

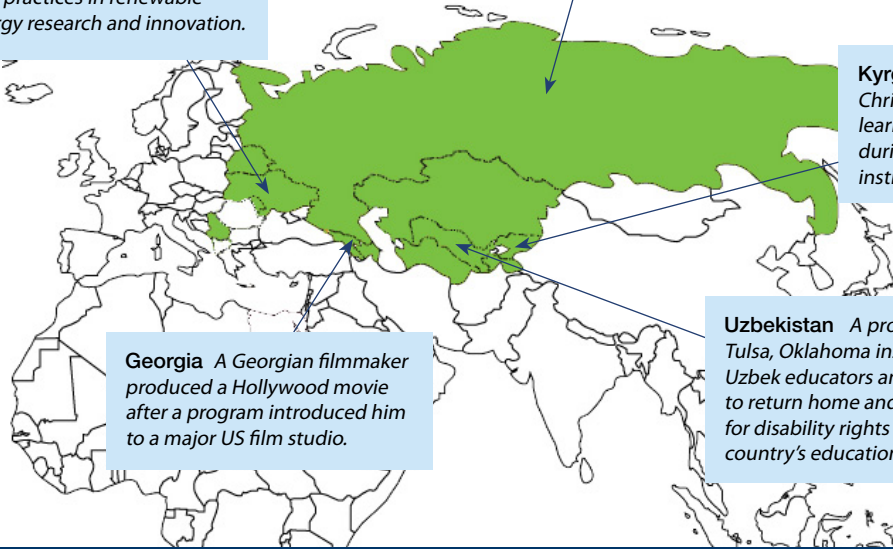
**Ukraine** A program on renewable energy technology in Portland, Oregon trained scientists from the Ukraine in best practices in renewable energy research and innovation.

**Russia** Russian medical practitioners acquired new techniques in HIV/AIDS care, prevention, and stigma reduction following their program in Philadelphia.

**Kyrgyzstan** Muslim and Christian leaders from Kyrgyzstan learned about religious freedom during their visit to faith-based institutions in Chicago.

**Georgia** A Georgian filmmaker produced a Hollywood movie after a program introduced him to a major US film studio.

**Uzbekistan** A program in Tulsa, Oklahoma inspired Uzbek educators and officials to return home and advocate for disability rights in the country's education system.



- Community Connections participating countries
- Armenia
  - Belarus
  - Kazakhstan
  - Moldova
  - Serbia
  - Turkmenistan
  - Uzbekistan
  - Azerbaijan
  - Georgia
  - Kyrgyzstan
  - Russia
  - Tajikistan
  - Ukraine

**Interested in Community Connections?**

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# Community Connections Program



## Innovative Training for Experienced Professionals



**USAID**  
 FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

# Community Connections Program

## What is Community Connections?

The **Community Connections Program** is a professional training program for experienced professionals from Europe and Eurasia funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

The program advances US foreign policy goals such as development, capacity building and public diplomacy by assisting participants in acquiring knowledge, skills, professional contacts, friendships, and a deeper understanding of American society.

Participants meet with leading experts in their field across the United States to gain new insights and approaches. Each three-week program is themed and tailored to meet the specific social, economic, and civic needs of participants' home communities. Sample themes include small business development, journalism, NGO management, judicial reform, and healthcare and social services.

Participants also increase their understanding of US culture and society through excursions, volunteer projects, and an extended homestay experience with an American family. All activities are designed to emphasize American civic values such as volunteerism and free speech.

Community Connections alumni return home to act as influential leaders and cultural ambassadors. World Learning has administered the program since 2005, empowering more than 3,400 participants from 13 countries to create positive, sustainable change in their communities.

“The program was highly commendable ... a priceless experience of gaining new knowledge.”

VITAL ZHUKOVICH, BELARUS  
Program on Linkages between NGOs & Local Authorities

## The Community Connections Approach

Hallmarks of the Community Connections Program are:

**Professional Training:** World Learning works closely with US community organizations across the US to design and implement trainings that are experiential, measurable, and results-focused.

**Action plans:** Trainers work with participants to develop rigorous action plans, which provide realistic benchmarks to guide participants in achieving goals and specific outcomes.

**Volunteerism:** An American tradition, volunteerism includes activities such as serving food to the homeless and planting a community garden. These activities inspire participants to promote volunteerism upon returning home.

**Homestays:** Participants become part of US families through homestays, gaining insight on American life, overcoming cultural barriers, and forming lasting connections with Americans. It is these relationships that help create community-to-community linkages.

“My host family was great. They showed me the true American soul.”

IA MAKHARADZE, GEORGIA  
Program on Media Advocacy



As part of their program, participants become part of their adopted community by volunteering with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

## Featured Program

The Community Connections Program helped Khairinisso Elmurodova, a charity worker and women's rights activist, gain the confidence and skills she needed to become a leader in her community in Tajikistan.

The program brought Elmurodova and nine other Tajik women leaders to Ames, Iowa to explore strategies for overcoming gender inequality and social barriers to women. Delegates spoke with leading American businesswomen and public officials to learn about advocacy, networking, and organizing. They also got an insider's look at the US electoral process when they met with then presidential candidate Hillary Clinton at a campaign rally.



Khairinisso Elmurodova teaches children basket weaving at her child-care center in Tajikistan, following her Community Connections Program in Ames, Iowa.

Elmurodova was impressed with the high quality of US social services centers, which the participants visited as part of the program. Upon returning to Tajikistan, she collaborated with US counterparts on an action plan that included establishing a child-care center to assist families struggling with poverty and unemployment. The action plan gave Elmurodova the steps necessary to see her project through to completion.

Today, the Shodi Organization provides essential services to children including psychosocial support, medical care, and professional skills development.