



SPECIAL INITIATIVES

STOP AIDS

“**S**TOP AIDS, KEEP THE PROMISE” was the slogan of World AIDS Day 2007. The international effort to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS was commemorated in Kosovo with a week-long set of activities, concluding with a concert in Peja/Pec on December 1st.

Kosovo currently has a fairly low HIV prevalence rate. However, Kosovo's young population—as many as 60% of Kosovars are under age 25—gives rise to concern among medical professionals and HIV/AIDS activists. There remains a need for continuous, Kosovo-wide education about HIV/AIDS.



Peja/Pec, December 1 - Following the maskball, PEN activists prepared for the STOP AIDS Concert

The Peer Educator's Network (PEN), in cooperation with Kosovo Population Foundation (KOPF), organized numerous activities, including lectures, exhibitions, theater performances, and distribution of public information material, all aimed at informing young people about risks associated with HIV/AIDS and prevention methods.

The week was capped by a STOP AIDS concert. The concert featured Clay Ross, a jazz guitar player who was in Kosovo under sponsorship of the U.S. Office Pristina, as well as prominent Kosovo artists Teuta Kurti and NRG Band. The activities and the concert led by PEN and KOPF were supported by USAID.

Supporting Kosovo Elections

November 2007 elections were historic for Kosovo, as they marked the first time that Kosovars elected their representatives for the parliament through open list voting. In addition, municipal elections were conducted through open lists for the first time since 2000. Finally, this was the first time that mayoral, municipal and parliamentary elections took place at the same day.

USAID contributed to a smooth election process by providing assistance to the Central Election Commission in conducting a major voters' education campaign in Kosovo and to the diaspora, as Kosovars living abroad were eligible to vote. USAID also provided support to Democracy in Action, a coalition of eleven non-governmental organizations, in monitoring all three elections.



Training of NGO activists who volunteered to monitor November 2007 elections.

Democracy in Action mobilized 2,400 activists to monitor election campaigns, the election process, and media coverage of campaigns. Most notably, the coalition conducted a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) through which volunteers text-messaged vote counts from over 2300 polling stations across Kosovo to a televised Media Center. In the hours following the elections, Kosovars could watch constant TV coverage of party scores for Parliamentary, Municipal Assembly, and Mayoral races across Kosovo, as the political parties -- either at the Media Center or glued to the website (www.democracy2007.net) -- watched as mounting tallies confirmed results.

This was the first election in which results were transmitted live to a Kosovo-wide audience. USAID support for election administration, public awareness, and get-out-the-vote efforts was implemented in cooperation with IFES, NFDI and the IREX Civil Society Project. The efforts of Democracy in Action were supported by IFES and KIPRED, a local think tank.

LEGAL DEVELOPMENT

Legal Professional Reform Index

The second Legal Professional Reform Index (LPRI) for Kosovo was released and discussed at an event that gathered Kosovar legal practitioners on November 27. The report provides an assessment of the current status of the legal profession.

The index evaluates the development of the legal profession against twenty four factors within five general categories, including: professional freedoms and guarantees; education, training, and admission to the profession; conditions and standards of practice; legal services; and professional associations of lawyers. As the Kosovo LPRI has been conducted since 2004, it also provides a means to chart progress, and identify backsliding, in areas vital to establishing a more ethical, effective, and independent legal profession. The 2007 index indicated improvement in five of the factors measured. Nineteen factors remained unchanged. None of the factors trended downwards in the report.

The LPRI was conducted by American Bar Association/Rule of Law Initiative under a partnership with USAID's Increasing Capacity for Legal Professionals. The full report can be downloaded at: www.abanet.org/rol/europe_and_eurasia/kosovo.html

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Fostering Business Development

Wild berry collectors from Leposavic region will have an easier time producing and marketing high-quality berries, thanks to a freezing and cold storage facility dedicated by Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID Director, on November 27th.

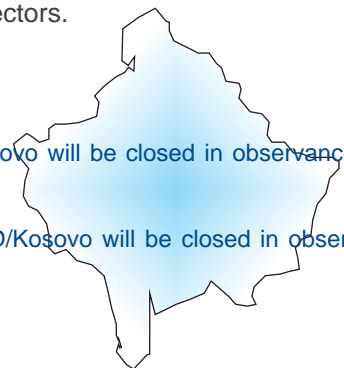
"The facilities we are inaugurating today will extend the marketable life of the berries" said Dr. Farbman at the opening. "This project confirms our conviction that Kosovo's private businesses can produce - and process to international standards - high-value agricultural products that are in demand on world markets. And in so doing, this will also contribute to building a stable and prosperous future for the communities in which they are located."

The construction of the facilities was an effort of AS Promet, a leader in collection of berries and mushrooms in the region, in cooperation with the 'EKO Voce' association of raspberry collectors. The company invested 69% of the total cost for the construction of the facilities, and USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support added an additional \$40,000 to the initiative.

This project will benefit hundreds of collectors in the surrounding mountain villages. By constructing storage and cooling facilities for a wide array of products, the initiative will extend product life and the duration of the trading season, thereby providing longer-term employment and incomes for the collectors.

December 20, USAID/Kosovo will be closed in observance of Eid ul Adha.

December 24 - 25, USAID/Kosovo will be closed in observance of Christmas.



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