



**IFES Early Warning for Confidence Building
IN KYRGYZ REPUBLIC**

Program Period – June 1 to December 31, 2005

**Agreement between IFES-Kyrgyzstan Republic and
The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Center in Bishkek**

**Submitted to the
The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Center in Bishkek**

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I. AIM AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

The IFES Electoral Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) project in Kyrgyzstan was funded by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Center in Bishkek to provide a methodologically standard format of electoral violence incident reporting throughout the territory of Kyrgyzstan to all interested individuals and organizations as well as to encourage interventions through providing operational information and formulating recommendations to civil society, state structures and international organizations. In cooperation with the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) IFES-Kyrgyzstan established communication and coordination mechanisms between civil society, state structures and international organizations as well as raised awareness of possible causes and triggers for violence across Kyrgyzstan by collecting, among other things, comparative data and reports.

By the end of the project, in addition to dedicating a staff member to work with the project and paying for regional coordinators in the program, IFES had transferred its capacity for election violence monitoring and use of Incident Forms to the Early Warning Unit, Monitors, and Coordinators; helped design other conflict analysis forms; assisted with recruitment of coordinators; facilitated project design and management structure; and provided staff with training in election observation, election procedures, elections and violence issues. These capacities and the assistance offered and capacities built remain in effect as the monitoring team and Early Warning Unit continue their activities under new funding.

The following report provides a complete overview of the Early Warning for Confidence-Building project from its inception through closeout. The EVER Project in Kyrgyzstan was developed as part of a global effort to monitor electoral conflict to identify those conditions, causes, practices, or failures provoking electoral violence, and using this data to devise strategies and methodologies for reducing electoral violence. The primary objectives of the project in Kyrgyzstan included partnering with local Civil Society Organization(s) to administer proactively a conflict mitigation program which identifies, monitors, and reports on potential areas of politically motivated conflict as relates to the electoral process. Further, IFES wished to enable a core group of Kyrgyz stakeholders (i.e. election officials, civil society, security officials, and international observers) to coordinate responses to critical and evolving priorities identified through monitoring and reporting that relate to political conflict and security during the electoral process.

Though this project had a conflict prevention element, a key output of the monitoring and reporting elements was to provide accurate data on trends, locations, and motivations of conflict that the stakeholders could use to improve local and international conflict prevention efforts in future elections. This data is also used in IFES' Global Incidents of Violence database and website, which allows information sharing on election violence on a global scale for the public, CSOs, the media, government officials, and election management and security officials.

II. ACTIVITIES:

As an international organization with global experience and experience with EVER methodology, IFES initially agreed to provide consultants/experts on EVER methodology and conflict resolution, as well as to develop initial training tools and the basis for project methodology to be applied in Kyrgyzstan. FTI's role consisted of leading conflict analysis trainings, developing a

conflict tracking form with IFES assistance, and the daily running of the Early Warning Unit. As a local NGO with a network of contacts with other NGOs, FTI agreed to identify monitors in the initial recruitment and IFES supplied several candidates for Coordinators. FTI also played a significant role in developing project methodology by working closely with IFES consultants. The expanded vision for EVER in Kyrgyzstan includes proactive conflict prevention, dialogue facilitation, and network building with stakeholders to ensure broad participation in, engagement with, and awareness of, key political issues.

IFES conducted two trainings for a total of 26 Monitors, 8 Coordinators, and 2 Analysts in the first month of the project, employing eight Coordinators. Well-prepared Monitors and Coordinators, proved very dedicated in their data gathering. After the first month of the project, an analysis of incidents of violence documentation allowed for process improvement. .

June 10-11 Training

The first training included 12 candidates for monitors and coordinators and 2 FTI analysts, focusing on EVER methodology and led by IFES EVER methodology expert Tihana Bartulac, assisted by IFES EVER program coordinator Lisa Kammerud. FTI and IFES each identified six monitors/coordinators to participate. Participants gained an understanding of EVER methodology and the overall project. IFES distributed the Training Manual, the Incident Form, and copies of IFES PEC training manuals from parliamentary elections. Of these participants, eight were invited to the second training.



*June 10-11, 2005
EVER training*

Monitoring Structure

The project team consisted of part-time Monitors hired by FTI and full-time Coordinators at the Oblast level (essential supervisory-level monitors) hired by IFES. The Coordinators and Monitors would work together and with project staff to gather and report data. This structure allowed most communication and facilitation to be handled by the Coordinators. They were responsible for routine contact with monitors, for assisting in investigations as needed, for answering questions, and for ensuring that reports and information were received in a timely manner from monitors. They also served as liaisons between the office and Monitors as needed.



September meeting with Project Coordinators in the OSCE Academy Bishkek

Through the initial phase IFES and FTI, not previously collaborators became used to each other's management and institutional style and ironed out inevitable miscommunications, arriving eventually at a collegiate partnership. IFES worked closely with FTI to build confidence in merging of the project goals and work plans as well as in the professional ties formed and the team-building experience of designing and leading the trainings.

June 21-22 Training

The second training targeted the 29 monitor candidates and 8 coordinators. Led by FTI and IFES, and building on the strong points of the previous training while taking into account lessons learned, this combined training program was more interactive and included units on skill sets of conflict analysis, EVER methodology, and interviewing. One highlight of the training was an exercise on listing potential areas of violence during various stages of elections and mitigation strategies for each. IFES also distributed copies of new IFES PEC training manual for presidential elections.

Pre-Election Activities

Monitors and Coordinators began work immediately following the second training. Through contacts, interviews, attendance at campaign and other events, and the media, they gathered information on incidents of violence and levels of tension across Kyrgyzstan. In July 2005 IFES organized three main events alongside continuous monitoring: a press conference formally introducing the project, a pre-election roundtable to discuss the project and election violence issues, and the deployment of monitors to polling stations on ElectionDay.

The *Roundtable* was held on July 8th, 2005 and was led by Dr. Eric Rudenshiold, IFES Director of Europe & Asia, and Raya Kadyrova, President of FTI. This meeting brought together key election stakeholders including white house representatives as well as officials from the Ministry of National Security responsible for each oblast, etc. FTI assisted with content and development of roundtable, while IFES led, funded and coordinated the event. The topics of discussion included: 1) Introduction of EVER weekly Bulletin available to all the stakeholders; 2) areas of potential conflict – where IFES facilitated discussion and provided strategies for resolving problems, encouraging participatory decision making on prevention techniques; 3) Sharing of appropriate and relevant global election violence and security experiences.

Before the election, Edil Baisalov, President of the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society (and project steering committee member) offered to connect Coalition Regional Observer contacts with the monitors. IFES also worked to link monitors with FTI regional and national coordinating councils (RCCs and NCCs) of law enforcement and civil society leaders. Monitors received a list of the Chairs of these groups as resource persons as well.

Monitoring Post-Election and the Interim Period

Observation on Election Day went smoothly, and the post-election period was not characterized by any serious conflict (detailed comments on monitoring and incidents in the Analysis section). During the summer and fall, IFES assisted with monthly meetings for Coordinators which became an essential tool in building morale, providing feedback to staff, and for holding supplemental trainings.

The monitoring team continued to gather valuable information on ongoing conflicts. In September, staff in the affected communities had further elections to monitor.



A participant discussing tools for conflict analysis in a training session

November Training and Discussion with CEC Representative

In November, 2005 most of the team's attention was concentrated around the upcoming by-elections and local elections, particularly on monitoring conflicts in relation to those elections and election violence monitoring. The Coordinator meeting in November, attended by the IFES/DC Research Coordinator Lisa Kammerud, helped prepare experienced and new Coordinators for the local elections. In-depth discussions of motivations of conflict revealed a variety of possible motivations and conflicts. In some local elections, control of land distribution was expected to motivate candidate supporters. In others, candidates garnered support along ethnic lines, and this was seen as a possible source of tension. The elections were calm, but incidents did reveal some of the expected cleavages.

Additionally, during the monthly meeting, a round table discussion was held on the coming elections and possible conflict areas with Tair Sadykov, CEC member, Kurmanbek Diykanbaev (Chair of the Association for Local Government), and IFES Chief of Party Dr. David Mikosz. For the coordinators this was an opportunity for lively discussion with participants and to encourage interviews with Election Commission Members at a local level. After mentioning some general statistics, Tair Sadykov noted several conflict prone moments in the elections, with a focus on bribery, voter list manipulation, mobile voting, as well as potential conflict situations on elections day. Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev stressed the understanding that local governance is not part of the governmental vertical power, because Ayil Okmotu are not appointed, but elected. He also explained conflicts that are typical during the elections, and mentioned his overseas experience where observers focused not only on negative sides, but also positive ones.

Evaluation

Self-evaluation was embedded within the project and regularly reflected in written reports. The local and international consultants as well as the Steering Board members shared their comments and recommendations as project progressed. The timeliness and efficiency of the reports was under constant scrutiny as well as the way the information from the early warning component integrated into the early intervention system.

Project Structure and Feedback

Mechanisms for evaluation and feedback are key to a project which depends so much on the initiative and detailed data collection of its staff. An essential restructuring advocated by IFES in



Project staff meeting

July was that Coordinators at the Oblast level (and an extra person in Bishkek) should assist in supervision of Monitors. Project Coordinators were given in-depth information on their supervisory responsibilities over monitors including guidelines related to the quality of work of monitors, financial responsibilities, reporting and feedback mechanisms.

Additionally, on a weekly basis the Early Warning Unit assessed the

work of each monitor and coordinator. A number of criteria were taken into account: the quality of information provided, the activities undertaken to collect information, timeliness in providing the information requested and the time spent working for the project.

Capacity Building and Learning on All Sides

In the first training, it was clear that most monitors began with a sophisticated awareness of the potential for conflict in their communities, and with new understanding of the dynamics of election violence, were soon able to pinpoint potential for election violence within the election cycle as well as possible strategies for mitigation. Their awareness, insight, and quality of reports and information continued to improve throughout the program. The monthly Coordinator meetings were a great help to staff morale and teambuilding, and provided an opportunity to conduct refresher training sessions as well as guest speakers/workshops on important issues. The monthly coordinators trainings also included sessions on filling out the forms properly and were essential for ensuring coordinator effectiveness. In the meetings, the team was also able to meet with the Intervention team from the UNDP-funded wing of the project. Coordinators were especially enthusiastic about the information received on the link between the early warning and early intervention. One coordinator, who was recruited after the first training, commented that it was one of the best project designs he has ever seen.

The individual talks during training provided coordinators not only with answers to some organizational and practical issues, but also made the relationship between the Early Warning Center and the coordinators stronger. IFES engaged the first groups of monitors and coordinators in dialogue about the design of Report Form 1 – the Incident of Violence Form. In adapting the form and methodology to the Kyrgyz context, monitors suggested adding variables to the Incident Form dealing with occupations of state buildings and erection of barricades. The team also determined that paper dissemination of the bulletin was essential for outreach to local government officials who might not have access to the internet. This allowed for wider awareness of issues in the lead-up to local elections in December.

III. IMPACT

Bulletin Widely Received and Respected

The Project's key output has been its Weekly Bulletin. Stakeholders from all sectors have praised the product's comprehensiveness, objectivity, and usefulness. The IFES contribution throughout its inception consisted of stressing objectivity, providing feedback to help it improve, and providing the services of a dedicated professional Russian-language editor. Throughout, and between, election cycles the Bulletin brought news to local government officials, the media, election officials, civil society leaders, political leaders, and others, unreported by other sources. Several segments from the Bulletin were picked up by Kyrgyz and international media and reached an even broader audience. Freely accessible information and the development of a strong written product has been an important project impact in Kyrgyzstan.

Other Key Project Outcomes:

- There are now capable and trained election violence monitors present in all districts nationally and understand the nuances of election violence with the skills and objectivity

necessary to conduct professional interviews and research thorough incident and conflict reports submitted to analysts

- Information from monitors is used to produce an objective, informative weekly bulletin leading to targeted interventions and adjustments in local policies, and increase awareness
- Two of the six interventions were related to elections in 2005
- Contribution of election violence data to IFES' global database and insight into the patterns of election violence in Kyrgyzstan as well as globally.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Election violence monitoring cannot capture every single incident, but is able to gauge the temperature of communities and helps uncover, understand and document most conflicts and violence. Again our goals were to documentation, dissemination, and development of recommendations.

Following the partnership deal between Kurmanbek Bakiev and Feliks Kulov, his main rival and northerner, the elections were not expected to be competitive given weak alternate candidates and the public perception of the election as a referendum on Bakiev. Arguably the most serious incidents of election violence observed by project Monitors during the project were assassinations. But reporting and classification of these was complicated by the fact that monitors had to judge whether or not incidents were election-related; given the realities of public life in Kyrgyzstan, these incidents may have involved criminal elements settling scores outside of the political playing field. However, where appropriate they were included as election-related incidents. Other incidents leading up to the elections mainly involved limited conflict between candidate supporters with property damage consequences such as destruction of pamphlets or in fewer cases assaults. Only one major demonstration occurred without notification. to the relevant authorities. Despite sensationalist international media coverage, the murder of two parliamentarians over the period of this project was exceptional. It is clear that these extreme examples of political violence are not part of a widespread pattern in Kyrgyzstan.

Overall in Kyrgyzstan, the people involved as perpetrators and victims of election violence in the vast majority of incidents are candidate supporters and election commission representatives. Occasionally other political groups or the public were involved, as in the case of a villager who beat a PEC Secretary. Experience shows that future mitigation efforts might focus on bridge-building between election commissioners and observers, and political candidates' supporters in localities as the dynamics of these local level actors tended to be conflict potential laden. More broadly, issues that will continue to contribute to electoral conflict include problems with the reliability of voters list, an inefficient complaints process, and vote buying.

V. CONCLUSION

This OSCE-funded project allowed IFES to transferred vital capacity to monitor and report on election violence to a leading Kyrgyz conflict-mitigation NGO. Its institutional expertise allowed for successful monitoring, raised awareness of potential problems, engaging election stakeholders

and contributing to global knowledge about election violence. Through sharing experiences with local NGO partner project staff, IFES also contributed to the team's awareness of election violence around the world. These successes have empowered monitors and coordinators in their work to monitor, report, and mitigate wider conflict and violence in Kyrgyzstan. Through dissemination of information and an online record of incidents, IFES has also contributed to the understanding of the potential for and occurrence of election violence in Kyrgyzstan for key stakeholders, the media, and the public.

APPENDIX OF ATTACHMENTS
(Available upon request)

Attachment A: First Coordinator/monitor training materials

Attachment B: Press Release for the July Press Conference held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Attachment C: Aki Press

Attachment D: http://www.fti.org.kg/eng/op_main.php FTI bulletin archive