, November 19

9:00-9:40 Summary presentation of discussions from Development Training Session #1.

9:40-10:30 Session 2: Resolving Electoral Disputes through Transparency:
Panel on Resolving Electoral Disputes

How can election officials effectively process disputes?

Introduce idea that disputes are a healthy natural part of any electoral system. Transparency as a means of reducing disputes: provide clear and accurate information to voters, candidates, observers and the media; allow trusted faces and observers to actively participate in the electoral process. Ensure observers are familiar with the regulations and expectations associated with being a fully-accredited observer

Moderator: Ron Gould, Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, Elections Canada

Presenters: -Ambassador Julian Santamaria, Spain (15 min)
(expert on adjudication of grievances as natural part of electoral process)

-Robert Dahl, IFES Legal Expert (15 min)
(expert on transparency as a means of reducing disputes - need to provide clear information to electorate and candidates)

-Peter Hatch, Electoral Services Consultant, United Kingdom (15 min)
(expert on transparency as a means of reducing disputes- need for election observers/deliberative voting members)

10:30-10:45 Question and Answer Session

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-12:15 Continuation of Session 2

How can you effectively respond to problems that you have observed?

Review procedures for responding to problems before election day (campaign period).

Difference between enforcement of laws and accepted practice (i.e. family voting, voting outside of booth).

Moderator: Peter Hatch, International Electoral Services Consultant,
United Kingdom

Presenters: -Linda Edgeworth IFES/Sarajevo Elections Consultant (15 min)
-Central Election Commission of Tajikistan (15 min)

How can you effectively handle a complaint forwarded by a voter, candidate or observer?

Every complaint matters, tracking types of complaints can reveal areas which need to be improved. How to respond to complaints at different points in the process (prior to election day, on election day, and post-election challenges)

Presenters: -Dr. Vladimir Lysenko, Member of the Scientific Board of CEC
of the Russian Federation (15 min)
-Robert Dahl, IFES Legal Consultant (15 min)
-Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan (15 min)

12:15-12:30 Question and Answer Session

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:15 Professional Development Workshop #2

A. Discussion Group - Domestic and International Observation

Safeguarding the role of domestic and international observers in providing transparency to the electoral process including accreditation and access to the protocol.

Moderator: Vadim Zhdanovich, OSCE/ODIHR Election Advisor

B. Discussion Group - Campaign Finance

Encouraging accurate disclosure of campaign expenditures by candidates including the use of media time.

Moderator: Robert Dahl, IFES Legal Consultant

C. Discussion Group - Candidate Registration and Removal

Requirements for ballot access including signature verification and reasons for removal of a candidate from the ballot.

Moderator: Prof. Vladimir Lysenko, Member of the Scientific Board of CEC of the Russian Federation

15:15-15:30 Break

15:30-17:30 Rotate Discussion Groups

17:30 Adjourn for the Day

18:30-20:00 Dinner Sponsored by the International Organizers and CEC of Kazakhstan

Friday, November 20

9:00-9:40 Summary presentation of discussion from Professional Development Workshop #2

9:40-10:45 Session 3: Informing the Electorate

What does every voter need to know?

Difference between A Get out the Vote@(GOTV) information and voter (logistical) information.

GOTV information includes both why the voter should vote and who they are voting for (what are the elected persons responsibility to the public). Voter information includes any new laws (constitutional changes) & regulations, logistical information (polling site location/identification required), voter registration procedures, and information on how to vote (how to mark the ballot).

Presenters: Judith Davis, IFES Voter Education Specialist (15 min)

Why is it important to inform the electorate?

How informing the electorate can increase voter turnout, reduce voter complaints and ease in election administration.

Moderator: Peter Hatch, International Electoral Services Consultant,
United Kingdom

Presenters: -Central Election Commission of Kyrgyzstan (15 min)

-Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan (15 min)

10:45-11:00 Question and Answer Session

11:00-11:15 Break

Display of comparative voter education/information materials (videos, posters, flyers, etc).

11:15-12:45 How can you target your audience?

What is targeting (and spillover) and what groups may be helped by it: youth, women, rural populations, etc.

How can you get the electorate to listen to your message?

Developing a voter education campaign including print (posters, invitations, newspaper ads), media (radio and television), events (contests, rallies, candidate debates), long-term programs (curriculum development).

Moderator: Ben Reilly, International IDEA Election Systems Expert

Presenters: -Mariela Lopez-Vargas, IFES Elections Specialist (20 min)

-Judith Davis, IFES Voter Education Specialist (20 min)

Who can help in the process?

Other organizations can assist in informing the electorate such as international donors, NGOs, businesses, political parties, schools, media, etc. The role of domestic and international organizations in providing direct electoral assistance.

Presenters: -Natalya Chumakova, Deputy Director, Center for Support of
Democracy, Kazakhstan (15 min)

-Central Election Commission of Kyrgyzstan (15 min)

-Prof. Rafael Lopez-Pintor, United Nations Development Program

(15 min)

12:45-13:00 Question and Answer Session

13:00-14:15 Lunch

14:15-16:00 Professional Development Workshop #3

A. Developing Effective Voter Information for the Electronic Media

Identify ways by which to effectively communicate voter information to the electorate through the electronic media including public service announcements, candidate debates and press conferences.

Moderator: Mariela Lopez-Vargas, IFES Elections Specialist

B. Developing Effective Voter Information for the Print Media

Identify ways by which to effectively communicate voter information to the electorate through the print media including newspaper advertisements and press releases.

Moderator: Judith Davis, IFES Voter Education Specialist

C. Developing Effective Voter Information through Small Group Interaction

Identify ways by which to effectively communicate voter information to the electorate through small group interaction including town hall meetings, public forums, etc.

Moderators: Ed Morgan, IFES/Zenitsa (Bosnia) Elections Consultant
Nermin Nisic, IFES/Zenitsa (Bosnia) Program Coordinator

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-17:00 Closing Session

Closing Remarks by Knut Ostby, UNDP/Kazakhstan Deputy Resident Representative
(on behalf of international organizers)

-Additional comments by Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan , United States Embassy, and SOROS Foundation

17:00 Adjourn Conference

18:30-20:00 Closing Dinner Hosted by the International Organizers

On-site Cultural Event Sponsored by CEC of Kazakhstan

Saturday, November 21

Sight-Seeing Tour of Almaty, sponsored by Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan