

KYRGYZSTAN

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan (SFK) was established in 1993, just a year after Kyrgyzstan emerged as an independent state from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In common with the other foundations set up by George Soros across the former Communist world, the new foundation has worked to help Kyrgyzstan with the transition to becoming a more open, democratic society.

SFK’s early work included funding the modernization and reform of crumbling education and health systems—and seeking to make them more responsive to the needs of individuals. The foundation, led by an advisory board of distinguished local figures, quickly developed a reputation for flexibility and innovation in a crowded field of international donors.

Over the years, the foundation’s work has expanded, and its work ranges from supplying water to rural communities to refining laws on data protection. But its overall aims have remained the same as those of the Open Society Foundations network of which it is a part: to promote justice, democratic governance and human rights.

KYRGYZSTAN: 2017 GRANTS BY SECTOR



Total Grant-giving expenditure in 2017:

\$2.65M

Total expenditure since 1993:

\$94.8M

9 FACTS ABOUT KYRGYZSTAN

AND THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

- 1** The foundation's support for Kyrgyzstan's education system started in 1995 with a program of intensive investment in teacher training and equipment that included translating text books into both Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages.
- 2** The foundation helped establish the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, which opened in 1998 and which is now one of the most highly regarded higher education institutions in the country.
- 3** Open Society has been an advocate for a health-focused approach to drug policy in Kyrgyzstan. Our grantee Socium launched a needle-exchange program in 1999, followed by Central Asia's first methadone program in 2002.
- 4** In 2014, the foundation worked with health officials and partners to facilitate the sale of generic drugs in Kyrgyzstan, significantly reducing the costs for healthcare providers and for individuals.
- 5** Starting in 1997, the foundation spent more than \$400,000 on fibre-optic cables and other hardware to improve Kyrgyzstan's connections to the internet, while donating computers and other equipment to schools, NGOs, libraries, and universities, and providing them with free internet access.
- 6** SFK has been a major funder of efforts by Bizdin Muras to build a Kyrgyz-language version of Wikipedia, and, through a partnership with Google, to improve the quality of Kyrgyz translations offered by the search engine.
- 7** The foundation played an important role in supporting Kyrgyzstan's transition from analog to digital television transmission. This included funding public information campaigns to explain the change, and providing technical support to the government.
- 8** SFK has been among the principle international supporters of government efforts to reform Kyrgyzstan's criminal justice system, funding input from international experts, supporting exchange visits, and organizing training for lawyers, judges and prosecutors.
- 9** The foundation's commitment to improve access to justice goes back more than 20 years, through its efforts to establish legal clinics run by students which have helped resolve legal disputes for disadvantaged clients.