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KOSOVO

CASE STUDY

Youth Energize Development Plans

Youth infuse a public-private development dialogue with new ideas



Photo: RTI International/Valentin Hoxha

Youth leaders from Suhareka/Suvaroka discuss business growth opportunities with a local businessman.

A youth group won a seat on a municipal committee after conducting a survey and analysis of local business needs.

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

Getting youth engaged in Kosovo's development energizes local debate and brings a fresh perspective to community and business leaders. Some even say it is critical to the country's future, because a youth population that is aware of the country's development needs and educated in how those needs can be met is uniquely positioned to influence the country's economic and political future.

Initiative

USAID is helping Kosovo engage youth in business development and local governance programs through training and education initiatives. For instance, one series of trainings in Suhareka/Suvaroka focused on economic weaknesses. After learning about the problems and potential solutions to those problems, the students took action. Having learned about Kosovo's high unemployment rate of 30 to 50 percent, student council members from a high school in central Kosovo launched an initiative to help the community address unemployment. The council conducted surveys of businesses to better understand the factors leading to problems, such as unemployment, that were slowing economic development.

Results

The survey's results highlighted a need for a municipal development plan. This plan would require engagement from institutions such as local government. The high school student council became involved in promoting and drafting a Local Economic Development strategy. "Their input into the design of the questionnaire and preparation of the summary report brought new creative ideas, making the report more attractive and most importantly accessible for all community groups," said Sali Asllanaj, mayor of Suhareka/Suvaroka. While working with businesses on both the survey and the development plan, the students gained respect and credibility. They are recognized as key partners in the community development process. One city official said, "Their efforts and interest were great and we see the value of adding a youth representative to the municipal development committee." Other officials agreed, and they created a student seat on the committee.