



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

"Stay in the Weekend" -- First Kosovo Travel Fair A Success

The first national travel and tourism fair opened in Pristina on Earth Day, April 22. Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaqi joined USAID/Kosovo Mission Director Patricia Rader for the opening.

The fair was organized by the Kosova Tourism Association (KOTAS) with support from USAID's Kosovo Private Enterprise Program. Over 40 businesses and organizations participated in the fair, presenting activities and products to attract visitors, especially the international community residing in Kosovo, to "Stay the Weekend - Experience Kosovo."

"For most of the businesses, this is the first time they have ever participated in a fair," said KOTAS President Zeke Çeku. "And it is also the first time many of them marketed and promoted their travel-related product offers to the international community and Kosovo people themselves, as well as people in the region." Kosovo offers a variety of activities including mountain biking, walking tours of Ottoman-era old towns, traditional cooking demonstrations, and wine tours.

KOTAS has 148 members from all sectors of travel and tourism, including restaurants, hotels, travel agencies and airlines, from throughout the country. The Kosovo Private Enterprise Program is a four-year activity designed to stimulate Kosovo's economy by increasing the competitiveness of private businesses. The program is implemented by Booz Allen Hamilton.

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE

USAID Project Provides Water to Villages

One eighty-five meter deep well is the only source of water for the villages of Bubel, Qupeva and Domanek in Malisheve/Malisevo municipality, and it's not enough. For the 2,580 residents, and even some people from other villages, gaining easier access to more quality water is critical.

Linking the community to potable water is part of the USAID-funded Small Infrastructure for Water and Sanitation program, which is focused on constructing water and sanitation systems in areas not served with potable water.

Malisheve/Malisevo municipality is limited in surface water resources, with only a small number of residents having access to potable water. However, recently an artisan well in the village of Bubel proved to be quality water, offering a good quantity of water, enough to sufficiently to serve several villages.



A feasibility study is underway for an expanded project. If the results are positive, the program will design and build a water system for the villages of Bubel and Domanek.

Malisheve/Malisevo is one of four municipalities in the Small Infrastructure for Water and Sanitation program. The three-year program is implemented by International Relief and Development (IRD).

INSTITUTION BUILDING

Civil Servants Learn How To Fight Corruption

Public servants, civil society representatives and Hope Fellows discussed the mechanisms available for civil servants to fight corruption at an April 15 forum organized by the USAID-supported Hope Fellowship Program.

The forum was part of a series of workshops on anti-corruption managed by the National Albanian American Council. NAAC's Hope Fellowship Program is helping to develop Kosovo leaders through a variety of leadership skill and issue seminars.

Participants discussed mechanisms that are being used by civil servants, and other possible tools available that could be applied as civil servants become more active in fighting corruption.

In addition to presentations on anti-corruption techniques, participants talked about their individual experiences, and came up with ideas on how to practically undertake anti-corruption actions within institutions.

Municipalities Increase Own Source Revenues

Municipalities have had success in increasing their 'own source revenues,' (OSR) or funds collected in the municipality, which remain available for municipality usage. The Municipal Performance Awards presented last month by USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative emphasized the importance of increasing OSR.

The top five municipalities demonstrating major increases of OSR were awarded Municipal Performance Awards by the USAID/Kosovo Mission Director at a recent ceremony. Gjakove/Djakovica municipality received an award, having increased its own source revenue by 121 percent in 2008. Their success was achieved largely by waging an innovative campaign against illegal construction, forcing builders and owners to pay the fees and late penalties to acquire permits for all buildings constructed without permits.



The Mayor of Gjakove/Djakovica accepts an award from USAID/Kosovo Mission Director Patricia Rader for the municipality's successful work to increase own source revenue collection.

The five winning municipalities increased the collection of OSR by an average of 154 percent in 2008 compared to 2007. These increases are largely due to municipal executive bodies taking more effective and aggressive measures to collect fees and taxes from several important revenue categories (including property tax, building and construction permits, transferring property ownership, renting municipal facilities and property, and registering businesses).

USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative is a three-year activity to improve the ability of all municipalities to deliver services by increasing municipalities' own--source revenues and improving democratic processes. USAID's Effective Municipalities Initiative is implemented by RTI International.

RULE OF LAW

Kosovo Women Law Students Gain New Encouragement

A new mentoring activity will pair female law students with women working as lawyers, judges and prosecutors in an effort to support women entering the legal profession. The Women in Law Mentoring Program, launched on April 8, supports and encourages women who are planning to enter legal professions. The program is led by the Gender and Minorities' Committee of the Kosovo Chamber of Advocates (KCA).

During the event, mentors and students had a chance to talk together about the profession and its challenges. "It's a great opportunity for me as a student to have a judge as a mentor," said Arta Zejnullahu, a student. "It is the first time I met a judge in person."



Judge Fetije Sadiku, the mentor and student Malesore Gashi, discussed the challenges facing the legal profession.

The mentors, women who practice as lawyers, judges and prosecutors, and students, were matched based on the profession the students were interested in pursuing. All promised to meet with each other monthly, and most mentors invited their students to visit them to see a typical working day.

The goals of the program are to support women who plan to enter the legal profession by pairing them with women who have succeeded in the legal profession; to encourage discussion about the difficulties women face in entering a legal career, such as balancing work and family life, discrimination, and lack of support; and to foster relationships between women. The mentors are committed to making the program an ongoing activity.

USAID through its partner organization, ABA ROLI, is assisting the KCA Gender and Minorities' Committee in increasing the number of women and minorities licensed to practice law in Kosovo.

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