



## SUCCESS STORY

# Positive Energy for Community Change

**Fund mobilizes public and private resources to address local needs**

“To be needed in society and to feel useful is not only a personal choice — it’s a lifestyle.” This is the motto of the Community Fund in the city of Pazardzhik, one which clearly its executive director, Hartyun Ashikian, and secretary, Stoyana Penova, fully embrace.



Photo: Pazardzhik Community Fund

Stoyana Penova (standing, third from right), secretary of the Pazardzhik Community Fund, applies her enthusiasm and teaching skills to one of the Fund’s top priorities, working with young people.

***“The main need in Bulgaria is more self-confidence among people,” said community fund executive director Hartyun Ashikian. “They need to feel a desire for development.”***

In 2004, Hartyun traveled to Seattle on a USAID program to learn about community funds in the United States and how they help drive community development. He and his colleagues participated in trainings sponsored by USAID. They learned techniques for working with local business, non-governmental organizations and government to tackle community concerns.

The Pazardzhik Community Fund made youth development a top priority. It’s also an area of expertise for Stoyana, who is a teacher. The Fund’s projects include special classes for gifted children, the renovation of playgrounds, the construction of a chess board in one of the central parks, and services for visually impaired children. The Fund also conducts activities to prevent trafficking and drug use among young people, both of which are serious problems in Pazardzhik. As a result, the local police, prosecutor, schools, and city officials now better coordinate anti-trafficking efforts.

The Fund has individual and business donors, and also engages in social entrepreneurship, publishing brochures and selling advertising on an outdoor audio-video system. Business representatives on the municipal council donate their councilmember salaries to the Fund. In early 2008, the Pazardzhik Community Fund won a \$100,000 grant under the first open competition for the European Union/Government of Bulgaria Operational Program. This grant support and the Fund’s local fund-raising efforts will help ensure that its efforts to respond to community priorities can continue.