



USAID/Bosnia-Herzegovina and Department of Defense

USAID is a leading donor agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and manages more than half of the total U.S. assistance program there. It is also a leader in coordinating efforts with other U.S. Government and international partners to scale development impact. One partner USAID/BiH has a special relationship with is the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

In the past two years alone, USAID and DOD have worked together throughout the country, in both BiH regions, delivering semi-trucks full of emergency supplies for flood victims, refurbishing schools and providing them with furniture, rebuilding playgrounds and youth camps, and renovating rehabilitation centers for persons with disabilities. They also tackled tough issues together, like government transparency and corruption.



U.S. Army cadets and local students in Travnik, BiH, painting playground fence. Photo by Haris Begic

In September 2014, the USAID/BiH Mission Director and the Defense Attache in Sarajevo co-authored a post, entitled “Outrage,” for the Ambassador’s blog. In it they drew attention to the fact that the BiH Government was not adequately responding to the needs of the people after the floods, and pointed to the corruption and misuse of funds that should have been used to mitigate floods and landslides in the first place. The blog drew phenomenal attention and support from BiH citizens, and went viral on the Internet, as it was shared repeatedly on social media and news portals and printed in daily newspapers.

They followed their words with action in October 2014 by visiting Dobo, one of the worst-affected areas, to highlight the importance of “radical transparency” in the distribution of the flood recovery assistance from the American people. “Many BiH citizens believe that the flood donations and international assistance will disappear due to corruption and cronyism.... Demand more of your elected representatives,” they said in a joint statement in Dobo. They told citizens about USAID’s interactive online map which allows citizens themselves to monitor the progress of flood recovery activities in real time and report any malfeasance.

USAID has implemented a broad range of programs across Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996, after the end of the war. After focusing initially on rebuilding infrastructure, the Agency’s efforts transitioned to longer-term programming designed toward peace-building, tolerance and supporting economic, democratic and social progress. Current efforts also promote civic participation, the use of clean energy, transparency and accountability, and helping the country’s most vulnerable citizens—women, LGBTI, Romani, and persons with disabilities—to live quality, independent lives.

That year, USAID and DOD formalized its commitment to work together with a Joint Mission Statement. “USAID and DOD missions will work to ensure their respective initiatives are complementary when possible, in order to best amplify the positive effects for the people of BiH,” it said. “By coordinating USAID and DOD initiatives, there is not only the possibility of increasing the intended outcomes of particular projects, but to conserve precious resources as well.”

USAID and DOD also work hand-in-hand in the field. In the days immediately following the floods, USAID helped DOD deliver five truckloads (over 25 tons) of emergency relief supplies from the U.S. Army Garrison Livorno (Camp Darby) in Italy. The emergency goods, valued at approx. \$750,000, included generators, water pumps and space heaters; 1,200 sleeping bags, cots, mats and blankets; portable kitchens and other supplies.

In September 2014, USAID provided furniture to seven flooded schools and a disability center, as part of the Excess Property Program, while the Office of Defense Cooperation arranged delivery with the BiH Army. A few months later, DOD and USAID refurbished and furnished a center for disabled children and youth in Dobojski. And in Glamoc, DOD and USAID provided two schools with teaching aids, school supplies and sports equipment.

Close collaboration continued in May 2015, when USAID welcomed 24 U.S. Army cadets as part of the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency (CULP) program, which sends cadets to other countries to foster cooperation between the U.S. and foreign militaries. USAID organized joint activities that would provide social benefits for the local population in various BiH cities. "USAID in Sarajevo provided additional funding and coordination for the service projects, and truly went above and beyond in ensuring the success of CULP," said U.S. Army Captain David Knox, who organized the program in Sarajevo.



U.S. Army cadets Jake Burger (L) and Andrew Schrantz building a playground in Orasje. Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Robert Perez

In Orašje, USAID's partners, the cadets and local volunteers relocated a children's park that was next to a busy street. They cut down vegetation, removed illegally dumped waste, planted trees, repaired lighting, moved the swings and slide, installed trash cans and built benches, a sandbox and a climbing mound. In Travnik, the team renovated three dilapidated playgrounds. They cleaned, sanded and painted of all the fences and recreational equipment, repaired or replaced broken benches, and removed dangerous and bulky waste (see photo, p1).



In Teslic, cadets clean and restore a footpath and Usora River embankment that was destroyed in the 2014 floods.

In Bosanska Otoka near Bihać, they renovated a youth camp that had been damaged in a storm. They installed 150 meters of fence, cleared 300 meters of river bank, repaired 80 meters of road, built log furniture (five tables and 25 chairs), and built a volleyball court and stage.

The cadets recognized that they were working side-by-side with the future leaders of BiH, building relationships that may one day benefit not only them and the citizens of the United States. "If we are to make BiH better, it's not by starting with the older people," said U.S. Army Captain Robert Perez.

"Playgrounds let us start with the children. They don't care what nationality you are or what religion you are. They just want to play together. They play together, they grow up together." The impact of this work will lead to lessened ethnic tensions in the future and therefore bring about societal cohesion, social well-being and economic prosperity in BiH.

For more information, please contact:

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