



SNAPSHOT

A Trade Fair Showcases Young Entrepreneurs Effort to Generate Employment



Photo: USAID Young Entrepreneurs Program

USAID grantee Mergim Cahani, the owner of "Phronesis" – local web search engine, coaches his employees how to demonstrate company's services to the Fair visitors.

Left to right: Eneida Reçica, Festim Cahani, Qëndresa Kastrati and Mergim Cahani.

A first-of-its-kind fair held May 16-18, 2013, gathered under one roof more than 70 of Kosovo's most promising up-and-coming entrepreneurs. The Young Entrepreneurs Fair provided a unique opportunity for these businesses, many of them newly established, to showcase their goods and services before clients, investors and the media.

Since, 2011, USAID through its Young Entrepreneurs Program has provided \$1.7 million in matching grants to 304 businesses in Kosovo, including everything from Kindergartens to consultancies.

"The most important thing is that USAID is giving us the chance to meet one another," said Kujtim Krasniqi, 27, owner of Vitorja Decor, a manufacturer of adhesive wall decals. "Business isn't just about customers. It's about developing cooperative relationships too." During the fair, Krasniqi met the owner of a local printing company, who agreed to take on some subcontracting work.

Another successful example of how networking worked during the fair came from Flamur Grudi, 30, owner of Muli Shoes. While setting up for the exhibition, Grudi realized his booth could use a pair of banners. A program officer introduced him to Ardian Kurhasani, 34, owner of Arti Graf. Hours later, and just in time for the opening, Grudi had his banners—and Kurhasani's graphic design business a brand-new customer.

Elsewhere at the fair, Valon Sopiani, 30, wasn't just seeking new viewers for Click Channel, a start-up television channel. The station manager also worked to lure potential advertisers and employees. Admir Vula, 36, hoped to interest the several Internet commerce sites exhibiting at the fair in retailing his oil paintings of scenes from Kosovo's history. And Liridona Muhaxhiri, 26, sent a text message to every exhibitor to drum up work for her marketing firm.

Approximately 70% of the population of Kosovo is under 35 and USAID through its activities has been channeling focus toward providing job opportunities for this large number of Kosovars. The Young Entrepreneurs Fair was sponsored by USAID through Young Entrepreneurs Program in partnership with Kosovo's Ministry of Trade and Industry.

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.