



SUCCESS STORY

From importer to manufacturer



Photo: USAID Youth Entrepreneurs Program

At age 23, Bujar Hajdini (USAID grantee) has embarked on a venture that few of his peers might dare to undertake. He anticipates turning his first profit by month three.

“If you produce here, it’s just cheaper—and the profits are greater,” Hajdini says, “I’ve surprised even myself”.

At age 23, Bujar Hajdini has embarked on a venture that few of his peers might dare to undertake. The college senior is owner of a newly launched garment manufacturer, supplying a market long dominated by imported goods.

Hajdini’s company, Iliri Gr, is barely a month old. Already, a full-time staff of six seamstresses, joined by 15 part-time workers, is producing blouses, shirts, skirts and other garments. Hajdini sells the clothes through his family’s established wholesale apparel business. He anticipates turning his first profit by month three. “I’ve surprised even myself”, Hajdini says.

USAID’s Young Entrepreneurs Program assisted Hajdini with business training and furnished a 5,000 Euro grant to help defray his 28,000 Euros in startup costs. On a less formal basis, USAID also provided Hajdini with the crucial encouragement he needed to set up manufacturing operations in the light-filled commercial space below his family home. “It was a huge help to me because it helped minimize my risk,” Hajdini says of USAID’s assistance. “It also gave me the confidence to start—and to continue.”

Hajdini runs the company full-time, all while wrapping up his coursework in management and graphic design at the American University in Kosovo. His sister designs the firm’s apparel line, which includes pencil skirts and billowing blouses.

Hajdini’s family has long imported clothing from Turkey. Hajdini leveraged their strong base of wholesale customers to launch operations. Still, Hajdini says his financial training showed him that moving into manufacturing would be profitable.

Indeed, low labor costs, minus any import duties he would have to pay, allow Hajdini to undercut the price of, say, a Turkish-made skirt by two to three Euros. That represents a significant advantage, since the run of 400 skirts his employees were busy assembling on a recent morning will sell for nine or 10 Euros apiece.

USAID’s support of Iliri Gr dovetails with its work to develop Kosovo’s private sector, with the aim of increasing sales, creating jobs and reducing reliance on imports.

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USAID's Young Entrepreneurs Program, a three year program that started in September 2010 and ends September 2013 is designed to assist Kosovo's new and emerging entrepreneurs, ages 18 – 35. The Young Entrepreneurs Program recognizes that young entrepreneurs need more than mere training—they need capital and real-time support during the critical early business start-up period. To achieve this, the program provides business start-up matching grants and financing options with practical business training and sustained, hands-on coaching services for fledgling enterprises.