

## **Summer School of Democracy 2011 (summary record)**

### **SSD goals and format:**

The Summer School of Democracy (SSD) is a program that encourages greater civic engagement among young from across Central Asia through discussions and activities centered around democratic ideas. The School, held in June 2011, is supported by the International Youth Foundation and implemented jointly with UNDP Youth Project, UNDP Kyrgyz Republic Election Support Project, the Soros Foundation Youth Program of the East-East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program, and the Institute for Civic Education Foundation, in partnership with the EU-UNDP New Legal Framework Project.

SSD is the initial activity of a four-year IYF initiative called Youth:Create [Jasa.kg] that seeks to encourage a new generation of young people in Central Asia to build a stable, prosperous and democratic society. Over the long term, the program, which is part of IYF's Youth:Work global initiative, will work to increase young people's leadership and civic skills, deepen their understanding of the democratic process and prepare them for success in the job market.

The SSD involved civil society stakeholders, government officials, and community leaders from the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Young leaders from each of these four countries participated in the school but the majority of participants, 50 out of 75 in the first session, were from the Kyrgyz Republic. SSD was designed to inspire active citizenship and create a culture of positive youth development. One of the direct results of this exercise was fostering and strengthening the dialogue between youth and government officials in the Kyrgyz Republic and its neighbors in Central Asia. Moreover, participants had an opportunity not only to participate in discussions with experts and public figures, but also to implement their own ideas and speak up about their concerns and visions on civic engagement via local and national media. The SSD also included trainings on development and realization of practical activities and social projects. Much attention was given to teamwork and network building with the purpose of uniting the SSD graduates not only inside of Kyrgyzstan but also within other states of Central Asia.

The purpose of the SSD program was to expand young people's understanding of the definition of democracy and its institutions, as well as to improve the analytical and leadership potential of young people through the development of critical thinking skills, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and exchange of experience.

The School consisted of three seminars. The first and second were implemented in Bishkek in June and July, and the third was implemented at the Issyk-Kul Lake resorts in August 2011. Each progressive stage of SDD was characterized by increasingly deeper study of materials and all stages included participation of high-quality experts at the international level.

Participants were selected via an open competition. The most active participants were selected for all three seminars. Eighty-four (84) participants were selected out of 250 applications for the first seminar. Forty-six (46) participants were invited for the second seminar. And, forty (40) participants were invited for the third final seminar. Attendees of the final seminar were awarded the title of Summer School of Democracy graduates.

The first seminar was opened by Roza Otunbaeva, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. The second seminar was opened by the well-known Kyrgyz astronaut, Salizhan Sharipov. Throughout the seminars, participants had opportunities to discuss important issues with experts and politicians, to implement their own volunteer actions, and to participate in the filming of a TV program.

After the first seminar, the first edition of the School Almanac was published with the support of a young journalist who collected information from the seminars and presentations, and selected extracts from the most interesting question-and-answer sessions and success stories. Two more editions of the School Almanac are planned to cover the second and third seminars. Electronic versions of the almanac will be available online. At present, the preparation of an audio book with lectures and discussions from the second and third seminars of SSD is taking place. The audio books will be distributed among the participants and partners of SSD, including the target groups of Jasa.kg

### **Experts, knowledge and skills:**

A total of 69 experts participated in the three seminars. Twelve (12) out of the aforementioned number were international experts, and there were also 17 experts who conducted their training sessions on a volunteer basis. In all there were 13 master classes held, which focused on critical thinking, policy brief development, social entrepreneurship and business development as well as diversity management and effective communication. There were also 7 informal discussions conducted with 18 guest-speakers.

The following 58 sessions were divided in thematic topics: introduction of general principles of democracy and geopolitics, politics, management and civil society – 17; democracy and diversity management, development of civil identity, gender – 8; economy, economy and ecology – 14; human rights and mass media – 10; culture, education and religion – 5; civil society – 4.

### **Community Development Projects**

During the second SSD workshop, participants implemented three community development projects – each were one day events.

Margarita Stekanova from Kazakhstan, the author of the “Youth Against Corruption” event, coordinated the efforts of 1/3 of participants to demonstrate that youth are against corruption in any form. Participants distributed thought-provoking items in the crowded streets of Bishkek. For example soap that had the sign “Let`s Make this World Cleaner” attached to it or leaflets with anti-corruption hotline numbers. Everyone was wearing white clothes that symbolized cleanliness and transparency.

Shirin Akmatbekova from Kyrgyzstan, the author of the “Let`s Be Positive” event, joined her group in distributing balloons and smiles to people on the streets of Bishkek, especially children.

Yelessov Adlet from Kazakhstan called his event “Central Asian Alley” because of the joint efforts of participants from four countries in renovating a children`s playground in the Ak-

Orgo suburb of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. This group installed benches, swings and painted walls with graffiti.

### Mass Media and SSD

- The events of SSD were covered by 17 various types of mass media, and 11 of them were invited officially. The TV channels at the regional level like National Channel 1, Channel 5 and ELTR were invited several times to cover SSD.
- The practical events of the second session of the SSD were broadcasted by the MIR channel, which has coverage over the whole territory of Commonwealth Independent States.
- The following mass media outlets covered the SSD: “Birinchi Radio” “Azatyk radio”, “Komsomolskaya pravda” newspaper, as well as in internet forums as “Kloop.kg”, “Inkg.info”, “Report.kg”, “Bulak.kg”, “Kabar.kg” and “president.kg”.
- The whole “Good Morning” program of the Channel 5 was devoted to SSD. The program guests were the participants of SSD from Kazakhstan and volunteers of SSD prep-team.
- There were also two independent Youth TV talk shows made “Today’s Evening” and “Tungo Karai”. The general discussion topics included “Development of Civic Identity” and “Participation of Rural Youth in Decision-making Processes at the Local Level”.
- In addition, one of the participants from Osh gave an interview to “Voice of America” in Uzbek and others prepared materials for Kazakh newspaper available at irstar.kz. <http://www.voanews.com/uzbek/news/SUMMER-CAMP-IN-KYRGYZSTAN-127314723.html>

<http://www.bulak.kg/ru/news/2011/06/13/2731.html>

[http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepublic/231771/PDFs\\_001/USAID\\_KYR\\_newsletter\\_May-June\\_2011\\_rus.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/kyrgyzrepublic/231771/PDFs_001/USAID_KYR_newsletter_May-June_2011_rus.pdf)

<http://rus.azattyk.kg/content/news/24232876.html>

[http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan\\_young\\_democracy/24234214.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_young_democracy/24234214.html)

<http://www.president.kg/ru/posts/4df5aca1f4d5523d99000002>

<http://www.report.kg/people/7200/>

<http://inkg.info/2011/07/12/dlya-molodyx-liderov-projdet-vtoroj-seminar-letnej-shkoly-demokratii/>

<http://lukash.kloop.kg/2011/07/15/nu-zdravstvuj-belyj-paroxod/#more-380>

<http://www.news-asia.ru/view/1358>

[http://www.zpress.kg/news/news\\_only/3/34802/255.py](http://www.zpress.kg/news/news_only/3/34802/255.py)

<http://thenews.kz/2011/08/02/882869.html>

[http://kabar.kg/index.php?option=com\\_content&limit=15&task=category&id=17&sectionid=1&cid=23026&Itemid=1](http://kabar.kg/index.php?option=com_content&limit=15&task=category&id=17&sectionid=1&cid=23026&Itemid=1)

### Ideas Fair:

During the third round of SSD, the participants developed 20 proposals. All these projects were presented in the framework of the fair ideas event, which was financially supported by the Youth Action Fund (YAF) program of the Open Societies Foundation. As a result of the Idea`s fair, YAF supported seven projects in the total amount of \$ 12099 USD. Below is the list of supported projects:

#	Candidates	Country	Project name	Description	Budget in \$
1	Anna Yalovkina	Kyrgyzstan	School of Analytical Journalism	Project intends to improve the sphere of journalism in Kyrgyzstan, especially to increase the number of qualified analytic journalists. Analytic Journalism is a very important aspect of Journalism and as a developing country it is necessary to have qualified journalists for spreading the ideas of open society. Through the Analytic Journalism School Ms. Yalovkina is going to train 15 young journalists in Bishkek. Participants of this school will be selected by special committee. The whole program will be based on three spheres: politics, economy and religion. Trainings will be organized every Saturday for four hours by regional and international experts. Experts will share their own experience with participants. After 3 months of trainings participants will practice their skills by publishing their own analytic articles on Tazar.kg, which is an analytic website.	1973
2	Denis Berdakov	Kyrgyzstan	2.0 Chance	Project intends to provide employment for disabled people	1950

				<p>through the Internet. Mr. Berdakov will train 300 disabled people</p> <p>to computer skills and using the Internet. Disabled people suffer from unemployment, they cannot do any physical work because of their disability. This project is targeted for work at home. By visiting, using, reading some web sites they will earn money, which will be transferred to their account. Trainers will visit participants at home and teach them to these skills. Experts will work out a program of methods of teaching, select web sites, evaluate and control the process. Project will be implemented in collaboration with local NGO's which work with this kind of group.</p>	
3	Alena Prashaeva	Kyrgyzstan	Updated School	<p>Project intends to prevent the criminalization of school children, age at 13-15 years. Ms. Prashaeva during her project will create a positive image of obedient children by publishing comics and social advertisements. Also she will involve psychologists and local inspectors for effective work with children. In the framework of her project she will organize discussion clubs, where everybody can share their opinions and propose solutions.</p>	1935
4	Sukhrobjon Ergashev	Kyrgyzstan	Communication without border, Language center	<p>The project aims to resolve a language problem among youth in a small village in Batken, south of Kyrgyzstan. The applicant proposed to create a linguistic center where he together with other teachers will provide free classes for Kyrgyz, Russian and English languages. The project will help buy necessary tools such as books and other learning materials. This project will help young people in Batken to interact in any of these languages with others and will be able to enhance their capacity by reading and understanding information in languages other than their native Tajik language.</p>	2000
5	Dildora Khamidova	Kyrgyzstan	I am not shy on stage	<p>This project aims at helping young people with disabilities through involving them in art. This project is based on success of a similar project from Uzbekistan. Five specialists will teach acting skills to 25 young people with disabilities. The project will be implemented together with local NGO and local theater. After trainings young people with disabilities will perform on stage in various theatrical genres in front of local populations. Themes of performances will reflect social problems of society.</p>	2000
6	Aziz Ablaev	Kazakhstan	Show you rights	<p>Project intends to teach children from orphanages their rights. The main purpose of this project is to prepare children for life outside of their orphanage and teach them basic leadership skills.</p> <p>The administration of these orphanages does not protect children's rights, sometimes they themselves become violators. Mr. Ablaev is planning to train children in advocacy skills and increase the self-confidence of these children. In the</p> <p>framework of this project he will involve youth experts, who will act as role models for them. During the project they will collaborate with local NGO's and town council for effectiveness of the project. Trainings will be organized in interactive ways and will be adapted for children.</p>	300
7	Adlet Eleusov	Kazakhstan	Happy Childhood	<p>Project intends to organize Youth Initiative Groups in 2 villages of Pavlodar town. The main purpose of the project is to activate the local youth and inculcate a sense of responsibility by involving them in community service.</p>	1941

				<p>In the framework of the project there will be organized trainings on how to write projects, critical thinking, and new media.</p> <p>After trainings these youth initiative groups will have a great opportunity to practice received knowledge. For their own contribution they will build and repair playgrounds for local children, also will actively participate in community life.</p>
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## 6 SDD Networking:

Participants have already formed an informal network. Upon completion of the program, IYF will create an email list-serv (using Google Groups) that will allow participants stay in contact. It is also planned that Jasa.kg project using its web-site will present SSD a platform for debating the actual issues and possibility of conducting the joint projects.

### Feedback from participants (quotes)

Ashyrbekova Nurai, Naryn city, Kyrgyzstan;

“The most important thing, which we realized, is that only we can solve our problems. I have become aware of many youth issues and will do my best to take part in solving them. I have received so much information and believe that I need to reflect on it seriously”.

Eleusov Adlet, Pavlodar city, Kazakhstan.

“I believe that participation in summer school is one of the most significant events in my life. I have gained lots of knowledge, and I am sure that it will bring some result very soon. The school also motivates me for development and growth. I am also very certain that my future life will be connected with the politics”.

Kurmanbekova Aichurek, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

“The school taught me to be responsible, to think critically and to be able to analyze the received information. It also made me proud that I was born and grew up in Kyrgyzstan”.

Serikov Jasulan, Kyzylorda city, Kazakhstan,

“For such period of time, I have learned even more about democracy, human rights, mass media, and also the importance of youth participation in the society. I am sure that I now will do my best to work for the development and wellbeing of my country. The SSD helped rid me of wrong misunderstandings about the Central Asia states”.

David Usupashvili, UNDP expert, Georgia

“This type of school is a unique opportunity for youth people to communicate freely, to ask questions, to debate and to share their opinions without thinking who and how they will understand them – this is pure democracy. That’s why these schools are a great experience for youth, who are young, ambitious and are also eager to change things for the better”.

Armen Arutyunyan, The head of the Central Asian office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

“It is important for me to share my experiences with youth and also to attract their attention to issues, which currently exist in state-building processes in the countries of Central Asia. It is important to understand how and what we include in the philosophy of observing human rights principles. I believe that such knowledge will help them to build a new society in their countries. I highly value the importance of the SSD event”.

Shestakov Igorm media-expert.

“It is very important that specialists share their experiences with young people. These events provide them with a special environment, where they need to identify their positions more vividly. They start thinking about their civil and political positions”.

Sasykbaeva Asia, vice-speaker of KG parliament.

“To bring these young people together for discussion is very important. They will influence the cooperation between the Central Asia states. In addition to communication, the participants also receive valuable knowledge from various sources – politics, independent expert, businessmen, - this helps them to broaden their horizons and also teach them to think critically”.

Shirin Akmatbekova, coordinator “Let’s be positive”.

“Our country has many political and economical problems. Turn on the TV and you will learn about disasters or cataclysms. The front pages of newspapers discuss scandals. It appears as if mass media does not discuss any good or positive news, but we people really need this”.

Eleusov Adlet, project coordinator “Central Asia Alley”

“This school brought together participants from four countries. I want my project to become the symbol of unity and friendship of our states ...

The best award for me was the smiles of kids and thankful words from rural areas. It appears that sometimes people lose faith in each other, but thanks to this activity, it proved that they do not feel indifferent. The joint work was very useful and made people feel closer. We have put part of our soul in this activity and now our land has a name ‘Summer School of Democracy’”.