



SUCCESS STORY

Young Hands Brighten City Walls

Mural project brightens Pristina and develops young artists



Photo: Fitore Berisha, Mural Art Group

Young artists work on a mural symbolizing cooperation and connectedness.

“The project forced students to think creatively and work together to accomplish something meaningful. The more youth become engaged in solving problems, the more they can offer to the future of Kosovo,” says artist and youth leader Fitore Berisha.

A gray, socialist-era building at the University of Pristina has received a rainbow of color thanks to a new mural painted by a group of young Kosovar artists. Symbolizing cooperation and connectedness, the mural is the result of effort of Fitore Berisha’s drive to engage youth in creative activities to beautify the city and is the first initiative of its kind in Pristina.

One of 70 graduates of a USAID-supported leadership development program in Kosovo, Fitore uses her talents as an artist to help youth develop their skills and potential through creativity, designing and painting murals. “Until I finished the leadership training that USAID offered, I didn’t think I had it in me to motivate students, or manage such large projects,” said Fitore. “But there are too many young people in Kosovo with nothing to do, and I want them to feel valuable. After this training, I knew I should try — if I didn’t do this, no one would.”

After obtaining all necessary permits from the municipality and university, Fitore organized workshops for the young artists in mural painting procedure and techniques.

The mural gives a different, brighter view of Pristina, and creates a pleasant environment for students as well as for pedestrians. Through the mural, young talented artists were able to improve their skills and professionalism. Everyone involved was a volunteer, creating a huge social impact with their willingness, dedication and hard work. The mural is now used widely by the media as a backdrop for their reporting. The success of the mural led has led to the establishment of the Mural Art Group, an organization founded to carry out similar projects throughout Kosovo.

“A colorful mural sends a positive message to students – and adults – that we each can do something to improve our society. The project forced students to think creatively and work together to accomplish something meaningful. The more youth become engaged in solving problems, the more they can offer to the future of Kosovo,” says Fitore.

Seventy women have completed USAID’s leadership training program, with studies in both Kosovo and the United States. Their initiatives range from Fitore’s murals to a business training program started by another woman — and show how the graduates have become leaders in their communities.