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ADVANCING KOSOVO TOGETHER

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AKT	Advancing Kosovo Together
APS	Annual Program Statement
BSCK	Business Support Centre Kosovo
B2B	Business to Business
CAIP	USAID Community Action Initiative Program
CDKD	Centar za Depolitizaciju Kosovskog Drustva
CDP	Capacity Development Plan
CF	Community Forum
CLE	Contract Low Enforcement
CoDe	Community Development Institute
CSD	Communication for Social Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPI	Development Professionals, Inc.
EU	European Union
EMPOWER	USAID Private Sector Competitiveness and Employment Generation Activity
GOK	Government of Kosovo
IADK	Initiative for Agriculture Development of Kosovo
JPIP	Joint Project Implementation Plan
LCO	Language Commissioner
LS	Local Solution
LUL	Law on Use of Languages
MACC	Municipal Assembly Committee for Communities
MAFRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
MCF	Municipal Community Forum
MF	Ministry of Finance
MLGA	Ministry of Local Governance and Administration
MPMS	Municipal Performance Measurement System
MOCR	Municipal Office for Communities and Returns
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization

NOA	USAID New Agricultural Opportunities Program
NOPM	Network of Peace Movement
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
OSR	Own Source Revenue
OLC	Office of Language Commissioner
PFD	Partnership for Development
PSIF	Program Support and Incentive Fund
RFA	Request for Application
RCRC	Regional Community Resource Center
RTC	Regional Technology Center
SIAPS	Service Improvement Action Plans
SME	Small Medium Enterprises
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The three-year USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT-US¹) program launched April 16, 2014 and is designed to support the achievement of the United States Government's foreign policy objective of peace and stability in the Balkans by supporting USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy's development objective of supporting improved rule of law that meets citizen needs and intermediate result of improved integration of ethnic minorities into Kosovo society. The program goal is to foster positive and constructive inter-ethnic cooperation between communities in addressing common problems of unemployment, social needs, and municipal services in 16 targeted municipalities² throughout Kosovo comprised of large Kosovo Serb populations.

¹ We refer to the project as AKT-US in this document to differentiate between this project and the Advancing Kosovo Together Local Solution project (called AKT-LS herein).

² Gračanica/Graçanicë, Klokot/Kllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Partesh/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Vushtrri/Vučitrm, North Mitrovica/Mitrovica e Veriut, Leposavić/Leposaviq, ZubinPotok/ZubinPotok, and Zvečan/Zveçan

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Since 1999, limited constructive inter-ethnic cooperation has hindered Kosovo's social, economic, and political development, prolonging the potential for instability in the region, lowering quality of life, and lengthening timetables for EU accession. This lack of collaboration is causing a level of distrust, reduces economic growth because the country is not utilizing human resources, and segregates Kosovo Serbs from Government of Kosovo (GoK) structures. Youth of both communities literally do not speak the same language and do not interact. The perception of non-majority communities is that governmental institutions lack willingness to respond to their needs despite the fact that legislation system is in place. Laws, particularly those relating to integration of Kosovo Serbs in government and society, have not been fully implemented, due to lack of municipal capacity, political will, civic advocacy or knowledge of the relevant language.

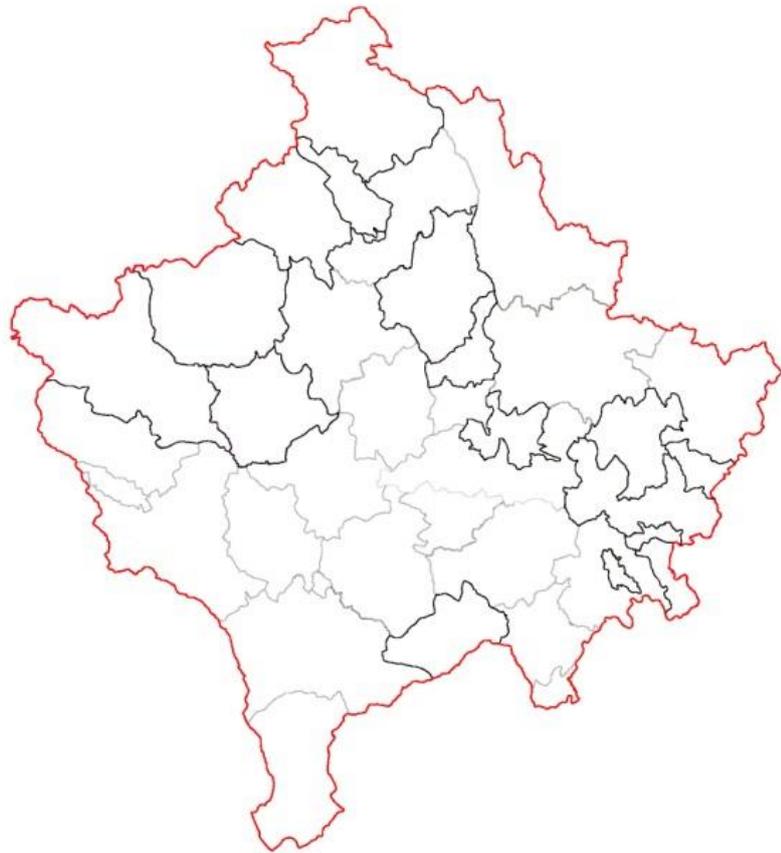
Municipalities also face difficulties in ensuring sustainable returns because when people return, municipalities do not have many opportunities to integrate them into economic and municipal structures, reinforcing displaced persons reluctance to return. Non-majority communities and women are exposed more to lack of employment opportunities especially in obtaining public sector positions. There is limited access to affordable financing schemes, particularly for small farmers and women who are unregistered as businesses. At the same time, job-related skills of youth are not well matched to employment opportunities. AKT-US's goal is to increase constructive interaction between Kosovo Serb non-majority and Kosovo Albanian majority communities, particularly in 16 targeted municipalities. This will be achieved through following project intermediate results (PIRs) elaborated in Exhibit 1, provisional results framework:

- 1) Improve autonomous, horizontal communications between majority and non-majority communities;
- 2) Improve economic opportunities in target municipalities; and
- 3) Increase the efficiency and capacity of targeted municipal administrations to respond to the needs of all the citizens.
- 4) Build capacity of host-country organizations to leverage cross-ethnic leadership to achieve program objectives and implement USAID Kosovo funded activities.

AKT-US PARTNER MUNICIPALITIES

AKT-US works in 16 municipalities:

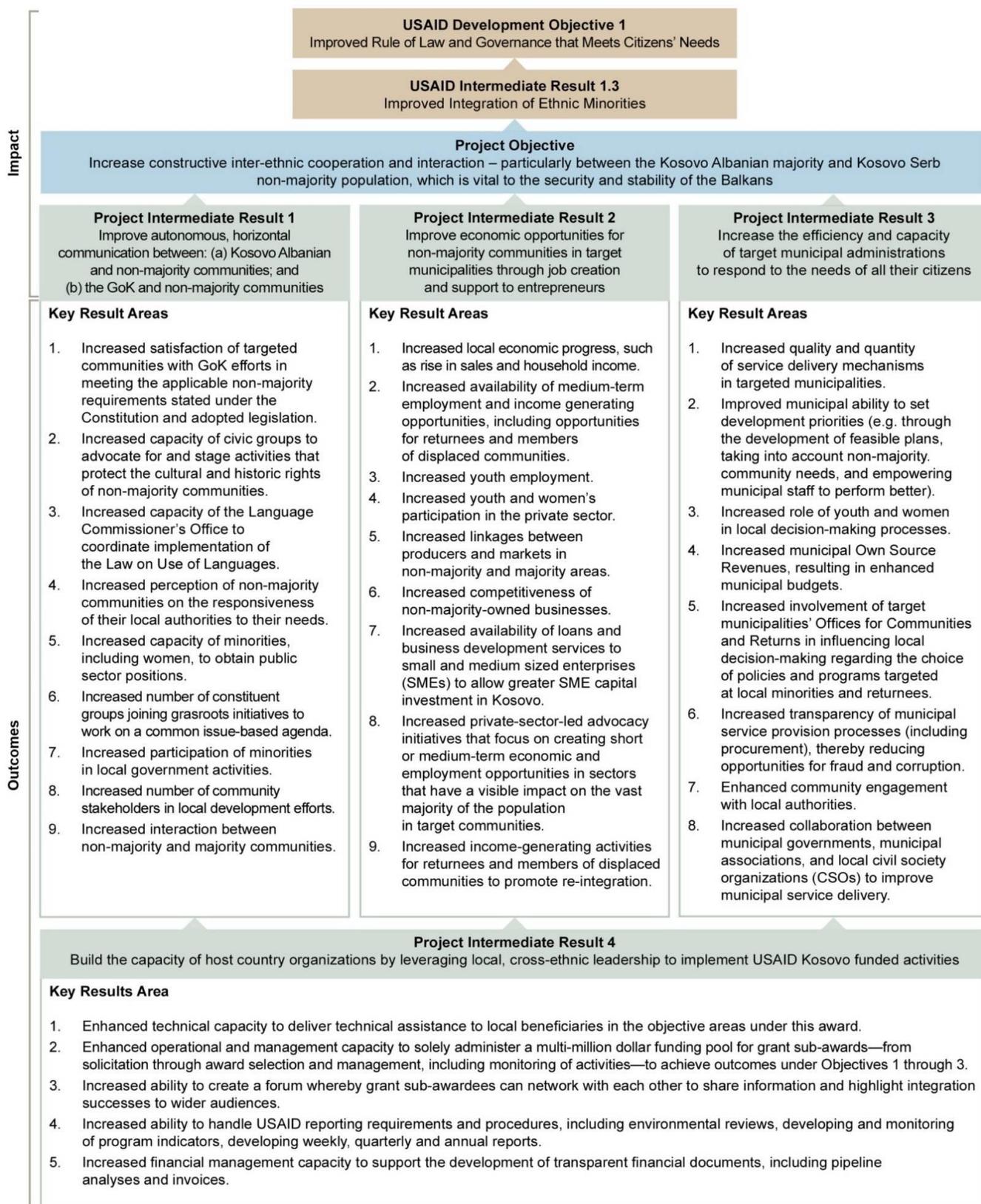
1. Gjilan/Gnjilane
2. Gračanica/Graçanicë
3. Istog/Istok
4. Klinë/Klina
5. Klokot/Kllokot
6. Leposavić/
Leposaviq
7. North Mitrovica/
Mitrovica e Veriut
8. Novo Brdo/
Novobërdë
9. Obiliq/Obilić
10. Parteš/Partesh
11. Pejë/Peć
12. Ranilug/Ranillug
13. Štrpce/Shtërpçë
14. Vushtri/Vučitrn
15. Zubin Potok/ Zubin
Potok
16. Zvečan/Zveçan



Map of Kosovo

RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Exhibit 1. Advancing Kosovo Together — Provisional Results Framework



KEY ACTIVITIES

This section describes accomplishments for each Project Intermediate Result, including information on key activities (both ongoing and completed) during the year, progress made toward relevant indicators and targets, challenges encountered and addressed, and activities planned for the following year.

Working closely with municipal officials, AKT-US identified target communities based on the following criteria:

- Large populations of non-majority community members
- Potential for interethnic cooperation
- Receiving a relatively lower level of municipal services
- Less interaction with local government

For each target community, the program worked to collect information on demographics, available services, past infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects completed by municipalities and/or other donors, and other relevant data to guide project implementation and serve as a baseline against which advances could be measured.

Project Intermediate Result 1: Improve autonomous, horizontal communications between majority and non-majority communities

Key Achievements

- Established 42 Community Forums (CF) and 12 Municipal Community Forums (MCF);
- Conducted 42 community open meetings with municipal officials to discuss needs, set priorities, elect community representatives, and identify community problems and infrastructure with participation of 791 people, including 47 municipal representatives;
- Identified 207 infrastructure and non-infrastructure priorities and 36 quick impact projects
- Organized 12 Municipal Community Forum meetings with 69 participants;
- Supported the first multi-ethnic chess tournament in Štrpce/Shtërpçë with the participation of 50 multi-ethnic competitors (32 Kosovo Albanians, 12 Kosovo Serbs, and 6 Other);
- Organized the first community-led initiative with involvement of non-majority and majority communities and municipal representatives to cleaning the riverbed in Kmetoce/Kmetovce village (Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality), mobilizing 40 people;
- Completed nine public debates on “Introducing the Guidebook on Implementation of Law on Use of Languages” in coordination with the NGO Communication for Social Development. A total of 227 people participated;
- Delivered three, two-day advocacy workshops for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that addressed three goals: 1) build advocacy skills; 2) promote alliances between and among CSOs and other stakeholders; and 3) explore top non-majority issues and potential solutions
- 44 NGO representatives participated in the workshops (24 men/20 women; 40 Kosovo Serbs/ 3 Kosovo Albanians/1 Kosovo Bosniak);
- Implemented four small, quick-impact projects identified by CFs: sound equipment for Klokot/Kllokot, sound equipment for Koretište/Koretishe village, playground equipment for

Viča/Viqe village and delivery of desks and school equipment for an elementary school in Donja Budriga/Budrige e Ulët.

Activity 1.1: Support the GoK in implementation of laws that protect non-majority (minority) rights (KRAs 1, 3, 7)

Communication in different languages is a barrier for inter-ethnic interaction and cooperation, particularly for the younger generation. Among the many challenges to cooperation, this one is fundamental, especially in the public sector. In majority municipalities, written material is often not available in the Serbian language and similarly in non-majority municipalities, Albanian language materials are not consistently available. AKT-US supports municipalities and non-majority communities to engage with one another for common benefit, addressing citizen needs, bridging gaps between central government and municipal structures, and sharing benefits of incremental inter-ethnic collaboration.

After parliamentary elections and initial introductions by USAID, AKT-US program management and the citizen engagement office met with the Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC) in the Prime Minister's office to review the OLC's latest priorities and discuss the challenges to implementation of the Law on Use of Languages at central and municipal levels. After several meetings with OLC, parties agreed that AKT-US would focus on two of OLC's current priorities to further support its capacity to implement the Law on the Use of Languages (LUL):

- Support OLC to develop regulations and procedures for receiving and processing requests/complaints related to possible violations of the Law
- Disseminate OLC's "Guidebook on Implementation of Law on Use of Languages"

AKT-US, through its partner Development Professionals, Inc. (DPI), engaged two consultants to work with the OLC to develop a roadmap to define the procedures for receiving and processing complaints related to alleged violations of the LUL. Consultants worked closely with OLC staff to understand and assess their business processes and procedures for responding to complaints. In particular, consultants engaged relevant officials at the central (Ministry of Local Administration) and local level (Obiliq/Obilic and Vushtrri/Vucitrn municipalities). The resulting report clearly outlines the challenges that the OLC is experiencing with implementation of LUL, the discrepancies between the existing law and regulations and the mandate of OLC, and opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness. The Commissioner welcomed the roadmap because it clearly presents each step that needs to be undertaken from the moment of receiving the complaint through processing by different departments and institutions, with all procedures to be followed. As a result, the OLC legal department is working to bring regulations in line with existing law and assign full authority to OLC to receive and process complaints and enforce the LUL.

AKT-US invited local institutions to submit applications to support the OLC in disseminating its new "*Guidebook on the Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages*" through workshops and awareness-raising activities that would inform non-majority citizens in 12 southern municipalities of their rights and responsibilities under the new law. The four northern municipalities were not included in the initial activities, since their local governments were still in the process of transition and the structures required to more readily receive and process complaints were not in

place. In December, a grant was awarded to Communication for Social Development (CSD) from Gračanica/ Gračanice, with the following elements:

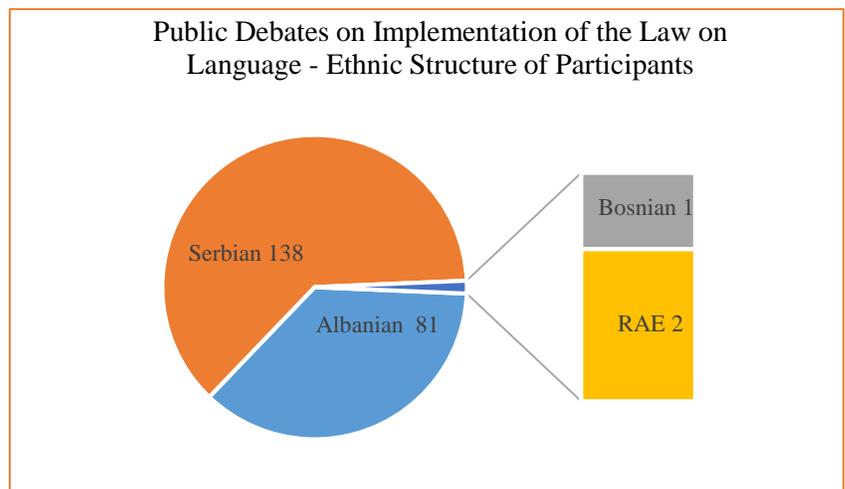
1. Build the capacities of CSOs to advocate for protection on language rights in their respective municipalities;
2. Raise awareness of community members about the importance of their participation in addressing the need for protection of language rights and close cooperation with institutional representatives;
3. Develop a unique toolkit for local municipalities that will serve as a basic and leading document for using the equal language representation in each municipality;
4. Promote the work of the OLC; and
5. Improve cooperation between local and central governments.



Debate organized in Gračanica/Gtracánice

During year one, nine debates were organized in nine partner municipalities:

- Klokot/Kllokot,
- Parteš/Partesh,
- Gjilan/Gnjilane,
- Ranilug/Ranillug,
- Gračanica/Gračanice,
- Vushtrri/Vučitrn
- Štrpce/Shtpce
- Novo Brdo/Novobërdë
- Obiliq/Obilić



The total number of participants at the debates was 227 individuals. The remaining three debates and work on developing a toolkit that will assist municipal officials on implementing LUL will continue during fifth and sixth quarter.

Activity 1.2: Improve government communications, responsiveness, and engagement with non-majority communities (KRAs 1, 2, 5, 6)

Improving two-way of communication and capacity for engagement will help local government to better understand non-majority communities' needs and appropriately mobilize and apply the resources necessary to begin to address them. AKT-US completed municipal assessments in each of

the 16 partner municipalities in order to confirm the most appropriate mechanisms for involving target communities in the protection of minority rights, local economic development, and service provision and to establish the priority capacity-building needs of target municipal administrations. Staff met with Mayors and other municipal officials, representatives of counterpart Government of Kosovo (GoK) agencies; CSOs; business centers and associations; and community leaders to discuss issues, identify needs and develop proposed interventions. Data collected during those municipal assessment visits were analyzed and reports prepared. Among the key findings:

- Room for improvement in the number of non-majority municipal employees. While results show that the overall number of municipal employees is 1,880, of which 301 (16%) are from non-majority communities and this percentage is in compliance with regulations, in some municipalities the percentage is low, including in Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Gračanica/Graçanice, Štrpce/Shtërpçë and Leposavić/Leposaviq.
- Low representation of non-majority community members in key local government positions. Only seven (7) of 16 municipalities had appointed Deputy Mayors from non-majority communities; only six (6) municipalities (Zubin Potok, North Mitrovica, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Leposavić/Leposaviq and Klokot/Klllokot) appointed a Deputy Assembly Chairperson from non-majority communities.
- Municipalities do not have accurate information on the number of registered business service providers and NGOs. Only seven municipalities (Mitrovica North, Zubin Potok, Klokot/Klllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Istog/Istok, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Štrpce/Shtërpçë) reported that they have some information about active NGOs.
- Municipalities are interested in infrastructure projects and other means of supporting constructive engagement, e.g. cultural, sports or any other traditional events or activities.
- Most municipalities reported that they do not have a separate list of projects planned for non-majority communities; all projects are incorporated in one list of budget planning and capital investments. Northern municipalities reported that they are currently working on budget planning so they do not have a list of projects.

In coordination with municipal representatives and community representatives, AKT-US organized 42 community open meetings to discuss needs, set priorities, select community leaders, and identify potential community programs and infrastructure projects. A total of 791 participants took part in these meetings. More than 207 priorities were identified; 42 Community Forums (CF) were established; and 12 Municipal Community Forums (MCF) were established. During year one, program staff worked closely with CF members and municipal officials on program-related activities; municipal officials heard from citizens about their needs and challenges that they face in their daily lives and what can be done to improve communication between local government and citizens, and community members learned how to prepare proposals for small-scale infrastructure and community projects that would be eligible for funding by the Program Support and Incentive Fund (PSIF).

One of the many issues that were tackled during community meetings were public hearings and low participation of citizens. Many citizens claimed that the majority of attendees at such hearings tended to be municipal staff and public sector employees, and often the meetings did not serve the purpose for which they were intended. Year one By the end of the year, AKT-US organized public hearings

starting with two municipalities Istog/Istok and Gjilan/Gnjilane, with participation of more than 80 community members. Feedback from participating citizens was very positive. For many, this was their first opportunity to talk with municipal officials involved in the planning and decision-making processes. Municipal representatives also appreciated hearing about community needs/priorities firsthand and were able to fully explain the budget process, while gathering citizen input on municipal planning and budgeting.

As a cross-cutting activity between PIRs 1 and 3, community members and municipalities came together and start working on developing Service Improvement Actions Plans (SIAPs). During the SIAP process, municipal authorities and community members identify and prioritize municipal services that need to be improved. Once identified, the SIAP will be created jointly by community and municipal representatives, and community members will monitor the progress of SIAP implementation. During year one, SIAPs were completed in Kline/Klina and Obiliq/Obilic municipalities. Work on developing SIAPs in other partner municipalities will continue during year two.

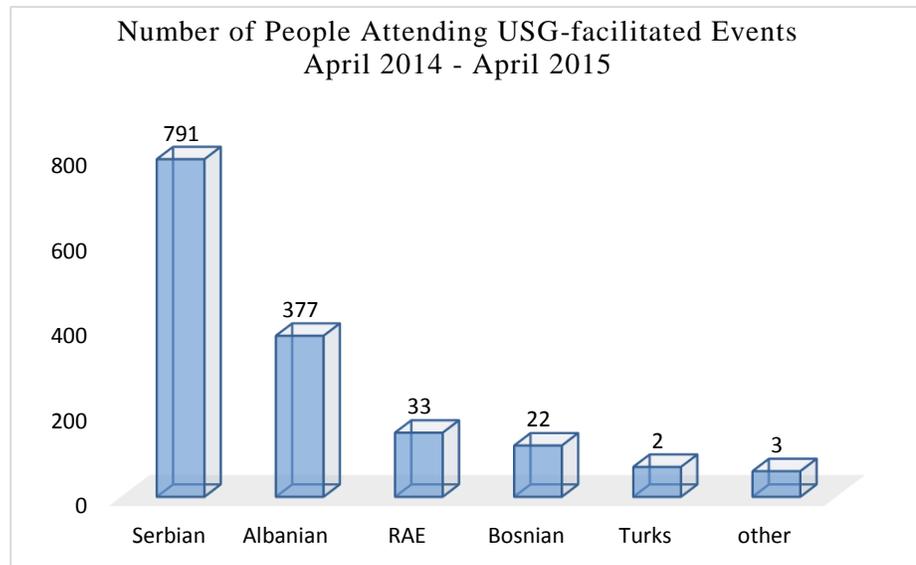
Activity 1.3: Build skills of minorities and women to obtain public sector positions (KRA 4)

Representation of minorities and women in public sector is not at a satisfactory level. While in public institutions women fill mandated number of positions, usually those positions are lower level as opposed to leadership positions. Contributing factors include a lack of open positions in the public sector as the public sector is downsizing, a lack of transparency in advertising positions and the hiring process, a lack of access to information about available positions among non-majority communities, nepotism, and a lack of educational background.

Taking all this into consideration, in year one AKT-US focused on improving access to information related to job opportunities among non-majority communities. Program staff worked with relevant municipal officials responsible for developing and maintaining municipal websites. Many reported challenges such as lack of timely and accurate information caused by lack of IT skills, lack of knowledge of local languages, and low quality of translated documents and advertisements and a lack of local media outlets in non-majority languages with whom municipal officials could work. AKT-US is committed to continuing to assist municipalities in their efforts to further develop municipal websites and explore innovative approaches to disseminate information to citizens, focusing on access to information for job opportunities. Further, AKT-US looks forward in year two to expanding its focus to other contributing factors through its partner DPI.

Activity 1.4: Facilitate community-led initiatives among majority and non-majority communities to address common issues (KRAs 2, 4, 6)

Interaction between majority and non-majority communities is low and the reasons for that are many: the post-conflict situation, a lack of knowledge of languages, political pressure, a lack of events where people can get together, perceptions among each community that they do not have common interests, and many other reasons.



One of the main criteria for the selection of AKT target communities was potential for cooperation between non-majority and majority community members. During the year, program staff worked together with community members in target municipalities to generate ideas to bring people together. The exercise of identification of initiatives was worthwhile in and of itself as people came together to talk about their needs and hopes for stronger communities with AKT-US facilitation. Together, communities shared ideas and identified priority activities, quick impact initiatives, and small-scale infrastructure projects for combined community, municipality, and project support. By the end of year one, 32 quick impact and small impact projects, such as equipment for community centers, playground equipment for schoolyards serving all communities, installation of central heating systems in schools, and establishing sidewalks, had been identified or were under planning or implementation stages (described further below). 10 grants were completed or under planning or implementation stages for community engagement activities, such as sport and cultural activities to strengthen inter-ethnic interaction. During year one, AKT-US delivered 67 events that involved 1,228 majority and non-majority community members and municipal authorities.

One of the best examples during year one was our work in Kmetoce/Kmetovce village in

“This was our priority, to clean-up the riverbed and this was essential to people who live here. USAID support is very important to us and we are hoping we will have more projects with AKT to help this community come closer together and work jointly on resolving our problems,”
 Zoran Naskovic, a farmer from Kmetoc/Kmetovce

Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality. During the open meeting, members of the majority and non-majority communities identified cleaning the polluted riverbed, which runs through the village, as a priority. The pollution threatens the communities’ health and well-being. The debris also made it difficult for people to access their farm land – an acute challenge during the harvest season. AKT-US coordinated work with municipal officials and the CF.

Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbs living in the Kmetoce/Kmetovce volunteered their service and the municipality provided the heavy equipment necessary to complete the job. Community members that took part at this activity appreciated how this activity brought the entire village together, making it the first joint multiethnic effort in Kmetoce/Kmetovce since 1999. This is just one example of how a little encouragement and support can help people take first step towards getting together and solving common issues without thinking about the past.

As mentioned in several places in this report, language is becoming a barrier especially for young people therefore any initiative that can bring young people from different communities together is one step forward. An example of this kind of interaction was work of youth groups, Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian in Klokot/Kllokot municipality. In this location there is a youth center where people get together and organize different cultural activities. The youth center had to rent audio equipment for its events, the cost of which was often prohibitive, requiring them to postpone or even cancel activities. The youth center approached AKT-US with a request to assist and the equipment was identified as a priority for the community. The audio equipment was purchased and delivered, and now the youth groups hold events regularly in the center, bringing youth from all communities together for social events.

"For a long time, nothing was happening here. We had to start from scratch. And if we want to do anything, we have to be active and take initiative. So, we organized ourselves, we initiated discussions, cultural events, and the whole village was very supportive. Also, USAID help was essential to us,"

Miloš Perić, a 22-year old community member in Klokot/Kllokot

Also in year one, AKT-US grantee Community Development Institute (CoDe) initiated implementation of "Strengthening Interaction Among Communities Through Sport and Culture" which engages youth from the municipalities of Gračanica/Graçanicë, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Peć/Peja, Klina/Klinë and Istok/Istog in tennis and photography activities and overall dialogue on accepting differences, respecting others, and appreciation for the cultural diversity and the heritage of Kosovo.

Activity 1.5: Increase CSO capacity to preserve and advocate for non-majority rights (KRA 2)



Advocacy skills workshop in Pristina

The number of local NGOs in Kosovo is very high. Looking at the number alone, one might expect that the civil society sector is strong and able to deal with the many issues that Kosovo society is facing, including those related to non-majority rights. However, many NGOs lack technical expertise and skills, innovative and constructive approaches, and operational capacities. Findings from AKT-US' initial assessment and field visits support KRA 2, that CSO capacity to preserve and advocate for non-majority rights is low.

With DPI, AKT-US engaged Ms. Ellen Seats to conduct workshops to build CSO capacity to advocate, both individually and collectively through alliances with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders sharing common interests. The workshops addressed three goals: build advocacy skills; promote alliances between and among NGOs and other stakeholders; and explore top non-majority issues and potential solutions. In each workshop, participants worked in groups to develop an advocacy campaign on an issue of their choice. AKT-US worked closely with



Advancing Kosovo Together Local Solution (AKT-LS) to identify participant NGOs. Workshops were organized in three locations involving 33 participants representing 24 NGOs:

- Gjilan/Gnjilane region covering municipalities Novo Brdo/ Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Klokot/ Kllokot, and Ranilug/Ranillug
- Pristina covering municipalities Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peç, Klinë/Klina, Obiliq/Obiliç, Gračanica/Gračanicë, and Štrpce/ Shtpce
- Northern Mitrovica covering municipalities North Mitrovica, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok, Leposavić/Leposaviq, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn

AKT-US also issued an Annual Program Statement (APS) seeking grant applications from qualified locally-registered Kosovo NGOs to implement activities that serve to increase capacities of local NGOs. Year one In year one, Center za Depolitizaciju Kosovskog Drustva (CDKD) initiated implementation of “Together in Action for the Benefit of All”, which works in Ranilug/Ranillug, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, Parteš/Partesh and Klokot/Kllokot and focuses on increasing the capacities of nascent civil society organizations, drafting and approval of youth action plans by municipal assemblies, and implementation of one youth action plan activity in each of the targeted municipalities. All action plan activities are multi-ethnic in nature and lead to improved inter-ethnic cooperation between majority and non-majority youth population in the targeted municipalities. Year one

Activity 1.6: Provide constructive engagement through small-scale infrastructure projects (KRA 1, 6)

Over the life of the AKT-US project, we plan to support community and municipality-identified priorities, to include implementation of up to 20 small-scale infrastructure projects. Communities are actively involved in the entire process, which includes project identification, project design, monitoring and evaluation, and preparation of a sustainability plans. The process of selecting and supporting priority small-scale infrastructure projects is composed of several steps:

1. In each partner municipality, AKT-US identified three partner communities. In each, program staff organized community open meetings with the purpose of presenting the AKT-US program, openly discussing priority community needs, identifying the top priorities, and establishing CFs as the body with which the program coordinates activities. Further,

community members at this meeting elected members of their MCF, who coordinate activities at municipal level.

2. AKT-US facilitates preparation of the project applications with community members for those priorities identified, including an explanation of the problem, its impact, anticipated benefits that the community will have when the problem, required activities, available resources and commitments, the number of beneficiaries that will benefit from the project, the process used to monitor project implementation, and any additional relevant information.
3. AKT organizes meetings with all three CFs in a municipality and the MCF. Each CF presents its project proposal and explains why it should be selected as the municipality's top priority. Together, they rank projects in priority order by consensus, or in case consensus is not reached, a vote is taken.
4. After prioritization at the municipal level, AKT initiates its process of review before sending to application concept to USAID for review and final approval. Once approval is granted, the program competitively tenders and subcontracts a local design firm and licensed construction company to ensure that the project is designed and implemented with proper permits and building standards. From start to finish, the process requires the active involvement and cooperation of both municipal officials and community members to ensure that the project meets expectations and will be well-maintained after completion.

Considering the number of planned small scale infrastructure projects up to 20 to be implemented, the number of established CFs, and available funds, AKT-US and AKT-LS agreed that AKT-US would share its lists of community identified priorities so that together both projects can provide a deeper level of support. In line with that, AKT-US and LS organized several joint meetings among both teams, community members and municipal officials with purpose of clarifying those that will be implemented by AKT-US and those by AKT-LS and division of responsibilities among projects, municipalities and communities.

During year one, year one AKT-US completed the process described above with a majority of its partner municipalities and initiated project designs and/or the procurement process for seven small-scale infrastructure projects:

- Central heating for school in Radevo/Radevë (Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality)
- Construction of sidewalks in Donja Budriga/Budrige e Ulët (Parteš/Partesh municipality)
- Central heating for Caravodice/Crkvena Vodica (Obiliq/Obiliç municipality)
- Public lightning for Kusce/Kufce (Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality)
- Water network rehabilitation for Viça/Viqe (Štrpce/Shtrpce municipality)
- Public lightning for Gorazhdevcë/Gorazdevac (Peja/Peç municipality)
- Construction of sidewalks in Vrbovac/Verbocë (Klokot/Klllokot municipality)

The total number of beneficiaries for the project above is more than 5000 inhabitants. Implementation will continue in year two. Program staff will continue to work on completion of all procedures for remaining planned projects.

Concurrently, AKT-US worked with CFs and MCFs to identify and implement “quick impact” projects. Smaller in scale at an average cost of \$3,000, these projects serve as a platform for establishing trust and confidence of each community and will help measure how actively engaged communities can be while working together toward a common purpose. Intended for all communities in which AKT-US works, these projects primarily support village youth clubs, playground improvements for children, equipment for schools and other similar small-scale endeavors. During year one, seven community quick impact projects were completed:



Delivery of playground equipment for the Vica/Viqe village (Štrpce/Shtpce municipality)

- Delivery of school equipment for elementary school in Donja Budriga/Budrigë e Ulët (Gjilan municipality)
- Delivery of playground equipment for Viča/Viqë (Štrpce/Shtpce municipality)
- Delivery of audio equipment for Koretište/Koretishe (Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality)
- Delivery of audio equipment for Youth Cenetr in Klokot/Kllokot municipality
- Delivery of equipment for community center in Kormnjan i Epërm / Gornje Kormnjane (Ranilug/Ranillug municipality)
- Supply school yard with children's playground equipment and sports yard with sports equipment for Gojbula/Gojbuljë (Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality)
- Provide IT equipment for the Family Health Care Center in Priluzhje/Prilluzhë (Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality)

Challenges Encountered and Addressed

PIR 1 faced challenges over the course of year one. Though they cannot be qualified as very serious, they did cause delays and inhibited our ability to accomplish activities at the pace planned in our first work plan.

- AKT-US experienced delays in human resources – project staff and project stakeholders. With the conclusion of predecessor projects, it took a few months to fully on-board project staff, and therefore apply the necessary expertise to generate momentum on project activities. In addition, local elections were held in June and certification of election results took more than six months, resulting in some delay in establishing productive relationships with local government.
- Municipal budgets were decreased due to required salary increases in the public sector, which drew municipal authority attention to resolve and drew resources away from the municipal commitment needed for responsive engagement and meaningful service improvement.

- Some target communities in partner municipalities were initially cautious and hesitant to participate in AKT-US activities. Participation in community open meetings in ethnically mixed communities was difficult; although people of different ethnicities live next to each other there is not much interaction between them, especially when it comes to joint initiatives and projects. In a number of cases the meetings were initially very tense, but as time passed, tensions abated and discussions became very constructive and interactive.
- AKT-US faced challenges in identifying opportunities for AKT-US to support the OLC. Already the target of other donor support and AKT's inability to accommodate OLC's request for a long-term embedded advisor, it required several meetings with Language Commissioner to come up with initial ideas and then confirm the nature of AKT-US's support.
- One of challenges to accelerating the number of project proposals was the collaborative process itself. Wanting to ensure community and municipal ownership, the process for engaging stakeholders took time (particularly during reporting and other administratively heavy times for municipal authorities) and the approval process from some municipal administrations (particularly for sizeable financial commitments) required more time than originally anticipated.
- Preparing project designs for small-scale infrastructure projects is a municipal responsibility. A lack of expertise within municipalities in preparing project designs and other necessary documentation required the municipalities to outsource to design companies. Prepared designs required extensive review and feedback, and not having an engineer as part of the team resulted in delays in finalization of designs and initiation of procurements. After we were able to engage an engineer designs immediately improved and the process streamlined.
- After award of AKT-LS, it became apparent that there was confusion among stakeholders on the difference between AKT-US and AKT-LS. Whenever possible, AKT-US and AKT-LS started to participate in meetings with stakeholders jointly and deliver clear information to Mayors and other key municipal officials.
- The situation in the northern municipalities and issues that local government in all four municipalities have with integration into Kosovo Government Institutions have influenced and significantly altered program activities planned for north.
- With regard to building the skills of youth and women to obtain public sector positions, we have encouraged NGOs to propose innovative approaches and apply via the APS, but unfortunately we have not received any applications pertaining to this activity. In addition, statements made by the newly established central government reveal plans for government downsizing, making it all the more difficult for our work in this area to yield employment. Nonetheless, we continued to look forward to poising youth and women to obtain increased representation in public sector positions.

Project Intermediate Result 2: Improve economic opportunities for non-majority communities in target municipalities through job creation and support to entrepreneurs

Key Achievements

- 334 entrepreneurs, women, youth, farmers and business owners from majority and non-majority communities have been equipped with trainings on entrepreneurs, business management, agriculture management, food processing and business plan development;
- 27 of these are non-majority and majority youth and women-owned businesses, 129 are businesses owned by people of age 26-60;
- 23 small businesses and 5 associations have been brought together for business-to-business meetings to create new partnerships between majority larger buyers and non-majority small businesses;
- 5 non-majority business associations assisted with branding and outreach activities
- 96 farmers prepared with application forms and business plan development for grants and subsidy applications at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD);
- Intensive outreach campaigns organized, generating 403 applications for 151 places for trainings;
- A database of another 400 non-majority and majority businesses of partner municipalities created, and will serve for future business linkages purposes;
- Partnerships created with relevant stakeholders, such as economic development departments of municipalities, business associations, NGOs, other USAID programs, namely NOA, CLE, EMPOWER, and Crimson Capital;
- Assessment report completed for non-majority businesses market opportunities and business linkages opportunities with majority businesses.

Activity 2.1: Assess and facilitate market linkages between majority and non-majority businesses (KRAs 1, 2, 5, 8)

As part of a market assessment in partner municipalities, AKT-US partnered with the USAID Contract Law Enforcement (CLE) program to conduct a roundtable discussion with 18 representatives from the non-majority business community in Gračanica/Gračanica. The roundtable, organized in cooperation with the Gračanica/Gračanica municipality, focused on the priority needs and obstacles that the non-majority business community faces, such as challenges associated with placing their products in the local market and partnering with other majority and/or non-majority businesses.



Round table organized in Gračanica/Gračanica organized by CLE

In July, AKT-US organized and conducted a business roundtable with former USAID-funded Community Action Initiative Program (CAIP) business development grantees in North Mitrovica/ Mitrovicë to discuss how USAID can help minority-owned businesses to further

develop their operations, extend their market into southern Kosovo, and strengthen inter-ethnic business cooperation. Fifteen representatives and owners of northern Kosovo-based businesses, together with representatives of the women associations “Inspiracija” and “Vesele Kolašinke”, participated in the event and shared their needs, everyday business challenges, obstacles to business unique to northern Kosovo, and ideas on how to foster and improve the business environment and strengthen inter-business cooperation Kosovo-wide.

AKT-US engaged Berman Group to identify market expansion opportunities and facilitate potential linkages between majority and non-majority businesses. We sought to identify local businesses capable of expanding production and markets (based on multi-ethnic cooperation driven by mutual economic interests) and pair up non-majority and majority buyers, input suppliers, and/or processors. AKT-US provided Berman Group consultants with its database of 400 businesses from 16 partner municipalities and facilitated meetings with the Economic Development Department of the Municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpçë, the Mayor of Zvečan/Zveçan, Business Support Centre Štrpce, Business Center Zvecan, and NGO AKTIV from North Mitrovica/ë to inform their work.

The Berman Group initiated a market feasibility assessment for micro and small family businesses and a business attitude and linkages survey with 48 non-majority businesses in 10 partner municipalities. The objective of the survey was to provide AKT-US with analytical information on the status, performance, and future plans of target businesses. Survey items included the history and current status of the company, the nature of its business, labor and employee relations, business facility information, government services, and potential linkages with other majority businesses. Surveyed companies were selected based on their longevity and likelihood for growth and job creation. The industries in which these businesses operate include: water bottling, sweets manufacturing, internet service provider, wood processing, agriculture, and food processing. In addition, eight interviews were conducted with larger scale majority owned businesses, with the goal of identifying and analyzing market linkages between majority-owned and non-majority-owned businesses. During the course of discussion with Kosovo Serb businesses, Kosovo Albanian companies were identified that had actual or potential opportunities to work with Kosovo Serb companies, and these eight were identified for interviews. The results of the assessment are incorporated into our year two work plan activities.

AKT-US presented the AKT program in the first Conference of North and South Mitrovica/ë businesses in North Mitrovica/ë, where we presented the strategy for North Kosovo opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs and met with businesses individually to listen to their business development plans and possibility of partnering between North and South Kosovo businesses.

AKT-US coordinated with AKT-LS to issue a Request for Applications (RFA) for existing family businesses of partner municipalities. The objective of the AKT-US grant program was to further strengthen Kosovo’s micro and small business development by enabling collaboration between businesses of different ethnicities and improving the competitiveness of non-majority owned businesses, particularly micro and small (less than 10 employees) family-owned enterprises on the verge of business expansion in the AKT partner municipalities. Businesses targeted through this RFA are those that have completed the business development training and business plan competition offered by AKT-US subcontractor Business Support Center of Kosovo (BSCK). The grants will enable businesses to create new employment opportunities for non-majority women and youth by facilitating

business growth, increasing sales through equipment or technological upgrades, strengthening value chain linkages, increased production of final goods, and/or partnering with other businesses to fulfill a particular market need. The focus sectors for business expansion activities include: services, agriculture and agro processing, food processing, wood processing, healthcare, media, tourism, trade, transport and logistics, recycling and paper production, and fashion and beauty.

While AKT-US will focus on expansion of existing businesses, AKT-LS will focus on start-ups. AKT-US anticipates awarding up to 20 small existing businesses in range of 2,500 to 6,000 EUR each. The deadline for business expansion grants application was April 20, 2015. This activity will directly contribute to increase of sales and generate new employment for small businesses in partner municipalities. Business grants activities will continue during year two of the program.

As part of providing technical assistance to businesses and farmers of partner municipalities, the program jointly with grantee Initiative for Agricultural Development in Kosovo (IADK) organized a training on *Improvement of Milk Quality* for businesses and farmers of Štrpce/Shtërpçë and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë. Two groups of 10 participants each, from majority and non-majority community participated in the five-day training. The training sessions covered the following topics: milking procedures using hygienic equipment, milking machine calibration, prevention from mastitis diseases, balancing feed ration, and improving feed quality. The 20 farmers that participated on trainings were supported with basic equipment for improving milk quality (milk sanitary equipment as brushers for cleaning, alkaline and acid, pre-deeping for udder disinfection and iodine). This equipment will assist the farmers on improving milk quality and in return, they will get higher milk prices from dairy processors.

Another training on *Farm Management and Increased Milk Production* for farmers and business of Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok has been organized through grantee IADK for 10 participants of each municipality. Each group has undergone 5 training sessions and equipped with technical assistance to improve farm management and facility standards, breeding, milk quality and calibration, milk storage and transportation and business skills for record keeping and gross margin.

Municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpçë and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë farmers have been offered two days training on how to apply for grants at Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD). Besides, both groups were delivered a training on how to prepare a business plan, to further assist them in grants applications. Local municipal staff also were included in the training to increase their capacities and in return provide the same opportunity to other local farmers. 60 farmers attended the training in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, and 36 farmers attended the training in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë.

In March, AKT-US organized a Business to Business (B2B) meeting in cooperation with AKT grantee Business Support Center Štrpce. The event brought together producers from partner municipalities of Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Klokot/Klllokot, Parteš/Partesh, and Ranilug/Ranillug and buyers and distributors from other parts of Kosovo. In total, there were 16 non-majority businesses and five associations from these municipalities, and another five larger buyers and distributors (four Albanians and one Serbian buyer/distributor). This meeting was also attended by representatives of Agriculture and Economic Development Departments of the above-mentioned municipalities. Prior to individual business-to-business

meetings, each participant introduced their business or association, and a discussion was facilitated on what is expected from producers in terms of quality, time, and volume of goods. Another topic of discussion was the



B2B organized by Business Support Center from Štrpce/Shtërpcë

agriculture grants from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) and the capacity of the producers in applying for these grants. Businesses and associations welcomed the support from the former USAID NOA program in improving the quality of production and AKT's support in assisting them in branding their products for better market access and visibility. AKT-US will organize three additional follow-up B2B meetings during May and June 2015.

To prepare for upcoming B2B meetings, the team organized field visits to non-majority businesses. The following businesses were visited and confirmed their intent to participate in business linkages activities to be organized by AKT: Aqua Breza, Štrpce/Shtërpcë; AquaSana, Klokot/Kllokot; Agroprodukti, Klokot/Kllokot; Zemljordnička Zadruga, Klokot/Kllokot; P.T.P. Šijak, Parteš/Partesh; P.P. Fratello Trade, Gračanica/Graçanicë; Euro Stil Ristić, Ranilug/Ranillug; P.P. Ristic-1, Ranilug/Ranillug; Scardus D.O.O., Štrpce/Shtërpcë. Another 11 non-majority businesses from both the North and South have confirmed via phone and email their participation in upcoming B2B events between majority and non-majority businesses.

As part of business linkages activities, AKT-US, together with grantee Business Support Center Štrpce, organized a workshop with three business associations from Štrpce/Shtërpcë to assist them in developing branding of associations. The topics covered in this workshop include marketing, branding, and product labeling. There are seven members from three associations namely Shara Swarm Association, Susice Raspberry, and Shara Raspberry Association. Each member brings ideas and works with others to develop a full package of branding for the associations. Final material is then presented. At the conclusion of the activity, each association will have final printed materials including stories, brochures, logo design, and business cards. The aim is to assist the associations that in turn increase their members and assist members to promote their businesses and increase their market share.

Activity 2.2: Promote SME competitiveness and access to finance and support youth entrepreneurship and employability, including returnees (KRAs 2, 6, 7, 9)

In October and November 2014, AKT-US, in collaboration with subcontractor Business Support Centre Kosovo (BSCK), organized four cycles of five-day Introduction to Entrepreneurship training for 92 non-majority entrepreneurs and business owners of partner municipalities. Over 200 applications were received for the activity, generated through an intensive promotion campaign in partner municipalities. Applications were evaluated based on the innovativeness of the applicant's business idea, the age of the applicant, the cost of implementing their proposal, and potential benefit to the community.

In all, 60 participants divided into two groups completed the training in North Mitrovica/ë at AKT-US Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC). Another 32 participants completed the five-day training in Gračanica/Graçanicë. In both training locations, the participants came from the following municipalities: North Mitrovica/ë, Leposavić/q, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Gračanica/Graçanicë, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Ranilug/Ranillug, Parteš/Partesh, and Gjilan/Gnjilane.

On the last training day, each participant took the “entrepreneur’s test” that evaluated the knowledge gained during the training as well as their entrepreneurial abilities in starting up or expanding their businesses. Based on the results of this test and the feasibility of their business ideas, 30 candidates were invited



Introduction to Entrepreneurship Training at the RCRC

to an advanced three-week training course, which focused on financial management, business planning, human resources, marketing, and market research. Successful participants with existing businesses were eligible to apply for business expansion grants at AKT-US, whereas those with ideas to start a business were encouraged to apply for AKT-LS business start-up grants.

Two groups of majority and non-majority business owners and entrepreneurs, 59 participants in total, have completed the Business Plan Competition training, organized through AKT subcontractor Business Support Centre Kosovo (BSCK). The training participants were chosen from 202 applications generated through the promotion campaign and were evaluated based on the potential of applicants’ businesses and their match to overall objectives of AKT. Trainings were organized in municipalities of Gjilan/Gnjilane and Klinë/Klina, and training participants came from the following municipalities: Klokot/Kllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peç, Klinë/Klina, and Istog/Istok. The five-day training was delivered in Albanian and Serbian languages and each training participant was trained to prepare a professional business plan that will help them apply for AKT-US small business expansion grants and find other sources of financing to grow their businesses. The same participants attended the briefing session on small business expansion grants. Entrepreneurs who had business start-up ideas were encouraged to apply for AKT-LS start-up grants.

Participants - Business Plan Competition Training BSCK										
Group	Total	Kosovo Serbian	Kosovo Albanian	Kosovo Other	Male	Female	15-25	26-35	36-50	51+
Gjilan/Gnjilane	30	17	13	0	24	6	6	13	8	3
Klinë/Klina	29	12	17	0	23	6	5	5	15	4
TOTAL	59	29	30	0	47	12	11	18	23	7
% of total participants	100%	49%	51%	0%	80%	20%	19%	31%	39%	12%

Participants Municipality			Participants Gender		Business		Gender of Owner		Ethnicity of Owner		
		%	Male	Female	YES	NO	Male	Female	Serbian	Albanian	Other
Gnjilane/Gjilan	12	20%	8	4	5	7	4	1	4	1	0
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë	11	19%	9	2	7	4	5	2	2	5	0
Parteš/Partesh	1	2%	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Klokot/Kllokot	3	5%	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Štrpce/Shtërpçë	3	5%	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Peç/Pejë	8	14%	8	0	6	2	6	0	0	6	0
Klina/Klinë	10	17%	6	4	5	5	4	1	0	5	0
Istok/Istog	11	19%	9	2	6	5	5	1	4	2	0
TOTAL:	59	100%	47	12	29	30	24	5	10	19	0

Similarly in February, the 27 most successful non-majority participants from the Introduction to Entrepreneurship training were moved to a three-week advanced business training, organized in North Mitrovica/ë. These training courses were delivered by BSCK and training topics included financial management, business planning, business strategy, and marketing and market research. BSCK assisted participants to develop professional business plans, to apply for small business grants at AKT-US, and find other sources of finance to grow their businesses. Each training course participant is eligible to apply for small business grants to assist vulnerable groups in finding new market opportunities and create linkages between majority and non-majority businesses and generate employment. During the first day of the training, AKT-LS introduced their program's business development component and its intent to support start-up grants.

Participants - Advanced Business Training BSCK										
Group	Total	Kosovo Serbian	Kosovo Albanian	Kosovo Other	Male	Female	15-25	26-35	36-50	51+
Gračanica/Gračanicë	8	8	0	0	7	1	5	2	1	0
North Mitrovica/ë	19	19	0	0	10	9	5	6	6	2
TOTAL	27	27	0	0	17	10	10	8	7	2
% of total participants	100%	100%	0%	0%	63%	37%	37%	30%	26%	7%

Participants Municipality			Participants Gender		Business		Gender of Owner		Ethnicity of Owner		
		%	Male	Female	YES	NO	Male	Female	Serbian	Albanian	Other
Gračanica/Gračanicë	7	26%	7	0	1	6	1	0	1	0	0
Ranilug/Ranillug	1	4%	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
North Mitrovica/ë	7	26%	3	4	3	4	2	1	2	0	1
Zvečan/Zveçan	7	26%	5	2	5	2	4	1	5	0	0
Leposavić/Leposaviq	2	7%	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0
Zubin Potok	2	7%	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Vushtrri/Vuçitrn	1	4%	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
TOTAL:	27	100%	17	10	12	15	9	3	11	0	1

Activity 2.3: Support women-owned enterprises (KRAs 1, 2, 4, 5)

To assess the women associations' capacities, the program conducted numerous meetings with both majority and non-majority associations. The program brought together Albanian Women Business Association "She-era" from Gjakova/Đakovica and Serbian NGO "Santa Maria" from Zvečan/Zveçan to create partnerships between both organizations in sharing experience and organizing joint activities in empowering women entrepreneurs from both communities. Other meetings include Women's Business Association (WBA) from North Mitrovica/ë, Mundësia NGO from South Mitrovica/ë, multiethnic Naš Dom from Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, and Avenija from Gračanica/Gračanicë. The team promoted the program's APS among these associations and encouraged them to apply. In March, two women associations, namely Mundësia and Sabor from North Mitrovica/ë, were awarded grants by the program. A multi-ethnic network of women entrepreneurs is underway and expected to be formally established by October 2015.

Women producers associations of majority and non-majority communities from Štrpce/Shtërpçë (10 women) were delivered a training on Fruit Home Food Processing through grantee Initiative for Agricultural Development in Kosovo (IADK). A practical and theoretical training was delivered including different recipes, hygienic training and standardization of the products. IADK provided portable kitchen equipment to be used during this training. Municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpçë participated by proving a location for training in village Gotovuša/Gotovushë. The two women associations include multiethnic women's associations - "Ikebana" from the village of Gotovuša/Gotovushë (Štrpce/Shtërpçë) and "Borovnicë" from Brod (Štrpce/Shtërpçë). This activity will help women increase their sales of homemade fruit products.

Challenges Encountered and Addressed

PIR 2 also faced challenges over the course of year one, though through careful management, they did not cause serious delays in delivery of project activities.

- To avoid overlap with USAID economic growth projects, the program had to carefully redefine its target businesses, focusing its activities on micro or small family-owned businesses. The business development team has now initiated linkages with micro businesses that are potential beneficiaries, and with business centers and associations, whose members are target groups for the program.
- AKT-US and USAID Contract Law Enforcement (CLE) Program were prepared to hold a business-to-business (B2B) Trade Fair in Gračanica/Gračanicë, inviting business from the Gračanica/Gračanicë region (including businesses who participated in the five-day introduction to entrepreneurship training course) and larger Kosovo

Albanian businesses to foster business relationships that might lead to deals. The mayor became unavailable to meet about the event and then resigned, so this event was cancelled. The B2B is no longer within CLE's remaining scope, therefore AKT-US will organize this event jointly with AKT-LS during year two.

- The engagement of our subcontractor, Berman Group, to conduct a market assessment in the program's 16 target municipalities and identify local businesses capable of expanding into new markets was delayed as their work was contingent on receiving a source origin waiver from the USAID Mission since Berman is a Czech company. To offset any further delay, the program divided the assignment into two phases, one to be conducted by a local consultant that started work in the interim and then the second phase to be completed by Czech consultants. Berman Group was engaged to provide us with critical insights and information regarding market linkage opportunities. The initial draft missed opportunities for drilling down on constraints to inter-ethnic cooperation within value chains. AKT-US provided this feedback to Berman Group and they subsequently conducted additional interviews on attitudes, opportunities, and constraints to inter-ethnic cooperation from a buyer's perspective. All of this information is currently being used to plan upcoming activities.

Project Intermediate Result 3: Increase the efficiency and capacity of target municipal administrations to respond to the needs of all their citizens

During the first year of the project, AKT reached 436 municipal officials through workshops, on-the-job coaching sessions, roundtables, and development of municipal self-assessments. Through topics ranging from budget preparation, property tax legislation, Municipal OSR, SIAP methodology, and MOCR issues, the project helped 16 partner municipalities improve their capacity to respond to the needs of all their citizens.

Key Achievements

- 436 municipal officials participated in various capacity building events aim at increasing efficiency and effectiveness of partner municipalities to govern better and meet expectation of citizens;
- Conducted comprehensive municipal self-assessments and developed customized Draft Capacity Development Plans for 16 partner municipalities;
- The MLGA, MoF and the four municipalities in the north (which are new to the Kosovo legal framework) have recognized the work of AKT staff and considered AKT team as a key partner in establishing mutual partnership between central and local governments and providing basic trainings on Kosovo legal framework;
- Created conditions for improving waste collection and public lighting in two partner municipalities (Klinë/Klina and Obilq/Obilić) - three SIAPs finalized; two other municipalities (Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan) are on the way to finalize their SIAPs and set preconditions for new investments and improvements in the area of energy efficiency;
- Posting of municipal acts at web portals of partner municipalities increased by 17 percent in 2014 compared to 2013 as result of on-the-job trainings and established collaboration between partner municipalities and MLGA in the area of municipal performance measurement;
- Launched capacity building curriculum that is targeting MOCR and MACC in partner municipalities with the purpose to empower them and enable more efficient protection of communities' interests and rights.

Activity 3.1: Enhance capacity of municipal administrations for strategic planning and to deliver and oversee quality services.

During the reporting period, AKT assisted 12 partner municipalities to comprehensive municipal self-assessments. The project facilitated open discussions and direct meetings with mayors, municipal assembly chairpersons, directors of municipal departments, and other relevant municipal authorities. The tool used for conducting the self- assessments consists of 50 questions and covers six key areas:

1. Leadership and management;
2. Municipal administration;
3. Municipal assemblies;
4. Citizen participation;
5. Service delivery; and
6. Local economic development.



Istog/Istok municipal officials during municipal self-assessment visit

The purpose of the self-assessments was to build upon earlier USAID’s previous investment with the Democratic Effective Municipalities Initiative (DEMI) municipal assessments; updating existing ones and initiating assessments in new partner municipalities. The overall goal of the assessment was to enable municipal authorities to define current levels of municipal capacity on the one hand, and needs on the other, in all the above-mentioned categories. The objective of the assessment is to serve as one of the tools to inform the program’s team on the process of preparation of customized Capacity Development Plans (CDPs) for partner municipalities.

During the reporting period, the 12 out of 16 partner municipalities fully completed the self-assessment: Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klokot/Klllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë; Gjilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć and Vushtri/Vučitrn. The program team did not use the same self-assessment tool in four northern municipalities: Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Lepsavić/Lepsaviq, Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan since the municipalities are still transitioning to Kosovo’s administrative regulations and procedures and are partially operating under Government of Serbia norms. However, AKT approached mayors, municipal assembly

chairpersons, and other relevant authorities of these municipalities individually and provided preliminary information related to the assessment.

The assessment process itself was well accepted by partner municipalities. Respective mayors were especially interested in subsequent program support to address municipal needs in the six areas, as appropriate. While conducting municipal self-assessments, for example, partner municipalities frequently sought the support of the program staff to properly understand the goal of assessments and evaluate municipal officials' own capacities and needs (based on the 50 assessment questions).

Based on completed municipal self-assessments and data from partner municipalities, the USAID AKT team drafted a *Report on Municipal Self Assessments 2014*. This report, along with other policy papers and reports (MLGA's Report on Functioning of Kosovo Municipalities, General Audit Report, Municipal Performance and General Municipal Information Form), has been used as a reference document during the process of preparing customized CDPs for the 16 partner municipalities. The CDPs are designed to guide municipal capacity-building, human and institutional development initiatives to address technical assistance requirements, and any other gaps identified in the assessment.

To support this effort through a Kosovo organization, USAID AKT program awarded a grant to local consulting firm Regional Technology Center (RTC) Consulting to prepare customized CDPs for our 16 partner municipalities. The AKT staff worked hand-in-hand with RTC Consulting's local government advisors, providing input and facilitation as they completed the CDPs. The advisors of RTC Consulting conducted a series of meetings with the leadership of partner municipalities to gain better understanding and insight into municipal needs. Similarly, AKT staff facilitated meetings of RTC Consulting's advisors with MLGA and MF's department directors as well. During these meetings RTC Consulting's advisors gained familiarity with areas that need improvements in the respective municipalities from the central government prospective, which could also be included into CDPs.

"Building internal municipal capacities is permanently ongoing in Gračanica/Gračanicë and we are looking forward to working with you in defining further municipal capacity needs. However, we are even more interested to improve municipal performance by addressing identified municipal needs."

Sandra Stevic, Chief of Mayor's Cabinet in Gračanica/Gračanicë

By the end of the program's first year, RTC Consulting developed the first draft CDPs for all 16 partner municipalities. In the second year of the project, AKT and RTC Consulting will finalize draft CDPs, present them to the mayors and other top municipal authorities in 16 municipalities, obtain their feedback and additional inputs, update and then finalize the CDPs accordingly.

The AKT-US team also worked closely with LS staff to coordinate and facilitate preparation of the LS's Objective 3 Work Plan. As a result, LS Objective 3 staff adjusted activities and priorities and incorporated them into their work plan and both teams established clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. On a similar matter, the AKT-US team introduced the LS team to the leadership in partner municipalities, including those in the north as well as to the senior authorities at the central level of the governance in Kosovo.

In September 2014, USAID/Kosovo decided to hire two international advisers, Ms. Joanne Adams and Mr. Krzysztof Chmura to facilitate program activities in the four northern municipalities: Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore, Zvečan/Zveçan, Leposavić/Leposaviq,

and Zubin Potok. The USAID advisors, accompanied by their staff. The advisers and their colleagues Mr. Lulzim Kuçani and Mr. Naser Ashimi, are located in the Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC) in Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore. They have been instrumental in providing daily assistance to these municipalities on their requests and *ad hoc* needs. This ultimately included on-the-job coaching on budget proposals, facilitation of communication between northern municipalities and line ministries in the GoK, participation in public budget hearings, and meetings with the mayors, municipal assembly chairpersons and directors on current municipal affairs.

USAID/Kosovo requested that the AKT team support four northern municipalities draft and finalize their Fiscal Year 2015 budgets based on instructions that respective municipalities received from the Government of Kosovo (GoK) and which met the northern municipalities' own expectations for support. The context for this support centers on the transition of state support for these particular municipalities from the Government of Serbia to the GoK and the subsequent process of realigning local priorities with newly controlling funding ceilings developed by the MLGA and MoF. Consequently, the team conducted a number of on-the-job coaching sessions with relevant authorities of the four northern municipalities on this matter. As a result, four northern municipalities, under AKT mentorship, developed two versions of their budget for FY 2015: the first version took into consideration budget ceilings and instructions from Kosovo's Ministry of Finance (MoF) (Budget Circular 1 and 2); and the second version reflected accurate needs in terms of staffing and allows transition of all public employees from the Serbian to Kosovo system, which was in the spirit of the Brussels accord. In September 2014, Mitrovica North Administrative Office (MNAO) sponsored a Workshop on the FY2015 Budget Proposal for Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë³ and invited AKT staff to participate in an advisory capacity. The workshop brought together the mayor, municipal assembly members, chairperson of the municipal assembly, MNAO Principle Executive Officer (PEO), MNAO department directors, and representatives of the MLGA to discuss the status of the budget preparation process for FY2015, and existing needs and challenges. Members of the municipal assembly participating in the workshop had a lively discussion about budget proposal and for the first time were able to directly communicate their needs and concerns to MLGA representatives.

Within the deadline required by law (September 30), the four northern municipal assemblies had approved only the budget proposals that reflect their needs. The Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) and MoF did not fully agree with these approved budgets as those were not in compliance with the released MoF's budget ceiling instructions (see Table and note below) while the northern municipalities maintained the principle that all public employees need to be transferred from Serbian to Kosovo system, which is in the spirit of reached Brussels agreements⁴, thereby adding to costs. Despite the challenges, this was the first time in the past 16 years that the northern municipalities developed and submitted budgets to the GoK for consideration and approval.

³ The workshop was conducted on September 21, 22 and 23 in Ohrid/Oher, Macedonia. AKT staff members facilitated working sessions during the first two days.

Municipality	MoF's budget ceilings for FY 2015 (in thousands)	Approved budgets for FY 2015 (in thousands)
Sev. Mitrovica/Mitrovicë	€4,598.608	€17,368.294
Zvečan/Zveçan	€1,715.522	€18,068.063
Leposavić/Leposaviq	€3,402.869	€11,561.625
Zubin Potok	€1,861.975	€21,542.365

Note: The MoF's budget ceilings include budget sub-categories "wages and salaries" in education and health, while the 2015 budget proposals approved by municipal assemblies in the north were instructed by Serbia not to include these items. Still, as shown, their budget proposals were many times larger than the maximum allocations allowed by MoF. The GoK has established a Working Group on Institutional Capacity Building of the Administration of Municipalities Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić/Leposaviq. The Working Group, composed of representatives of the line ministries, mayors and international stakeholders such as U.S. Embassy, EU Office, USAID and USAID Advancing Kosovo Together staff, has been tasked to resolve the budget issues in respective municipalities. The budget spreadsheets (the two versions of the budgets, each presenting municipal budget lines (1) wages salaries, (2) goods and services, (3) utilities, (4) subventions and transfers, and (5) capital investments) prepared by the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together team with municipalities in the North will help the working group in accomplishing its task.

As part of the year one work plan activity of providing basic training in effective municipal administration, including legal counsel in drafting and adapting required municipal legislation in the northern municipalities, the program responded to a request from the director of the Municipal Administration Department in Leposavić/Leposaviq for legal advice to better understand the internal organization of the municipal administration under Kosovo's legal framework. In particular, the director sought clarification on public procurement procedures and the protection of personal data within the municipal administration. The AKT team responded with guidance on both issues.

Additionally, responded to the mayor of Gračanica/Graçanicë's request to provide guidance on waste management and the establishment of municipal public utilities company. A regional public company "Pastrimi" at the time provided the services in Gračanica/Graçanicë. Nevertheless, the municipal leadership was not quite satisfied with the service provision and intended to further improve municipal waste collection and disposal services by establishing a municipal public utilities company. The municipality has prepared a set of documents needed for registration/licensing of the enterprise, and has requested program assistance in reviewing the documents and helping with the process, particularly prior to their submission to line ministries and governmental agencies. Accordingly, the AKT team provided the mayor with a *Guide to Registration and Licensing of Municipal Public Companies* in Serbian. The guide sets forth rules and procedures based on applicable Kosovo legislation, which each local government needs to follow while establishing a municipal public utilities company. The municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë has submitted an official request for registration as a public utilities company to the line ministries. However, the registration process is still pending governmental approval and in the meantime, the Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality continues to provide services through the regional public company "Pastrimi."



SIAP workshop with the Obiliq/Obilic and Kline/Klina municipalities

To build the best managerial practices among the leadership and staff in partner municipalities, and increase the quality and efficiency of service delivery, AKT staff launched a series of workshops (see picture above) to introduce the Service Improvement Action Plan (SIAP) Methodology in partner municipalities. The SIAP had been used by particular municipalities in Kosovo and other developing countries (e.g. Albania, Georgia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, etc.) as a management tool to improve municipal service delivery. In the first year, AKT staff introduced the SIAP methodology to Obilić/Obiliq and Klinë/Klina. Consequently, these municipalities established working groups that consist of municipal experts, civil society and community representatives, and municipal leadership to improve public lighting (Obilq/Obilic and Klinë/Klina) and waste management (Klinë/Klina) through this methodology. AKT staff conducted three workshops with the working group members to help them develop SIAPs. As result, Obiliq/Obilic municipality developed a SIAP on Public Lighting while Klinë/Klina finalized one SIAP on Waste Management and another on Public Lighting. These simple but strategic documents provide clear steps on what municipalities need to do over a three-year period to improve selected services, including indicators against which progress could be measured. In year two, AKT-US and LS will support implementation of the SIAPs in these two municipalities by co-financing two projects in each municipality that are related to selected services.

Similarly, the AKT-US team conducted a seminar on SIAP methodology, MLGA's Municipal Performance Measurement System, and Energy Efficiency Legal Framework in Kosovo with the leadership of the municipalities in the north. The program engaged the MLGA and Kosovo Agency for Energy Efficiency (KAEE) to establish communications between local government authorities in the north and central government institutions on municipal programming. The seminar was held at the Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC) in Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore and brought together representatives from Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić/Leposaviq, MLGA, and KAEE to discuss strategic approaches on improving municipal services and the ways in which municipalities in the north could attract incentive funds and meet Kosovo's legal requirements on energy efficiency. The overall goal of this seminar was to familiarize northern municipalities with SIAP as a management tool that allows local governments to provide more efficient municipal services while focusing on the needs of citizens. MLGA representatives

introduced the Kosovo’s Municipal Performance Management System to participants and provided extensive information on finance sources and procedures that municipalities need to follow while applying for available MLGA incentive funds. Similarly, the KAEE representatives clarified international energy efficiency standards and presented legal requirements for developing municipal energy efficiency plans that municipalities need to fulfill. The seminar also built the capacity of the four northern partner municipalities to comply with applicable legal frameworks on energy efficiency. Finally, this meeting was an exciting opportunity and likely the first occasion in the past 15 years for the legitimate representatives of the northern local governments and central government officials to participate in a training held in north Kosovo. The participants also used the opportunity to get to know each other and explore future collaboration.



Mr. Nenad Talic, Regional Development Advisor, and representatives of the four municipalities in the north discuss the advantages of the SIAP methodology to improve municipal services.

The mayors of Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan quickly reacted to this initiative and established working groups to draft a SIAP on Energy Efficiency. The working groups consist of representatives of the municipalities, experts in the field of energy efficiency, community representatives, and representatives from CSOs. Consequently, AKT staff successfully led the first workshop entitled “SIAP Methodology in the Function of Improving Energy Efficiency in the Municipality” and provided technical assistance and guidance on four major steps in SIAP development, i.e. (1) how to conduct situational analysis; (2) how to define outcomes and indicators for selected priority service; (3) how to collect and analyze needed data regarding selected service; and (4) how to set objectives and prepare the SIAP.

The participants also received guidance on how to engage citizens, including Community Forum members, in monitoring the implementation of the SIAP at a later stage. The SIAP working groups collected data required for drafted Municipal Plans on Energy Efficiency. It is worth mentioning that AKT-US staff engaged LS staff in all SIAP-related workshops conducted with partner municipalities. In Year 2, AKT staff will finalize SIAPs on Energy Efficiency in Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan and guide a process of SIAP development in remaining partner municipalities. This will be followed with implementation of the projects related to SIAPs and CDPs.

As part of customized support to improve municipal service delivery, AKT staff analyzed MLGA's Progress Report on the Functioning of Kosovo Municipalities and developed comparative tables that reflect the progress of the program's partner municipalities regarding the publication of municipal acts on their official web portals. The municipalities in the north, Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić/Leposaviq do have functional and relatively well-maintained websites (www.kosmitrovica.rs; www.opstinazvecan.rs; www.zubin-potok.org.rs; www.leposavic.rs). However, these websites are not consistent with the unified web portal layout that municipalities in the south use, and information at these websites are not available in Albanian. Therefore, the AKT-US team in collaboration with the LS counterparts, will jointly decide the approach to address this issue in the future.

Analysis shows that out of 515 municipal acts approved by 12 partner municipalities during 2013, only 249 or 48 percent were posted on their web portals. Therefore, in October 2014 AKT staff undertook few concrete steps in those partner municipalities to improve their performance in this regard: the program staff individually approached 12 partner municipalities to present the analysis/comparative tables, including best practices that transparent municipalities with good performance apply. Additionally, AKT also provided on-the-job coaching for 34 municipal officials (primarily for municipal public information officers, municipal assembly support officers, and directors of administrations in a few occasions) in the partner municipalities on concrete interventions that could increase the percentage of posted municipal acts on web portals of partner municipalities. During these meetings and on-the-job coaching sessions in partner municipalities, AKT team obtained municipalities' feedback on challenges that they normally face when comes to posting municipal acts on their web portals. Key concerns that partner municipalities raised regarding this matter include:

- Lack of adequate coordination among municipal staff
- Insufficient capacities to provide translation of municipal acts in minority language
- Insufficient Internet speed in municipalities
- Inconsistent maintenance of the web portals by contractor selected by MLGA for this purpose
- Inaccurate data published by MLGA in the report on publication of municipal acts on municipal web portals

However, it is worth mentioning that by the end of 2014, eight partner municipalities made outstanding progress with respect to posting municipal acts on municipal web portals. The top three champions among partner municipalities are Klokot/Kllokot, Štrpce/Shtërpçë. and Obilq/Obilić.

Municipal acts posted on official municipal web portals in 2013 vs 2014 in AKT-US partner municipalities

MUNICIPALITY		NUMBER OF APPROVED ACTS IN 2013	NUMBER OF POSTED ACTS IN 2013	PERCENTAGE OF POSTED ACTS IN 2013	NUMBER OF APPROVED ACTS IN 2014	NUMBER OF POSTED ACTS IN 2014	PERCENTAGE OF POSTED ACTS IN 2014	PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN 2014 COMPARED TO 2013
OBILIQ	OBILIC	36	9	25%	63	50	79,37%	54,37%
GRAČANICA	GRAČANICĚ	91	60	66%	89	85	95,51%	29,51%
ISTOG	ISTOK	19	1	5%	50	26	52,00%	47,00%
KLINĚ	KLINA	23	2	9%	57	36	63,16%	54,16%
PEJĚ	PEĆ	36	8	22%	76	35	46,05%	24,05%
LEPOSAVIC	LEPOSAVIC	0	0	0%	25	0	0,00%	0,00%
VUSHITRI	VUČITRN	50	30	60%	77	77	100,00%	40,00%
ZUBIN POTOK	ZUBIN POTOK	0	0	0%	17	0	0,00%	0,00%
ZVEČANE	ZVEČAN	0	0	0%	15	0	0,00%	0,00%
SEVERNA MITROVICA	MITROVICĚ VERIORE	0	0	0%	13	0	0,00%	0,00%
GJILAN	GNJILANE	58	43	74%	86	58	67,44%	-6,56%
NOVO BRDO	NOVOBĚRDĚ	47	28	60%	51	29	56,86%	-3,14%
ŠTRPCE	SHTĚRPCE	67	17	25%	37	35	94,59%	69,59%
PARTĚŠ	PARTESH	22	22	100%	41	0	0,00%	-100,00%
KLOKOT	KLLOKOT	37	0	0%	37	34	91,89%	91,89%
RANILUG	RANILLUG	29	29	100%	47	47	100,00%	0,00%
Total		515	249	48%	781	512	65,56%	17,21%

In the second half of year one, AKT staff continued to support partner municipalities in increasing their transparency. To encourage greater collaboration between partner municipalities and the MLGA, Advancing Kosovo Together met with the director of MLGA's Legal Department (Division for Monitoring of Municipalities) and presented the conclusions



March 26, 2015 - Municipal public information officers and municipal assembly support officers discussing municipal challenges and mechanisms to improve transparency at the local level of governance.

of the coaching sessions and meetings with partner municipalities. Moreover, the AKT team, in collaboration with MLGA, conducted a workshop, "Municipal Transparency – challenges and opportunities for improvement." The workshop was held in Pristina and it gathered 25 municipal public information officers and municipal assembly support officers from 15 partner municipalities, including the three in the north. The aim of this workshop was to familiarize municipal

authorities with practical aspects of municipal transparency and discuss existing municipal challenges and possible interventions to overcome them. Publication of municipal acts on official municipal web portals was also discussed during the workshop. This was an excellent opportunity for municipal authorities to publicly speak about their daily challenges and give recommendations as to how those challenges could be overcome in collaboration with MLGA and out program support. In addition, the director of Department for Monitoring Municipal Performance in the MLGA presented a Municipal Performance Progress Report for 2014, focusing on performance of the municipalities in respect of publication of municipal acts on municipal web portals against which municipal transparency of Kosovo's municipalities is measured.

Some of the challenges identified by participants in the workshop include: lack of a separate budget line in the municipal budget for municipal assemblies; lack of translators and qualified web & IT specialists; insufficient staff in the Public Information Office; lack of IT equipment (scanner, laptops, printer, digital camera, etc.); and insufficient funds for promotional material (municipal bulletin, municipal handbooks, brochures and leaflets, etc.).

Some of the recommendations presented include: trainings and coaching municipal staff on access to public documents; language courses (Albanian, Serbian, and English); assigning additional staff to the Public Information Office; additional trainings on municipal Web site maintenance, internal and external communications and outreach mechanisms; and IT equipment for Public Information Office such as scanner, laptops, printer, and digital cameras.

The AKT-US team, in collaboration with RTC Consulting will incorporate identified challenges and recommendations concerning municipal transparency into the customized CDPs of partner municipalities. Following completion of the CDP both AKT-US and LS will focus on practical aspects of possible support that our programs can provide to its partners to further improve municipal transparency.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this workshop, upon the explicit request of MLGA and MF, was conducted and facilitated in all of Kosovo's municipalities by AKT team, in coordination with SDC Democratization and Municipal Support project (DEMOS). DEMOS agreed to cover the expenditures for the workshops with our non-partner municipalities.

As part of the year one work plan activity to "Continue collaboration with the Ministry of Local Governance and Administration in the improvement and expansion of Municipal Performance Management System (MPMS)", the program also collaborated with the MLGA's Department of Municipal Performance and Transparency on training modules concerning MPMS.

AKT and MLGA staff made efforts to organize a training on municipal performance indicators and how to measure and use them in improving municipal performance for municipal authorities in the four municipalities in the north. The four municipalities in the north do not use or apply MLGA's MPMS, however, due to the complex and sensitive environment in the north this the planning process will continue into year two.

3.2 Support municipalities to increase own-source revenue (OSR) for municipal services and capital projects (KRA 4)

During the reporting period, the AKT team conducted an introductory meeting with the MoF's General Secretary to discuss possible areas of support that KT program could offer to partner municipalities in respect of municipal OSR. The General Secretary, on behalf of the Treasury Department and Municipal Budgets Department, pledged full support to the AKT team in carrying out activities aim at increasing municipal OSR. Several other coordination meetings with the MoF's senior authorities (Director of Property Tax Department, Director of Department for Municipal Budgets and Treasury Office within MoF) took place during the year as well. In these meetings AKT-US introduced LS' staff to the ministry, who acknowledged AKT's key role in local government programming aimed at increasing the collection of OSR and improving financial management of municipalities that are partners to the program.

The following program activities took place during the reporting year:

- Conducting municipal OSR and property tax analysis in 12 partner municipalities;
- On-the-job coaching sessions on OSR and property tax performance during the FY2014 and possible steps for improvements;
- Workshop on Improving Legislation on Property Tax in Kosovo;

- Workshop on Municipal OSR – Trends, Challenges and Recommendations for Improvements.

To assess the situation with respect to OSR collection rates in partner municipalities, the MoF shared data on OSR collection from January to October 2013 and 2014 respectively. The AKT team analyzed this data to compare progress in municipal OSR collection and property tax collection in partner municipalities for the first 10 months of available 2013 data compared to the same time period in 2014. The AKT team used this analysis to identify areas for possible improvements in OSR collection and to recommend concrete steps for how partner municipalities could achieve them. During this period of time, the program staff met individually with 21 relevant municipal authorities in partner municipalities (mayors, municipal assembly chairpersons, finance directors, and property tax managers) and presented the OSR analysis and possible steps and interventions that could improve property tax collection through the end of 2014.

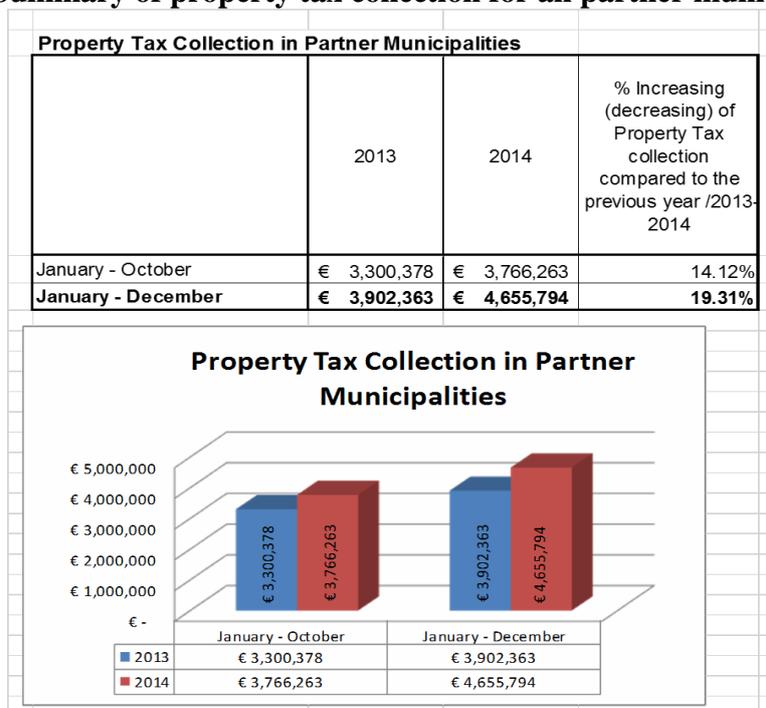
Property tax collection in AKT Partner Municipalities (January - October)					
#	Code	MUNICIPALITY	Property tax collection January - October		
			2013	2014	% Increasing (decreasing) of Property Tax collection compared to the previous year /2013-2014
			Collection, in €	Collection, in €	
			4	5	6=(5-4)/4
1	61	OBILIQ/OBILQ/OBILIĆ	237,89	288,47	21.26%
2	61	GRAČANICA/GRAČANICE	230,92	323,56	40.12%
3	63	ISTOG/ISTOG/ISTOG/ISTOK	226,74	231,91	2.28%
4	63	KLINĚ/KLINĚ/KLINĚ/KLINA	191,69	214,36	11.83%
5	63	PEJĚ/PEĆ	907,83	1,101,54	21.34%
6	64	LEPOSAVIC/LEPOSAVIC	n/a	n/a	n/a
7	64	VUSHTRRI/VOČITRN	273,41	332,49	21.61%
8	64	ZUBIN POTOK	n/a	n/a	n/a
9	64	ZVEČANE/ZVEČAN	n/a	n/a	n/a
1	64	SEVERNA MITROVICA/MITROVICĚ VERIORE	n/a	n/a	n/a
1	65	GJILAN/GJILAN/GNJILANE	1,076,81	1,079,39	0.24%
1	65	NOVO BRDO/NOVOBĚRDĚ	44,902	40,03	-10.83%
1	65	ŠTRPCE/ŠHTĚRPCE	46,493	84,68	82.14%
1	65	PARTeŠ/PARTESH	6,927	5,178	-25.25%
1	66	KLOKOT/KLLOKOT	29,553	39,41	33.38%
1	66	RANILUG/RANILLUG	27,188	25,19	-7.34%
		TOTAL	3,300,378 €	3,766,263 €	14.12%

Property tax collection in AKT Partner Municipalities (January - December)					
#	Code	MUNICIPALITY	Property tax collection January - December		
			2013	2014	% Increasing (decreasing) of Property Tax collection compared to the previous year /2013-2014
			Collection, in €	Collection, in €	
			4	5	6=(5-4)/4
1	61	OBILIQ/OBILQ/OBILIĆ	253,45	316,19	24.76%
2	61	GRAČANICA/GRAČANICE	319,68	429,36	34.31%
3	63	ISTOG/ISTOG/ISTOG/ISTOK	270,93	274,78	1.42%
4	63	KLINĚ/KLINĚ/KLINĚ/KLINA	234,87	265,60	13.09%
5	63	PEJĚ/PEĆ	1,083,99	1,391,98	28.41%
6	64	LEPOSAVIC/LEPOSAVIC	n/a	n/a	n/a
7	64	VUSHTRRI/VOČITRN	335,84	443,07	31.93%
8	64	ZUBIN POTOK	n/a	n/a	n/a
9	64	ZVEČANE/ZVEČAN	n/a	n/a	n/a
1	64	SEVERNA MITROVICA/MITROVICĚ VERIORE	n/a	n/a	n/a
1	65	GJILAN/GJILAN/GNJILANE	1,222,98	1,293,71	5.78%
1	65	NOVO BRDO/NOVOBĚRDĚ	50,594	52,55	3.87%
1	65	ŠTRPCE/ŠHTĚRPCE	59,754	100,77	68.65%
1	65	PARTeŠ/PARTESH	8,953	8,337	-6.88%
1	66	KLOKOT/KLLOKOT	32,172	46,97	46.00%

1	66	RANILUG/RANILLUG	29,119	32,44	11.40%
		TOTAL	3,902,363 €	4,655,794 €	19.31%

The analysis depicts a downward trend of OSR collection in partner municipalities. Nevertheless, the property tax collection rate, which was analyzed separately for each of the partner municipalities, indicates a 14 percent increase in 2014 compared to 2013, see below.

Summary of property tax collection for all partner municipalities:



On a different matter, the MoF requested technical support from AKT and USAID Partnership for Development (PFD) programs in organizing workshops on the new Draft Law on Property Tax in Kosovo for partner municipalities. Accordingly, the two USAID programs, in close collaboration with the MoF's Department of Property Tax, reached out to partner municipalities and mobilized them for a workshop on the new Draft Law on Property Tax in Kosovo. The workshop entitled "Improving Legislation on Property Tax in Kosovo" convened finance directors and heads of Property Tax Offices in the program's 16 partner municipalities to (1) discuss the new Draft Law on Property Tax in Kosovo and (2) formally launch public hearings for the new law. This event was a good opportunity for MF authorities to familiarize the 31 local government counterparts who attended the workshop with the new property tax legislation and its function as a major source of municipal own revenues. In addition, participating municipal officials used this opportunity to present the challenges that municipalities often face in property tax collection and recommended concrete measures on how the new Law on Property Tax could address those challenges. Municipal representatives from the north, who also participated in this workshop, were acquainted with their roles and responsibilities under the Kosovo legal framework, and the benefits of the new Law on Property Tax.

During the reporting period, the AKT team also successfully conducted a workshop entitled "Municipal OSR – Trends, Challenges and Recommendations for Improvements." AKT and SDC DEMOS partnered to conduct the workshop for all of Kosovo's municipalities upon the explicit request of the MLGA and MoF and thanks to efforts of AKT team and. This workshop



Agim Salihu, Municipal Development Specialist, addressing finance directors and property tax managers in partner municipalities during the workshop on improving legislation on property tax in Kosovo

was designed to familiarize finance municipal authorities with (1) the Fiscal Year 2014 budget implementation, (2) effective tools for public funds management, (3) trends of property tax collection. In addition, the workshop identified obstacles and challenges concerning municipal OSR and property tax management that partner municipalities are facing and outlined recommendations for possible improvements in OSR and property tax collection. Thirty-seven representatives from Directorate for Budget and Finance and Heads of Property Tax Offices in partner municipalities, including representatives from Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan and Severna Mitrovica/Mitrovicë Veriore attended this workshop.

Some of the challenges that participants emphasized include: lack of qualified staff, advanced OSR and Property Tax software, citizens awareness and outreach, lack of property tax registration equipment, confusing naming of streets and quarters within municipalities, and insufficient resources and capacities for property tax management.

Some of the given recommendations are:

- Additional support to Finance Department through assigning more people to the department,
- Property tax trainings,
- Improving the system of naming the streets and quarters within municipal territory,
- Improving the existing property tax software,
- Provision of equipment for property tax registration, GPS devises, for example,
- Public awareness campaign

Some of these recommendations will be incorporated into CDPs, which USAID Advancing Kosovo Together team is supporting in partner municipalities.

AKT-US will coordinate with counterparts at LS on possible support to municipal Finance Departments and Property Tax Units in partner municipalities in order to increase their

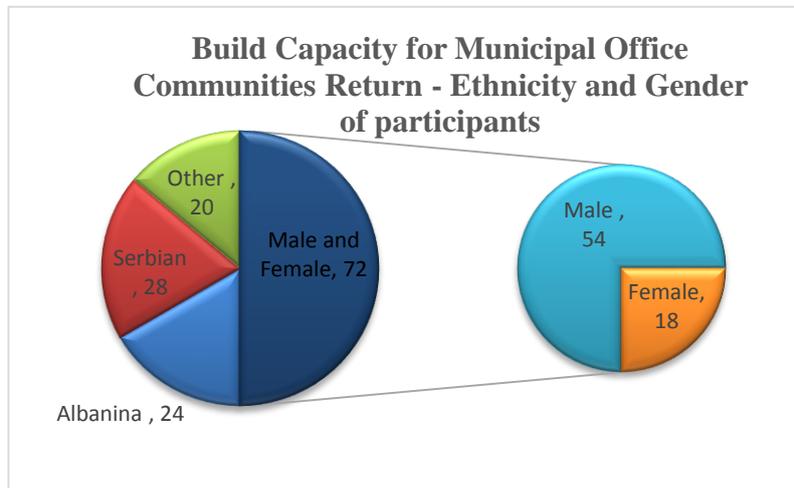


Municipal finance authorities listing challenges and recommendations for improving municipal OSR and property tax collection in their municipalities.

efficiency in OSR and property tax collection and address some of the identified challenges.

Activity 3.2: Build Capacity of target municipalities’ Offices of Communities and Returns (MOCR) (KRA 5)

In an effort to empower MOCRs in AKT’s 16 partner municipalities, the project awarded local civil society organization “Network of Peace Movement” with a grant to implement a project entitled “Enhancing Capacities of MOCR and Municipal Assembly Committee for Communities (MACC) to advocate for minority communities’ needs”. The project targeted



four partner municipalities: Klokot/Kllokot, Parteš/ Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë respectively. The municipal leadership in these municipalities (mayors, chairpersons of Committee for Communities and heads of MOCRs) expressed strong interest in project activities, and highlighted that these activities will tackle municipal shortcomings as well as further build capacities of municipal officials. The respective municipal authorities also offered full support and cooperation in implementing of all project activities as well as ensured participation of municipal officials in capacity building activities.

Consequently, the grantee organized round tables in proposed municipalities to raise awareness of the municipal authorities on the work of MOCR and MACC, conducting trainings for MOCR staff and members of MACC on drafting action plans for 2015, conducting outreach activities, and increasing engagement in municipal budgeting. Through this grant, AKT team incentivized four partner MOCRs and a local civil society organization to implement activities aimed at strengthening capacities of MOCRs in selected municipalities with the possibility of rolling out this activity in other partner municipalities. As a result of this initiative, some targeted municipalities included heads of MOCRs in the meetings with mayors and directors, who now were able to report, inform, propose and discuss MOCR priorities with municipal leadership.

In addition to this project, AKT staff, in close collaboration with NOPM, conducted a two-day workshop entitled “Identifying MOCR challenges, recommendations and steps needed to strengthen the role of MOCR and MACC in partner municipalities.” The workshop brought together 51 MOCR and MACC’s officials working in 16 partner municipalities, including

“This was an excellent opportunity to finally hear the voice of MOCR and share common concerns. I do hope we will be able to address at least some of the identified issues in the future.”

Elvira Cesasi, Head of MOCR in Gračanica/Gračanicë.

deputy mayors for communities, chairpersons of MACC and deputy chairpersons for communities in the municipal assemblies. The purpose of the two-day workshop was to identify challenges and issues that MOCR and MACC, and give recommendations for enhancing capacities of these local government bodies to advocate for non-majority communities needs efficiently.

Some of the challenges and issues identified and presented during a two-day workshop include:

- Insufficient influence of the MOCR and MACC in the municipal decision making process, particularly in the process of setting priorities to be funded by municipality;
- Absence of separate budget lines in the municipal budget for MOCR and therefore limited ability of to address problems of returnees;
- Lack of employment opportunities of non-majority communities in the public sector,
- Lack of office space in the municipalities in the north;
- Lack of the office equipment and promotional material designed to reach out displaced persons reluctance to return and explain communities' rights;
- Insufficient coordination with central government authorities (Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Return and Communities);
- Lack of capacity building activities for MOCR staff (budget administration and project management).

The AKT team will incorporate some of these challenges into CDPs with the purpose to address them jointly with Local Solution in a later stage.

In year one, AKT, in close collaboration with local civil society organization Network of Peace Movement, sponsored a Training on Lobbying and Advocacy for MOCR staff and MACC representatives. The purpose of this training was to enhance the capacity of MOCRs and MACC to advocate for minority communities' needs. The training was conducted in Gjilan/Gnjilane and it gathered around 25 participants, mainly heads of municipal office for returns and communities, communities committees' chairs and deputy chairs, MOCR officers, members of the MACC, and municipal public information officers of targeted municipalities. This was an excellent opportunity for the participants to obtain broader knowledge about advocacy as well as techniques and methods that municipal staff could utilize to empower the MOCR and MACC in municipalities.

The AKT team will continue to carry out activities aimed at strengthening mechanisms for protection and promoting the rights of communities in partner municipalities and improving collaboration with the central government (MOCR and MLGA respectively).

Activity 3.4 Strengthen municipal capacity to manage or government-to-government awards

Activities in this area are scheduled to begin in year two.

Challenges Encountered and Addressed

- AKT-US's four northern partner municipalities are transitioning to the Kosovo legal framework and need support in all aspects of local government programming under the Kosovo system. AKT municipal development advisors facilitated these municipalities' correspondence with line ministries in the GOK when it came to (1) preparation of municipal budgets and (2) communicating issues of municipal transition to the Kosovo local government system, particularly the MLGA and MoF.

Project Intermediate Result 4: Build the capacity of host country organizations by leveraging local, cross-ethnic leadership to implement program objectives

Key Achievements

- Capacity Development Plan developed;
- Joint Project Implementation Plan developed;
- Daily coordination, strategy and approach, and troubleshooting occurs across management and component staff;
- On-the-job coaching and training of technical and operational staff;
- Tools, manuals, and templates shared to kick-off human resource, financial management, governance, organizational management, and program management performance improvements.

Activity 4.1: Enhancing technical capacity and aligning the local consortium's work plan, sub-awards, and operational capacity with overall AKT objectives (Outcome 1)

AKT-US customized the existing Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool used by USAID for USAID funded organizations, which covers seven areas to be assessed: governance, administration, human resources management, financial management, organizational management, program management, and project performance management to include all three program objective areas to be covered by AKT Local Solutions (LS) in order to evaluate the program's capacity with respect to each objective and determine strengths as well as possible areas for improvement. While the year one work plan envisioned conducting the OSA during September-October 2014, AKT US was informed shortly after award of AKT-LS that USAID would conduct the OCA. AKT-US received the OCA report from the OCA managed by USAID and completed by AKT-LS in February. It covered all of the above mentioned domains and included all consortium members: CDF, AKTIV, CPT and KRD. Based on the OCA results scoring for all consortium members was completed.

Based on findings, AKT-US drafted a Baseline Capacity Development Plan (CDP) for CDF as the consortium's leading organization, while CDF will assist as necessary its subcontractor members of AKT-LS. The draft CDP was shared with AKT-LS, comments were received, and the document was finalized. CDF received a high score on the OCA and capacity building areas focused on more sophisticated interventions across all areas. With regard to technical capacity, the main focus area is in PIR 3 activities.

In the meantime, AKT-US and AKT-LS had their first introductory meeting with USAID in November. After the introductory meeting, AKT-US and AKT-LS staff participated in a three-day facilitated workshop to develop the key elements of a Joint Project Implementation Plan (JPIP) and help establish the close working relationship that is clearly critical to the success of both projects. In the weeks preceding the workshop, AKT-US sent its annual work plan, along various reports and studies it had prepared, so that AKT-LS would know what US was doing. Within a few days, AKT-LS sent US its draft first-year work plan for review and comment. AKT-US compared the document with its own work plan and returned it to AKT-LS with written comments, virtually all of which were graciously accepted by LS. As a result, the work plans of the two projects are remarkably free of potential conflict or duplication. The Joint Project Implementation Plan explains how the two projects fit together and are able to frame all their components into one solid AKT program, so that as each implements its own set of

activities, neither stands alone, nor is completely independent of the other. The workshop helped with finalizing a joint vision, management strategy, roles and responsibilities, external communications, and a conflict mitigation plan between AKT-US and LS. During the JPIP workshop, the year one work plans of both mechanisms (AKT-US and AKT-LS) were discussed and to the extent possible harmonized, in order not to overlap, but rather complement each other's activities. The Joint Communication Strategy was discussed and agreed on next steps. The JPIP examines the context in which AKT-US and LS are working, describes strategies employed in the implementation of each project and hones in on the core elements of those strategies to ensure that the two projects are in no way undermining each other or confusing stakeholder or municipal partners, but are instead reinforcing each other.

On technical implementation, AKT-US facilitated several meetings with CFs and partner municipalities as part of introduction of AKT-LS to the selected communities. For PIR 1, the list of priority community projects provided by AKT-US was harmonized with AKT-LS, and AKT-LS took over the priority community projects for further processing that were prioritized by AKT-US on the established municipal community forums and based on the AKT-LS selection criteria. For PIR 2, as described above, AKT-US and LS share information about the businesses with which they are working, have separated their target businesses for grants assistance (start-up versus existing), and coordinate technical activities. AKT-US provides ongoing coaching to AKT-LS's PIR 3 team on municipal service delivery efforts, integrating them into meeting with municipal administrations and supporting municipalities' SIAP planning. AKT-US has shared its Municipal Self-Assessment Report and GMIF database with its LS colleagues and involves them in the upcoming series of SIAP, OSR and MOCR workshops, which US will lead. For its part, the LS municipal development team is leading the effort to upgrade municipal websites, making sure that they are compliant with the Law on the Use of Languages. LS will provide grants for the development of specific SIAPs. AKT-US will utilize its municipal community forums (MCFs) to monitor SIAP performance and has suggested that AKT-LS undertake a survey to measure citizen satisfaction with service delivery.

Activity 4.2: Enhancing operational and management capacity (Outcome 2)

Since receiving the OCA and developing the CDP, AKT-US has been working closely with LS to deliver technical assistance to address OCA capacity development needs identified. The teams coordinate daily on activities and troubleshooting issues. In addition, the following were provided:

- Governance: AKT-US provided LS with Chemonics' internal authorities matrix, outlining different areas and levels of authority to get CDF considering what their delegation might consist of given their structure.
- Human resource management: AKT-US provided LS with its field office policy manual, Chemonics' policy manual, and Chemonics' field office templates.
- Financial management: AKT-US Operations Director has provided on-the-job coaching, guidance on financial reporting and managing indirect costs, and timing on adoption of Quick Books.
- Organizational management: AKT-US Communications Specialist worked closely with AKT-LS Communications Specialist to refine LS tools, templates, standards, and processes.

- Program management: AKT-US provided LS with Chemonics' close-out manual and templates to promote smooth and compliant implementation with a smooth close-out in mind, as well as close-out procedures. Further, AKT-US provided training and follow-up coaching to LS on OMB Circular A-122.

Activity 4.3: Creating a forum for sub-awardees to network to share information and highlight integration successes to wider audiences (Outcome 3)

To ensure clear communication to all stakeholders and local communities, AKT-US and AKT-LS started their outreach strategy and explained to all relevant partners that AKT-US will be implementing program objectives jointly with AKT-LS. In addition AKT-US initiated and developed a Joint Communication Strategy that serves both mechanisms AKT US/LS. Under the Joint Communication Strategy, AKT-US and AKT-LS jointly develop messages and jointly tailored communication tools for each audience based on that audience's information consumption preferences. Messages are aimed at informing audiences about ongoing activities and achievements, advocating their buy-in for the program's mission and objectives, mobilizing their support where applicable, and influencing behavior changes in line with the overall programs' objectives. Working closely with AKT-US/LS communications specialists, the AKT-US/LS technical teams share narratives about successful inter-ethnic cooperation between minority and majority communities in Kosovo emphasizing the benefits of cooperation and offering a new vision of collaboration for all Kosovo citizens. Using USAID Kosovo social media, the teams target Kosovo's minority women and youth to advertise both programs. For a more traditional audience, the programs apply time-tested tools such as joint meetings with mayors and other local government officials in partner municipalities, joint coordination meetings with other projects and donors, and joint information sessions.

AKT-US initiated a SharePoint collaborative project management site. Password accessible by both projects and USAID, once full-populated and adopted as part of the LS workflow, the site will enable easy, updated information-sharing with a newsfeed; shared document library for templates, reports, and tools; calendar; work plan with monthly status updates; PMP with monthly updates; and weekly updates on community small and quick impact infrastructure projects. With this tool, staff of both projects have access to fundamental and current implementation information at their fingertips.

Activity 4.4: Increasing ability to handle USAID reporting requirements and procedures (Outcome 4) and Activity 4.5: Strengthening financial management capacity (Outcome 5)

During this reporting period AKT-US Component 4 lead and operations, with the support of the home office PMU, had several meetings with CDF's management and finance department and discussed USAID reporting requirements, as part of Component 4 work plan activities. AKT-US Component 4, with the support of home office, conducted half-day overview-training on the specific rules and regulations that govern cost principles of non-US non-governmental organizations to get them started in this process, with AKT-LS procurement and finance departments. The half day training/workshop topics were; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circular A-122 and 2 CFR 200, sub-part E. During this session, specific rules and regulations that govern cost principles of non-US non-governmental organizations to get them started in this process were discussed. In addition, all necessary materials related to the above mentioned specific rules and regulations were shared with AKT LS and documents and

templates were shared. Considering that CDF's intent is to obtain ISO 9001, Chemonics began assisting and shared with AKT-LS initial documents and preparatory steps for ISO certification, including and ISO 9001 road map and ISO 9001 FAQ's. Additionally AKT US provided technical assistance in several occasions as required by AKT LS.

Considering that CDF is a local organization, and according to the Kosovo Law they are obliged to have auditing once a year meanwhile AKT US will provide with technical assistance and prepare AKT LS for auditing as required, according US rules and regulations.

Activity 4.6: Increased ability to establish professional linkages with a variety of stakeholders (Outcome 6)

On the whole, from the time AKT-LS was awarded, AKT-US and AKT-LS program components have worked together to engage stakeholders on the AKT program. AKT-US and LS undertake joint visits to communities and municipalities across management and components. Via regular coordination, calls, and meetings we are increasingly aware of each other's activities and plans, so that we are able to jointly establish professional linkages.

Considering that CDF has a long experience in Kosovo implementing a variety of programs and has an extensive experience with different donors, including GoK, there is not an immediate need for assistance on establishing many new linkages, since the linkages are already in place. Although linkages exist, AKT-US and AKT-LS agreed to exchange any new linkages for the benefit of the AKT program. AKT-US shared with AKT-LS the list of Community Forums (CF), Municipal Community Forums (MCF) and AKT municipal focal points. For their part, AKT-LS shared with AKT-US the list of Youth Councils and Women Groups. This practice will continue during the life of the AKT program, in order both mechanisms using the same established stakeholders and avoiding any possible confusion.

Challenges Encountered and Addressed

With the delay of the award of LS to September, we experienced some delay compared to the annual work plan. The LS award does not include reference to incorporating guidance from US, so there was initial uncertainty and hesitancy about the adoption of guidance. Further, delays and shifts in staffing at LS delayed formation of foundational relationships between counterpart staff. However, with the ramp up of activities on US and LS, coordination and sharing of lessons learned and united communication with external stakeholders became all-the-more essential. Such coordination and associated coaching and assistance as challenges were encountered has gained momentum and is coming more naturally. However, increased activities have also resulted in additional stretch to resources. As a result, AKT-US is working on a two-prong approach. Priority is given to technical assistance, trouble-shooting, and coaching on challenging areas that inhibit technical performance on AKT-LS. These experiences provide immediate assistance and experience as capacity building that extends to all AKT-LS implementers and may be technical and operational in nature. Second, we are working with CDF administration to take on priority operational and compliance issues identified in the OCA that may occur separately from technical project performance.

PROJECT OPERATIONS

Project staffing

With respect to staffing, AKT managed to start well by mobilizing a startup team that identified and contracted AKT key personnel positions, including mobilization of a chief of party, approved on May 16, 2014. Vacant positions were advertised to ensure coverage through Kosovo Serbian and Kosovo Albanian media outlets. The start-up and management team instituted additional procedures to stipulate the duration of job announcements and a reference-check vetting process. Constraints included expeditiously transitioning key personnel that were simultaneously closing other USAID programs (DEMI and CAIP). For this reason, the citizen engagement specialist, regional development advisor, and municipal development specialist were first engaged through short-term agreements and then transitioned to long term employment contracts. Level of effort was closely coordinated with DEMI and CAIP management to ensure adequate resourcing for all projects as well as a smooth transition for staff. AKT engaged four former Urban Institute employees (two Municipal Advisors and two Assistants) to continue their work in Kosovo's Serb-majority northern municipalities.

Office Set-Up and DEMI and CAIP Equipment Disposition

The AKT office received equipment from DEMI, SIWS, and CAIP, all USAID programs that were scheduled to finish their activities in August 2014. The handover of assets from DEMI included three vehicles, office furniture, computers, and other miscellaneous office equipment. The handover from SIWS included one vehicle. The handover from CAIP included office furniture, computers, and printers. These items remained in RCRC as this center continued to operate under AKT management.

Regional Community Resource Center

The Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC) was established three years ago as part of the CAIP program. Located in north Mitrovica/ë, the center's purpose was to provide a convenient and welcoming space for meetings, training sessions, and workshops for targeted communities, the business community, Kosovo Policy Action Network, civil society organizations, and other USAID implementing partners. This center had previously been managed by the Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT) as a CAIP subcontractor. During CAIP, the RCRC proved to be a place where communities and other program partners and stakeholders felt very comfortable organizing various activities.

At the request of USAID, the AKT-US program agreed to continue the operations of the center. For an initial three month period, CPT staff continued to manage the center on a volunteer basis. In October 2014, the RCRC became fully operational through the AKT program, managed by AKT staff. The Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC) has continued to be a gathering place for organizations in northern Kosovo and organizes different activities carried out by NGOs, USAID program partners, and other international and local

organizations, several of which are helping reach Advancing Kosovo Together program objectives. During the period of October 2014 – March 2015 this center were organized 258 events including trainings, workshops, round tables, language classes, and meetings with a total of 3,168 participants. Activities were organized by NGO AKTIV, CBM, CPT, USAID Advancing Kosovo Together, Kosovo Business Center for Support, CRLS, KFOS, and NGO French Association.

Security Considerations

To ensure the safety of staff and per Section H.29 “Security Considerations” of the AKT contract, the program completed its Emergency Action Plan in September 2014. The emergency procedures and plan are managed by the chief of party, operations director, deputy chief of party, and security focal point with support from the home-office security department and project management unit. The process for developing the plan helped raise awareness among personnel and clearly defined roles and responsibilities in the event of a threat to personnel, property, or materials. The plan provides guidance in handling crises ranging from civic unrest and violence to evacuation and budgets resources accordingly. A cascading phone list was developed and tested to reach all staff in the event of a crisis and security equipment and services (fire escapes, satellite phone, insurance, guards, etc.) were secured and assessed in both the Pristina project office and the RCRC.

Program Support and Incentives Fund

The Program Support and Incentives Fund (PSIF) is designed to 1) provide small grants to local civil society organizations, 2) implement small-scale infrastructure and quick impact projects through subcontracts, and 3) provide expansion grants to micro and small businesses aimed at providing employment for non-majority groups. The AKT PSIF objective, structure, and characteristics reflect key AKT objectives.

Grants

During the first year, the project received 65 full grant applications solicited through the Annual Program Statement and Requests for Applications published.

A total of nine grant requests with a value of USD ██████████ were approved during the year, of which eight are currently under implementation. A majority of these grants were used to build the capacities of non-majority businesses and farmers, increase youth and women employability, assess the needs of AKT target municipalities through development of Capacity Development Plans, support the Office of the Language Commissioner to improve implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages, and support capacity building workshops to the Municipal Office for Communities and the Committee for Communities of the Municipal Assembly. Grant activities covered the following municipalities: Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klokot/Kllokot, NovoBrdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë; Gjilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina/, Obiliq/Obilić/, Pejë/Peć, Vushtrri/Vučitrn/, North Mitrovica/Mitrovica e Veriut, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan. In addition, a total of four grant awards with a value of USD ██████████ are in the final negotiation stages and are expected to be processed for USAID approval in the first quarter of year two. These grant activities are focused on providing women entrepreneurs tools to expand their businesses through management capacity building, increase quality of design, increase homemade production skills, product promotion and packing and increase of public speaking skills of women entrepreneurs, and organize community engagement and sports activities between majority and non-majority communities.

At the end of fourth quarter, AKT-US released a Request for Applications (RFA) for micro and small business grants to strengthen private sector development between businesses of different ethnicities and improve the competitiveness of micro and small family enterprises in the 16 partner municipalities in which we work. AKT-US anticipates awarding up to 20 business growth and expansion grants with a value of USD ██████████, all grant awards are expected to be approved and executed in the first two quarters of year two. In addition, AKT-US released a Request for Applications (RFA) for qualified, locally registered media houses and NGOs for media initiatives that include showing success, human touch, and inspirational stories that improve ethnic communications, interaction, and understanding between majority and non-majority businesses, CSOs, women's associations, youth groups, and other informal groups. AKT anticipates awarding up to 5 grant awards with a total commitment of USD ██████████

recommended grants are expected to be approved and executed starting in the first quarter of year two.

GRANTS SUMMARY (Approved and Planned)					
Objective	Grant Awards	Total Value (USD)	Average grant amount	Allocated Funds	Budget Remaining
1	9	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
2	23	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
3	5	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████
4	0			██████████	██████████
Total	35	██████████	██████████	██████████	██████████

GRANTS SUMMARY BY GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Geographic Coverage	# of grants
Gračanica/Gračanicë	6
Klokot/Kllokot	7
NovoBrdo/Novobërdë	7
Parteš/Partesh	6
Ranilug/Ranillug	6
Štrpce/Shtërpçë	8
Gjilan/Gnjilane	4
Istog/Istok	6
Klinë/Klina	5
Obiliq/Obilić	4
Pejë/Peć	5
Vushtrri/Vučitrn	6
North Mitrovica/Mitrovica e Veriut	5
Leposavić/Leposaviq	6
Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok	6
Zvečan/Zveçan	6
Total	22

The effects of the grants program are also highlighted under the sections describing individual objectives. Grants monitoring is an ongoing activity, and the project will continue to report on impacts of grants as the data become available.

GRANTS SUMMARY

Type of Organization	No. of Awards
Private Company	2
NGO	8
Association	3
Total	13

The table below shows list of grants awarded and in approval process during the first year:

Grantee	Grant Title
SARA Chess Club	Organizing of Multiethnic Chess Tournament-Brezovica Open
Regional Technology Center (RTC)	Development of Municipal Capacity Development Plans (CDPs)
Business Support Center Shterpce	Enhancing cooperation and sales among communities
ASD Group L.L.C	Strengthening Communities Role in Municipalities (SCRIM), capacity building for MOCR and CC
Initiative for Agricultural Development of Kosovo (IADK)	Strengthening Capacity and Collaboration of Local Farmers from Northern and Southern Kosovo
Network of Peace Movement (NOPM)	Enhancing capacity of Communities Committees and Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCR) to advocate for non-majority communities' needs
MDA Foundation (MDAF)	Increasing Employability of Young Kosovars
Business Center Zvecan	Women and Youth Support Program for Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Northern Kosovo
Communications for Social Development (CSD)	Introduction of the Language Commissioner's Guidebook on the Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages in 12 partner municipalities
*Mundesia	North Kosovo Women Entrepreneurs Capacity Building
*CDKD	Together in Action for the Benefit of All
*Community Development Institute (CoDe)	Strengthening interaction among communities through sport and culture
*SABOR	Business Promotion Program for Female Entrepreneurs in Northern Kosovo

* Grants in the approval process

At the end of year one, USD [REDACTED] in grant funds available were either approved, are in the negotiation stage, or are committed. This represents [REDACTED] percent of the grant funds of USD [REDACTED], leaving [REDACTED] percent to be committed in the first quarter of year two.

Subcontracts

In the first year, the project processed for approval five small scale infrastructure projects with a value of USD [REDACTED], subcontracting and implementation is expected to be completed by end of the first quarter of year two. Another eight projects with a value of USD [REDACTED] are in the planning phase and are expected to be process for USAID approval during the first two quarters of year two, while procurement and implementation is expected to be completed by the end of year two. In addition, during this period AKT processed for USAID approval nine quick impact projects, of which eight were completed with a total value of USD [REDACTED]. One additional quick impact project is under contract with a value of USD [REDACTED]. During the same period, AKT-US identified and developed 10 additional quick impact projects with a value of USD [REDACTED], expected to be processed in the first quarter of year two.

SUMMARY of SMALL SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (Approved and Planned)

Objective	Category	Small Scale Subks	Total Value (USD)	Allocated Funds (USD)	Budget Remaining (USD)
1	Small Infrastructure	13	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
1	Quick Impact	19	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
3	Small Scale Infrastructure (SIAP)	16	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
1,2,3,4	Program Subcontracts	1	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Total		49	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

At the end of year one, USD [REDACTED] of small scale infrastructure, quick impact, and program subcontract funds available were approved or planned. This represents 49 percent of the small scale infrastructure, quick impact, and program subcontract funds of USD [REDACTED] allocated, leaving 51 percent to be committed in years two and three.

The table below shows subcontracts committed during the first year:

Municipality	Name of the project
Parteš/Partesh	Establishment of pedestrian sidewalk in the main street in the village of Budriga/Budrigë
Obiliq/Obilić	Installation of the heating system and rehabilitation of primary school in the village of Crkvena Vodica/Caravodicë
Gracanica/Graqanicë	Installation of Heating System in Primary School in the village of Radevo/Radevë Establishment of pedestrian sidewalk in the main street in the village of Budriga/Budrigë
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë	Installation of the heating system and rehabilitation of primary school in the village of Crkvena Vodica/Caravodicë
Štrpce/Shtërpçë	Rehabilitation of Water Supply System in the village of Vica
*Pec/Peja	Installation of public lighting for the village of Gorazdevac/Gorazdevcë
*Klokot/Kllokot	Establishment of pedestrian sidewalks in the village of Vrbovac/Vërbovc
*Vushtrri/Vuçitri	Road rehabilitation and storm water drainage in the village of Banjskë/Banjska in
*Štrpce/Shtërpçë	Fencing of the Community Sports Court in Donja Bitinja/ Biti e Poshtme
*Gjilan/Gnjilane	Installation of Central Heating System in the primary school in Ponesh/Pones
*Istog/Istok	Public Lighting and Sidewalk in the village of Dobrushë/Dobruša
*Klinë/Klina	Establishment of Sidewalk in the village of Videje/Vidanje
*Ranilug/Ranillug	Building Technical Cabinet for the Primary School
* USAID approval expected to be processed in Q1 of Y2	

The table below shows Quick Impact projects completed and planned during first year:

Municipality	Name of the project
Klokot/Kllokot	Supply youth center with audio equipment
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë	Supply community center with audio equipment
Partesh/Parteš	Provide equipment and furniture for the primary school
Ranilug/ Ranilug	Provide rehabilitation and equipment for the community center
Strpce/Shterpce	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment
Gjilan/Gnjilane	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment
Gjilan/Gnjilane	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment
Vushtrri/ Vuçitri	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment and sports yard with sports equipment
Vucitri/Vushtri	Provide IT equipment for the Family Health Care Center
Vushtrri/Vuçitri	Supply water pumps for the water system

*Istog/Istok	Supply primary school with smart boards
*Istog/Istok	Provide equipment for the community center
*Kline/Klina	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment and fencing
*Klokot/Kllokot	Supply primary school with IT equipment
*Obiliq/ Obilic	Supply primary school with IT equipment
*Partes/ Partesh	Supply primary school with smart boards
*Peje/Pec	Supply school yard with children's playground equipment
*Strpce/Shterpce	Supply primary school with IT equipment
*Strpce/Shterpce	Provide equipment for the community health center

* USAID approval expected to be processed in Q1 of Yr.2.

OTHER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

MoU signing ceremonies with Advancing Kosovo Together partner municipalities

On March 19, USAID Mission Director James Hope traveled to Klokot/Kllokot and Parteš/Partesh to sign Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the mayors of each municipality formalizing USAID's partnership through the Advancing Kosovo Together activity. "There has been great progress made here in getting the local government and community leaders to set priorities and we are here to support that," the Mission Director said in a statement to the media following the signing in Klokot/Kllokot.

Over the next 12 months, USAID through its Advancing Kosovo Together will approximately invest 79,500 USD for small infrastructure projects, civil society grants and business grants in Klokot/Kllokot. "The first infrastructure project that will be implemented here will be the construction of sidewalk in Vrbovac/Vërboc," said the mayor of Klokot/Kllokot, Srećko Spasić.

Earlier in December, USAID through its Advancing Kosovo Together program donated the audio equipment to the Youth Center Klokot to strengthen the engagement of young people in multiethnic cultural activities such as: concerts, plays, and recitals. This center was established two years ago and is a gathering point for more than 300 young people, both Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, who live in this municipality. After the MoU signing, to express their gratitude, members of this Youth Center performed a skit for the mayor and Mission Director using the donated audio equipment.

USAID, through AKT-US, will invest approximately USD 70,000 for small infrastructure projects, civil society grants, and business grants in Parteš/Partesh over the next 12 months. "These investments will be of great importance for this municipality," said the mayor of Parteš/Partesh, Dragan Nikolić, after the signing of MoU.

AKT took part in the Information Roadshow in Northern Kosovo

USAID, in cooperation with the U.S Embassy Public Affairs office, launched an information roadshow on February 6, 2015. Over 350 people visited the Cultural House in Leposavić/Leposaviq that day, and some 300 visited the Cultural House in Zvecan on February 10, 2015 to learn about opportunities provided through USAID and the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs office. Later in February, similar fairs were conducted in Mitrovica North and Zubin Potok.

This roadshow in northern Kosovo was very successful, therefore, USAID Kosovo decided to implement similar activities in southern Kosovo in which USAID AKT-US will also take part. The first in southern Kosovo was organized in the Štrpce/Shtprce municipality.

Chess tournament

During the municipal assessment visits, AKT-US was approached by management from the chess club “Šara” from Štrpce/Shtërpce, a group that was organizing a one-day inter-ethnic chess tournament for chess clubs and players throughout Kosovo. “Šara” applied for a grant

for this activity through the program’s recently released Annual Program Statement (APS). The AKT-US Procurement/Grant Manager provided application forms and conducted a site visit as part of the pre-award due diligence process. The application met APS criteria and was approved by both AKT-US’s Project Evaluation Committee and USAID. Managers of the club expressed their gratitude for the program’s help in familiarizing them with the grant application process. The club was recently registered as a legal entity and has indicated that participating in the application process has increased their capacity as an organization.

Our aim is to facilitate relations among majority and minority communities and help them regain confidence in each other. Through this tournament, we wanted to develop friendships and I think we succeeded in that.

Dejan Mrđinac, President of
Chess Club Šara.



On Sunday November 9, 2014, a Multiethnic Chess Tournament was held in Štrpce/Shtërpce in which 40 competitors, Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs, and Goranis participated.

A tournament was organized by Chess Club Šara and supported by the Chess Federation of Kosovo (CFK) with the aim of promoting multiethnic cooperation through chess in the area. Chess Club Šara is a multiethnic organization and its members are qualified to play in the Second Chess League in Kosovo with good chances of becoming members of the First Chess League.

Annex B – Success Stories



SUCCESS STORY

Community Comes Together to Clean up the Riverbed

USAID supports the multiethnic community in Kmetoc/Kmetovce (Gjilan/Gnjilane) clean-up the riverbed and helps farmers access their fields and crops



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together, AKT]

Kmetoc/Kmetovce multiethnic community working together on the clean-up of the village riverbed

"This was our priority, to clean-up the riverbed and this was essential to all people who live here. USAID support is very important to us and we are hoping we will have more projects with AKT to help this community come closer together and work jointly on resolving our problems," explains Zoran Nasković, a farmer from Kmetoc/Kmetovce

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Kmetoc/Kmetovce is a small agricultural village located several kilometers away from Gjilan/Gnjilane. This community is unique in many ways. Around 1,000 of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb hardworking residents are united in an effort to make their village prosperous and advanced. But year 2014 brought many challenges to this multiethnic community. Namely, floods which heavily hit the region directly affected the village economy.

This is why during the open community meeting Kmetoc/Kmetovce residents approached the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) asking for help to clean up the riverbed and improve the river's drainage to prevent flooding which disabled farmers access their land and crops with agricultural equipment. In addition, around 130 children living in this village were also affected by the disease-carrying organisms feeding on decomposing uncollected garbage in the riverbed, and floods that carry waste into the yards represented threats to their health.

With the support from AKT and municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, around 40 Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb residents, cleaned up the riverbed during the five-day activity. "It is great to see the community come together and clean up the riverbed. We were very happy to support them with the heavy equipment and help hardworking farmers access their crops and land," explains Sokol Haziri, Director of Public Services in the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane.

Qemajl Latifi, one of the residents who participated in the riverbed clean-up said this activity brought the entire village community together making it the first joint multiethnic effort in Kmetoc/Kmetovce since 1999. "This project is very important to our community. The riverbed was covered with debris and illegally dumped trash. We are grateful to USAID for the support," explains Latifi. Zoran Nasković also thanked the municipality for the support with the heavy equipment, such as excavator, bulldozer and a truck. "This was our priority, to clean-up the riverbed and this was essential to people who live here. USAID support is very important to us and we are hoping we will have more projects with AKT to help this community come closer together and work jointly on resolving our problems," explains Zoran, a farmer from Kmetoc/Kmetovce.



SUCCESS STORY

Helping to Build Links between Communities

USAID supports Multi-ethnic Chess Tournament in Štrpce/Shtërpçë and helps build links between majority and minority communities



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together]

Around 40 competitors, Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs and Gorani from across Kosovo, gathered to participate in the Multiethnic Chess Tournament in Štrpce/Shtërpçë

“Our aim is to facilitate relations among majority and minority communities and help them regain confidence in each other. Through this tournament, we wanted to develop friendships and I think we succeeded in that,” explains Dejan Mrđinac, President of Chess Club Šara

Publication date: November 2014

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Sport is often viewed as a universal language that can bring people together, create a sense of common identity, facilitate healing, develop friendships, and reestablish relationships between communities, all of which are essential for people to rebuild the society and move forward. To promote multiethnic cooperation through sport and build links between communities, NGO "Chess Club Šara" from Štrpce/Shtërpçë approached the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) program and the Chess Federation of Kosovo (CFK) seeking their support to hold a multiethnic chess tournament.

Around 40 competitors, Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs, and Gorani from across Kosovo, gathered to participate in this tournament on November 9. “We had a great cooperation with the Chess Club Šara. They approached us for support in organizing this activity and we were happy to help them. In the beginning of the tournament, competitors were somewhat reclusive, but later on, through the game of chess, they overcame their concerns and were at ease with each other,” explains Nusret Avdiu, President of the Chess Federation of Kosovo (CFK) and the tournament participant. “My impressions are great. I want to thank the organizers for taking the initiative, and USAID for supporting activities like these, because cooperation through sports and culture is essential.”

Additionally, for the first time, Kosovo Serb chess players received invitations from their colleagues from Rahovec/Orahovac, Kačanik/Kaçanik and South Mitrovicë/a, to participate in their tournaments. “Our aim is to facilitate relations among majority and minority communities and help them regain confidence in each other. Through this tournament, we wanted to develop friendships and I think we succeeded in that,” explains Dejan Mrđinac, President of Chess Club Šara. “This is only the beginning of future cooperation,” says Mrđinac, since this organization plans to reestablish Brezovica’s image as a sport center, open a multiethnic chess school for children in Štrpce/Shtërpçë and organize the children’s multi-ethnic chess tournament to help youth establish communication and develop friendships. “That is essential for the future of Kosovo,” explains Mrđinac.



SUCCESS STORY

Encouraging Business Linkages through Entrepreneurship Training Courses

USAID supports business training courses in minority communities and encourages entrepreneurship spirit in women and youth and business linkages Kosovo wide



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together]

Participants attending the Introduction to Entrepreneurship for Minority Communities training courses in Gračanica/Graçanicë

"I want to learn how to expand the assortment of our dairy products and expand the market Kosovo wide. Once we start producing hard goat cheese, we can easily start selling it in South Kosovo," explains Miloš Marković, a young entrepreneur who runs a family dairy farm in Srbovac/Srbovc (Zvečan/Zveçan)

Publication date: November 2014

Training is essential to the achievements of a business, and entrepreneurship training has become of critical importance for young people. In today's economy, business learns as its people learn. With high youth and women unemployment rate, encouraging entrepreneurship and developing business linkages are keys to creating jobs and improving competitiveness and economic growth throughout Kosovo.

In order to facilitate entrepreneurship in vulnerable groups, USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT), in collaboration with Business Support Centre Kosovo (BSCK), conducted four five-day Introduction to Entrepreneurship for Minority Communities training courses at the Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC) in North Mitrovica/ë and Gračanica/Graçanicë in late October and early November.

Of more than 200 candidates that submitted their ideas for creating new businesses or expanding existing businesses, AKT's business development team selected 120 applicants to participate in the training programs. One of the participants, Gordana Mlađović, from Zvečan/Zveçan who established her business "Food Pack" through USAID CAIP Women and Youth Entrepreneurship Support Initiative, says she applied to participate in these courses to broaden her knowledge and expand her business. "USAID's support for women in north Kosovo is very important, because the environment here is still underdeveloped and very patriarchal, so you won't meet many women running their own business in this part of Kosovo." Miloš Marković is a young entrepreneur who runs a family dairy farm "Farma Laki". "I want to learn how to expand the assortment of our dairy products and expand the market Kosovo wide. Once we start producing hard goat cheese, we can easily start selling it in South Kosovo," explains Miloš.

Around 50 people participated in the two courses in Gračanica/Graçanicë. Snežana Nikolić from Ranilug/Ranillug says her business idea is to open a fitness center in this municipality: "Young people have no place to exercise and train there, and we need to keep them off the streets." Zoran Đokić from Parteš/Partesh has a business that dries and sells fruits and vegetables. "These trainings are important to the development of my business. I want to learn how to expand my market, create business linkages and sell my products Kosovo-wide," explains Zoran.

All the participants, 40 percent of whom were women, had an opportunity to take a test at the conclusion of the five-day training. Based on the results and the feasibility of their business ideas, they will be eligible to qualify to move to an advanced three-week training course which will include financial management, marketing and market research, etc. BSCK will also assist participants in the development of detailed business plans and facilitate access to financing.



SUCCESS STORY

Bringing Young People Together

USAID supports Youth Center in Klokot/Kllokot with voice equipment and encourages young people in this multiethnic community to organize joint cultural activities



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together]

Youth Center Director, 22-year old Miloš Perić, working on the new audio equipment received through USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) Program

“Serbs and Albanians live together here and we will work alongside each other. We want to achieve a more integrated community,” explains Miloš Perić, the Klokot/Kllokot Youth Center Director

Klokot/Kllokot is a village located in southeastern Kosovo and is well known for its spa resorts and a number of thermo-mineral springs. Until recently, there was no youth center in this village, leaving young people little choice but to congregate in the streets. When the center was recently established, it required additional equipment to serve the youth members in the community.

During a recent multiethnic community forum meeting organized by USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) Program in Klokot/Kllokot municipality, residents emphasized the need for audio equipment in the youth center to strengthen the engagement of young people in multiethnic cultural activities such as: concerts, plays, and recitals.

Miloš Perić, a 22-year old in charge of the youth center and already demonstrating strong leadership skills, is an asset to his community. “For a long time, nothing was happening here. We had to start from scratch. And if we want to do anything, we have to be active and take initiative. So, we organized ourselves, we initiated discussions, cultural events, and the whole village was very supportive. Also, USAID help was essential to us,” Miloš explains of the center which was established two years ago and is a gathering point for more than 300 young people who live in Klokot/Kllokot. “Serbs and Albanians live together here and we will work alongside each other. We want to achieve a more integrated community.”

Maja Spasić, a 20-year old nurse from the village is also a member of the Klokot/Kllokot community forum. “I want better conditions for young people who live in this municipality, and that is why I joined the community forum. We have to help each other to achieve that goal,” explains Maja. Now, the center is fully equipped with a mixer, loudspeakers, wireless microphone system, and two stand microphones, which enables young people to organize more activities, including the celebration of St. Sava’s Day that gathered all community members on January 27. The total value of the grant received from USAID through Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) Program is \$3,900.

Publication date: January 2015



SUCCESS STORY

Creating a Better Learning Environment for Children

USAID donates new desks and chairs to the primary school in Donja Budriga/Budrikë e Poshtme and helps create a better and healthier learning environment for children



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together Program]

Students using new desks and chairs donated to the "Dositej Obradović" school in Donja Budriga/Budrikë e Poshtme

"The old furniture was so damaged and shabby that we could barely use it. Projects like this are of great importance for the schools, especially for quality teaching," explains the primary school "Dositej Obradović" director, Maja Cvetković

Unpleasant classroom environment with old, ragged desks and chairs can significantly impact children's behavior, social interaction, and motivation to learn. In addition, children who use ergonomic desks and chairs are more focused and show more attention.

Even though the satellite primary school "Dositej Obradović" in Donja Budriga/Budrikë e Poshtme (Parteš/Partesh) was recently renovated, most of the classrooms were using old furniture. The children were at risk of hurting themselves from rough edges of the desks, and they were seated in non-friendly chairs thus impacting their long-term development. To improve the learning environment and provide adequate seating for children, the community approached USAID Advancing Kosovo Together (AKT) to help the school replace the old furniture with new desks and chairs.

"The old furniture was so damaged and shabby that we could barely use it, but the school did not have enough funds to replace it, so this was a great opportunity to provide a better learning environment for pupils," explains the school director, Maja Cvetković. Through the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together Program, the school in Donja Budriga/Budrikë e Poshtme received 60 new desks and 100 new chairs. "Projects like these are of great importance for the schools, especially for the quality teaching. To learn, children need to feel safe and supported. They are very happy now," explains Cvetković.

A ten-year old, straight-A student, Luka, says the classrooms look much better now. "We don't have to watch out for the sharp-edged desks which were hurting our wrists. Also, new furniture allows us to write without fear that our clothes will be torn up. I feel more focused now," explains Luka who is also the class president. "I enjoy attending school now," proudly explains eleven-year old straight-A student, Katarina, who also enjoys Serbian language classes.

The total value of the grant received from USAID through the Advancing Kosovo Together Program to purchase new desks and chairs for the school in Donja Budriga/Budrikë e Poshtme is worth \$3,159.

Publication date: April 2015



SUCCESS STORY

Let the Children Play Together!

USAID supports purchase of children's playground equipment in multiethnic villages Ponesh/Poneš and Gornji Livoč/Livoç i eperëm (Gjilan/Gnjilane), and helps communities interact through play



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together Program]

Encouraging joint activities through imaginative play in Gornji Livoč/Livoç i eperëm

"This playground was essential to us, because it brings Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian children together in play," explains Fadil Musliu, director of the school "Vatra e diturisë" in Gornji Livoč/Livoç i eperëm

Publication date: April 2015

Children can spend hours swinging, climbing, running, and interacting with each other while pretending to be superheroes, pirates, cowboys, transformers, or cosmonauts. Gathering in playgrounds, children explore and invent worlds made to fit their needs. This type of play not only allows children to roam freely in a safe environment, but these games are also of great importance to their development and wellbeing. Play helps young children interact and develop social skills, imagination, creativity, and a sense of self and belonging that will be essential in their adult lives. They learn how to lead, make decisions, and get along with their peers; through this they build confidence in their own abilities.

Given the far reaching benefits of playgrounds, communities without these facilities feel a tangible loss for their youngest members. For this reason, the multiethnic communities of Gornji Livoč/Livoç i eperëm and Ponesh/Poneš (Gjilan/Gnjilane) approached the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together Program to ask for help purchasing and installing playground equipment in each village. To help childhood development in both communities and encourage a stronger bond between minority and majority communities, the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together Program installed playgrounds with seesaws, swings, and slides in the school yards of both villages.

"This playground was essential to us, because it brings Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian children together in play," explains Fadil Musliu, director of the "Vatra e diturisë" school in Gornji Livoč/Livoç i eperëm where 350 children attend classes. "The new playground is wonderful. This is important for us because we have a good time here and it's wonderful for all children," explains Festina Kurteshi, a thirteen-year old pupil and president of the Children's Municipal Assembly in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

Stefan Trajković, a fourteen-year old pupil from the "Sveti Sava" school in Poneš/Ponesh says the new playground helped children from both communities socialize with each other. "This project means a lot. Now, we hang out and play with each other," explains Stefan.

The total grant received from the USAID Advancing Kosovo Together Program to purchase playground equipment is worth \$2,615 for Gornji Livoč/Livoç i Epërm and \$3,000 for Ponesh/Poneš.



SUCCESS STORY

Empowering the Role of Municipal Officers for Communities and Return

USAID supports “The Effective Representation of Communities’ Interests in Local and Central Government in Kosovo” conference and empowers Municipal Officers for Communities and Returns to achieve their mission



[Photo by Advancing Kosovo Together Program]

Representatives of MOCRs attend “The effective representation of communities’ interests in local and central government in Kosovo” conference held in Pristina on June 16, 2015

“Meetings and conferences such as this are very constructive because they give us an opportunity to learn about the best practices of our colleagues in other municipalities,” explains MOCR representative from North Mitrovica/ë, Suada Hajdarpašić

Publication date: June 2015

At the local government level, the Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs) should be a driving force in protecting and promoting the rights of all communities in their municipalities. But these offices face many problems, such as insufficient capacity and lack of an allocated budget for capital investments which are affecting their ability to be responsive to community needs.

To help achieve their mission and strengthen the role of Municipal Officers for Communities and Returns (MOCR) to address community needs and issues more effectively and to further promote relations between them and the Ministry of Communities and Returns, on June 16, USAID Advancing Kosovo Together organized “The Effective Representation of Communities’ Interests in Local and Central Government in Kosovo” conference in Pristina.

“At its heart, this is a discussion between local and national level government and that kind of dynamic is at the very core of democratic process”, USAID Kosovo Mission Director James Hope said in the conference opening remarks. He pointed out that creating sustainable return, promotion of dialogue and enabling reconciliation between communities throughout Kosovo cannot be done without the efforts and energy of municipal officers for communities and returns. “To be successful however, it is critical that municipal leaders recognize and empower the role of these officers by providing them necessary financial and capacity building support to help them do their jobs.”

The conference speakers included the Minister for Communities and Return, Dalibor Jevtić, Chairperson of the Committee on Rights, Interests of Communities and Returns in the Assembly of Kosovo, Jasmina Živković, and Zoran Mojsilović, Advisor to the Minister for Local Government Administration. “In the past, we were able to communicate and cooperate with municipal officers through regular coordination meetings during which they were able to give suggestions to help reach our common goals. But there is a need to improve such cooperation and that is precisely the way I look at this conference,” says Minister Jevtić thanking USAID for organizing the gathering.

Representatives of MOCRs in municipalities throughout Kosovo participated in this event. “Meetings and conferences such as this are very constructive because they give us an opportunity to learn about best practices of our colleagues in other municipalities,” explains Suada Hajdarpašić, MOCR representative from North Mitrovica/ë. “This is first time that I attended a Kosovo wide MOCR conference which allowed us to hear about the work of MOCRs in the municipalities in northern Kosovo,” explains Hajredin Alija, head of the MOCR in Prizren which recently, with the support of USAID Advancing Kosovo Together, hosted representatives of MOCRs in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Gračanica/Graçanicë and Štrpce/Shtërpcë.

Through its Advancing Kosovo Together program, USAID supports MOCR staff at the municipal level by providing forums for exchanges of experiences and best practices and building their internal capacities in areas such as budget preparation, lobbying and advocacy, strategic planning, project management, transparency and outreach.