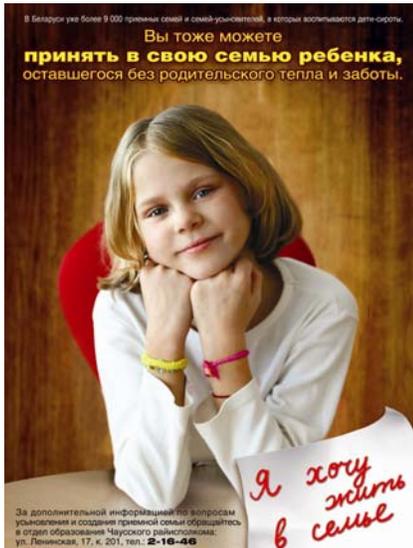




USAID | BELARUS

COUNTRY PROFILE

MAY 2009



The number of orphaned children in alternative care has increased by 75 percent as a result of a USAID-funded project in one Belarus city. There is also a waiting list of families prepared and willing to care for a child left without parental care. This successful project is being rolled out in other towns and cities across the country, as part of USAID's Supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children project.

BELARUS SNAPSHOT

Date of independence: 1991
Capital: Minsk
Population: 9.7 million
Annual income per person: \$5,900

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

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



Minsk

European Union (EU) shares a border with Belarus, it has launched the Eastern Partnership initiative to bring Belarus, together with other Newly Independent States, in closer cooperation with Europe. Belarus' current authorities have stifled independent media and political opposition, and have carried out questionable economic policies. Some positive but still reversible steps were taken by authorities in the direction of U.S. and EU human rights concerns and creating forums for dialogue with civil society and democratic forces.

Structural reforms and privatization remain on the agenda, though some measures were recently undertaken to liberalize the economy and continue privatization. The current global economic crisis may provide new incentives for structural reforms. In its internal policies, Belarus continues to be a difficult environment for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), opposition parties, and free media. The country retains the potential to contribute to and benefit from regional economic development, but needs to implement democratic and market reforms. USAID focuses on empowering Belarusians so that they may participate in the reform and transition process.

PROGRAMS

ENGAGING 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; it also works to improve their advocacy capacity. USAID promotes the rule of law by training lawyers, activists, and NGOs in human rights. Support is also provided to defend civil activists from illegal government actions. USAID conducts international exchanges for Belarusian professionals, NGO leaders, entrepreneurs, and local government workers to promote mutual understanding through exposure to democratic and market-based societies.

For over a decade, USAID has supported business education development in Belarus. One long-term impact of this support can be seen in the



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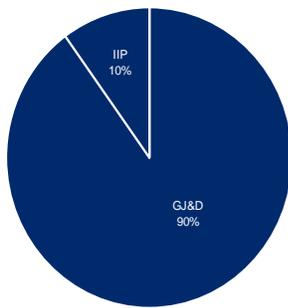
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

USAID ASSISTANCE TO BELARUS



FY 2008 Budget Allocation by Objective



Governing Justly & Democratically:
\$6,376,000
Investing In People: \$730,000

Based on FY 2008 Freedom Support Act funding.

creation of three separate business education programs and bringing these schools to international standards. USAID capitalizes on successful experiences to help launch a Western-style MBA program. USAID also supports a coalition of reform-minded business associations and other NGOs to advance ideas of free-market and democratic principles within Belarusian society. Their advocacy efforts with the Belarusian government have led to improving the business environment.

The government has limited citizens' access to independent print media and attempts to control electronic media. USAID focuses on strengthening the media's ability to provide objective, fact-based, and useful information. USAID works with independent print and electronic media, including internet resources, cross-border radio, and TV.

USAID 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 help political parties improve their outreach and public relations skills to communicate better with citizens and the media, enabling them to more effectively participate in future elections, hold government accountable, and counteract the isolation imposed by the authorities.

SUPPORTING IMPROVED SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH

USAID seeks to improve the level of healthcare and social protection for Belarusians by strengthening community-based services for vulnerable groups, such as children and adults with disabilities, and those in Chernobyl-affected areas. USAID is supporting a Global Fund grant to Belarus to fight rising tuberculosis infection rates by developing protocols for treatment, effecting improvements in the healthcare system, and providing training for medical professionals.

USAID works to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to reduce the number of children living in state-run institutions. It helps develop methodologies, supports adoptive families, and trains parents and service providers on proper child care. USAID engages people with disabilities and supports efforts to increase awareness of their rights and freedoms. Assistance to NGOs that unite and represent people with disabilities bolsters their capability to effectively advocate for the interests and basic human rights of their constituents.

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