



USAID/Kosovo Newsletter

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The Return to Normal Living

USAID is helping to restore normalcy in living standards and provide greater opportunities for Kosovars and their communities. Through the Community Infrastructure and Services Program (CISP) and the Kosovo Assistance Program (KAP), USAID has successfully engaged individuals, groups and communities to promote and encourage self-determination and self-reliance that supports community development. While employing this method of community involvement, infrastructure rehabilitation projects have been selected under the CISP initiative to repair vital structures and utilities. Additionally, income generation, social service improvements and children and youth projects under the KAP initiative have attended to the needs of some of Kosovo's most vulnerable groups. These programs have responded to community priorities, and have been driven by the needs of Kosovars - supporting sustainable long-term development and growth at the community level.



Young students peer through a window of their newly constructed school in Kamenica Municipality.

REBUILDING LIVES - THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES PROGRAM

Without electricity a community cannot heat its homes. Without water a community suffers unsanitary conditions. Without roads or bridges trade and integration is deterred. Without schools or medical facilities a community cannot educate its children or care for its elderly. For thousands of residents throughout Kosovo the failure to meet basic infrastructure needs within their communities has drastically limited their standards of safe and normal living for years.

Through its Community Infrastructure and Services Program (CISP), USAID has worked to restore normalcy to communities in a region traumatized by the events of the last decade. Implemented by Parsons Delaware, this four year program has completed over 120 small- and medium-sized infrastructure improvement projects benefiting over 900,000 residents throughout Kosovo.

Completed in September 2003, CISP helped revive and reactivate Kosovar communities through the repair of vital structures including electrical systems, sanitation systems, schools, bridges, roads, community and health centers, and municipal buildings, all suffering from damage inflicted during the conflict and/or years of neglect. Almost 40% of these projects were completed in minority or multi-ethnic communities, and all projects employed local labor.

Operating on the premise that the people themselves are agents of change and social and economic recovery, individual Kosovar communities were at the core of CISP - involved in every phase of the program from identifying and selecting projects, to maintaining the projects

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upon completion. Through close partnership with field offices of the USAID-funded Kosovo Transition Initiative (KTI), communities were assisted in identifying projects that met USAID goals for social-economic impact, cost effectiveness and sustainability. To ensure community buy-in, all CISP projects after 2001 required a minimum of 15% co-financing from beneficiary communities through monetary or in-kind donations.

In conjunction with CISP, an additional 88 infrastructure projects were implemented in the ethnically diverse and volatile areas of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica through the Mitrovica Infrastructure Rehabilitation Initiative (MIRI). By assisting these various communities, USAID programming helped serve as a catalyst toward community planning and peace in these areas. One example is the contractors of both Serbian and Albanian ethnicities that worked together to complete the rehabilitation of a sports center in this area.

Now, as CISP closes its doors, communities are enjoying infrastructure improvements that have allowed them to regain a sense of progress and normalcy. As described by Mr. Lufi Haziri, the Mayor of Gjilane/Gjilani, "The support of USAID, through CISP, was of capital importance to our municipality. Without this assistance our infrastructure today would be deficient. This program affected many dimensions of life and above all encouraged further development". ☘



The Orllan Bridge in Podujevo Municipality was restored by USAID / CISP

THE KOSOVO ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (KAP)

While broad-based reform efforts are steadily being put in place, the 5-year USAID Kosovo Assistance Program (KAP) is addressing the need for citizens Kosovo-wide to see immediate positive changes and take increasing responsibility in the future development of Kosovo. Managed by Save the Children, KAP supports grassroots social and economic recovery initiatives via a \$20.5 million portfolio of NGO projects. Now entering its final year, the program has supported 20 projects and five special initiatives benefiting over 250,000 Kosovars of mixed ethnicities and backgrounds.

In an effort to help return Kosovo communities to normalcy, the KAP supported sectoral interventions at the community level. Projects aimed at the social and economic recovery of Kosovo by addressing three goals - 1) increasing income and employment opportunities, 2) enhancing community support for children and adolescents, and 3) improving access to and quality of sustainable social services.

KAP projects provided technical assistance to farmers, business people, agribusinesses, business enterprises, and agricultural or business associations, in order to stimulate job creation and increase output. In addition, under the Small Farm Support (SFS) Program, farmers and associations began receiving training and technical assistance that resulted in a significant increase in the quality and quantity of production in dairy, fruit, vegetables, feedgrains, and specialty products including sheep cheese. To maximize its impact along the production-processing-marketing chain, the SFS program cooperated with the USAID-funded Kosovo Business Support agribusiness clients to address their demand for agricultural commodities.

To help normalize the lives of children and adolescents KAP projects established community-based activities for youth and youth leadership development. Youth and children's centers held hundreds of weekly classes, seminars, and recreational events, providing opportunities for learning, growth, and a sense of normalcy for young people of all ages. Playgrounds were built in nine rural communities providing recreation and play for more than 4,000 young children. In addition, child-to-child and youth-to-youth projects provided educational opportunities and planning, problem solving, and leadership experience for children and youth. Advocacy was the theme of many child and adolescent initiatives, and more than 2,200 children and youth participated in research, debates, round tables, and advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns on a variety of issues that are important to them.

In order to improve access to and quality of sustainable social services, projects addressed key gaps in social services and public infrastructure through a local governance and community participation approach. At its conclusion in August 2003, this program component had completed over 125 community-identified social service projects, benefiting over 200,000 people with improved access to social services and infrastructure. Over 67,200 people now have access to improved water supplies, schools, roads, and other community infrastructure, and approximately 143,000 people have access to improved services, equipment, and infrastructure at 25 primary health care facilities. Communities have also benefited from a variety of improvements in the quality of social services such as health education, informational radio programming, domestic violence outreach, and libraries. All of these interventions were grounded in supporting the healthy development of civil society by facilitating and strengthening relationships and processes between and within communities and their municipal governments.

Additionally, KAP further improved social services by supporting an HIV/AIDS prevention program, two Voluntary Testing and Counseling centers, a Behavior Changing campaign reaching youth through mass media and interpersonal communications outreach, and technical support to the development of a 5-year HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan for Kosovo.

USAID funded initiatives have taught Kosovars how to help themselves. By gathering community participation and contribution toward local development projects, KAP is helping shift Kosovo toward a more democratic and economically sustainable climate. By involving Kosovar citizens, the direct beneficiaries of all KAP initiatives, local capacity is being built and nurtured, providing for ongoing grassroots development. ☘

DEVELOPING KRANIDELL/KRAJNIDEL

In a small, remote village in eastern Kosovo, residents of Kranidell/Krajnidel village had a unanimous concern - the safety of their kids. Every day the children of this agricultural community attended school in a dilapidated building with a roof that was near collapsing. Despite the fact that the building had been condemned in 2001, and even further damaged by the earthquake in 2002, classes continued. There was no other place for the students or teachers to go.

Then in April 2001 the village of Kranidell/Krajnidel embarked on an 18 month partnership with the Community Action for Social Services (CASSI) program to better their community. Implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and funded by USAID through its Kosovo Assistance Program, CASSI engaged and trained communities on how to develop social service projects that address needs such as health, education and infrastructure. In October 2002 the children of Kranidell/Krajnidel began attending a brand new school; the construction of which was the result of CASSI's intense community-driven process.

In the beginning, the village nominated a working group comprising five men and two women. They were taught how to facilitate group resolutions, advocate with and engage in joint decision-making with their municipal government, assess and monitor projects, and make informed and transparent choices for contractors and materials.

Perhaps most importantly, the working group learned how to mobilize support for community development. Village-wide meetings were held, eventually enticing representation from every household. "At first people didn't know the value of meeting and solving problems together, but after some time everyone began to show up" reports Ruzhdi Qehaja, Kranidell/Krajnidel's village leader.

Community-wide voting on the proposed projects identified the construction of a new school as one of the villages utmost priorities. The working group successfully advocated with their municipality to budget supplemental funds for the school, and they also committed over 20,000 in cash and labor as their own contribution. Qehaja proudly states, "In the beginning we had a very small budget; but through the facilitation of CASSI and the organization of the village members we achieved much."

Having worked with the villagers since April 2001, CASSI helped Kranidell/Krajnidel implement other infrastructure improvements as well. The working group implemented a sanitation project and obtained matching funds from the Community Development Fund to implement a road rehabilitation project that greatly improved access to and from the village.

Community driven projects not only create a sense of ownership but provides skills for these rural communities to solve issues and make decisions in the future. "There was a lot of effort and feeling of ownership for the school project," reported the Kranidell/Krajnidel working group. "If all municipalities had a way of working together and getting the community involved the way CASSI helped us to do, Kosovo would look like a different place."

Since 2002, Kranidell/Krajnidel has seen the return of three families displaced by the 1999 conflict. One returnee acknowledged that his decision to return was largely due to the infrastructure improvements. By improving access to the outside communities and enhancing conditions for the education of their children these villagers have regained a sense of normal living and have paved the way for ongoing community development. ☘

ACHIEVING TOGETHER - MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

The municipal administration building of Gjilan/Gnjilane is a busy place. Located on a hectic main street in the downtown area, its halls see the constant action of visitors and workers coming and going. Here the Chief of Projects, Fadil Osmani, shares an office with his Serbian counterpart supporting and serving this large municipality, fielding a multitude of questions and issues daily from local village leaders and community representatives. Together they are responsible for collecting information on community issues, needs and problems - a demanding job given the size and diversity of Gjilan/Gnjilane, comprising 63 villages, 17 of which are populated by ethnically mixed or minority residents.

It is people like Osmani that USAID, through Parsons Delaware, used to help select projects for implementation of the Community Infrastructure and Services Program (CISP). CISP utilized the knowledge of those who know the area best -- the municipal government and its workers -- to help identify infrastructure projects that represented the communities greatest needs. In Gjilan/Gnjilane, with the help of Osmani and his colleagues, 19 projects were identified for implementation.



The old
Kranidell/Krajnidel school

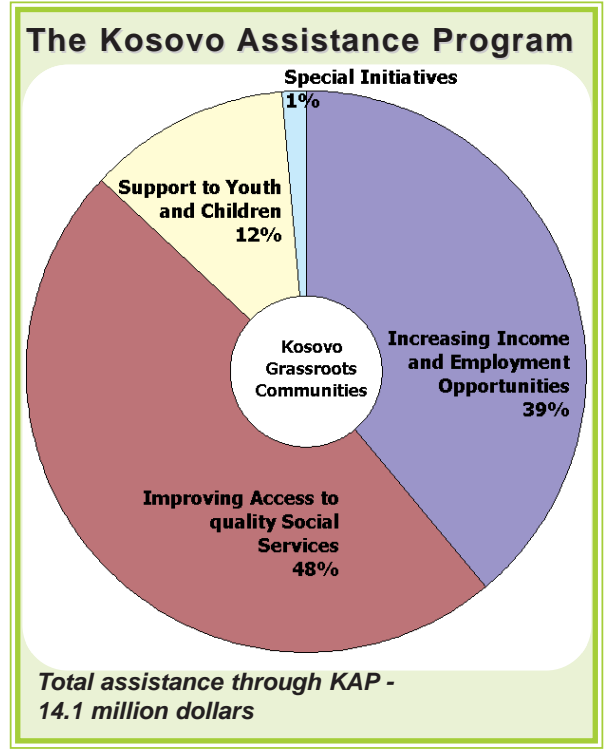
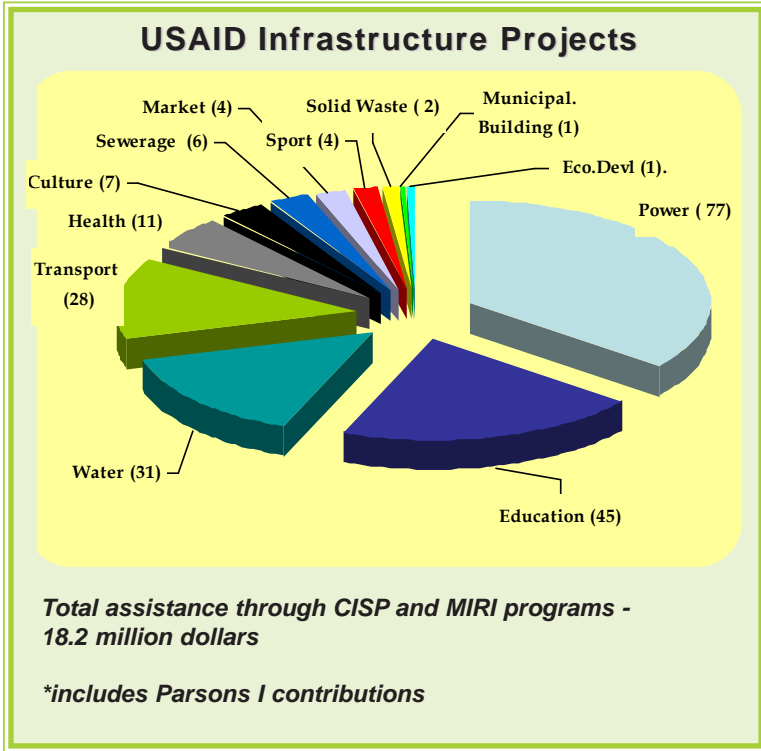


Kranidell School
today

A long time resident of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Osmani is eager to contribute to the municipality's success. "I feel somehow I am a person helping to make things happen and to make people happy," he says. He is in tune with the needs of the community, and has helped Gjilan/Gnjilane accomplish much through the CISP program. Osmani works on all ends of the process, from helping communities identify infrastructure needs and develop proposals, to liaising with donor organizations to present projects that meet their goals and criteria. As a result Osmani has gained the appreciation and support not only from donors such as USAID, but from the municipality itself. He was recently chosen to attend a USAID-funded training run by the Kosovo Business Support project, where he learned how to write, implement and monitor business plans that helped him work better with local representatives to develop sound project proposals and maintenance plans.

Ensuring the participation of local partners has always been a key element of USAID projects in Kosovo. "I was always using USAID as a concrete example of how things could work," says Osmani describing his efforts to get other donors to develop projects through the municipality in the same way that CISP did. "After the war several donors were working in Gjilan/Gnjilane without the participation of the municipality; however USAID came to us immediately to develop projects."

By involving the local municipality CISP has attained perhaps its most important objective - the support of community members and assurance that each project will be cared for upon completion. Osmani works with the various departments of the municipality helping them develop project proposals that ensure community buy-in. "Everything that has been contributed through American taxpayers will always be valued," he says, emphasizing the local contributions and ongoing maintenance provided by communities for all CISP infrastructure improvement projects. These contributions help to instill an ongoing pride and ownership for USAID projects for years to come. ☘



The Return to Normalcy - USAID funded projects throughout Kosovo

