



Dialogue and Reconciliation

PROJECT BRINGS PEOPLE - COMMUNITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES TOGETHER

“**U**SAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI), which helped you with the paving of the road, is not a project about infrastructure. It's a project about bringing people, communities and municipalities together,” said Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director at the dedication ceremony in Rubofc/Rubovc, Lipjan/Lipljan Municipality on April 27.

Rubofc/Rubovc, a mixed Serbian Kosovar and Albanian Kosovar community demonstrated their peaceful spirit and interethnic cooperation during March 2004 riots, when Albanian Kosovar residents protected the houses of their Serbian Kosovar neighbors. The community benefited from USAID's assistance by advocating to the municipal officials the need for improvement of living conditions, and what was envisaged as a 1.5km long road turned into 5 km of asphalt road. Implemented through Mercy Corps, the road is the first of five MISI projects in this municipality to be finalized. The total cost of the project was Euro 231,121; of which Euro 173,121 was contributed by municipality, 30,000 by community and Euro 28,000 by MISI.

MISI is implementing 42 similar projects and its goal is to enable nine participating municipalities take a leading role in improving conditions for return and reintegration of minorities in Kosovo.

Media and Rule of Law

UNDERSTANDING AND REPORTING ON COURTS

In an effort to improve journalistic skills on court reporting, the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) organized a one-day training for court journalists. A total of 30 journalists from Kosovo broadcast, print and news agency organizations were instructed on how to report on fundamental court procedures and trials. The program included instruction from district and supreme courts judges, prosecutors and attorneys, and court administrators regarding correct and accurate reporting on an array of court procedures, including trials, and terminology lists.

The importance of accurate reporting was stressed by moderators and participants alike as Ali Cenaj, Zeri



Improving Court Reporting, journalists and legal experts discuss possibilities.

journalist provided a critique of recently published stories about the court system, how they had been incorrectly reported and how journalists and editors can avoid mistakes in the future. Thomas Monaghan, head of Justice Department with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), participated in the training and highlighted the fact that the quality of news reporting on the justice system is directly related to the quality of information the court system provides to the journalists. At the same time, when journalists' face difficulties in accessing court procedures and documents, presenters discussed the obligation of court officials to provide information and documents to the journalists, and particularly provide certain fundamental information about criminal cases without jeopardizing their trials.

The training is the second on this topic organized by USAID's Kosovo Independent Private Media(KIPM) project implemented through IREX. The first seminar was organized in cooperation with the USAID's Independent Judiciary and Effective Court System project implemented through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) tasked with court improvements, including public information sector.

COURT AUTOMATION WORKING GROUP

On April 5, the Court Automation Working Group (CAWG) held a roundtable discussion on possible ways to improve court procedures. This is the second CAWG roundtable. CAWG was established to improve the software developed to automate court proceedings. The group gathers representatives from district courts, Department of Justice (DoJ), Department of Justice Affairs (DJA), and USAID's Judiciary and Effective Court System project implemented by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

The roundtable discussion identified needed changes and possibilities for expansion of existing automotive mechanisms to include new changes amended by the new Criminal Procedure Code.

An efficient, transparent and predictable judicial system is an essential component of the rule of law. The delays in delivering case resolution are often caused by delays in the procedure. Therefore, NSCS is committed to provide technical assistance for the second phase of the Automation Court Mechanism, which will be introduced throughout 5 District Courts. The Automation Court Mechanisms was developed by the European Agency for Reconstruction.

Civil Society and Government

DECENTRALIZATION-A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC

On April 8, the USAID-supported Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) held a public discussion addressing "Decentralization and the Pilot Projects in Kosovo." Decentralization is a controversial topic and as such elevated a diverse group of participants, representatives of local and international organizations as well as civil servants.

Lutfi Haziri, Minister of Local Government, presented a history of the process and the provisions of the current plan, while Enver Hoxhaj from the Democratic Party of Kosovo and Nazmi Jashari from the civic movement ORA, representing parliamentary groups from opposition parties, critiqued the current administration for implementing the plans prior to consultations and parliamentary debates. They also expressed their disapproval with the impetus of governmental officials to initiate the pilot plans prior to delineating a clear governmental structure and legal framework which would regulate the correlation between the local and central level as well as decentralization of power. The discussion was welcomed by participants, especially by politicians who expressed their satisfaction with having an opportunity to discuss openly this controversial topic.

USAID supports ATRC through the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), a four-year cooperative agreement with East West Management Institute (EWMI).

HOW THE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Understanding Government's Operations" was the topic of a one-day workshop organized by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) on April 26. The presentations offered a general overview of government's functions, focusing on the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF) and Kosovo's budget.

A diverse group of speakers, including international and local experts working with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) addressed the structure and responsibilities within MEF's units, the budget planning process, the issue of deficit, Kosovo's budget for 2006 and most importantly the Tax Administration operations and NGOs' tax responsibilities. The workshop was of great interest, with a large number of participants from civil society and media. Participants noted that, for many of them, this was the first time that such an open workshop was organized for grassroots level activists in Kosovo.

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WINDOW OF LIFE

A memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) and USAID's Girls and Women Literacy Project marked the official launch of the first phase of non-formal education in 10 Kosovo municipalities.

Today, 25 women literacy centers operate, serving almost 400 girls and women with classes offered three times a week with trained and experienced teachers. The project includes basic and advance reading, writing and numeracy classes for 750 rural girls and women. The classes use "Window of Life", a text book designed to accommodate the needs of illiterate adults, primarily women and young girls, by addressing topics related to women's and children's rights, tolerance and peace building, domestic violence, health/nutrition issues, life skills, and civic education.

The project builds upon a successful initiative of the Non-Formal Education Section, a section within the Ministry dealing with alternative education, which initiated the Women's Literacy Project, a project implemented through 130 literacy centers in 19 municipalities. These centers were managed by local women's groups and they were established as alternative education premises. The Rural Women Literacy Classes is implemented by the UNICEF.

Upcoming Events

April 28-29, USAID's Rule of Law Program organizes a two-day training in Vërmica

May 2-7, USAID/Kosovo will host the Director of U.S. Assistance to Eastern Europe

May 3, MISI dedicates the renovation of a school project in Gjilan/Gnjilane

May 5-6, a two day conference organized by KNAP



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