



USAID Newsletter

Regional News

November-December 2011



Progress on Regional Energy Cooperation. USAID and the World Bank facilitated the Government of Tajikistan hosted November 15-16 working-group meeting of stakeholders in the Central and South Asia Electricity Trade and Transmission Project (CASA-1000). Experts from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan came together to move forward CASA-1000. Participants agreed on the role, structure, and location of an Inter-Government Council (IGC) Secretariat and a schedule and process for final negotiation of the structure and scope of the CASA-1000 transmission line. When completed, this line will deliver summer hydroelectric power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. USAID held a capacity-building seminar for the participants on November 14 and will support the new IGC Secretariat Executive Director, facilitate future working-group meetings, and support design of the CASA-1000 project for presentation to its financial backers. *Photo: Recommended route for transmission line (credit: SNC LAVALIN)*



New TB Detection Technology to Launch in Central Asia. On November 15-16, USAID and the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe held a regional workshop in Almaty to discuss launch strategies for a groundbreaking new tuberculosis (TB) diagnostic technology, GeneXpert. This diagnostic tool will revolutionize TB diagnosis by rapidly diagnosing multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. Representatives from National TB programs and National Reference Laboratories in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan now have access to more USAID-supported information and technical assistance to introduce this new technology throughout Central Asia. GeneXpert will greatly reduce the spread of all forms of TB as well as improve



infection control throughout the region. *Photo left: Dr. Shakimurat Ismoilov from Kazakhstan inspects a patient's X-ray for signs of damage from a delayed MDR-TB diagnosis; photo right: Kyrgyzstan TB experts and government leaders develop an algorithm for treatment*

Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment in Central Asia. The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, supported by USAID, conducted a climate vulnerability and adaptation assessment for the energy sector in three countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. The results of this assessment were presented to key government stakeholders during a two-day seminar in Ashgabat on November 15-16. Integrated adaptation strategies to increase the protection and resilience of vulnerable infrastructure were identified, projections of changes in climate, water availability were made, and risk management strategies were discussed.



Workshop on Water Security and Glacier Melt in South and Central Asia. USAID hosted the workshop that was held in Almaty from December 5 to 8. The workshop brought together experts from the United States, Afghanistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and international agencies such as UNEP and UNDP to increase links between the countries, donors, and institutions to build a larger alliance on improving water security with a focus on the impact of glacier melt.

Participants shared their knowledge, increased communication on and coordination of regional water security issues including glacier melt, and identified synergies of their work and potential areas of collaboration. Discussions included water security issues and vulnerabilities related to democracy and governance, health, economic growth and environment sectors. *Photo left: participants of the workshop; photo right: Andrei Barannik, Regional Environmental Adviser for Asia, with Sabit Ibatullin, Director of International Fund of Saving the Aral Sea*



Regional High-level Meeting on TB in Migrants. Representatives from Ministries of Health, Interior, and Labor, and Migration Services from Central Asian countries met for the first time on November 28 and 29 to discuss tuberculosis (TB) in migrant populations. Approximately 5 million labor migrants travel in the region and the Russian Federation. Although they contribute as much as 50% of national GDP, they put themselves and others at high risk of TB due to poor living conditions and lack of access to health services. Participants agreed that regional cooperation is needed to address TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in this vulnerable population. Recommendations were developed that will be addressed to the governments of Central Asia and Russia.



Central Asian Forum on Civil Society Law. The USAID-supported International Center for Not-for-Profit Law conducted a Central Asian Forum on Civil Society Law in Almaty on December 1 and 2. The Forum drew together approximately 60 lawyers and Civil Society Organization (CSO) activists who discussed best practices and developments in Central Asia and other Eurasian states, with a view toward producing implementation plans for reform. In addition to experts from all Central Asian countries, delegations of CSO lawyers

from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia presented the most relevant experiences from their countries for the Central Asian countries to consider. *Photo: participants of the forum*

Kazakhstan



USAID Partners with Government of Kazakhstan and World Bank in Implementation of Health Reforms. From October 31 to November 12, the World Bank and the Government of Kazakhstan jointly conducted a mid-term review of a health project to introduce international standards and build long-term institutional capacity in the Ministry of Health and related healthcare institutions in support of key health sector reforms pursued by the Government of Kazakhstan. USAID provided technical input for several components of the project that is co-financed by the Government of Kazakhstan with US\$178.4 million and the World Bank with US\$117.7 million. USAID is also contributing technical expertise to support implementation of project activities. By maintaining effective partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan and

other donors such as the World Bank, USAID is able to greatly expand the impact of its contributions to improved health for Kazakhstan's citizens. *Photo: Health practitioners inputting data – credit: World Bank*



Central Asia and Afghanistan Women's Symposium Steering Committee Meets. A Central Asia and Afghanistan Women's Symposium (WES) Steering Committee Meeting was held on November 16 in Almaty, led by Melanie Bixby, the U.S. Department of State's Senior Gender Advisor. WES was initiated by Secretary Clinton and supported by Kyrgyz Republic President Roza Otunbayeva as part of the follow up to last year's Seoul G20 Summit that endorsed the "Financial Inclusion Action Plan" and the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion as part of the means of strengthening access to finance women-owned SMEs in developing countries. The meeting discussed progress, priorities, practicalities, and recommendations to be implemented in partnership with symposium participants. Several members of the Steering Committee group, including USAID/CAR Gender Advisor, Rabiga Baytokova, received certificates on behalf of

Secretary Clinton for their contribution to WES. *Photo: Rabiga Baytokova, USAID/CAR Gender Advisor, with her certificate*



World AIDS Day Events. USAID/Kazakhstan supported several events to commemorate World AIDS Day. A World AIDS Day event for most-at-risk populations was hosted at an ice skating rink in Almaty to raise awareness of HIV prevention. On Dec 7, Regional Mission Director Erin McKee hosted a World AIDS Day informal roundtable for journalists to discuss HIV issues with government officials, NGO representatives, and people living with HIV. *Photo: Erin Elizabeth McKee, USAID Regional Mission Director (left) and Khorlan Izmailova, USAID Regional HIV/AIDS Advisor (right)*

Roundtable on NGO Financing in Kazakhstan. USAID supported a roundtable with government and civil society to discuss the financial and legal barriers for health NGOs in Kazakhstan. During the meeting, the Ministry of Health agreed to delegate more responsibilities to NGOs and increase funding to NGOs working in HIV and TB by 30 percent. Government of Kazakhstan financial support to NGOs is a critical first step for helping to ensure sustainability of community programs as well as ensuring continuity of services to vulnerable populations who are being served by these NGOs.

Tajikistan



School Drop-out Prevention Pilot Presents Analysis. The situation analysis findings of a USAID-supported School Drop-out Prevention Pilot project were presented to the Tajik Ministry of Education, Tajik NGO representatives, and donors on November 15. Research was conducted over the past several months on what factors put a child at risk of dropping out of school. The analysis found that economic factors have the greatest influence on a child's ability to stay in school, with teaching quality and school services also cited as significant contributors to students' staying in school. This study will be followed up with evidence-based interventions to rigorously test approaches for reducing school dropout. *Photo: Participants' discussion*



USAID Opens Water Systems. A restored water system in Yakumi Mai jamoat, Tursunzoda district will provide safe drinking water to over 2,200 people. The Soviet era water pump stopped working many years ago, and the pipes had fallen into disrepair. The new local government owned system will be maintained by an independent water management concession. The cost per family will be an estimated 5 TJS (approximately \$1.05) each month. The project was completed as part of the USAID Tajikistan Safe Drinking Water Project, which will bring drinking water to over 100,000 people by the end of 2012. The ceremony included performances by schoolchildren on the importance of clean water and good hygiene. These performances are part of a child-to-child education program that

accompanies each water system. USAID also inaugurated a new safe drinking water system in the administrative center of the Bohtar district in December. USAID assisted the state water authority "Vodocanal" to replace one pump and 1,700 meters of pipe. More than 4,000 inhabitants obtained access to safe drinking water because of this small water infrastructure project. Since November, USAID has launched six safe drinking water systems in Tajikistan, with more to come early in the New Year. *Photo: Opening the Yakumi Mai jamoat water system*

Roundtable to Advance Housing and Communal Services Reform Convened. On December 13, USAID organized a roundtable to discuss ways to strengthen public services in rural areas and de-monopolize and decentralize water and solid waste management, thereby creating new options for providing services more efficiently, such as local contracting or setting up separate local state-owned service enterprises. Officials from the Office of the President of Tajikistan, key ministries and state agencies participated along with local government representatives, donors, and NGOs. Drawing on the experience of USAID-supported pilot efforts in the Bobojon Gafurov district in Sughd, participants discussed options for attracting private sector investment to help foster competition, redistributing state budget resources to the municipal level, involving the public in fee-setting discussions, and creating public private partnerships. At the end of the event, proposed recommendations were consolidated and included in the Government of Tajikistan's Program of Housing and Communal Services Reform of Tajikistan 2010-2025, which governs current reform efforts in the sector.

Turkmenistan



Seminar Empowers Women at All Levels. On November 23-25, USAID's Governance Strengthening Project in Turkmenistan conducted a two-day seminar on "Organizational skills and the capabilities of women leaders" in collaboration with the School of Business under the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan, and the Women's Union of Turkmenistan. The seminar was attended by 35 women from civil service posts, including representatives from Khakimliks of various regions, the Central Office of Youth Union of Turkmenistan, and the National Labor Union of Turkmenistan. Immediately after the event, the National Union of Women called to share their excitement about what they had learned and requested the project draft a work plan for other joint activities. *Photo: Participants at the seminar*



Launch of New Artificial Insemination Training Center. On November 30, USAID's Agriculture Technology Program held the grand opening of its new Artificial Insemination Training Center in Mary. This new center, co-funded by USAID and the owner, Mr. Dovlet Eminov, will operate as a central station where veterinarians can access equipment and resources to provide artificial insemination services for farmers' herds in the Mary region. In the 12 months since its inception, the project has established a solid foundation for improving livestock genetics in Turkmenistan by introducing artificial insemination services in the country. The result of improved genetics and better herd management will be an increase in milk production and an improvement of livelihoods for small cattle farmers throughout Turkmenistan. *Photo: The ribbon cutting ceremony*

Uzbekistan



Samarkand Farmer Produces and Exports Plant Material. USAID's AgLinks project regularly conducts Fruit Variety Contests to promote farmer interaction, stimulate interest in agronomic best practices, identify new local varieties, and disseminate agricultural information. These end-of-season contests are experience-sharing platforms and are opportunities to market promising domestic plant material. During last year's Grape Variety Contest farmer Faizulla of Samarkand Province presented his home grown "Sogdiana" grape variety. His variety was chosen as the best raisin producer among two dozen entries by a three-person panel comprised of leading grape sector representatives. Raisins made from the "Sogdiana" variety are priced 8 to 10 times higher than other varieties due to higher sweetness and pulp. In 2011, using plant propagation methods introduced by AgLinks, Faizulla replaced one-third of his 6 hectare vineyard with the "Sogdiana" variety. He also sold 3,000 cuttings of "Sogdiana" to a buyer in Chimkent, Kazakhstan and received additional domestic orders from Jizzakh and Kashkadarya provinces, which have increased his income by 10%. *Photo: A farmer demonstrates the size difference between regular (left) and Sogdiana (right) raisins*



Solar Fruit and Vegetable Dryer. USAID's AgLinks Plus project and Farmer-to-Farmer program collaborated on a post-harvest training and introduced a solar dryer to Uzbek farmers. Participating farmers constructed a fruit and vegetable dryer suitable for home use completely from local materials costing \$50. Twelve people built the small-scale, low-cost solar dryer, which reduces production time from seven to two days; increases hygiene (insect access to product is blocked); and functions with temperatures as low as 25 degrees Celsius. Participants were very excited about the technology but disappointed with the training timing since it was too late in the agricultural season to fully test the equipment. Given farmer interest, AgLinks Plus plans to test and potentially promote this technology in the 2012 harvest season through integration with two other project activities, fruit variety contests and household processing training. *Photo: Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer, Ralph Bucca (in green jacket), oversees final touches on the solar dryer constructed by AgLinks Plus farmers*



Solid Waste Management Capacity Building. Waste that is not properly managed is a serious health hazard and leads to the spread of infectious diseases. USAID's Local Development Initiative conducted baseline assessments in its eight partner regions and identified the need for better solid waste management, as well as the interest and motivation of local government bodies to enhance collection, transportation, and disposal of residential solid waste. In response, the project provided a series of three trainings in Samarkand and Tashkent for local government officials on municipal solid waste management. Participants studied the cycle of waste from generation to recycling and disposal and learned how to estimate the quantity of hardware and equipment required for their communities based on real volumes of waste created in their regions. Local government representatives discussed several options for collection, transportation, recycling and disposal of solid waste. *Photo: Trainer and local government officials at solid waste management training event*

For more information about USAID in Central Asia go to:

Website: <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/USAID.Central.Asian.Republics>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/USAIDCentralAsianRep>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usaidcentralasianrepublics/>

Foreign Assistance Dashboard: <http://www.foreignassistance.gov>

Or, contact Leanne MacDougall, Regional Development Outreach and Communications Specialist at: Imacdougall@usaid.gov