



**MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

**USAID Dedicates New Technology for the Kosovo Serb Radio Network**

**T**ina Kaidanow, U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, inaugurated the re-launching of the Kosovo Serbian Media Association (KOSMA) network on Friday, February 13th.

The original radio network was constructed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2004, with microwave technology. However it soon fell into disrepair and was expensive to maintain. Following a detailed survey of the existing system, USAID's Strengthening Independent Minority Media program issued a \$37,400 grant to fund the purchase of equipment that allows member stations to exchange programs live and in stereo over the internet.

Each station has a rack-mounted unit which allows them to send programs and news items to each other, live or pre-recorded, even through low-quality internet connections. They also each have mobile units, with which they can broadcast live from anywhere with an internet connection.



Tina Kaidanow, U.S. Ambassador, learns about the technology provided to the network. Andrew Clayton, Program Director with USAID's Media Program [right], and Nebojsa Vesic, editor with Radio Klokot [middle].

The five radio stations in the network cover most of the Serbian communities in Kosovo. These communities are very isolated and audience research shows that they turn first to radio for their local news. As Zivojin Rakocevic, news editor at Radio KIM in Caglavica and Chairman of the KOSMA network, says: "With good communication by radio, enclaves are not ghettos."

The executive director of one of the other networked radio stations, Radio Gorazdevac near Peja/Pec, emphasizes the advantages of internet technology, which doesn't need transmission towers on the top of mountains to make it function: "Our work will be much easier with this equipment. If there is a problem we will not have to go to the hills to fix it. Now, everything is possible. We can have more members and bigger programs. One of the things we should discuss is joint marketing, programs that could be a profit for all."

Creating networks for radio and TV stations improves their news-gathering and their profitability. The re-building of the KOSMA network will help all of the stations provide more comprehensive news for their listeners and bigger audiences for their advertisers.

USAID's Strengthening Independent Minority Media is a three-year program administered by IREX.

**NGO Registration Office Improvements Initiated**

**W**ork to strengthen and streamline operations of the NGO Registration Department has started with the February 6 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Pristina ceremony marked the start of a partnership between the department and the USAID-supported Kosovo Civil Society Strengthening Program. The NGO Registration Department serves as a resource and provider of services to Kosovo NGOs.

"We look forward to a very close relationship with the NGO Department in its commitment to become customer centric," said Suzanne Reed, Director of the Kosovo Civil Society Strengthening Program who, along with Bajram Kosumi, Director of NGO Registration Department, signed the Memorandum of Understanding at the event hosted by the Ministry of Public Services. The program will work in partnership with the department to help it to assess its current organizational systems and identify opportunities for strengthening its service to NGOs.

"We are particularly excited about the development and implementation of an online registration system," Reed said. "This will help streamline the registration process and provide much easier access to those organizations located outside of Pristina."

USAID's Kosovo Civil Society Strengthening Program is a three-year activity implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC).

The program aims to ensure that Kosovo civil society is an effective and influential partner to government in public decision-making, contributing to an inclusive and democratic Kosovo.

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

### After School English and Computer Classes Start at Kamenicë/a-Area School

Computer and English language classes will be starting at the Technical School in Veliko Ropotovo/Ropotove e Madhe, Kamenicë/a municipality, as a new computer laboratory opened on February 5 with support from USAID/Kosovo, the municipality and the school.

The laboratory will be used for special after-school computer and English language classes for 80 students at the school. The laboratory includes 11 networked computers with internet access and a multimedia projector.

The initiative is a partnership of the school, municipality and USAID's Focusing on Result Enhancing Capacity Across Sectors in Transition (FORECAST) program. The municipality renovated the room and arranged for new desks and chairs. The USAID program will also support teachers in leading the after-school English and computer classes.

The laboratory in Veliko Ropotovo/Ropotove is the sixth laboratory to open in Serbian speaking schools. Other participating schools are in Laplje Selo/Liapllasellë, Partes/Partesh, Vrbovac/Vrbovc, Strpce/Shterpce and Susica/Sushicë. Other laboratories were opened in Kosovo Albanian schools in Lipjan/Lipljan, Viti/Vitina, Istog/Istok, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Deqan/Decan, Ferizaj/Urosevac and Kaqanik/Kacanik. In total, the initiative reaches more than 1,000 students in 13 schools.

USAID's FORECAST program is designed to provide training and study opportunities for Kosovars in many areas, and to support Kosovar partner organizations to operate more efficiently and achieve better results. The program is implemented by World Learning.

## MINORITY OUTREACH

### USAID Opens Partner Office in Kosovo Serb Center

The new Gracanica/Gracanice office for USAID and its partner, Academy for Educational Development, was opened at a February 5 reception. The office, located in one of the largest Kosovo Serb cities in southern Kosovo, will serve as a focal point and resource center for all USAID assistance programs to minority communities.



U.S. Ambassador Kaidanow greets guests at the new office for USAID's Initiating Positive Change Program in Gracanica/Gracanice

"This office is a resource for all of you and will provide information on all of the U.S. Government's assistance programs in Kosovo," said Ambassador Kaidanow at the opening ceremony. "It is also a chance to bring new ideas and initiatives to our attention. So, please make full use of this office. We want to hear from you."

In addition to the opening of the office, the event marked the launch of USAID's Initiating Positive Change program, a community mobilization and development activity that aims to help minority communities improve quality of life, create economic opportunities, address security challenges, and develop links with local and national institutions.

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