

SPRING SPOTLIGHTS

MAY 2013

USAID Supports Turkmenistan's WTO Accession Initiative

A two-day international conference titled “Turkmenistan and WTO Accession: Substantive Matters and the Negotiation Process” featured speakers and experts from various international organizations and was attended by senior and mid-level officials from 30 agencies of the Government of Turkmenistan. During the conference participants addressed relevant issues with international experts from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and WTO itself, in addition to internationally-recognized professional practitioners in WTO and international trade policies. The conference familiarized participants with the benefits of joining the organization as well as explained its purpose, history, fundamental principles, and the key areas and functions of members.



USAID strengthens rug-making exports from Central Asia

Thirty rug and carpet makers from Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan gathered in Almaty for a two-day USAID seminar ending March 20 to help facilitate export of rugs and carpets from Central Asia to international markets. Participants learned marketing techniques for promoting products internationally as well as modern trends in designs. Rug makers from across Central Asia will form an export partnership group sponsored by the USAID Regional Economic Cooperation project to strengthen the trade and export of rugs and carpets.

USAID hosts multinational energy efficiency financing event

Over 70 representatives of companies from Europe, the Caucasus, Asia, Russia and Turkey gathered in Almaty to develop bankable proposals for energy efficiency investments. This two day event is part of a larger USAID and UN program to encourage the financing of green investments in the region. Implementing a strong energy management system typically saves a company 15-20% of energy costs. Recent USAID work with KazPhosphate identified more than \$1 million in annual savings. Representatives of multinational development banks, credit institutions and business companies shared their experience financing projects in the region, and private sector and Ministry leaders learned to calculate the internal rate of return on energy efficiency investments.

USAID joins summit on demand reduction for forced labor

IOM, together with USAID and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, hosted a regional event to discuss regulations on the abolition of all forms of forced labor and slavery-like working conditions in Central Asian countries and the enforcement of labor law to stop the forced labor and exploitation of migrants. Representatives of labor ministries, migration services, trade unions, employers' associations, as well as counter-trafficking NGOs and international donor organizations shared experiences and developed recommendations for combatting trafficking in Central Asia.

Farmers take control to improve irrigation

The changing role of women in Tajikistan water management

As the sun sets in rural Tajikistan, farmers start gathering in the main building in town for their water users association meeting. All heads turn as their leader, Chairwoman Mamlakat Abduqahorova, calls the meeting to order. She has been successfully leading the Havaskor-I Water User Association since its formation a year ago and is part of a select few women who lead water users associations in Tajikistan.

Feed the Future is building the capacity of water users associations formed by farmers to manage and operate their own local irrigation systems, including planning fair and efficient distribution of water and planning for maintenance of infrastructure. Already, USAID has helped form over 50 associations, organized into four federations, benefitting over 200,000 people in Tajikistan. These water users associations, built on democratic principles, leadership, and participation from women, are a foundation for agrarian reform. Women are responsible for planting, harvesting, and making decisions regarding what their families eat; they form the cornerstone of family farming. They can work with fellow water users along the canals and share information on water borne diseases, food preservation, and malnutrition of children. Ms. Abduqahorova shares her perspective on this. "As mothers we understand the plight of other families and see the impact on the nutrition of our children. It is because I have managed my roles as mother, wife, mother-in-law, and grandmother that I believe I can successfully manage the water user association in my district." The men of the association



believed that too, and voted her to be their chairwoman. She has big plans. "We want to make Havaskor-I sustainable. We'll continue maintenance of canals and rehabilitating water gates to provide our farmers with the needed conditions for better harvests." Scarred by the disarray and mismanagement of irrigation infrastructure over the last twenty years she confirmed, "We put a lot of our time and effort into this process, and, as a result, will never let it collapse again."

Photo: Chairwoman Mamlakat Abduqahorova leads her peers in managing irrigation canal maintenance in Khatlon, Tajikistan.

Water and Hope Flow Back into Kyrgyzstan's Hard-Hit South

When Abibilla Kimsanov was a child, his father and uncle had serious disputes over water. They shared a self-made water canal used to irrigate crops. But since his uncle's house was further uphill, he was first to receive the incoming water and often would not let Abibilla's family get their fair share. "I remember being very upset because of the constant fighting over water between my relatives. My cousin and I couldn't play together for a week at a time because my uncle would forbid him to talk to me," recalls Kimsanov. Abibilla Kimsanov is now a local farmer himself and has been a community leader for the past 13 years helping to institute changes to calm the tensions over water. He created a water users association, a grassroots group that now includes many members from all of the villages in his municipality in Osh. This group partnered with USAID to rehabilitate the irrigation infrastructure. Local people cleaned the canal and for less than \$3.40 per person, water now reaches more than 7,000 farmers.

At the end of the first harvest season after the restoration of the irrigation network, the local government of Zulpuev reported cumulative revenue for farmers of more than \$1.7 million, doubling that of the previous year. "I called my son in Yekaterinburg as soon as we started the renovation works on the canals. I was hoping that he would return and help me with our farm and he did! We look forward to next year. We expect a fruitful harvest season," says Kimsanov.

Between 2004 and 2012, USAID assisted 28 water user associations in three provinces, which helped rehabilitate about 250 km of canals. About 10,000 hectares of degraded land were brought back into production, impacting the lives and incomes of more than 200,000 people.



Photo: Young men from Zulpuev municipality clear the irrigation canal so thousands of farmers can receive water.

USAID celebrates World TB Day across Central Asia

New tuberculosis infections are occurring at a worldwide rate of about one per second. In 2010, there were an estimated 8.8 million new cases and 1.5 million associated deaths, mostly occurring in developing countries. Each year, we celebrate World TB Day on the anniversary of the discovery of the bacillus that causes tuberculosis.



TAJIKISTAN

USAID helped sponsor a cultural and informational event at Jami Concert Hall where young people actively participated in quizzes and courageously responded to questions related to TB prevention and treatment. The best TB specialists, lab specialists and health workers from primary health care facilities were honored. Reporters were recognized for mass media coverage of TB, and USAID launched a new contest for journalists.

USAID participated in several other events dedicated to World TB Day including a round table organized by IOM, a charity auction organized by the Global Fund, and a round table on treatment outcomes of MDR TB patients.

TURKMENISTAN

The USAID Quality Health Care Project, in collaboration with local and international partners, provided lectures, videos, and other educational events in honor of World TB Day to students, outreach workers, volunteers, and most at-risk populations at seven separate events in Ashgabat and one in Dashauze.

UZBEKISTAN

USAID, the National Tuberculosis Program, and the WHO raised awareness of health providers about stigma reduction and improvement of patient support. Seven teams of nurses and doctors representing all city TB facilities shared their creative energy and were awarded prizes in three contests and seven mini-skits on patient-centered care. Performances of a youth orchestra, dances, and a pop band created an exceptionally festive atmosphere.

The event received wide media coverage in local press, radio and TV, including TV Channel “Toshkent,” which aired an interview with USAID. We also held a health quiz for youth and two health fairs.



KAZAKHSTAN

USAID sponsored a half-day conference in the Ministry of Health’s National TB Center, focused on coordination of NGOs, donors, and the government to improve patient care. USAID joined a gathering in front of the Palace of the Republic to raise awareness on TB, its causes and treatment. USAID TB CARE program staff distributed leaflets, and sponsored posters on billboards and public transportation.

The USAID Quality Health Care Project launched a contest for the best media coverage of TB issues. Outside Almaty, USAID sponsored a children’s drawing contest, a series of TB patient support groups, and several events for health care workers.

KYRGYZSTAN

USAID took part in observing World TB Day at Victory Square with a press conference; a dance; a marathon; a competition for the best drawn picture among TB patients; TV and radio broadcasts on TB; dissemination of educational materials; and the placement of banners to increase TB awareness across the Kyrgyz Republic.

US Ambassador Susan Elliott Champions Development in Tajikistan

Ambassador Elliott attended the graduation of the University of Central Asia's School of Professional and Continuing Education in Khorugh. Two hundred students received certificates at the ceremony, and a total of 132 students from Afghan Badakhshon received scholarships to study English, IT, bookkeeping, and other vocational subjects. The Ambassador toured the campus and also visited microfinance, water, and agricultural assistance projects in the region.

Ambassador Elliott and the Deputy Prime Minister Murodali Alimardon officiated at the USAID Land Reform Project's closing event in celebration of Government of Tajikistan's achievements in advancing land reform. Through a network of legal aid centers, USAID provided direct assistance to 102,000 people by increasing their knowledge and protecting land use rights.

Ambassador Elliott joined local officials at the inauguration of a water user association that will facilitate reliable access to irrigation water for over 22,000 residents across three districts in Shahritus. Water users associations are groups of farmers who work together to democratically plan water delivery schedules and maintain irrigation systems.



Ambassador Elliott, Deputy Prime Minister Alimardon and Khatlon Region Chairman Ghaibullo Afzal opened the USAID Agricultural Inputs Fair in Qurghonteppa. The fair brought together farmers, agribusinesses, financial institutions, and input dealers to facilitate business relationships and promote trade.

Ambassador Elliott joined the Deputy Minister of Health Saida Jobirova at a World Tuberculosis (TB) Day event. USAID projects fight TB through assisting the National TB Program and penitentiary medical system, supporting outpatient treatment, improving laboratory services, and supporting policies and systems for vulnerable populations.

Ambassador Elliott, Deputy Prime Minister Alimardon, and the Director of the Statistical Agency Bahtiya Muhammadijeva, participated in the presentation of the internationally recognized Demographic and Health Survey preliminary report. The Statistical Agency surveyed roughly 6,700 households throughout Tajikistan and interviewed more than 9,600 women. Tajikistan showed positive improvements in a wide range of population, health and nutrition indicators.

Ambassador Elliott and Tajikistan's Minister of Education Nuritdin Saidov attended the launch of the School Dropout Prevention project to reduce the dropout rate of grade 9 students. This program was collaboratively designed with Ministry of Education officials and school personnel to encourage students to stay in school. Over the past year, the program conducted an analysis of the factors that affect dropout in grade 9 and designed school-level interventions.

Ambassador Elliott joined Rajabali Tagoev, Governor of Yovon, and Islomiddin Narsov, Head of the Education Department in Yovon, in attending the closing ceremony of a 4-day Reading for Children workshop. This USAID workshop equipped 26 master trainers with skills and knowledge on how to teach reading and how to help parents encourage young children to love reading.

Ambassador Elliott visited the Istravshan Family Medicine Center in Sogd Oblast where she met with a group of doctors from the surrounding rayons. The doctors were participating in a USAID training to increase access to quality health care services and increase the use of data for decision-making within the health care system.

