

KYRGYZSTAN

The Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan was established in 1993, soon after Kyrgyzstan emerged as an independent state from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like the other foundations set up by George Soros across the former Soviet Union and its satellite states, the Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan worked to help the country transition to a more open, democratic society.

Led by an advisory board of distinguished local civil society leaders and activists, the foundation’s early work included funding the modernization and reform of crumbling education and health systems. It developed into a grant-making organization known for its flexibility and innovation in a crowded field of international donors.

For over 30 years, the foundation’s work ranged from supplying water to rural communities to refining laws on data protection. All this work continued to be guided by the Open Society Foundations’ fundamental aims of promoting justice, democratic governance, and human rights.

KYRGYZSTAN: 2022 EXPENDITURES

Total Expenditures for
Kyrgyzstan in 2022:

\$3.4M

Total Expenditures in Europe and Central Asia in 2022:

\$154.3M

Total Global Expenditures in 2022:

\$1.3B

9 FACTS ABOUT KYRGYZSTAN AND THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

- 1** The foundation's support for Kyrgyzstan's education system included large-scale investment in teacher training and equipment, as well as translating and printing textbooks in both Kyrgyz and Uzbek.
- 2** During the COVID-19 pandemic, the foundation organized a free medical advice phone service, Hotline 118, which responded to tens of thousands of calls, and continued to provide free urgent medical advice in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- 3** Starting in 1997, the foundation funded the provision of fiber-optic cables and other hardware to improve access to the internet for over 400 educational, scientific, medical, and media institutions. The foundation also donated computers and other equipment to schools, NGOs, libraries, and universities, and provided them with free internet access.
- 4** The foundation was a major funder of civil society efforts to build a Kyrgyz-language version of Wikipedia, and, through a partnership with Google, to improve the quality of Kyrgyz translations offered by its search engine.
- 5** One of the foundation's main contributions to the development of open society in Kyrgyzstan was supporting the government's efforts to reform the criminal justice system by funding international experts, supporting exchange visits, and organizing trainings for lawyers, judges, and prosecutors.
- 6** The foundation worked to strengthen democratic institutions in the country by backing the development of free media, fostering transparency in government structures, and aiding Kyrgyzstan in implementing the Open Government Partnership initiative.
- 7** With the foundation's support, Kyrgyzstan was one of the first countries to adopt the "Istanbul Protocol," a key source for international guidelines for effectively investigating and documenting torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
- 8** Kyrgyzstan's technology sector received significant support from the foundation which led to the launch of the Kyrgyz Software and Services Developers' Association, an organization made up of over 350 software professionals. In 2023, they collectively generated an annual turnover of nearly \$90 million, the highest among Central Asian countries.
- 9** The foundation worked for more than two decades to improve access to justice by supporting initiatives by law students and their teachers to establish local legal clinics to help disadvantaged clients resolve civil law legal disputes.