

Activities

On 13-14 October 2004, within the framework of the joint OSCE-HCNM project "Integration through Education," members of the Project Working Group visited Osh and Uzgen in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The Working Group members, accompanied by OSCE Field Office in Osh representatives, met with the various representatives of the local community (national minorities' representatives, local authorities, officials, academics and NGO representatives) and presented their report and findings. The presentation was followed by an interactive question-and-answer session related to these findings and the concrete steps ahead.



On 20 September the Field Office organized with its partner NGO "Podruga" a training session on "Trafficking of human beings" for police officers in the premises of the Osh City Police Dept. This training session, organized within the OSCE-funded "Combating Human Trafficking in the south of Kyrgyzstan" project, focused mainly on the issue of "identification" of victims of human trafficking. The training gathered high-ranking police officers, lieutenant and sergeant staff as well as Osh resident police officers.

Activities of the Osh Field Office

Launch of "Human Rights Festival"

The OSCE Field Office in Osh and its partner the Fund for Legal and Economic Reforms non-governmental Organization (FSPPR) organized a press conference for the launch of the OSCE-funded "Human Rights Festival". This festival, to be coordinated by FSPPR Festival, in close cooperation with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw) and numerous local Human Rights NGOs, will last for two months and its culminating activity will be the celebration of the International Human Rights Day on 10 December. The Festival will propose various activities, ranging from screening of documentary and fiction movies on human rights, school and university lectures and debates, contests for the best essay on human rights as well as various trainings and roundtables. The geographic scope of the festival covers mainly Osh, Batken and Jalalabad Provinces but will extend to Bishkek where documentary and fiction movies on human rights will be screened. The International Human Rights Day will be celebrated through Conferences on human rights in Osh, Jalalabat and Kyzyl Kiya towns.



(Launch of the "Combating Human Trafficking" campaign at the AKIPRESS Fergana press center)

On 22 October 2004, the field office together with partner organizations have officially launched an "Anti-trafficking Campaign" in the South of Kyrgyzstan. The press conference on this occasion was organized at the AkiPress Fergana Press Centre. Posters, leaflets and other campaign materials were presented to the participants. A presentation of the recent findings of an assessment on the human trafficking situation in the south of Kyrgyzstan was also made and generated important reactions and contributions from the participants, which included a representative of the Osh Migration Department. The presentation included recent figures and graphics compiled during the assessment process.

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On 15-16 October, Osh Field Office together with its partner "Osh SBDC Consult" conducted a training seminar in Karasuu for local entrepreneurs entitled "Identification of the business idea: legal regulations of business activities". More than twenty businesspersons and representatives of state bodies attended the event. Prior to the event, a survey in Karasuu district to obtain the real picture on impediments to SME development in the region. Information about their needs for educational support was conducted with the main targets on poor knowledge of efficient business keeping; a lack of legal knowledge on existing laws and legislation concerning SMEs; and a lack of cooperation among entrepreneurs themselves. These factors contribute on the one hand to a violation of entrepreneurs' rights, but also hinder them meeting their responsibilities. A subsequent evaluation of the training indicated that participants of the event benefited greatly from their attendance, and it is envisaged that their respective business activities will be conducted to a greater degree of efficiency as a direct result. In addition, during October some 27 entrepreneurs received support from a legal consultation service provided by the same partner NGO. Specifically assistance was provided on taxation, new legislative deeds and laws, and various aspects of business planning.

Visits

Mr. Albin Dearing, Police Reform Consultant paid a working visit to Kyrgyzstan from October 24 to November 7. A considerable amount of work has been done with respect to the elaboration of a Police Reform Concept, which should be the base for the next phase of the OSCE program. The most important task now is to translate this analytical work into a police reform concept and come to an agreed strategy and policy decision supported by all public and institutional stakeholders. This will form a solid base for the formulation of the second phase of the OSCE/Kyrgyz Government program (2005-2008). It is proposed to finalize this reform concept in a small working group composed of representatives of the State Commission on Police Reform, the Interior Ministry, Police Assistance Programme the OSCE Centre, and a representative of the civil society. The reform concept should be finalized in a workshop, to be held at the end of November. It will then be formally submitted to the Kyrgyz Government for approval.

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ACTIVITIES of the CENTRE

Fighting corruption by implementing best practices of good governance

On 14-15 October, Kyrgyzstan hosted a workshop on "Anti-Corruption National and International Legal Instruments and Best Practices" organized jointly by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Office of the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, together with the Secretariat of the National Council on Good Governance of the Kyrgyz Republic with the support of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UN ODC), Council of Europe and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Among the participants of the workshop were representatives from legislative, executive and judicial branches of power, NGOs, academicians and international experts. Addressing the participants of the workshop, the Head of the OSCE Centre, Ambassador Markus Muller underlined: "Learning about international conventions and legal tools and using them is a real step forward in implementing national good governance practices".



(Press conference at "Kabar" news Agency on joint anti-corruption activities of the OSCE and the Kyrgyz Government)

As a result of the two-day discussion participants put a number of recommendations forward in order to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to combat corruption at the national level. Participants have recommended that the Kyrgyz Government apply to Parliament to expedite ratification of both the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, as well as to review and amend relevant anti-corruption laws and regulations of Kyrgyzstan, in order to bring them into compliance with the UN Convention against Corruption, including the Criminal Code's provisions related to criminalization of corrupt activity and money laundering.

In Focus

Human rights in mental health care system

After independence of the Kyrgyz Republic, the mental health sector, due to lack of resources, found itself in a desperate situation with regard to the human rights of patients. The current situation with respect to observance of human rights of mentally ill persons in Kyrgyzstan leaves much to be desired. One of the major factors that determine to which extent their rights are respected is the attitude of doctors-psychiatrists and medical staff to these socially vulnerable people with whom they interact on an everyday basis. An urgent need exists to address the problem of low-level awareness of human rights among employees of Kyrgyz mental health institutions. Through constant information and lobbying efforts of the NGO "Mental Health and Society", the situation in this sector came to the attention of national decision makers, as well as several international organizations. As the sector of mental healthcare needs further attention it is foreseen to have follow-up measures in this field in 2005.

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Activities

From September 21 to October 8, the Centre in collaboration with the NGO "Initiative" conducted a pilot project on education and preparation for elections. For the first time in Kyrgyzstan such training has been provided in the pre-election period based on joint methodology. They were targeted on representatives of justice, police, prosecutor's office and independent lawyers; representatives of OMBUDSMEN, persons empowered to act for candidates and for political parties (representatives of 17 parties), election committees, observers and representatives of local women and youth NGOs. Fifteen trainings covered 400 representatives in 7 regions. Participants in the training also took a test based on 200 questions on new election legislation. The software was prepared by the NGO "Russian Public Institute Of Election Law". Among the most interesting topics indicated by participants were election-case litigations and appeal submission; cooperation of police and election committees during the election campaign and on election day; international standards and observers' methodology; prevention of use of "black" election technologies. Participants of the training received OSCE materials and documents and ODIHR-OSCE recommendations on elections. Besides, during the trainings some special study materials on law enforcement in Kyrgyzstan were developed.

Conferences, events, workshops

Supporting freedom of the Media in Central Asia

The Centre supported participation of six Kyrgyz journalists and the Kyrgyz Media Commissioner in the annual Central Asian Media Conference in Dushanbe on 23 and 24 September. The conference was organized under the auspices of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in cooperation with the regional OSCE Centres. This year the conference focused on Libel and Legislation on Freedom of Information as modern challenges for the media in the 21st century. The participants agreed that the obsolete Libel Laws which exist in four Central Asian countries are inadequate to a democracy where freedom of the press and uninhibited discussion of public issues could be diminished by libel sentences used against journalists. It was underlined that significant efforts are required to ensure that the region joins the rest of the OSCE in recognizing the right to access to information for the media and the public. The Kyrgyz participants made three significant presentations: "Regional Media in Kyrgyzstan - myth or reality?"; "Access to information in Kyrgyzstan"; and "Unsuccessful attempts of humanization of libel legislation in Kyrgyzstan".



(Miklos Haraszti (left), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media greets journalist Sergei Duvanov)

The Conference ended with a declaration on libel and freedom of information, pointing out that the possibility for governmental officials and politicians (public figures) to sue the media and journalists should be limited; and defamation should be decriminalised and replaced with appropriate and narrowly defined civil defamation laws, introducing a defence of 'reasonable publication' and capping damages. It was stressed that comprehensive laws on Free Access to Information based on international standards should be adopted and their proper implementation ensured. Besides, multilateral oversight of the observation of these laws and standards should be ensured and carried out by parliaments, parliamentary commissions open to the public, commissions of public hearings and independent ombudsmen. In addition, it was underlined that criminal liability for journalists connected with the disclosure of state secrets should be limited in cases of public interest.

Activities

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Sixty psychiatrists from all over the country took part in a series of two trainings on basic and special human rights focused on mental health institutions. These were successfully conducted in June and July by trainers from the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Polish Psychiatric Association as well as local legal and medical experts. The organization of events was supported by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek (CiB), the Ministry of Healthcare and the NGO "Mental Health and Society". On 14 - 21 October the CiB organized the visit of 22 participants to the 2nd practical seminar "Observance of human rights in psychiatry" in Warsaw/Poland. The event was co-organized by the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Polish Association of Psychiatrists and the NGO "Mental Health and Society". Through lectures and on-the-spot visits to mental hospitals of Poland, participants learned practical aspects of human rights in the sphere of psychiatry and their monitoring, institutionalization of patients rights at the Polish Ministry of Healthcare and transformation of psychiatry from an authoritarian to democratic system of society. Such trainings are especially important taking into account the present situation with mental clinics, such as Chim-Korgon of Kemin Rayon, which has already attracted attention and concern of several international NGOs.

Meetings and visits

ODIHR/OSCE international experts Julian Peel Yates and Jonathan Stonestreet visited Kyrgyzstan in connection with elections to local legislative bodies on October 10. The purpose of experts' visit was to become acquainted with the pre-election situation, to study the election laws and practices of the election committees, as well as to meet representatives of government, legislative bodies, including courts and the prosecutor's office, political parties and NGOs in order to share opinions on the present election situation in the country. Experts also revised the OSCE Center performance of Elections assistance program 2004-2005, which is addressed to local election committees, civil society institutes, mass media and voters.

The 4th meeting of the PAP Executive Steering Committee took place in the OSCE Centre in Bishkek on October 18, 2004. Members of the Committee, including representatives of the law enforcement institutions, donor countries and civil society, were presented with the Programme Progress Report. The main purpose of this meeting was to assess the developments and financial status of the existing phase of the PAP, and to agree on the extension of this phase through July 2005. This phase of the program will seek to achieve its primary goals, as well as to build a basis for the next, more comprehensive and longer-term phase.

Co-operation with international organizations and governments

De-mining project to be considered in Kyrgyzstan

The issue of de-mining is one of the priorities in activities of the OSCE centre in Bishkek. It is expected that the Centre together with the Kyrgyz Government and in cooperation with the Swiss Government would start the implementation of de-mining project next year. In this respect, Mr. Henri Leu, President of the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) paid a visit to Kyrgyzstan on 8-12 September. During the visit meetings were held with senior Governmental Officials representing the Kyrgyz Ministry of Ecology and Emergency, Ministry of Defense and Border Service. The Government designated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the coordinating institution. Right after the visit, the Government issued an official letter of acceptance for the implementation of the land-mine action project in Kyrgyzstan. The visit was aimed at providing assessment of the possibility of the FSD assistance to the Government of Kyrgyzstan in addressing the land-mine issues as well as obtaining official acceptance from the Government for the implementation of such a project. The project would basically consist in establishing of two Emergency Response Teams (ERTs), who would be trained, equipped and supervised by an FSD Technical Advisor. The teams would primarily be deployed on Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), survey General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) and marking. In addition the teams would be trained in Mine Risk Education (MRE). An integral part of land mines action concept would be the capability of the teams to be rapidly deployed to the scene of an accident, extract, treat and evacuate a casualty to a suitable medical facility in a timely manner, thus increasing the casualty's chances of survival. An application for project's financing is being forwarded to the European Commission (EC) by the OSCE with FSD as an implementing partner.

Environmental security is an important precondition for human life

Experts on environmental issues, representing government agencies and NGOs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan gathered in Issyk-Kul for a workshop from 5 to 7 October to discuss ways of dealing with environmental issues in the region. The workshop was organized by the OSCE Centre together with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Environment and Emergency Situations, the Swiss Government, Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The main objective of the meeting was to review national environmental impact assessment systems, as well as to develop regional implementation mechanisms. At the end of the workshop, the participants adopted recommendations, which highlighted the importance of joint efforts and trans-boundary measures to apply provisions of the Convention for the benefit of the region".

Activities

On 25-29 October, and 1-5 November, in cooperation with the NGO "Center for the Support of Small and Medium Enterprises and Business Incubator", the Bishkek and Osh OSCE Centres conducted a five-day workshop entitled "Enhancing Gender Participation in Economic and Social Development in Rural Areas" in Osh and Jalal Abad Oblasts respectively. The workshop aimed to promote women's entrepreneurship and create employment in rural areas. Fifteen women were subsequently trained in practical skills for starting and running small businesses. Participants were provided information on taxation, licensing, registration, inspection regulations and credit opportunities.

The Centre has supported participation of a representative of the NGO "Kyrgyz Family Planning Alliance" in the first preparatory seminar for the 13th Economic Forum, which will take place on 8-9 November in Trieste, Italy. The seminar will focus on the demographic trends, migration and integrating persons belonging to national minorities. The NGO representative will make a presentation on the project on "Prevention of HIV/AIDS and Protection of Reproductive Health for Refugees and Migrants of Kyrgyzstan" at the Seminar.