



CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

Standards: What do they mean to me

Avoko, a coalition of NGOs supported by USAID's Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), completed the public education campaign on the United Nations standards for Kosovo, "Standards: What do they mean to me." The campaign, carried out during April and May, was conducted in 15 Kosovo municipalities.

The campaign resulted in a number of recommendations, such as transfer of judicial, security and property rights competencies from internationals to locals; United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and Kosovo Government to continue with increase of pressure for return of bodies from Serbia to Kosovo; international and local institutions to engage in respect of human rights for all and to ensure rule of law in Kosovo; and that the international community put more pressure on Serbian Kosovar representatives in order to gain Serbian Kosovars' cooperation in fulfillment of standards. A key recommendation was the need for open meetings with citizens to explain what standards are, the process implementation and evaluation of the standards and what will happen after fulfillment, as well as the role of citizens in all these steps.

"Civil society wasn't offered the possibility to contribute in drafting the plan for achieving or implementing the standards, and this is one of the reasons why citizens are not sufficiently informed about standards, and they do not have a clear understanding on how to contribute to the implementation of the program for which they were not asked to give their opinion," said Shqipe Pantina, coordinator of the Avoko campaign.

The campaign has achieved its objectives through three main activities: open debates, broadcasting of a TV video and drafting and dissemination of an informational leaflet on standards for Kosovo.

The campaign was financially supported by USAID in cooperation with East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI) and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) through the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP). The Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) provided technical support for the campaign's implementation.



A group of students during a workshop activity, Ohrid May 14th 2005

Investing in youth by strengthening their capacities

May 11-14, USAID's Local Government Initiative (LGI) Project conducted a three-day workshop to assist representatives of the youth community in advocating for successful and actionable projects to key stakeholders. Participants included students of high school councils throughout the six LGI host municipalities, as well as several other municipalities. The participants represented approximately 15,000 Kosovo high school students.

Municipal representatives participating in the training alongside the students had an opportunity to develop innovative ways of working with the youth communities throughout Kosovo. The Ministry for Sports, Culture and Youth representative expressed willingness to involve the Ministry in follow-up activities and possibly fund projects.

The workshop was organized in cooperation with municipal department for education, department of culture, youth and sports and it is the first of a series of activities planned by LGI to strengthen the cooperation of youth communities with municipal institutions and to address the role of youth in Standards implementation and local economic and social development.

The next planned activity will address the issue of institutional development of youth councils. USAID's Local Government Initiative is implemented by RTI International.

Building Democracy through Grassroots Advocacy

“Building Democracy through Grassroots Advocacy,” a documentary film presented on May 31 at the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), marked the finalization of the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP).

Through advocacy trainings, KNAP worked to strengthen NGO skills, and through small grants supported implementation of some of the advocacy efforts. In close partnership with its partners, Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) and Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI), KNAP had many successes. A few of these were highlighted in the documentary: the approval of a meat handling regulation in Gjakovë/Djakovica; a regulation on environment protection in Decan/Decani; and a regulation on infrastructure accessibility for people with disabilities, peace and tolerance.

Supported by USAID, in cooperation with East-West Management Institute (EWMI), KNAP built a four year partnership among local NGOs, accomplishing successful activities that benefited the life of Kosovo citizens. The documentary introduces some of the activities thus presents a diversity of issues addressed and supported through the project all over Kosovo.

ECONOMY

Strategic Activities Fund conference

USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project introduced its Strategic Activities Fund (SAF) at a conference on May 25. The Strategic Activities Fund (SAF) is designed to fund activities that stimulate economic growth and improve employment opportunities for Kosovar citizens, which is KCBS's overarching goal.

Through these small funds KCBS will facilitate the work of Kosovar partners, improve their working environment, skills and opportunities. Specifically, KCBS will support programs including training and research, producer organizations' and commodity associations' activities, transfer of technical information, and management assistance. Organizations whose proposed activities meet the SAF USAID-approved eligibility and evaluation criteria, as well as contribute to KCBS project results, are eligible for SAF assistance.

Eligible candidates are business associations, trade unions, NGOs, market development companies, farmers associations, etc.

KCBS is a USAID project designed to assist economic growth by targeting field to table productions or clusters, livestock, fruits and vegetables, and construction materials.

Improved Road Standards for Better Roads

Improvement of road construction standards was the aim of a workshop marking the start of the construction season in Kosovo. The organizers, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) and the Road Construction Association of Kosovo (RCAK), built a dialogue between investors and road construction companies on improving construction standards, thereby extending the life of roads in Kosovo.

Road standards have become an issue in Kosovo, so over 70 people participated in the workshop and in the discussion. Other discussions tackled issues such as procurement process and specifications; inspection, responsibility of the investor to inspect and approve/reject the work; coordination with other public utilities for simultaneous improvements; examples of road construction conducted by international companies, and possibilities for the involvement of municipalities and Ministries in this initiative.

By bringing together the investors in road construction and the road construction companies, the workshop provided an opportunity for Municipalities to ensure that their limited budgets are prudently spent, for Kosovo road contractors to prove that they are raising the quality of their construction to meet EU standards, and for investors to learn more about their activities. USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project works closely with the RCAK and assisted in organizing this workshop.

Upcoming Events

June 8, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director will issue award certificates to winners of “Kosovo: a democratic, multi-ethnic and tolerant society” - essay contest.

June 17, Public- Private Business Dialogue Conference, organized by KCBS



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