



Citizens Lay Foundation for Rebuilding Village School

Challenge

A new school was a key priority for Kranidell village in Kosovo. The old school, condemned in 2001, was further damaged in 2002 after an earthquake caused the roof to nearly collapse. Yet it was still being used to hold classes. This is the only school for the twenty-five students living in the small remote mountain village. Both the village and municipality could not finance repairs themselves after the war ended in 1999.



Photo: USAID/Kosovo Gail Gibson McCullagh

The entire village turned up at the school opening.

“There was a lot of feeling of ownership for the school project. If all municipalities had a way of working together and getting the community involved the way USAID helped us to do, Kosovo would look like a different place.”

- Kranidell Working Group

Results

Since the USAID project was implemented, Kranidell has seen the return of families displaced by the 1999 conflict. One returnee said that his decision to return was largely due to the infrastructure improvements. Following this success, the villagers also completed a sanitation and road rehabilitation project that greatly improved access to the village. The villagers achieved this goal by applying the skills learned during the first community action project, using additional support from USAID, and mobilizing support from other donors as well as the community itself. Today, students attend classes in the 236-square meter two-classroom school with space for interactive learning. The school also has a teacher’s room, and a large foyer for school and community activities.

Initiative

As part of efforts to strengthen local communities in Kosovo, USAID funded infrastructure projects identified by the Kranidell village - the school was the top priority. First, the village met and listed all the problems citizens could identify. Then, a working group of five men and two women was formed to lead the process of determining village priorities and managing a construction project.

The working group was trained to facilitate group resolutions, engage in joint decision-making with their municipal government, monitor projects, and ensure choices for contractors and materials were made public.

“At first, people didn’t know the value of meeting and solving problems together, but after some time everyone began to show up,” says Ruzhdi Qehaja, Kranidell’s village leader.

The project gained strong support, not only from municipality and village leaders but residents as well. After the construction contractor was chosen, the villagers dug the foundation for the school themselves.

