



USAID | BELARUS

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COUNTRY PROFILE

AUGUST 2008



A family resource center in Brest was founded as a result of USAID-funded exchange for Belarusian social service NGO staff and specialists. The center's notice board displays the mixture of ideas, principles, and activities learned from visits with American organizations and the Belarusians' priorities and plans.

BELARUS SNAPSHOT

Date of independence: 1991
Capital: Minsk
Population: 9.8 million
Annual income per person:
\$1,260

For more information,
see www.usaid.gov
Keyword: Ukraine

OVERVIEW

The U.S. has a national interest in a free and peaceful Europe, which must include a stable, democratic and market-oriented Belarus. Now that the European Union shares a border with Belarus, it is vulnerable to potential



Minsk

political and economic instability across that border. Belarus' current president has stifled independent media and political opposition, and has carried out questionable economic policies. However, structural reforms and privatization remain on the agenda.

Belarus will hold parliamentary elections in 2008 and presidential elections in late 2010 or early 2011. Nothing suggests that they will proceed any differently than the flawed elections of 2006, which presented a difficult environment for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), opposition parties and free

media to work in. The country retains the potential to contribute to and benefit from regional economic development, but it needs to implement democratic and market reforms. For this reason, USAID focuses on involving citizens in the democratic process.

PROGRAMS

ENGAGE CITIZENS IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DECISION-MAKING

Independent NGOs are under constant government scrutiny in Belarus. USAID provides support, training, and expert advice to help sustain NGOs, independent trade unions and legal assistance providers, and works to improve their advocacy capacity. USAID supports international exchanges for Belarusian entrepreneurs, professionals, and NGO leaders to break the increasing self-isolation of the country and promote mutual understanding through exposure to democratic and market-based societies. USAID promotes the rule of law by training lawyers, activists, and NGOs in human rights. Support is also provided to organizations that defend civil activists from the government's illegal actions.

The government has limited access to independent print media and attempts to control electronic media. USAID focuses on strengthening the media's ability to provide citizens with objective, fact-based and useful in-

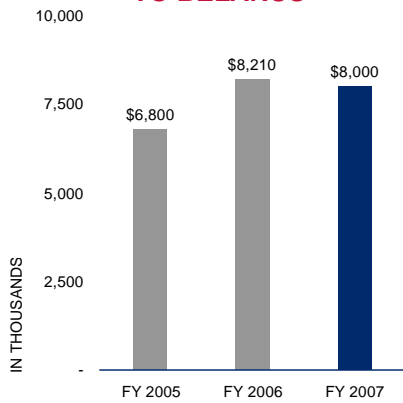


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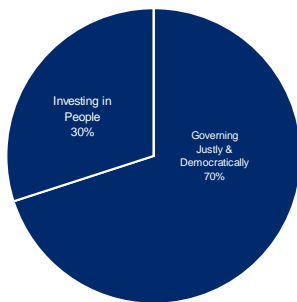
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COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

USAID ASSISTANCE TO BELARUS



FY 2007 Funding per Program Area



formation. USAID works with independent print and electronic media, including internet resources and cross-border radio and TV.

USAID also works with democratically-oriented political parties to improve their ability to recruit and retain members, plan and manage campaigns, and build coalitions. Special attention is given to helping political parties improve their public relations skills to communicate better with citizens and the media to more effectively participate in future elections, hold government accountable, and counteract the isolation imposed by the authorities.

SUPPORT IMPROVED SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH

USAID seeks to improve the level of healthcare and social protection for Belarusians through its HIV/AIDS prevention program, tuberculosis (TB) treatment program, and efforts to improve community-based services for vulnerable groups, such as children and people in Chernobyl-affected areas. The government has acknowledged Belarus' rising infection rates of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. USAID is supporting Global Fund grants to Belarus to fight these diseases through improvements in monitoring and evaluation practices, the training of medical professionals, and the involvement of nongovernmental organizations in fighting infectious diseases.

Belarus has about 32,000 children living in orphanages and government-run boarding schools; 86 percent of these children were reportedly abandoned by their parents. USAID also works to prevent child abuse and neglect and reduce the number of children living in state-run institutions by supporting families and training parents and service providers in proper child care.

USAID funds the International Organization on Migration to combat trafficking in persons. Public awareness campaigns are aimed at prevention of trafficking, and NGO grants and training programs in the regions reach out to thousands of victims and people-at-risk. Implementing these programs, USAID works with Belarusian communities to help address community needs.

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On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need around the world since the Marshall Plan.