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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

SNAPSHOT

Knowledge Empowers Civil Society

A USAID-produced how-to manual supports civil society efforts to engage with Parliament.



Photo: USAID/OTI

OTI supported the development and publication of a reader-friendly manual on how civil society actors can lobby members of Parliament more effectively.

“The manual ...provides insight to the [Parliament] and strengthens the capacity of NGOs working with [it].”

*—Alina Stepanova,
Westminster Foundation for
Democracy project in Kyrgyzstan*

February 2013 - “Involving representatives of communities, vulnerable groups, citizen associations, and businesses in the legislative process should lead to the adoption of effective and popular laws, decisions, and programs,” said Anna Kirilenko and Jibek Koichukulova of Interbilim, developers of an innovative new OTI-supported manual that teaches civil society to engage Parliament in the legislative process.

The June 2010 constitutional referendum, which came only weeks after violent political change and interethnic violence, was intended to increase government accountability and transparency and increase citizen participation in initiating and discussing draft laws with the newly formed Parliament. By the following year, however, 77 percent of the population still did not understand how to work with the Parliament, according to a 2011 survey by Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society.

Moreover, few civil society organizations (CSOs) understood how the Parliament functions or how to access and lobby Parliament. In response, International Center Interbilim, a leading civil society advocate, approached USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) with the idea to develop a manual intended to increase citizen participation in public decision-making by teaching CSOs the tools and procedures for interacting with Parliament.

OTI supported the development and publication of the manual in a simple, reader-friendly format for distribution among CSOs, Parliament, and law faculties across the country. Interbilim followed the distribution with two presentations to CSOs, local government, and media outlets in Bishkek and Osh on using the manual. Many CSOs, as well as USAID’s implementing partners, requested additional copies for their counterparts. OTI intends to print additional manuals for distribution in the spring.

To further promote civic participation in the political process, OTI is also supporting Interbilim and the Liberal Youth Alliance in a nationwide advocacy campaign on civil society supported reforms of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as a case study intended to evaluate and improve civil society efforts to conduct advocacy campaigns that influence legislation.

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