



Community Fund Revitalizes Bulgarian Towns



Photo: USAID/Bulgaria Diana Arnaudova

USAID's program to promote community development helped build new guest houses in the Bulgarian town of Bogutevo; opened with the traditional Bulgarian 'bred and salt' ritual.

USAID initiated a project to create a community fund in three Bulgarian towns – Gabrovo, Blagoevgrad, and Chapelare. The community funds in these towns integrated, in a small but very successful alliance, the efforts of businesses, local governments and citizens to address community needs in a sustainable way. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to establish a community fund to leverage resources, and use them for meeting the specific local needs. The key to the success of USAID's project lies in the connection it creates between U.S. foreign aid programs and the strong Bulgarian traditions of charity and community involvement. The idea of leveraging resources for local economy revitalization inspired and united the local communities.

Soon the village of Bogutevo followed the example set in these larger communities. 600 citizens - the majority of whom are retirees living on \$20 to \$30 a month - donated a total of \$3,835. USAID assisted by matching the initial donations by Bogutevo citizens and helped with expertise on managing the community fund. The citizens used the funds to develop eco-tourism in the region to maximize the village's location in the majestic Rhodopi Mountains. Volunteers completed eighty percent of the work on renovating the infrastructure including streets, and street lights. USAID also assisted in opening four guesthouses with thirty beds thus improving the tourist infrastructure.

Photo & Caption

