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MACEDONIA

SUCCESS STORY

Town Responds to Local Energy Needs

USAID helps a school and a home for seniors upgrade their facilities



Photo: USAID/Teresa Albor

A teacher works under the bright new lights in Mirko Mileski High School in Kicevo, Macedonia.

“Honestly, I couldn’t believe my eyes,” says Aleksandra Pavleska, 16, who attends Mirko Mileski High School. “There are new fluorescent lights placed above the blackboards and on the ceiling. Even in the late afternoon classes, it is as bright as if the sun was still shining outside.”

“The afternoon classes were the most troublesome,” said Aleksandra Chortanoska, a 17-year-old high school student. “We struggled to see what was written on the blackboard. It was sort of a murky atmosphere.”

Aleksandra attends Mirko Mileski High School, Macedonia’s second-largest high school with over 2500 students and some 170 employees. Because of the outdated facilities, students often had to struggle to see the blackboards in poorly lit classrooms. But now, classrooms are bright and blackboards are well lit, thanks to USAID’s help.

While the students appreciate the improved lighting, the school’s administrators appreciate its low costs. Since the lighting systems that were installed are energy efficient, electricity costs are down by 15 to 20 percent, even though the 50-year-old classrooms are now five times brighter than before.

“We achieved something very significant. We have improved the quality of the teaching process and saved money at the same time. This rather alternative approach is just what we needed to ease the overburdened municipal budget,” said Vladimir Toleski, Kicevo’s mayor.

The lighting project is part of a broader USAID effort to help Macedonia develop more effective, responsible, and accountable local governments that can respond better to the needs of their community. Among other things, local governments learn about low-cost ways to deliver energy-intensive services, like lighting.

The same project also helped improve conditions at a nearby home for senior citizens, which also serves as a social hub for the community, by protecting the building from the cold with special insulation tape along windows and doors. Now, during the cold winter months, residents and visitors to the facility can stay warm.

“The heating has now been significantly improved and we’re saving energy and money”, says Vlado Veljanovski, the manager of the home. “It’s good the elderly are not forgotten.”