



USAID
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BULGARIA

CASE STUDY

Expanding Philanthropy Efforts Locally

With infrastructure and guidance, foundations together leverage more.



This children's playground full of color and laughter in Stara Zagora was renovated by the local community fund.

“The assistance we received gave a strong boost to the development of the community fund model in Bulgaria. The opportunity to see the work of community funds elsewhere inspired us to work even harder,” said Daniela Dimitrova, the director of the Association of Community Foundations.

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

Local philanthropy has deep roots in Bulgaria. Reviving and enhancing that spirit at the community level could encourage people to participate actively in their communities' development in areas that central and national bodies may not consider priorities.

Initiative

USAID supported a multi-year project focused on developing community foundations that harness an area's local businesses, government, non-governmental organizations and other parties to define collectively community needs and to seek resources to address them. USAID supported this objective extensively, with two U.S. study tours, a European study tour, in-country conferences and seminars, and small grants. These efforts all aimed at helping the young community fund boards learn from and draw upon the experience and insight of successful similar bodies in the U.S., Poland, Russia and other countries. Trainings have covered such topics as attracting and working with donors, the importance of public relations, management issues and developing community partnerships.

Results

A new national Association of Community Foundations emerged as USAID technical assistance for community foundations ended. The Association's annual "Donor of the Year" ceremony recognizes the most active individuals, corporate donors and partners. The Association put into action some core principles from the assistance and training: acknowledging key donors and philanthropists, and putting aside differences when working through the Association on national-level events. The foundation's collaboration under the Association's umbrella also made possible greater public outreach, yielding more enthusiastic partnerships and more successful fund-raising. Community funds have since implemented projects such as hospital renovations, playground improvements, and computer literacy promotion in schools.