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REMOVING A HEALTH HAZARD THROUGH COMMUNITY WORK

On January 19th, USAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI) and the community working group in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje Camp 029 dedicated a sewer system built in the community with USAID, municipal, local and UNHCR funding. Camp 029 in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje is a neighborhood of primarily Ashkali minority residents. The community has been working for several months with MISI staff to identify community needs, in order to improve living conditions for residents through infrastructure projects.

"This is just the beginning of the work for improving lives of all communities living in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and USAID has been very supportive," said Skender Zogaj, president of Fushë Kosovë/ Kosovo Polje municipal assembly at the January 19 dedication ceremony.

Through their advocacy efforts and help from MISI staff, the Community Working Group of Camp 029 won support for the project from the municipality which contributed 5,390 Euros of the total 28,940Euro cost. The community contributed 400Euros in-kind worth of labor on the initial construction, and remainder was funded by USAID. The project eliminated a health hazard caused by an open sewer running through the neighborhood.

MISI is an 18-month project designed to assist communities and improve conditions for returns of minorities. As Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director said, "MISI is not a project about infrastructure. It's a project about bringing people, communities and municipalities together."

KAMENICE NGOS OFFER CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

Eleven representatives of youth, women's and ethnic NGOs gathered on January 19 to meet with US Office Pristina Chief of Mission Phil Goldberg during his visit to Kamenice/Kamenica municipality. The NGOs, which have joined together in the Triorg NGO alliance, are advocating for a Committee on Peace to be established by the Kamenice municipality, because they believe that a new committee could help prevent interethnic violence similar to what happened in March 2004. Triorg is one of many NGOs to receive a grant from the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives, funded by the USAID Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project. Goldberg complimented the participants, saying, "Real democratic societies also are based on a strong, active civil society...Don't give up if people are not always listening." Some of the participants offered Chief of Mission Goldberg concrete suggestions - such as Roma Kosovars' desire for representation on the municipal assembly - and some general comments about the desire of youth to be heard, the need for economic improvement, and the need for Kamenice officials to do more to keep inhabitants in the municipality through improvement of social and economic conditions.



Sadulla Ahmeti, Kamenice/a Youth Center (left) suggests getting more minorities on the police as one way to improve interethnic relations to US Office Chief of Mission Phil Goldberg (right).

ADVOCATES FINANCIAL SKILLS

On January 14-15, 15 members of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates attended a seminar on financial management and planning to help them better manage the group's projects. The seminar, conducted through the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative

(ABA/CEELI) "RIBA" program (Regional Institution Building Advisor), provided specialized training to address organizational needs, build institutional capacity and promote sustainability of these organizations. While primarily directed at building the capacity of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates, the information was also valuable for participants' use in their own law offices. ABA/CEELI, supported by USAID/Kosovo in implementing the Legal Professional Development Project, is part of USAID's Rule of Law Program in Kosovo that assists legal associations.

PRIVATIZATION MARKS ANOTHER SUCCESS

The provisional winners of the "Ordinary Spin-Off" sales in the fourth wave of privatization of Socially Owned Enterprises (SOEs) were announced on January 19 at the Kosovo Trust Agency's (KTA) Bid Opening ceremony. This event marks another positive step towards Kosovo's economic development. The fourth wave included 19 SOEs to be privatized, 17 via "Ordinary Spin-Off" and two already sold via "Special Spin-Off". The total value of the provisional winning bids was over 18,000,000Euros. People in Kosovo, with its high unemployment and underdeveloped economy, view privatisation as crucial to economic development and hope privatized enterprises will provide employment opportunities for Kosovars. While two KTA sites could accept bids (in Pristina and North Mitrovica), no bids were received in North Mitrovica, the predominantly Serbian Kosovar-inhabited part of Kosovo. USAID supports privatization experts in the Kosovo Trust Agency, which implement privatization under the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK).

FUTURE LEADERS LEARN MANAGEMENT SKILLS

In January, the USAID-funded Hope Fellowship program, implemented by the National Albanian American Council, organized a course on "Operations Management" as part of the Kosovo Leadership Program. The course provided the 40 participants with techniques on managing the processes they supervise. The trainees, all civil servants in Kosovo government institutions, then attended a three-day course on human resource management, a skill considered crucial for a new government. The human resource course enabled participants to improve their knowledge and mastery of skills necessary for improving relations with individual personnel and their teams in working environments, focusing on successful completion of their missions or projects. This is the third group to be trained under the Kosovo Leadership Program, designed to strengthen the skills of public servants in Kosovo

PUBLIC POLICY TRAINING CONDUCTED FOR NGOs AND THINK TANKS

On January 17- 19, the USAID-supported Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) organized a three-day "Advanced Training on Public Policy". This workshop helped enhance the capabilities of local NGOs and institutions engaging in public policy analysis. The class included KIPRED, KODI, SFERA, and several other local think tanks. The trainers were public policy specialists Mark Baskin and Robert Nagamura, both professors at the State University of New York. The training agenda was based on their assessment of actual research and reports that the participating local organizations had done in the past year. ATRC implements the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Program with East-West Management Institute (EWMI) to strengthen advocacy skills of local NGOs and civic groups in Kosovo.

Upcoming Events

January 26, Ken Yamashita, USAID Mission Director will dedicate a sewerage system in Roma Neighbourhood, Kamenica Municipality

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