A BRIEF HISTORY

When the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation–Tajikistan began its work in late 1996, the country was in the final months of a five-year civil war that ultimately left tens of thousands of people dead, and displaced over a million people from their homes. Against this grim background, the foundation's initial goals were of necessity modest—to create space for debate in a country where social and political life had been turned upside down by the collapse of Soviet Communism and the ensuing bitter civil conflict.

The foundation's early programs included travel grants, scholarships, help for libraries, and organizing conferences to expose academics and officials to current research trends and thinking. Gradually, the work expanded into supporting the same kind of institutional modernization and reform that was underway in other former Communist states in the 1990s.

Today, the foundation works on issues from promoting inclusive education for disabled children to efforts to support economic development.
9 FACTS ABOUT TAJIKISTAN
AND THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

1. The foundation supported the anti-death penalty campaign led by one of Tajikistan’s leading NGOs, the League of Women Lawyers, that led to a moratorium on executions in 2004.

2. Open Society is one of the leading funders of the Civil Society Coalition Against Torture, which campaigns for a “zero tolerance” policy on torture and ill-treatment in Tajikistan.

3. Over the past two decades, the foundation has supported efforts to strengthen Tajikistan’s educational system, including technical support for development and introduction of unified entrance exams and a common admissions system across the country.

4. Open Society has worked to boost awareness of the importance of digital literacy and of digital rights for Tajikistan’s future, fostering the emergence of a group of digital rights experts that now regularly engages in policy dialogue with the government.

5. The foundation is a proud supporter of Dushanbe Art Ground (DAG), a center for contemporary art and artists that is a significant contributor to cultural life in the Tajik capital.

6. Grantees of the foundation continue to play a leading role in advocacy around disability rights in Tajikistan, including the campaign that led to Tajikistan’s signing of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2018.

7. Open Society’s support for access to public health services in Tajikistan has contributed to the creation of the country’s first palliative care unit; to reforms of the provision of health care in prisons and detention centers; and to a shift to a human-rights focused approach across the public health sector.

8. The foundation’s support for economic development in Tajikistan includes establishing the country’s National Loan Guarantee Fund, which has supported over 250 small businesses.

9. In the area of labor rights, Open Society is one of the funders of the “World of Law” Public Association, which runs a hotline for the victims of the workplace violations, providing free consultations and assistance.