



### ECONOMY AND INSTITUTIONS

#### "MFE would not be what it is without USAID's assistance"

**T**he Ministry would not be what it is without USAID's assistance," stated Haki Shatri, Minister, at the presentation of the vision and statement of the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE). According to Shatri, USAID's management and advisors work with the Ministry's staff on daily basis, ensuring the creation of a modern and strong ministry in fiscal affairs, and bringing Kosovo closer to international practice and standards.



MFE Vision Statement

(Left to right) Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director and Mr. Haki Shatri, Minister of Economy and Finances

The presentation, held on June 5, introduced a new concept of what MFE stands for, with its "Vision" of improving the standard-of-living for all of the people of Kosovo by fostering a stable and healthy investment environment. MFE's "mission," also unveiled at the event, is to provide responsible, equitable, and transparent management of public funds. These two statements will serve as guiding principles for MFE's work. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director, said that "the mission and vision [statements] are like the invisible hand that shows the direction to be taken."

#### Accelerating citizens' participation in municipal budget process

**A** workshop designed to promote inclusion of citizens in municipal budget planning brought together representatives of 29 Kosovo municipalities.

The workshop introduced methods to promote and ensure active inclusion of citizens in the budget process, such as sharing of information, designing mechanisms to obtain citizens' feedback, create space for dialogue with citizens and share the decision-making responsibility.

Participation of citizens in planning the budget process buys "legitimacy" for the entire budget process, one participant said. Participants included Chief Executive Officers, Directors of Finance, and Chief Financial Officers, and Directors of Health and Education Departments in the municipalities, as these areas have large budget demands and greater personnel numbers.

USAID's Local Government Initiative is a three-year program designed to help strengthen the capacity of local government., implemented by RTI International.

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY

#### Civil society challenged by political leader

**T**he president of of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), Ramush Haradinaj, challenged civil society "to continue their work and contribution for better and accountable governance," during a roundtable discussion on political developments and the role of civil society on May 12 in Pristina.

The roundtable, organized by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), brought together representatives of local organizations to discussion civil society and its involvement in policymaking. The topic was timely as Kosovo's civil society is becoming more involved in addressing unemployment, corruption in public institutions, university reforms and student protests, and other issues.

While Haradinaj praised civil society for its engagement in Kosovo, and urged them to continue, participants emphasized the need for political parties such as AAK and their members to better understand the role and importance of civil society.

This discussion was is part of a series of meetings organized by ATRC, a partner in USAID's civil society program along with the International Research & Exchanges Board and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives.

## Examining elections law: What may be in Kosovo's future

The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) organized a conference on June 5 with representatives of governmental institutions, political party representatives, and representatives of civil society to discuss ideas behind a new election law. The discussion ranged from when a new election system should be in place - and when elections should be held - to how and why Kosovo needs a new election law. The conference also looked at voting trends in Kosovo in the past elections.

Conference participants examined previous advocacy effort, especially Reforma 2004, which tried to increase voter turnout, and discussed future challenges and new initiatives for upcoming elections. USAID/Kosovo Mission Director Ken Yamashita, one of the speakers, said he believed the process of dialog and grassroots advocacy involving large numbers of Kosovars, were more important than even the outcome, as such civil society efforts are key as the "foundation of democracy starts at the grassroots."

Though Kosovo institutions are receiving more competencies, elections remain a reserved competency of the international administration in Kosovo. The conference was supported by USAID through the Kosovo Civil Society Project, implemented by International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

## CONFLICT MITIGATION

### Albanian and Serbian Kosovar TV stations jointly produce documentaries on divided communities

Three documentaries produced by six local television stations in a team reporting project were screened in their respective communities during the week of June 5.

Supported by USAID's Support to Peace and Stability in Kosovo project, the team reporting project linked six stations, pairing together three sets of Albanian Kosovar stations with nearby Serbian Kosovar stations, to produce and broadcast documentaries that show daily lives and issues facing individuals from the divided communities.

The documentaries, which offer local perspectives on issues related to the status process and stability, were produced to help promote tolerance and compromise in Kosovo. The documentaries were conceived and produced through a series of collaborative workshops led by the Academy for Educational Development, implementers of the project. Teams from each station worked together to create 30-minute films that give personal perspectives on a range of sensitive final status issues.

The process has enjoyed success and significant buy-in from the participants and their media outlets. The local screenings gave the TV stations (in Mitrovica/a, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Shilove/Silovo, Ferizaj/Urosevac, Shterpce/Strpce) a chance to see the reactions of representative viewers, and hear opinions directly. It is hoped that this input will help the stations develop programs directly addressing their viewers concerns in the future, and continue the effort to show all sides of the issues.

The broadcast of the documentaries on the local TV stations will be between June 12-16

### Upcoming Events

**June 16**, Information Technology in the courts, a one-day training organized by USAID's Justice System Reform Activity.

**June 19**, the first of the Citizens Service Centers supported by USAID to open in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

**June 20**, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director will address the Mayors of 30 municipalities at a Policy Leadership Conference.

**June 24**, USAID will honor participants of the Political Party Academy.



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