



GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONS

Improving professional cooperation among judges and advocates

The relationship between Judges and Advocates from the perspective of both parties was the topic of a Bench-Bar roundtable held on February 16th in Pristina. The roundtable is part of an effort to reinforce cooperation between Kosovo judges and advocates in support of a stronger and independent judiciary.

"Everyone should encourage an open debate among judges and advocates to enrich the judicial system and make it transparent, independent and impartial" - said Osman Havolli, a judge with the Municipal Court in Pristina during the morning session of the roundtable.

Sharing her experience, Mrs. Kathleen Weir, a guest speaker emphasized the need for a strong mechanism to enforce the ethical standards for advocates in Kosovo. In her speech Mrs Weir emphasized the role of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates as the main player in helping built this mechanism and implement the ethical rules. She also advised that judges and advocates who socialize privately may raise doubts about their impartiality, and the extent to which their friendships may affect the fair and just hearing of their cases.

The judges and advocates present shared examples of the problems they face with each other by illustrating cases of disrespect in court, unprofessional behavior, violations of procedure, failure of lawyers to inform their clients about the way courts operate, as well as other misunderstandings. Bad behavior such as this can lead to the public's distrust of judges and advocates who, as one of the judges said "are responsible for creating a good spirit to the public that we are in their favor."

This is the second Bench-Bar roundtable that has taken place in Kosovo, and both judges and advocates have commented that the events are helping them in understanding each other's views.

The Bench-Bars for the Kosovo judges association are supported by USAID, under the Professional Legal Development Program, implemented by the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI).

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Publishing Municipal Assembly Scorecard

The Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) announced the publication of its scorecard of the work of the municipal assembly in Ferizaj/Urosevac. The scorecard is a mechanism that helps citizens evaluate the work of their assembly representatives, and thereby hold their elected officials accountable to their electorate.

The individual "scores" for local assembly members are based upon their attendance at assembly sessions, their active participation in discussions, their initiation of legislation or other issues of interest to citizens, their proposal of amendments, and calls for account session. "Monitoring tends to make public the information, which in fact, should be public" states KDI Project Manager Ismet Kryeziu.

KDI monitors urge assembly members to abide by the existing legal frameworks and procedures that allow citizens to observe the work of their institutions and give their input for the betterment of their lives. In addition, KDI monitors call for leaving aside party disputes and divisions and focusing on finding solutions to the problems of their constituents.

Since August 2005, KDI has been monitoring the work of six municipal assemblies with particular emphasis on the institutions' transparency towards citizens, citizen inclusion in decision-making, the role of opposition in the legislative processes, and the use of executive oversight by the legislature.

KDI is a nongovernmental organization recently established with support from the National Democratic Institute and the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Kosovo and European Integration

Kosovo's integration into Europe was the topic of a recent public debate designed to focus on issues Kosovo society is faced currently with.

Organized by the Advocacy and Training Resource Center (ATRC), the debate held in Pristina on March 2,

featured Veton Surroi leader of ORA, opposition party.

The discussion also raised important issues concerning the quality of public administration in Kosovo. Participants noted the problem of unsuitable people being appointed to important positions in the Government, the result of which is sub-standard management and productivity. It was equally recognized that it is the responsibility of civil society of Kosovo to say ENOUGH to the negative practices occurring in Kosovo's political scene, and Surroi stressed the need for a more proactive role of civil society in Kosovo.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Promoting Locally Made-cheese

Assisted by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project, the promotion of new products produced by local dairy processors is becoming a success.

The first marketing event was held in Prizren on February 13th followed by ones in Ferizaj/Urosevac, and Gjilan/Gnjilane on March 1st. At all events the attendees tasted new locally produced mozzarella.

Compliments went to all three producers - ABI, Rona and Kabi - from the attendees. All agreed that these events are a good opportunity to link the cheese producers with local supermarkets and restaurants, and this can lead to future business deals. The final event is scheduled to take place in Pristina on March 16th.

USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support project has worked closely with local dairy processors and assisted them in production of new products such as fruit yoghurt, mozzarella cheese, etc. since its inception in October 2004.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Lessons learned Conference

Reproductive Health Services in Primary Health Care was the topic of a one-day "lessons learned"

conference held in Pristina on March 1st, 2006. The conference was organized by the Center for Development of Family Medicine (CDFM) with assistance from USAID, through a partnership between the Dartmouth School of Medicine and the American International Health Alliance (AIHA).



During the break participants were shown the premises of the Center for Development of Family Medicine.

In the photo, right to left: Dr. Arbresha Turjaka, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID Mission Director and Dr. Genc Ymerhalili

The Center for Development of Family Medicine (CDFM) is responsible for implementing family medicine in Kosovo and has developed training and continuing education resources in support of this endeavor. The USAID-funded Gjakova-Dartmouth AIHA partnership has been working to implement a model for antenatal services that focuses on a combination of training, resources, and systems changes that can lead to the sustainable improvements in comprehensive and coordinated health services necessary to improve maternal and neonatal outcomes in Kosovo. At present, the team is working to package the model in a way to be disseminated systematically, utilizing the CDFM.

Upcoming Events

March 21 - Dr. Ken Yamashita will speak at the opening of the USAID sponsored Budget Analysts Training

March 22 - Challenges of opposition in relations with the Government, a roundtable discussion organized by the ATRC, partner of International & Exchanges Board (IREX) in implementing USAID's Kosovo Civil Society Project.



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