



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Corruption in our Society: What do we do to fight it?

Corruption in Kosovo and mechanisms to it were the topic of a public debate held on December 5. Organized by the Advocacy and Training Resource Center (ATRC) and "Çohu", a local NGO the debate brought together a spectrum of media, civil society representatives and most importantly government officials.

The debate addressed challenges such as citizen's perception about the level of corruption as the latest public opinion survey shows that 58% of the respondents have used or were bribed for a service or the difficulties for the media outlets to raise the issue.

The discussions praised the role of Kosovar civil society during the draft of the Government's Anti-corruption Strategy, as well as the anticorruption campaign that followed, emphasizing the fact that NGO's around the world very often are the ones that lead the anti-corruption combat.

Advocacy and Training Resource Center is a partner along with International Research & Exchanges Board in implementing Kosovo Civil Society Project, a three year program supported by USAID.

Marking new beginnings

One of the last of USAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI) projects to be completed, a sewer system, was dedicated in Smaq/Smac, Prizren municipality.

Community representatives, municipal officials, residents and children participated in the November 30 event. Smaq/Smac is a multi-ethnic community of Albanian and Serbian Kosovar families. The village's cooperative spirit made the project come true.



Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID Director, and Rexhep Gajraku, CEO for Prizren Municipality, unveiling the inaugural plaque in Smaq/Smac

"Different ethnicities cooperating on behalf of community, a community and municipality working together in solving community problems and facilitating integration of communities in one: this is the way to solve problems through integration and this is how you'll be integrated into Europe," said Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director.

Diplomacy, negotiations and civil society

Miroslav Lajcek, the former ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Yugoslavia, challenged Kosovars to "decide whether you want to stay focused on the past or look toward the future" at a public debate on December 6.

Ambassador Lajcek shared his country's experience with integration into European institutions, the difficulties and challenges during the transition period and the rights of minorities. He emphasized the role of civil society in the development of Kosovar-Serbian dialogue.

The debate is part of a public debate cycle organized by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), and Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI), partners of the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) in implementing USAID's Kosovo Civil Society Project.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Participant Training Program Award Ceremony

USAID honored 150 Kosovars for their participation in short-term training programs and study tours in the US and other countries on December 6 in Pristina. The honorees received certificates acknowledging their participation and were congratulated by Kosovo's Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi, US Office Chief of Mission Philip Goldberg, and USAID/Kosovo Mission Director Ken Yamashita.

"Education of public servants and the private sector is an investment in Kosovo," said Prime Minister Kosumi as he thanked USAID for this program. "This is a hugely important endeavor as Kosovo moves forward," said Goldberg as he encouraged participants to share the information they learned, and from 150 participants to "multiply that by reaching out to 10 more people."

Displays in the reception area showed all guests and participants the types of programs. "I learned in Wisconsin that people have to work hard to succeed, and have to learn all their life long," said veterinarian Kreshnik Rogova, Suhareke/Suva Reka, who participated in a training program aimed to improve Kosovo's dairy sector.

Since May 2004, USAID's Participant Training Program has organized 33 training programs (21 in the US or other countries) to equip Kosovo's leaders and specialists in the public and private sector with specialized skills and practical knowledge to bring about institutional reform supporting democratic processes, rule of law, free enterprise and economic restructuring.

USAID's Participant Training Program is implemented by World Learning in Kosovo. All USAID/Kosovo's implementing partners joined the events, as each USAID partners had played a critical role in suggesting training programs and nominating participants.

Preventing HIV from spreading

Kosovo's situation with a very small HIV/AIDS-positive population might not last long if Kosovars fail to recognize social trends and problems facing societies in transition. Efforts addressing prevention and USAID's role were highlighted at a December 1 session on "Kosovo and UN Statement of Pledge to HIV/AIDS," supported by the Prime Minister of Kosovo.

Considering Kosovo's very young population structure, and the fact that more than half of those newly infected around the world are 15 to 24 years old, Kosovo can easily become the perfect host for the plague of the century.

"That is why USAID in Kosovo has engaged more in the areas that can help prevent the disease - development of policies and institutions to provide an environment for economic development and job opportunities thus improve living conditions," said Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Director.

USAID's support in HIV/AIDS prevention resulted in Kosovo's five-year HIV/AIDS strategic plan (2004-2008), helped establish the first confidential counseling and testing services in Kosovo, produced a high-profile media campaign on HIV/AIDS prevention, supported training to build local capacities and today is supporting an HIV/AIDS surveillance plan that will measure key behaviors and HIV prevalence among high risk groups, providing the critical behavior and biological data for the first time in Kosovo.

Upcoming Events

December 12, USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support project organizes a one-day Public-Private dialogue

December 14, USAID's Strengthening Rule of Law project will host a Bench-bar roundtable

December 14, USAID will host a reception to honor Michael Greco, The president of the American Bar Association.



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