



CONFLICT MITIGATION

USAID Awards the 'Top Performing' Municipality

The municipality of Lipjan/Lipljan has been selected as the top performing municipality in USAID's Municipal Infrastructure Support Initiative (MISI) Program. The award came with a \$50,000 grant to support a small infrastructure project in the municipality.

"The municipality of Lipjan/Lipljan has made a special contribution toward the return and reintegration of communities," said Michael Farbman, USAID Director.



Left to Right: Mr. Lila, Deputy Minister of MLGA, Mr. Grbic, Minister for Communities and Returns, Mr. Olluri, Mayor of Lipjan/Lipljan, and Dr. Michael Fabman USAID/Kosovo Mission Director

The other 7 municipalities participating in the program, including Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Istog/k, Kamenicë/a, Novo Brdo/Novoberde, Obiliq/c and Rahovec/ Orahovac, were honored with certificates of appreciation for their efforts to support the return and reintegration of communities.

"The municipalities are on the right path to improve conditions for the return of communities that want to live in Kosovo," said Branislav Grbic, the Minister for Returns and Communities who joined Dr. Farbman and Mr. Aziz Lila, Deputy Minister for Local Government Administration, in presenting the municipalities with certificates.

From 2003 to 2006, these municipalities implemented over 41 projects in partnership with community members. The aim of MISI is to support municipalities and commu-

nities to actively create an environment conducive to the return and reintegration of minorities. MISI continues to work with municipalities in improving conditions for the return and reintegration of communities.

IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Building a Dialogue around Decentralization

Decentralization, one of the topics dominating Kosovo's political landscape, was discussed at a one-day conference on June 20th in Pristina. Organized by USAID's Local Government Initiative in cooperation with OSCE, the conference offered a basic conceptual understanding of decentralization and set the stage for a structured dialogue among key stakeholders about decentralization in Kosovo.

The Conference targeted principal stakeholders in the decentralization process, ranging from municipalities, line ministries, and civil society actors. Decentralization has become a highly politicized, and largely misunderstood, issue in Kosovo. Accordingly, the conference helped dispel some of the larger misnomers about the decentralization process and served as a kick off for further discussions as decentralization is implemented.

One-stop shop Opens in Gjakovë/Djakovica

Bringing municipal services closer to the people is the overarching goal of Citizen Service Centers (CSC), also known as "one-stop shops". The last one of six USAID-sponsored CSCs opened in Gjakovë/Djakovica municipality on June 18th.

"Working together, municipalities, the Ministry of Local Government Administration and USAID have formed a most productive partnership for the successful establishment and launch of these centers. But, the success of our assistance is dependent on the willingness and determination of your leaders to stay focused on serving your interests. It is dependent on you holding leadership accountable by participating in Assembly meetings and in periodic elections," said Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Director, at the opening ceremony.

The center offers all services which were previously provided by the Municipal Directorates.



Gjakovë/Djakovica: Children wearing traditional clothes and dancing in front of the newly-opened Citizens' Service Center

The Center will serve as a modern municipal management tool to increase the quality of municipal services, assist the municipal administration become more "customer oriented", and foster more cooperative relationships between citizens and local government. Furthermore, through fast and efficient service delivery, the Center will improve the municipality's understanding of citizen's expectations and priorities.

RULE OF LAW AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Applying International Standards in the Assembly

International standards for democratic legislatures were the topic of a roundtable discussion organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The discussions, held on June 19th, used *Toward the Development of International Minimum Standards for Democratic Legislatures*, a recent document outlining standards for the functioning of democratic legislatures. The document has been translated into Albanian and Serbian and copies will be distributed to members of Kosovo's parliament.

John Johnson, director of NDI's governance program in Washington and one of the authors of the discussion document, participated in the roundtable and answered some of the questions from members of Kosovo Assembly, leaders of parliamentarian groups, heads of Caucasus, and other participants at the event.

This document, which was developed by NDI in coordination with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and other international governance organizations, covers a wide range of issues concerning the election and status of legislators and the organization, functions, and values of legislatures. Funded by USAID, NDI works closely with Assembly of Kosovo in developing standards and procedures.

Mentoring New Skills

Thirty-four interns and staff of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), participants of a Mentoring Program, were honored with Certificates of Completion at a ceremony held on June 28th.

"I have to say that this is the first time that training is not imposed on us, but rather we jointly designed the training according to our needs. This doesn't happen often," said Shkelzen Maliqi, Director with Department of Legal Affairs at Ministry of Justice, also a participant of the training. This ceremony recognized two components of the Mentoring Program. The first, an internship program, placed 15 recent law graduates in the MoJ. The second, implemented with a pro-bono contribution of time from the U.S. law firm DLA Piper, provided training for 19 legal officers.

The Mentoring Program is part of the USAID-supported Participant Training Program. The effort assists the MoJ in attracting and retaining high quality, professional staff, using non-monetary incentives such as professional training programs and job shadowing.

Upcoming Events

July 9-- Groundbreaking ceremony for the north Mitrovica Public Library and dedication of the Water System Project in Banjske/a, Zvecan municipality.

July 9-- Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID Director will present 33 participants of the Party Training Academy with certificates of completion. Party Training Academy is organized by NDI.



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