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SOCIAL INNOVATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Building a vibrant and responsive civil society in Central Asia

The USAID-funded Social Innovation in Central Asia program is a five-year, \$18 million program implemented by Eurasia Foundation to cultivate a vibrant and responsive civil society throughout the region, including Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and build a new generation of forward-looking civil society leaders (2019-2024).

OBJECTIVES

Social Innovation in Central Asia centers on four inter-related objectives:

- Foster a cohort of civically responsible young leaders;
- Strengthen civil society's role in promoting greater public transparency and accountability;
- Enhance civil society's ability to quickly respond to emerging opportunities; and
- Build the capacity of civil society organizations to be financially viable and responsive to constituents.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- 163 participants from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
- 80 youth successfully graduated the Central Asia Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA)'s online school
- 48 competitors in a participant-organized debate tournament
- Eight online courses and more than 200 consultations and 85 coaching sessions
- 24 youth leadership grants with a value of more than \$68,350 awarded

In 2020, Social Innovation in Central Asia launched CAYLA for civically responsible young leaders who share goals, values, and passion for positive change in their communities, enrolling 163 young civic leaders from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. CAYLA members studied foundational skills in community engagement and leadership via interactive and engaging online activities. At each step, CAYLA members have had the opportunity to network with their peers, civic leaders, established civil

society organizations (CSOs) and local government officials to share lessons about what works in community-level initiatives.

POLICY RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

- 39 participants from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
- 15 proposals developed for collaborative policy analysis on budgeting processes
- Six transparency advocacy grants awarded
- Five policy research projects awarded

The Social Innovation in Central Asia Policy Research School (PRS) offers mentoring, workshops, on-the-job training, and peer-to-peer exchanges for CSOs, think tanks, and independent researchers that build capacity needed for participation in policy development and the role of watchdogs in monitoring the public sector. PRS engages its members in advanced budget advocacy curriculum tailored to the policy areas of highest priority for them and aimed at improving ongoing advocacy initiatives and designing future campaigns on the budget process. Social Innovation in Central Asia also awards grants (more than \$188,000 to date) to support advocacy and research projects that strengthen civil society's role in promoting transparency, public accountability, and policy research in Central Asia.

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

- 22 innovative solution grants awarded
- Four in-kind grants awarded
- Three dialogue platform fora on civil society pressing issues conducted

Social Innovation in Central Asia provides civil society actors with resources they need to strengthen their work and address the priorities of their communities. To allow civil society to identify where they see the greatest need for investment, the program provides resources through ongoing, flexible grant competitions (more than \$215,700 awarded to date) to solicit and support timely project ideas and promote positive citizen participation and social innovation. Projects funded promote transparency and accountability, revitalized, inclusive communities and opportunities and protections for all.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Research study conducted on the feasibility of social entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan
- 74 CSOs from Central Asia enrolled in the Institutional Development Program (IDP)
- 21 Central Asian experts trained on and using program instruments for assessment and technical assistance to CSOs.

The Social Innovation in Central Asia program develops the skills, tools, and capacities of civil society organizations to diversify their funding sources and increase engagement with their constituents in IDP, a 14-month program designed to empower established and new civil society organizations through a series of tailored assessments and targeted assistance from Central Asian experts in organizational capacity building, long-term strategizing, CSO workforce development and relationship building with key constituencies and other stakeholders. In 2021, the program began offering institutional development grants (average \$15,000) to help CSOs address capacity gaps and better pursue their organizational missions.