



A STREAM THAT DIVIDED NOW JOINS COMMUNITIES

A mixed Albanian, Roma and Serbian Kosovar community in Kamenicë/a Municipality dedicated a sewerage and drainage system on January 27, in one neighborhood of this municipality. The neighborhood's Community Working Group, assisted by USAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI), worked closely with municipal officials to address the needs and priorities in this community, and as a result the stream of black water running through the neighborhood is no longer a health hazard for residents. After several months of identifying priorities, working out solutions, advocacy efforts and lobbying for support to the municipal officials, the mixed Community Working Group managed to repair 451 meters of the sewerage/drainage system at a total cost of 23,426.41 euros, of which municipality contributed 4,676.41 euros and USAID/MISI, 18,750.00 euros; the community's in-kind contribution totaled 1,000 euros.

"If I were to live 10 more years here, I'm certain that without this project I wouldn't have the chance to establish communication with other ethnic groups living here. But now there is contact and communication between us," said Hajredin Krivaqa, member of Community Working Group.

MISI is an 18-month project designed to assist communities and improve conditions for returns and reintegration of minorities, and as Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director said, "Kamenica and this neighborhood, this working group have are an example for all Kosovo, on how everyone - different ethnic groups, officials and citizens - can work together to resolve their problems."

TOWARDS TRANSPARENCY

In an effort to improve transparency of municipal government, USAID's Local Government Initiative (LGI) is strengthening communication between municipal officials and residents. The Suhareke/Suva Reka Municipal Assembly established the municipal public relations office, designed to ensure more direct communication with civil society groups in this municipality. At the same time, in Gjakove/Djakovica municipality, USAID's Resident Municipal Advisor facilitated a meeting between local NGOs and the Chief Executive Officer to address NGOs' funding needs. The meeting was beneficial, since the NGOs were promised support through a competitive proposal review process that the municipality will institute; the municipality indicated it will hold those NGOs receiving funding accountable for their work and money received. LGI is a three-year program supported by USAID, designed to strengthen and increase capacities of officials in the local government and improve conditions in the municipalities.

UNCLEAN WELL WATER = HEALTH HAZARD

On January 26, the USAID-supported Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) organized a public discussion on "Well water, a health hazard and possible solutions." The discussion followed a report presented earlier by the Water for 3rd Millenium (WIIM), a local NGO that conducted a survey on the well water in rural areas. Burbuqe Nushi, National Institute for Public Health (NIPH), addressed possible health hazards to the well water users, and Dr. Halit Gashi, Director of WIIM, analyzed the present situation with well waters. A lively debate took place between participants on the current well water situation in Kosovo, resulting in a detailed analysis of the situation and possible solutions. According to WIIM's analysis, the water of 85% of the wells tested is highly dangerous, though NIPH representative played down the possibility of serious infections rising from the consumption of well water. Two key panelists agreed that field cooperation between NGOs and governmental institutions is highly desirable. The survey was funded by the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), a three-year project implemented by East-West Management Institute in partnership with the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and ATRC, and supported by the American people through USAID.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE NEW EARLY WARNING SYSTEM REPORT SHOW DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ABOUT STANDARDS

Viewpoints of the different ethnic groups in Kosovo, their opinions about standards, performance of UNMIK, and more information will be available in the upcoming "Early Warning System (EWS) Report" to be issued by the end of February. The report, prepared by Riinvest, a local think tank, is funded by USAID in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) in an effort to monitor trends and public perceptions of key institutions and provide a conflict prevention tool.

At the press conference organized by Riinvest to present the results of the public opinion poll, which preceded the publication of EWS, it was highlighted that,

-a majority of Kosovars of all communities think that the continuation of dialogue is important for the fulfillment of the standards.

-Over 40 percent of those surveyed think that Rule of Law is the most important standard. This opinion is shared both by Albanian and Serbian Kosovars, while "other" communities perceive economy as the most important standard (more than 30%).

-More than 36 percent of Kosovars think UNMIK is responsible for the fulfillment of standards, around 30 percent think that PISG is responsible; while around 33% say that every Kosovo citizen has the responsibility to fulfill the standards.

-Serbian and Albanian Kosovars have different opinions on the relationship between the standards and the initiation of talks about the final status. The majority of Albanian Kosovars think there is no link between standards fulfillment and the beginning of talks about the final status, while Serbian Kosovars have an opposite opinion.

Early Warning System Report #8 is the analysis of results of an opinion poll conducted by Riinvest at the end of November 2004. The complete report will soon be on the UNDP web site <http://www.ks.undp.org/index.asp>.

IMPROVING LEGAL DOCUMENTATION PROCEDURES

On January 27, the Civil Rights Project (CRP) in Kosovo organized a roundtable on "Analysis of Public Policies," examining documentation procedures regarding inheritance claims. The topic was a result of a previous CRP study on documentation issues that arise in the process of gaining access to inheritance, focusing on minorities' experiences.

The roundtable moderator Haki Lecaj, Kosovo Judicial Institute (KJI), explained that the project was "to help tribunals, while also understanding that the judicial system should be independent and free of pressures." The roundtable dealt with proper documentation procedures, and participating judges explained the process and clarified questions regarding possible mistakes made in documents. The issue of exchange and information dissemination was identified as crucial for the parties involved in the process of claiming inheritance, therefore cooperation among legal institutions should be a priority in order to avoid discrepancies and not prolong the cases.

The study and the roundtable were supported by the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project, a cooperative agreement between USAID and East West Management Institute (EWMI) and Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI).

Upcoming Events

February 8, Ken Yamashita, USAID Mission Director will visit municipality of Shtërpce/Strpce,

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