



ASSISTING THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Kosovo's President Visits USAID-ASU Accounting Scholars

On February 23rd, during his recent U.S. trip, Kosovo's President Fatmir Sejdiu visited Arizona State University (ASU) students from Kosovo who, with support from USAID/Kosovo, are earning advanced accounting degrees. President Sejdiu was in Tempe to receive the university's Distinguished Global Leadership Award. The USAID-supported students are at ASU as part of the USAID/Arizona State University Public/Private Partnership for Accountancy at the University of Prishtina.



Left to right: USAID-supported students Arben Avdiu, Adrian Alo, Visar Peci, and First Lady and President Sejdiu.

ASU is partnering with USAID in a project to strengthen the capacity of the University of Prishtina (UP) to produce accountants familiar with international accounting standards, conversant with standard accounting software, and trained to meet specific the needs of companies working in Kosovo. The project aims to help modernize UP's Faculty of Economics by introducing a new curriculum, which will lead to the opening of an Accounting Department within the Faculty.

The USAID-supported fellows at ASU, in addition to their classes, are designing the curriculum. Upon their return, they will start the new department and teach some of the subjects. Kosovo's current business/economic education system needs modernization in order to provide graduates with the skills needed in increasingly regional and global workforces.

USAID, through its Higher Education Development activities, is addressing the challenge through several university partnerships, including the ASU-UP partnership.

Other Higher Education Partnerships are between UP's Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences and the University of Pittsburgh, and the American University in Kosovo (AUK) and Rochester Institute for Technology.

In 2003, President Sejdiu, then a professor of law at the University of Prishtina, spent a semester in residence at ASU as part of an educational partnership administered by ASU's Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies through a grant from the U.S. Department of State.

Boosting Local Production through Special Loan Fund

A loan to Shalaj Company, a concrete products manufacturer in Istog/Istok, helped the firm overcome electrical supply irregularities and increase production by 150% to meet the growing demand for concrete curbing for highways.

The 100,000 euro loan assisted the company in purchasing an industrial-sized electricity generator, pressurized pallets and two heavy duty trucks, which will help the company respond to the growing demand for road infrastructure improvements. With its own generator, the company was able to add a second production shift, hiring nine new permanent employees.

Shalaj is one of Kosovo's leading producers of concrete curbs for highways and sidewalk/patio blocks. However, Shalaj's ability to produce an adequate supply of roadway curbing and sidewalk blocks was constrained due to the erratic supply of electricity which frequently interrupted the production process.

Improvements to Kosovo's road network are important for the medium-term success of the economy. The movement of commodities and finished products within Kosovo, and trade to and from other countries depends almost entirely on road traffic. However, the existing road infrastructure cannot accommodate traffic of this weight or density, and most of the existing roads are inadequate and/or in poor condition.

The Government of Kosovo is implementing a road construction program that is designed to correct this deficiency with several major arteries in some stage of planning, construction, rehabilitation, or expansion. These include improvements in the routes between Pristina and Macedonia, Albania (with connection to the Albanian Adriatic port Durres), Mitrovice/a and Peja/Pec. All of these roadways require concrete curbs, creating an enormous demand for Shalaj's products.

The loan is part of USAID's Kosovo Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Commercial Finance Fund project, implemented by Crimson Finance Fund, LLC. The four-year project provides new types of short-term working capital financing to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), farmers, women, and minorities across all sectors of the economy.

USAID, which has provided \$700,000 to the fund, is working in cooperation with the Norwegian Government through its NORFUND, which has provided a \$485,000 grant for enterprise start-up costs and a \$1.1 million low-interest loan to be used for lending to local businesses.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sessions Encourage Greater Transparency and Citizen Participation in Municipal Assemblies

Members of 24 municipal assemblies were trained on ways to improve the transparency of municipal assemblies and to encourage greater citizen participation in municipalities. The training sessions were designed to facilitate dialogue between the municipal assemblies and the Ministry of Local Government Administration. A total of 360 municipal assembly members attended the sessions held throughout Kosovo.

The training sessions, conducted by USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative staff, provided participants with explanations of transparency, anti-corruption and citizen participation as well as current practices necessary to meet municipal legal requirements. Participants presented their municipalities' strategies to increase participation and transparency as municipalities undertake many actions, ranging from the development of the municipal annual budget to planning for a new park.

During small group sessions, many of the participants put the theoretical information into practice, developing specific ideas for situations in their municipalities. Participants were encouraged to undertake concrete steps to implement strategies to increase transparency and citizen participation.

As a part of the training, the participants received the "Handbook on Local Self-Government Law," compiled by USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative. The Effective Municipalities Initiative is a three-year activity to help local governments to improve management and service delivery. The activity is implemented by RTI International.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

U.S. Soldiers Train Teachers on Classroom Management

A workshop on Classroom Management was organized for 25 teachers and administrators of primary schools at Camp Bondsteel on February 28th.

The participants came from Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb schools in four municipalities -- Ferizaj/Urosevac, Viti/Vitina, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Shterpce/Strpce. Local teachers learned new techniques in education management and discipline from their American colleagues. The training was conducted by two U.S. Army Captains, educators in their civilian lives, and a professor from the University of Maryland.



KFOR soldier shows how to use equipment to a trainee

The workshop offered an opportunity for Kosovo Forces and local teachers to exchange teaching tips, helped the soldiers build stronger relationships with school staff and reinforced the soldiers' mission of ensuring a safe and secure environment in Kosovo.

The workshop was organized jointly by USAID's Focus on Results -- Enhancing Capacities Across Sectors in Transition program (implemented by World Learning) and KFOR Multi-National Task Force (East) at Camp Bondsteel.

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