



## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT

### Businesses offer insights on public infrastructure

Members of High School Student Council in Suhareka/Suvarëka conducted a municipal-wide Business Attitude Survey.

Some 35 business-owners were interviewed on municipal services and infrastructure, and their impact on business development or non-development, labor force productivity and the future of the community. This was the first time for such a survey to take place and include business owners as major employers in the area.

The results and recommendations from the survey are incorporated in the Suhareka/Suvarëka Local Economic Development (LED) plan, which is a unique mechanism being developed in municipalities participating in USAID's Local Government Initiative.

USAID's Local Government Initiative works in six municipalities, including Suhareka/Suvarëka, and assists municipal leaders in the development of municipal Local Economic Development Plans.

### A year in review

Officials from six municipalities participating in USAID's Local Government Initiative gathered for a meeting held on September 7.

The meeting brought together the officials from different regions to discuss issues that affect the work in the municipalities and how USAID's activities on the ground can help them address these issues. An example is property tax collection.

Property tax collection has been introduced by USAID through its advisors to the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF), and it has helped



Officials from municipalities participating in USAID's Local Government Initiative

local governments raise their incomes.

At the same time, the municipalities use the income to address the needs of their citizens. Just recently several municipalities have invested the money from their tax collection for community projects, such as a road linking a village to the urban areas in Kaqanik/Kacanik, and a city park in Prizren.

The officials were encouraged to look into ways of increasing the tax collection rates in their respective municipalities in order to make life better for their constituencies.

## DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

### Achievements through joint efforts

Millosevë/Milosevo, a small Albanian and Serbian Kosovar community in Obiliq/Obilic Municipality, organized a celebration to dedicate the rehabilitation of its Cultural House. The mayor of Obiliq/Obilic, other municipal officials, members of the Community Working Group, students, and members of the community participated in the event that took place on September 9.

"The project is a result of cooperation between the community, USAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI) and the municipality,"

said Ismet Hashani, Mayor of Obiliq/Obilic.

He continued, " This project was made possible by you - it's your property taxes that have contributed to the budget of municipality and we have invested them wisely."

Assisted by MISI with training, the Community Working Group advocated for the project which cost 54,000 euros: 14,000 euros from the municipal budget, 40,000 euros from USAID, with the community contributing labor. The MISI program is designed to assist communities and improve conditions for returns and the reintegration of minorities through cooperative efforts of ethnic groups.

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

### Trade policy and negotiations

Participants in a recent study tour to the U.S. entitled "Trade Policy and Negotiations," presented their impressions of their experience at a meeting held on September 6.

The study tour, arranged through USAID/Kosovo's Participant Training Program (PTP), was designed to suit the needs of Kosovo's institutions, primarily those responsible for drafting policies, presenting, and negotiating them. For many participants from the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD), Prime Minister's Office, and Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) the training was very important, particularly for the MTI, since Kosovo is in the process of negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) with its neighbors.

"We believe that the experience gained will help you in managing more effectively the trade policy decision-making and trade negotiation preparation process in Kosovo," said Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Director at the opening.

## Kosovo Early Warning Report # 10.

In its latest quarterly report, the USAID-sponsored Early Warning Report addresses indicators and conclusions derived from analysis of the data that has been collected in connection with socio-economic, political and institutional stability in Kosovo, including inter-ethnic relations and public security for the period April - June, 2005.

The report highlights a positive trend with regard to the collection of budget revenues at the central level; however, the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) is stagnating, the number of registered unemployed is rising, and the trade deficit is increasing. In the area of inter-ethnic relations, the trend of opinion on "relations are tense and will continue to be tense" represents a decrease by all respondents: for Albanian respondents from 32% in July 2004 to 14% in June 2005, whereas for Serb respondents from 84% to 76%.

And last but not least, very few respondents consider that the security situation has worsened, while more than half of the Albanian respondents and those of non-Serb minorities considered that the security situation has improved.

### Upcoming Events

**September 20-23**, A delegation of the State Department with the Office of U.S. Assistance for Europe and Eurasia will be visiting USAID and its partners in the field.

**September 26**, USAID-sponsored International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with local authorities will launch the anti-trafficking media campaign



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