



CONFLICT MITIGATION

Thank You, USAID!

Five little girls holding signs that spelled out "U-S-A-I-D" stood ready to greet Michael Farbman, departing USAID/Kosovo Mission Director, at the dedication of a kindergarten rehabilitation project in Mitrovica/Mitrovica on August 27th.

Gezimi Yne is the only kindergarten in Mitrovica/Mitrovica for children south of Iber River. Presently it provides day care for 350 Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Bosniak and Kosovo Turkish children, ranging in age from 9 months to 6 years. Prior to USAID's involvement, there had been no major rehabilitation of the building since its opening more than 35 years ago.



Children of the *Gezimi Yne* kindergarten in Mitrovica/a, show their appreciation to USAID

USAID support funded extensive internal and external refurbishment of the kindergarten, including installation of new windows and toilets throughout the building; reconstruction of walls in each of twelve classrooms; repair of terraces attached to classrooms; installation of a new kitchen; complete refurbishment of the dining room; and provision of playground equipment.

"We are thankful for all the assistance the American People has provided to Kosovo, especially to this kindergarten," said Shefkije Nimani, director of kindergarten. Ms. Nimani joined Farbman and Bajram Rexhepi, Mayor of Mitrovica, in cutting an inaugural ribbon.

The project was made possible through the Community Enhancement and Development Program, a USAID

activity designed to improve living conditions in Mitrovica, Zubin Potok and Gračanica through small infrastructure upgrades. Project identification and selection is achieved through a process of close engagement and consultation with municipal and community leaders.

EDUCATION

Digitalization at the University of Prishtina

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USAID and University of Prishtina (UP) was signed by Dr. Michael Farbman, departing USAID/Kosovo Director, and Professor Enver Hasani, rector of UP, on August 26. The MOU outlines roles and responsibilities of each party in implementing a program to improve administration of the university and digitalize key functions.

"The signing of this memorandum represents the fruits of a year of preparatory work between USAID and the University to identify the University's most pressing needs and the best possible use of USAID assistance. And it comes at a time when, over the course of just the past few months, the University has been granted financial independence; is gaining greater autonomy; and is increasing, by thirty-eight percent, its entering freshman class size," said Farbman at the official signing ceremony.

Over the next two years, USAID and the University of Prishtina will work together to improve the University's administrative systems and processes related to student administration; financial administration; human resources; administration of teaching and learning; information management; and facility management. USAID hopes that the project will improve the learning experience for students at UP.

USAID has been working to improve the quality of instruction at various departments within UP for several years. Most notably, USAID has been helping strengthen the quality of legal education in partnership with the American Bar Association. More recently, USAID has sponsored partnership programs between UP and U.S. universities to improve curriculum in the Faculties of Economics and Computer Science.

The University of Prishtina Performance Improvement and Digitalization project is implemented by World Learning.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Marketing Interns in Industry

Three students were offered permanent jobs with Kosovo based companies after completing internships organized by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project.

Students were part of a three month long pilot program that linked students specializing in marketing with local businesses. The project was organized in cooperation with the American University in Kosovo (AUK), University of Business and Technology (UBT), Elkos Group and the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce. Upon completion of their internships, the students presented their work experience, challenges and achievements to their supervisors, fellow interns, and classmates.

Participating companies were very supportive of the initiative, providing 2/3 of the stipend for the interns, along with specific training required to help the students be successful. The rest of the stipends was covered by USAID's KCBS. The Kosovo Chamber of Commerce has committed to continue the internship program in the future. The Chamber also plans to build upon the pilot initiative by offering participating students training in business ethics and codes of behavior.

KCBS is a four-year activity implemented by Chemonics International.

More Lending Opportunities for Businesses

The Crimson Finance Fund (CFF) officially commenced its activities in Kosovo in July. CFF will provide Kosovo businesses with increased access to finance, as insufficient borrowing opportunities have been identified as one of the main impediments to business expansion. Thus the CFF, through its products and services, aims to help Kosovo businesses grow, become more competitive, and employ more people.

"SMEs in Kosovo have a hard time obtaining needed finance. Start up SMEs, agriculture sector businesses, and firms that impact minorities and women tend to face the most difficulty as they don't meet lender's requirements, have an insufficient record or don't have the necessary collateral," said Michael Farbman, departing USAID Mission Director at the launch event. Using its experience from neighboring Macedonia, CFF will specialize in short-term working capital and trade finance loans to SMEs and entrepreneurs.

The General Manager of Crimson Capital, Peers Brewer stated, "we expect that the loans and assistance provided by the CFF will help facilitate the development of SMEs and women- and minority-owned businesses, the creation of jobs, and the increase of export sales.

The particular product line of CFF is designed to help small and medium sized companies to fill larger or more frequent orders and strengthen their reputation in the market as prompt and reliable suppliers of goods and services."

CFF is a non-banking financial institution, founded by Crimson Capital and supported by Norfund, USAID, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Crimson Capital. CFF will specialize in short-term working capital and trade finance loans to SMEs and entrepreneurs.

RULE OF LAW

Kosovo Chamber of Advocates' Client Relation Committee Reports on Attorney Disciplinary Cases

The Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (KCA) is using their new ethics code and disciplinary system to review disciplinary cases against attorneys. The new disciplinary system includes lay members of the community and was introduced last year.

In less than one year, the numbers of reported disciplinary cases against attorneys has increased and at the same time the disciplinary committees of the KCA have proven effective in resolving these cases. Out of 42 cases received, 40 are completed or in the final phases of the procedure. Five cases were sent to the Disciplinary System after the Client Relations Committee, found cause for proceeding with disciplinary measures. According to the Chairman of the Client Relations Committee the disciplinary cases can be divided into three categories including: charging of inappropriate fees for representation; inappropriate behavior on the part of attorneys in court; and cases of felonious conduct.

The efficiency of the disciplinary bodies of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates shows that the KCA is serious about the ethical and professional conduct of their members and at the same time are trying to improve their image among citizens and public confidence by including lay members in their disciplinary organs. The implementation and monitoring of KCA's disciplinary procedures remains a priority of the USAID-funded Legal Profession Development Initiative program implemented by the American Bar Association - Rule of Law Initiative.

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