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Office of Transition Initiatives

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

PROGRAM UPDATE: March 28, 2011

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The USAID/OTI program in the Kyrgyz Republic is supporting the country's efforts to establish a more stable and secure democracy. It provides small grants to civil society, government, and private sector partners to implement high-impact, short-term projects in volatile communities. The targeted assistance supports the ongoing democratic political transition in Kyrgyzstan, while addressing emerging sources of instability and drivers of conflict at the community level. The USAID/OTI model is designed to be fast, flexible and responsive to a dynamic environment. It allows partners to implement pilot initiatives and catalytic projects that build momentum for continued long-term development. As a whole the activities are working to encourage democratic processes and build trust both within communities and between citizens and government during the critical period of transition.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

To date, OTI has completed or initiated a total of **103 activities for \$5,517,728** including the following recent activities:

1. ***Mitigating Conflict Through Increased Access to Irrigation Water in Tashbulak:*** An important series of municipal irrigation canals provide water for several farming communities in the Tashbulak district in Jalalabad Oblast. The canal system is 67.7 km in total length and provides irrigated farming water to the district's population of 16,489. However, 27.2 km of canals begin within the Kyrgyz villages of Aral, Cholokterek, Dmitrevka and Yntymak and pass through the Uzbek villages of Irrigator, Tashbulak, Doskana, and Teplitsa. Jalalabad oblast authorities last cleaned the irrigation canal in 1995. Compounded by the lack of routine maintenance, the accumulation of garbage, debris, and seasonal foliage dramatically reduced the canal's carrying capacity. The growing annual deficit of water available to support the agricultural production of the Uzbek villages located at the canal's end has generated increased tension towards the Kyrgyz villages located at the canal's starting point. The interest of Tashbulak's local government authority in increasing public access to irrigated water and mitigating conflict between the district's villages serves as an opportunity to mobilize young men for a community-driven infrastructure project. AMOUNT: \$141,679
2. ***Engaging at-risk Youth During the Anniversary of April 2010:*** During the run-up to the anniversary of violent protests that led to the ouster of the government in April 2010, OTI has recently engaged a variety of partners to initiate a spate of activities designed to engage a large number of at-risk youth from volatile neighborhoods surrounding Bishkek. The activities include clean-up campaigns that provide short-term income opportunities, a city-wide sports tournament, arts and comedy festivals, a youth entrepreneurship development project, the establishment of youth community-action groups to mobilize youth the engage with their local governments, and the rehabilitation of sports facilities and other community infrastructure primarily used by young people. The primary beneficiaries include the at-risk youth residing in the unincorporated settlements, known locally as *novostroiki*. These quasi-legal settlements, many of which have sprung up in the last decade, lack basic community infrastructure such as roads, schools, parks, playgrounds, libraries and sanitation. The youth in particular who live in these peripheral communities lack access to jobs and education, thus reinforcing the popular perception that growing up in a *novostroika* means the future is bleak and holds no promise. As a result, the youth of the *novostroiki* are prime targets for those seeking to foment unrest during times of political turbulence AMOUNT = \$414,872
3. ***Research and Round Table on Economic Recovery in the South:*** On March 24, the University of Central Asia (UCA) opened a two-day roundtable discussion in Osh with multi-ethnic entrepreneurs and government representatives from across the three oblasts of southern Kyrgyzstan. The roundtable developed actionable policy recommendations designed to promote economic recovery and stabilization in the south in the wake of the June 2010 events. This round table is the final phase of a six-month OTI-funded research project implemented by UCA in cooperation with the Small Business Development Center. Through a series of interviews with diverse stakeholders working in the various sectors of the economy in the south, UCA's study analyzes the region's

economic development potential, industry, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, microfinance, and access to credit. The round table discussion provides an opportunity to discuss the findings of the study and generate a list of concrete recommendations from entrepreneurs and local officials to inform the national government and business community as they set policies for economic recovery and development in the south. AMOUNT = \$50,000

4. ***Assisting Bishkek Local Government to Engage Youth and Rehabilitate Sports Complex:*** On March 10, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires and representatives of local government participated in a public commemoration of a joint initiative to renovate a soccer field in Bishkek's 12th micro-district, located on the outskirts of the country's capital. Renovation of the community soccer field, an effort spearheaded by local government officials from Municipal Territorial Department #7, was launched in direct response to the instability ensuing in the country last summer. The initiative was created to rally citizens' participation in a positive community-based initiative with the purpose of reducing tensions and instability in the country at a crucial time in Kyrgyzstan's transition to a stable and peaceful democracy. The project also demonstrates to the broader community the local government's commitment to addressing issues of concern to local residents. AMOUNT = \$52,703

5. ***Socio-economic Mapping and Conflict Analysis of the South:*** Following last year's USAID-funded humanitarian mapping project in the south, USAID/OTI recently initiated a six-month research and mapping activity with the international NGO ACTED to provide a comprehensive overview of the socio-economic issues that are at the root of tension and conflict within the Kyrgyz Ferghana Valley. By synthesizing existing research and gathering micro and macro-level socio-economic information through a variety of complementary methodologies, ACTED will produce both an analysis report and a series of interactive, multi-layered maps of the targeted area. Given the lack of reliable information and the divergent perceptions of the sources of instability in southern Kyrgyzstan, this activity will be key factor to inform USAID programming and magnify the impact of all domestic and international actors working to mitigate conflict, support good governance, and promote stability in southern Kyrgyzstan. Largely it will serve to both mitigate conflict and improve governance by clarifying potential tensions in key conflict-prone communities AMOUNT = \$204,148

6. ***Restoring Citizens' Confidence Through Improved Street Lights in Jalalabad city:*** On February 22nd, USAID/OTI and the Jalalabad municipal government hosted a public grant signing in Jalalabad city to support the municipal government's repair of street lights and restore evening illumination to affected streets and neighborhoods. Funds from this activity will procure materials and equipment to rehabilitate 524 street light lamps along 27.7 km of roads and reestablish street light service for 79,000 residents living within the multicultural neighborhoods of Kurmanbek, Sputnik, Dostuk, and Amir-Timur in Jalalabad city. The municipal government will provide specialized labor for the installation of new street lights. Outdated Soviet-era urban infrastructure and depressed municipal budgets have limited the capability of local government authorities in Kyrgyzstan to adequately illuminate streets in neighborhoods and public areas during evening hours. The violence in June 2010 destroyed meager but functioning street lighting, thus exacerbating the problem and creating an enduring sense of vulnerability among the resident population of Jalalabad city at night. The lack of public street light service restricts free movement, hinders security after sunset, impedes economic recovery efforts, and serves as a constant reminder of the conflict. By supporting the Jalalabad municipal government with restoring the city's lights, this grant activity will increase city residents' confidence in their security, increase economic activity in the evenings helping to stimulate the local economy, build trust in local government, and provide a foundation upon which residents can engage each other freely and without concern for their safety. AMOUNT = \$217,165

7. ***Building Community Cohesion by Rehabilitating the Kelechek Youth Center:*** On February 9, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires participated in a ceremonial grant signing recognizing USAID/OTI's support to rehabilitate the Kelechek Youth Center in the city of Osh. Since 1961 the center has provided the young people of Osh with extracurricular opportunities including dancing and singing, handicrafts and other hobbies, and computer training. In recent years, the center has faced increasing competition for the attention of the young people from local sports clubs – known in Osh to be a key place of recruitment by a variety of actors looking to manipulate youth for their own negative purposes. This activity will renovate Kelechek's dilapidated gymnasium, refurbish a dance hall, replace the ceiling and windows, and procure new recreational equipment and office furniture. Additionally it will support an expanded curriculum of extracurricular courses and help to organize a number of public cultural events. OTI will engage the Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) to help the center design a new syllabus of non-vocational classes that will meet the needs of Osh city's youth. MSDSP will also provide skills-based training to 31 instructors in order to deliver more relevant demand-based course content. By upgrading the Kelechek Youth Center, this activity will provide enhanced opportunities for Osh city's multicultural youth to interact and participate within a safe and constructive environment. AMOUNT = \$138,676

FAST FACTS

Start Date: May 2010
Budget: \$21 million
Partner: International Resources Group (IRG)
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