

USAID and USOP Kick Off the New ATRC "Meet the Donors" Program

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Meet the Donors: The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives
.....**Feb. 18, 13:00.**

Sharri Net Celebrates Two Year Anniversary
.....**Feb. 16, 12.00.**

On January 20, ATRC held the first of its new series "Meet the Donors" in which representatives from grant-giving organizations are invited to present on the substance of their projects, their mission, grant guidelines and pointers for applying. This month David Black--Director of the Democracy and Governance Office at the United States Agency for International Development-USAID and Luan Nimani from the United States Office in Prishtina-USOP presented on USAID and USOP grant-giving policies.

Most of USAID's financial assistance is provided through two implementing partners: the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), implemented by ATRC and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI). NDI promotes a political system in which all the people of Kosovo can express themselves democratically; KNAP supports advocacy and public policy NGOs.

Other, unsolicited grants must be consistent with USAID's five-year strategy, which focuses on long-term institution and capacity-building assistance (available online at: http://www.usaid.gov/missions/kosovo/pdf/kosovo_strategy_final.pdf).

Black Provides Advice for NGOs

"If your proposal is rejected, try to approach the donor to ask why; sometimes its something simple that could be easily adjusted such as the format, or the need to be presented in the context of a donor's particular objective," Black said. According to Black, a donor's reasons for rejecting grants vary: it could have to do with the fiscal year, how much money they have available and many other factors. Black also suggested NGOs be "upfront" about the different donors to which they are

"It's in your favor to be upfront about [other] donors you're applying to."

applying. "I think NGOs are afraid to mention [other places they have applied]," he said. "I'd much rather see a letter that says, I'm submitting a grant to these others donors. Then I can call and see if they are funding you, fully or partially." Black also highlighted the importance of emphasizing only one issue in a grant proposal.



David Black from USAID and Luan Nimani from the USOP presented on their grant-giving policies at ATRC's first "Meet the Donors" public discussion on Jan. 20.

Additional Grants Available

Local NGOs can apply to USOP for funds up to \$24,000, which will not cover administrative costs. An organization cannot receive a grant twice, except in special cases when the activity is considered a priority by the US office. According to Nimani, USOP is specifically interested in projects that concern gender rights; minority communities; human rights; education; developing the media and free flow of information; and campaigns for higher voter turnout.

Grants for Regional Projects

Funds for regional projects are available through the USAID regional office in Budapest or the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a fund supported by USAID and other donors, Black said.

For more information about "Meet the Donors", please contact ATRC.

"If your project is rejected, approach the donor to ask why."

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**Who Sponsors the NGO Projects
Featured in "The Advocate"?**

The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives, whose strategic location in Gjakova allows it to reach historically neglected rural areas, is a certified fiscally sound grant-giving institution that provides funding to Kosovar NGOs and associations that seek to establish a tolerant and open society by supporting advocacy projects and campaigns. Projects supported by FDI promote accountability and transparency; include minorities and women; and conduct education and training programs in advocacy, management and gender awareness. For more information about FDI and its grant-giving programs, please write to fdigjakova@hotmail.com.



**"So long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we'll be called a democracy."
-Roger Baldwin**

**World Learning
Establishes Office in Prishtina
Job Announcement**

World Learning will establish a USAID-funded Participant Training Program office in Prishtina. From February 15 through February 26 - they will be recruiting four local staff to work on the program: a Program Manager, a Program Assistant, an Admin/Finance Officer and an Administrative Assistant (for job descriptions please contact ATRC). If interested, please contact Colin Davies colin.davies@worldlearning.org. More information about World Learning is available at www.worldlearning.org/ptp-e

NGO Explains Rights to Serb Minority

The Committee for the Protection of Human Rights, an NGO working since 1999 primarily in the Obiliq region to promote the rights of Kosovar minorities, especially Serbs, started a project called "Integration through Education and Protection of Human Rights" in January.

The project aims to raise the Serb minority's awareness regarding their rights to participate in the decision-making process in their municipalities. Organization representatives will visit Babin Most, Milosevo, Plemetino, Janjina Voda and Crkvena Vodica to learn more about problems faced by the local communities. They will advocate for the requests made by citizens during these visits to be processed legally.

"Through this project, we will try to answer questions like 'who and how?' and 'where and when?'" Boban Stankovic, a representative from the Committee for the Protection of Human



Representatives from the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights prepare for an awareness raising discussion, as a part of their "Integration through Education and protection of Human Rights" Project.

Rights, said. The Committee plans to tell citizens that they have a right to make demands and to participate in the decision-making process.

The Committee believes that citizens are not acquainted with their rights, do not know where to take complaints and do not understand their relation to the government. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the communities lack committees to intervene at the municipal level; committees were supposed to be established for the Serb community, according to regulation 2000/45.

Citizens, who are dissatisfied with the institutions' and elected deputies' work, have expressed interest in holding public debates to elaborate on this issue. In these debates, Committee representatives will introduce regulation 2000/45 and the municipality's statute. In discussions representatives from the community will present the issues they face. The committee will then determine priority issues and send them to the Assembly for review. The Committee has invited a Serb deputy from the Kosovar Assembly to advise the municipality.

**NGOs Discuss Public Participation Regulation
Participants Call for Establishment of Municipality Information Office**

The Kosovar Institute for Not-for-profit Law (IKDO) organized a public discussion on "Public Participation in Decision-making" in which representatives from the Association of Municipalities and from the NGO community participated. The discussion dealt mainly with democratization and public policies and took place at ATRC.

IKDO Director Gjyljeta Mushkolaj introduced participants to the drafting process for the public participation regulation, using Gjakova as an initial model. She stressed the need for cooperation between the municipalities and civil society to enhance efficiency

of the assembly's work.

Currently, officials who do not comply with the regulation and thus fail to fulfill their obligations to citizens are not subject to the envisioned sanctions due to limited competencies,

Vushtri Mayor Muharrem Shabani commented in regards to the regulation. Era Gjurgjeala, a representative from the Kosovo Institute for Research and Development Policies (KI-



Gjyljeta Mushkolaj, Director of Kosovo Institute for Not-for-profit Law (IKDO), leads a public discussion on "Public Participation in Decision-making" at ATRC.

PRED), told of her experiences while conducting interviews in the Podujeva Municipality where she had difficulties accessing official documents. She proposed that municipality representatives establish a special office for the coordination of

Association of Ecologs Advocates for Eco-Tax

The Association of Ecologs, a NGO from Peja that deals with ecological problems, initiated a project in January that aims to regulate ecological taxes. The proposed "eco-tax" for every liter of petrol derivate imported would go towards establishing a Fund for Ecology at the central level and opening an office within the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning to manage this money as well as new environmental projects.

"Until now small, short term projects have had some cosmetic effect but little overall impact on improving the ecological situation", Muhamet Kelmendi, representative of the Association of Ecologs said. This tax would use financial means to help create a foundation from which the central level could draft strategic, large-scale, long term projects that would eradicate poisoning agents from power plant waste or clean the Sitnica river, for example.

First, their project will raise public awareness through posters, fliers, video clips and radio contact programs. Second, the association will visit Kosovar environmental NGOs, present their project and invite NGO participation in regional roundtables. Discussion participants will include representatives from the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the Chamber of Commerce, economic and legal experts, citizens, the media, representatives from political parties and other NGOs.

Finally, the organizations will submit their recommendations to the Assembly to draft a separate law or amend the existing Law on Spatial Planning, depending on the legislative committee's decision.

"Stars" Address Student Issues in Schools

"Stars of Galactica", a youth NGO that raises awareness among youth regarding issues such as drugs, AIDS, prostitution, the trafficking of women and children, peace-building initiatives, and interethnic understanding, began a project called "Prevention of Violence and Drug Abuse in Schools". They plan to organize public debates in Mitrovica's primary schools and high schools, which will be attended by teachers, students and parents.

The project aims to de-

velop a regulation on these issues and to form groups within the schools consisting of a parent, professor and student who will deal with psychological issues dealt previously by pedagogs. They plan to hold six to twelve debates from which they will produce recommendations for the Ministry of Education.

A group of experts including a legal expert, a representative from the Directorate of Education and a teacher will attend every debate. The project will be implemented in partner-



Migjen Abrashi, Stars of Galactica Director shows equipment they used to produce awareness-raising radio programs about smoking, drugs, birth control, and other issues of interest to youth.



Stars of Galactica also conducts trainings on how to make learning more creative for primary school students.

ship with local television channel TV Mitrovica. In addition to discussions, "The Stars" will establish a debate club with students regarding the same topics.

Association of Carpenters Unites Associations, Demands Standards

The Association of Carpenters initiated a project called "Made in Kosova" in September 2003, which aims to promote domestic carpenters' products. The project has three objectives: to determine standards for raw materials in carpentry; to initiate cooperation between associations and big

business companies; and to improve marketing.

The association seeks to form an agreement among all associations for establishing a syndicate which deals primarily with carpenters' interests. The association tries to cooperate with wood processing companies in Kosovo such as Lesna in Prishtina, Dugllas in Podujeva, Ukaj in Peja and Brovina in Gjakova. The association has established a relationship with Kosovo Business Support (KBS) and the Kosovo Government Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Ministry of



Local carpenters work to reestablish their businesses after the war.

Trade and Industry has been charged with compiling a draft on standards and at the same time advocating for lower taxes on raw materials. KBS will provide technical assistance through consultants from America and experts in the wood industry. The standards will be reviewed in three groups: doors and windows; furniture; and kitchens and interior.



The Association of Ecologs advocates, "Ecology Tax for a better environment," through posters like this.

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ATRC Library at

OSCE Mission in Kosovo Introduces Measures to Increase Transparency of Political Parties

Harri Holkeri, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in Kosovo, signed an administrative directive on January 20, introducing rules to improve transparency and financial reporting by political parties.

Political parties must submit 2002 and 2003 annual financial reports by the end of February. Specifically, parties must report all

contributions over 1,500 Euros, all expenses over 10,000 euros and designate a financial contact person. In addition, the parties will need to keep financial records for a period of five years.

The reports will be audited by the OSCE Mission's Political Party Registration Office, composed of three international auditing experts. If the reports are not

filed properly, fines will be assessed in accordance with the formula set out in the directive.

The parties' financial reports will be available to the public with the aim of detecting irregularities in financial reporting.

For the full text of this article see OSCE's webpage at <http://www.osce.org>.

Guest Article: Zëri i Ditës

Economic Experts Request Correction of Fiscal Policy

The Customs and Value Added Tax on Equipment Imports are Constraining Foreign Investments

The responsibility to determine taxes and fees, which are not favoring foreign investments, is a competence of UNMIK and the Fiscal Economic Council said Muhamet Mustafa, President of RIINVEST.

Evaluations from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also have a considerable influence on the fiscal policy, according to him.

Mustafa said that in order to correct the fiscal policy, the government, parliament and civil society should take the initiative to constructively apply pressure for changes in the fiscal policy.

According to him the government was interested to change this policy and has sent UNMIK and the IMF strong written recommendations. The practice of pressuring these institutions to change the taxes and fees so that they favor investments and employment should also continue in the future, according to the leader of RIINVEST.

If UNMIK lowers taxes on

the import of investment equipment, the budget would lose around ten million Euros which is bearable for Kosova, he said based on assessments conducted by RIINVEST.

Therefore, the primary changes made to fiscal policy are those influencing

The government, Parliament, and civil society should constructively pressure for changes in fiscal policy, according to Muhamet Mustafa, the President of "RIINVEST" institute.

the decrease of investments prices. He also mentioned that decreasing customs fees and the value added tax for equipment would increase investments and employment.

He said that a priority issue is also to decrease taxes on raw materials, which are endangering the growth of agro-businesses and food production in Kosova.

The taxes and fees policy

is identified as one of the major obstacles to encouraging foreign investment and generating new places of employment in Kosova.

Kosova is the only place in the region that charges a customs tax for raw materials in the production industry and on the import of machinery used for initiating new investments.

The customs fee in Kosova is ten percent for all products, which means that the fee for car imports is equal to that for milk production packaging.

Some time ago the Kosovar government of submitted a project to UNMIK requesting a decrease from 10 percent (as it is now) to 2 percent on custom taxes for raw materials and investment equipment.

This proposal was rejected by UNMIK with the reasoning that a two fee customs system would create more opportunities for corruption and corrupt practices. The Kosovar government rejected this reasoning, concluding that corruption suspicions cannot hold back economic development forever.