



CONFLICT MITIGATION

Students and State Department representatives paint Mitrovica school wall

John Boris, Director, Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Division in the Office of the Coordinator of Assistance for Europe and Eurasia joined students of Sveti Sava School in painting the school wall on October 4 to mark the beginning of the school rehabilitation project.

"We know a good education is critical not just for you, but for all Kosovo. We know this building is your home away from home, and we want it to be safe ... to be comfortable ... and to be a place where you can learn without interruptions," said Boris at the inauguration ceremony, followed by Andrija Vukomanovic, Sveti Sava school director who thanked USAID for supporting the school project.



Students of Sveti Sava School in north Mitrovica paint the school wall together with John Boris, Deputy Director for EUR/ACE

The painting of the wall marked the official start of \$110,000 school rehabilitation project, part of USAID's Community Enhancement Project implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and Mercy Corps International. The renovation includes a new roof, new windows, exterior repairs and painting, and new toilets. The over \$ million project works with communities in Leposavic/q, north Mitrovica/e, Zubin Potok and Zvecan on small infrastructure program.

New USAID project assists communities in solving conflicts

USAID/Kosovo started a new program, Kosovo Inclusive Community Change and Reconciliation Project (KICCR), to help different ethnic groups address the causes of conflict within communities.

The project, which started mid-September, will help Kosovars learn skills needed to resolve community disputes. Kosovar facilitators of all ethnicities will be trained to assess unresolved conflicts in their communities, bring together stakeholders, facilitate multi-sector dialogue, and build consensus on community-based solutions to those problems.

"By identifying issues that can be used as 'connectors' of communities, this program will help communities to address and resolve disputes that surround those issues," says Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director. "We're helping build a dialogue between communities by dealing with issues of joint concern."

KICCR is a one-year program that will be implemented by Partners for Democratic Change and Partners-Kosova Center for Conflict Management.

Regional boundaries disappear for cooperating ag businesses

The need to promote agricultural products cross the boundaries gave impetus to establishment of Agro Union Ku -Gj (Kumanovo, Macedonia - Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kosovo).

Consisting of seven founding members, non-governmental organizations and agricultural associations from both towns representing all ethnicities, the union was established last week. The idea for creation of the Union appeared within USAID's Cross-Border Cooperation project since its initiation, but the successful Agribusiness Fair organized in summer 2006 in Gjilan/Gnjilane, with support from the project, led to the establishment of the Union.

USAID's Cross-border Cooperation project ends in December but the AgroUnion will continue to promote agricultural cooperation and linkages between two municipalities by holding an annual agricultural fair, conducting training seminars, increasing the quality of products and

access to markets, and organizing study exchanges between various agribusinesses.

AgroUnion will kick-off its activities by having a display booth at the next agribusiness fair organized by the project in Kumanovo, Macedonia.

INSTITUTION BUILDING

Bar association learns project implementation and budgeting techniques

A two-day seminar in Struga, Macedonia, September 15-17, trained members of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (KCA) on project implementation and financial management as the association begins new projects.

Supported by USAID through the project Increasing Capacity of Legal Professionals, implemented by the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative, the training was organized in cooperation with KCA and Criminal Defense Resource Center (CDRC). The training focused on establishing indicators to monitor performance during the implementation of project, including financial management of funds. "We welcome the training topics, especially as we [the KCA] are preparing to engage in other projects," says Musa Dragusha, Chairman of the KCA Continuing Legal Education Committee and a participant. "The basics of financial management will help us improve on fundraising and other activities, which contribute to self-sustainability and progress of the KCA."

The training is part of the Continuing Legal Education (CLE) activities designed to help legal professionals and their associations improve their organizational skills.

Municipal officials plan budgets with help from USAID

Some 350 officials from 31 municipalities have been trained as a result of USAID's Local Government Initiative (LGI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE). Since April 2006, LGI has worked closely with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) to develop training materials and train officials in programming budgets.

The training served as basis for the directors at the municipal level to accept responsibility for both the budgeting and performance of their programs, as well as

use the training to start planning budgets for 2007-2009 for each of the municipalities.

MEF counseled municipal leaders on the content of budget instructions, including the requirement to reduce the staff of municipalities as well as maintaining budgets below the "ceilings" set for each municipality. OSCE offered advice on conducting the final public budget hearings and distributed both posters and copies of radio announcements for these events to be held throughout Kosovo during September. The EAR offered review and guidance on the development of municipal capital budget projects. USAID/LGI assisted municipalities in the development of key measures of performance for each directorate.

Need for Issue-Policy Political Party Platforms Debated at Public Conference

The need for parties to develop broader platforms addressing not just status, but issues such as education, health, and economy was discussed at the "Political Party Platforms Conference", on September 29.

The conference was part of a larger initiative to draw attention to issues that parties will need to address in order to attract voters' interest in future elections. The meeting brought together political parties, non-governmental organizations and community groups to start a discussion and bring forward specific ideas needed for the creation of concrete party policies that reflect citizen needs. It is anticipated that the next elections in Kosovo will see a turning point for Kosovar politics, with the Status chapter likely to be closed, and what used to be the foundation of all political party election platforms (Albanian Kosovars, Serbian Kosovars and other communities) for seven years will not be an issue. Citizens will look for solutions for their day-to-day problems, while parties need to accelerate the process of policy development.

The conference was organized by two USAID supported projects, the Kosovo Civil Society Project, implemented by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), and the Legislative Politics Program, implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

Upcoming Events

October 11-12, Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Director participates at the Energy Donor Conference.

October 28, the launch of the Sesame Street II.



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