

Kyrgyz Republic Program Summary

The year 2011 marks the 20th anniversary of the Kyrgyz Republic's independence and a major test of the country's transition from a Soviet Republic to a parliamentary democracy. The past 20 years in the Kyrgyz Republic have been marked by great upheaval as its first two presidents were removed from power by popular protests – Askar Akayev in March 2005 and Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010. A new interim government led by Roza Otunbayeva reformed the constitution in 2010 to transform Kyrgyzstan into a parliamentary republic with reduced powers of the presidency. On October 30, 2011, Almazbek Atambaev was elected President of the Kyrgyz Republic, marking the country's first peaceful transfer of presidential power.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) has been working in the Kyrgyz Republic since 2004 supporting the development of democratic institutions. In June 2007, IRI opened a regional office in Osh to support the development of political parties' regional branches and to provide resources for youth leadership development in the south. In addition, IRI has been one of the few, if not the only source for reputable, methodologically-sound polling in the country since 2005. IRI has also been at the forefront of the constitutional reform efforts in both 2005 and 2010 through presentations on forms of government to the media, political parties, civil society and constitutional commissions. In recent years, IRI has focused on democratic governance, political party development and civic engagement.

Democratic Governance

IRI's democratic governance program works to improve the capacity of the newly-elected government and provides them with a basis for forming a legislative agenda that responds to the needs of the electorate. IRI works with both the legislative and executive branches of government to share international best practices and encourage them to effectively and responsively engage with citizens on issues of concern.

Political Party Development

IRI's political party development programming supports the development of strong, unified national political parties. This work focuses on strengthening political party capacity to address key areas of citizen concern, particularly by encouraging the development of issue-based platforms and campaigns and improving political party organization and management with a special focus on regional offices. During elections, IRI also collaborates closely with political parties to provide candidate and campaign training as well as extensive, nationwide election observer training for candidate volunteers.

Civic Engagement

IRI's civic engagement program focuses on developing the next generation of leaders by equipping youth and women with the skills to actively engage in the political process. IRI provides active youth with training on leadership and civic education and encourages them to undertake community projects that utilize these skills. IRI also works closely with women in political parties to empower them to take a more active part in decision making processes on the regional level.