

FINAL REPORT
BULGARIAN TECHNICAL TWINNING
PROGRAM - PHASE III

May 25, 2000 – August 24, 2002

Prepared for the
United States Agency for International Development

by

The International City/County Management Association
and the
Foundation for Local Government Reform

Contract No: LAG - I -00-99-00008-00/ TASK ORDER No. 807
Subcontract with ICMA: LAG - I -00-99-00008-00 – FLGR

Bulgaria Technical Twinning Program- Phase III

USAID Final Report

July 2002

Table of Contents

I. Project Background and Overview.....3-8

A. New Partnerships.....5-6

B. Phase I & II Partnerships.....6-7

C. Secondary areas of cooperation.....7-8

II. Program Results and Outcomes.....9-22

A. Overall Impacts.....9-11

B. By Partnership.....11-19

- Silistra/ Kettering, Ohio..... 11-12
- Vidin/ West Carrollton, Ohio.....12-13
- Veliko Turnovo/ Golden, Colorado.....13-14
- Pazardjik/ West Bend, Ohio.....14
- Blagoevgrad/ Auburn, Alabama.....15-16
- Razgrad/ Brunswick, Ohio.....16-17
- Gabrovo/ Portage, Michigan.....17-18
- Haskovo/ Abington, Pennsylvania.....18-19

C. Other Results..... 19-22

III. Best Practices Symposium.....22-23

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations.....23-25

Annexes:

Annex 1: Case Studies

Annex 2: Final Best Practices Symposium Proceedings

Annex 3: List of Deliverables

I. PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Summary

After the successful completion of the Resource Cities Program (July 1997-June 1998) and the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program (BTTP) Phases I and II (July 1997-April 2000) the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) was awarded, in a competitive process, a contract to implement the third phase of the program. Phase Three has aimed to establish four new municipal twinning partnerships in addition to four former ones that were formed during the previous phases. In the period May 2000 – August 2002, the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR) and ICMA continued their institutional collaboration to initiate and carry out the overall activities of Phase Three of the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program under the USAID/ICMA Sustainable Urban Management Contract (LAG - I -00-99-00008-00/ TASK ORDER No. 807).

Since its inception, the program has worked in 14 cities throughout Bulgaria and achieved remarkable results. The strength of the program lies in the special technical focus and the guiding principles of partnership and cooperation. This approach has resulted in a highly demand driven and technically focused program that has the ability to produce tangible achievements. Through the exchange of experience, know-how and innovative practices between local governments, the Program creates opportunities to develop solutions to nation-wide municipal and urban management issues. It also promotes new initiatives that aim at economic and community development; increasing citizen participation; encouraging partnerships among the public, private and non-governmental sectors; improving local government operations and provision of services to citizens. The Program also contributes to the strengthening and further building of the institutional capacity of the local governments and their partner organizations. The program has worked in the following focus areas:

- Citizen Participation
- Environmental Management
- Economic Development
 - Marketing
 - Tourism
- Urban Redevelopment
- Finance and Budget
- Infrastructure Management and Planning
- Sustainable Development/Strategic Planning
- Community Development
- Public Private Partnerships
- Improvement of Local Government Operations
- Effective service delivery

Phase III has aimed to further the development and expansion of the Program. The third phase was designed based on an in-depth analysis of the achievements and lessons learned from the first two phases and on the recommendations made by the earlier partnerships and

US Agency for International Development (USAID)/Sofia. Since 1997, three phases of the Program have been implemented with the assistance of the Foundation for Local Government Reform, with each phase heavily building on the accumulated experience of the previous phases. Phase III included the following program components:

- The establishment of technical twinning partnerships between four new Bulgarian and four new American municipalities;
- The continued financial support for the program activities of four of the Bulgarian-American partnerships from Phases I and II selected on a competitive basis;
- The replication of projects, innovative practices and models developed by Phase I and II partnerships in other interested Bulgarian municipalities; and,
- The continued institutional management support to FLGR.

Participating Municipalities

During the third phase of the program, the following four new partnerships were established and engaged in technical cooperation:

- Municipality of Silistra/City of Kettering, Ohio
- Municipality of Vidin/City of West Carrollton, Ohio
- Municipality of Veliko Turnovo/City of Golden, Colorado
- Municipality of Pazardjik/City of West Bend, Wisconsin

Under the second component of the program four partnerships from the previous phases were selected on a competitive basis and continued to receive organizational and financial support for their expanded scope of activities. These were:

- Municipality of Blagoevgrad/City of Auburn, Alabama
- Municipality of Razgrad /City of Brunswick, Ohio
- Municipality of Gabrovo/City of Portage, Michigan
- Municipality of Haskovo/Township of Abington, Pennsylvania

In Phase III, the four continuing partnerships undertook efforts to replicate their successful projects in other Bulgarian cities. These efforts intended to disseminate best practices and to share new models developed during the previous round of the technical twinning. Five Bulgarian Municipalities (Sevlievo; Tryavna; Harmanly; Novi Pazar and Sliven) benefited from the replication activities by applying and expanding on the best practices developed by the replicating partners.

Program Sustainability

Under the Institutional Management Support component of Phase III of the program, ICMA and FLGR successfully continued their collaboration through major topical trainings of FLGR staff and joint work on the improvement of FLGR services and operations. The strengthening of FLGR's capacity is an added value to the sustainability of the organization and contributes to the successful fulfillment of the organization's goals.

Other Results

The multi-component format of the third phase provided the participants with the opportunity to initiate, continue and further develop the identified areas of cooperation, to seek solutions to common problems in areas that had not yet been addressed during the previous phases, to strengthen the sustainability of their results, and to increase their impact by communicating them to other municipalities. In Phase III the Partnership Support Fund supported the efforts of all participating partnerships by making modest amounts of funds available for concrete project initiatives. This funding, which amounted to approximately \$60,000 USD, was granted to support the practical implementation and completion of partnerships projects and replication activities, and significantly maximized the effects of the technical cooperation.

During the 26-month period of the program's third round, the partners undertook numerous activities to help the Bulgarian Municipalities address their specific needs. In addition to the traditional areas of cooperation, which include *Local Economic and Community Development, Citizen Participation, and Solid Waste Management*, the partner cities explored *new areas: Public Infrastructure Management and Maintenance, Park Revitalization and Urban Development*.

Based on the Memoranda of Understanding and Action Plans for technical cooperation developed by each partnership, the twinned cities implemented the defined projects and replicated their activities in other Bulgarian cities. These achievements were attained through targeted technical visits to Bulgaria and the United States, training activities and consultations, and an on-going exchange of technical materials and information. The following projects have been developed and implemented within the scope of the partnerships' bi-lateral and tri-lateral cooperation:

A. NEW PARTNERSHIPS

1. Municipality of Silistra/City of Kettering, Ohio

a. Economic Development:

- Project 1: To create economic development opportunities through the establishment of a Business Incubator;
- Project 2: To develop a set of economic marketing materials for Silistra;
- Project 3: To identify economic development incentives in Silistra;

b. Park Redevelopment:

To develop a Master Plan (Conceptual Design) for the renovation and future development of the Danube Park in Silistra, including the implementation of small renovation projects in the park, through active citizen involvement.

2. Municipality of Vidin/City of West Carrollton, Ohio

a. Economic Development:

- Project 1: To create of an Economic Development Marketing Program for the Municipality of Vidin;
- Project 2: To develop an Industrial Park for Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs) in Vidin;
- Project 3: To promote and support business exchanges between Vidin and the Dayton Ohio Metropolitan Region;

b. Green Areas Development:

To develop a conceptual design for the Vidin Riverfront Park through active citizen participation.

3. Municipality of Veliko Turnovo/City of Golden, Colorado

a. Urban Development:

To develop a Strategic Plan for the Redevelopment of the Old Military School site in the downtown area of Veliko Turnovo;

b. Public Infrastructure Management:

A project to develop an Asset and Financial Management Program for public infrastructure in Veliko Turnovo.

4. Municipality of Pazardjik/City of West Bend, WI

a. Economic Development:

A project to create a Business Development Plan to establish an Economic Zone for SMEs in Pazardjik;

b. Urban Development:

A project to develop a Management Plan to create a Geographic Information System for the Municipality of Pazardjik;

c. Park Redevelopment:

A project to develop a Request for Proposal for the redevelopment of Ostrova Park.

B. PHASE I & II PARTNERSHIPS

1. Municipality of Blagoevgrad/Auburn, Alabama

a. Strategic Planning:

To develop the Strategic Plan of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad in the areas of Education and Social Care;

b. Economic Development:

To establish a comprehensive Plan for Economic Development for the Municipality of Blagoevgrad including: the creation of a Marketing Profile in the Municipality of Blagoevgrad, and the development of a model for a public-private partnership for the operation of a commercial center;

c. *Solid Waste Management:*

To redevelop the management plan and practice of the existing landfill to extend its lifespan;

d. *Replication of Best Practices:*

To replicate of the Marketing Profile Project in the City of Sliven.

2. Municipality of Razgrad/Brunswick, Ohio

a. *Economic Development:*

- Project 1: To develop training modules for the Center for Economic Development of Razgrad;
- Project 2: To develop a Strategy for Tourism for the Razgrad region;
- Project 3: To further revise and improve the marketing materials of the Municipality of Razgrad;

b. *Replication of Best Practices:*

To replicate of the Marketing Profile Project in the City of Novy Pazar.

3. Municipality of Gabrovo/Portage, Michagan

a. *Citizen Information/Participation:*

To develop a municipal Web site including a Business/Investment Profile of the Municipality of Gabrovo;

b. *Economic Development /Public Private Partnerships.*

To replicate the best practices in a public-private partnership (PPP) for economic development in the Municipalities of Tryavna and Sevlievo.

4. Municipality of Haskovo/Abington, PA

a. *Economic Development:*

- Project 1: To develop a Marketing Program for of the Municipality of Haskovo;
- Project 2: To develop an Orientation Program for potential investors;
- Project 3: To develop a Strategy for the Development of the existing Industrial Park in Haskovo.

C. SECONDARY AREAS OF COOPERATION

In the course of Phase III program implementation, in addition to the primary technically focused program areas, the partnerships worked in secondary areas of cooperation as well. Under these secondary areas, partners planned and implemented several new activities and undertook concrete initiatives to expand their collaboration. These efforts had a significant positive impact on their communities. The following activities and projects should be noted:

1. Education and Culture:

- a. A working relationship for an exchange of knowledge, faculty and students among South-West University and the American University in Blagoevgrad and Auburn University was established. The Auburn City Manager and Economic Development Director taught Public Administration and Economic Development courses to students at the American University in Blagoevgrad.
- b. A cultural exchange, called Auburn Musical Days in Blagoevgrad took place. The City of Blagoevgrad hosted a student band from the City of Auburn and organized several performances and meetings, encouraging linkages between youth groups of both twin towns.
- c. Contacts and correspondence exchanges were established between students from Vidin and West Carrollton, Pazardjik and West Bend, and between university students from Veliko Turnovo and Golden. With the support of the Cities of Pazardjik and West Bend, linkages between the Plovdiv University and the University of Wisconsin for distance education were initiated.
- d. The city libraries of West Bend and Pazardjik initiated cooperation for an information exchange of book donation by the West Bend Library.
- e. The municipalities of Haskovo and Abington explored opportunities to develop a Nurse Training Exchange Program.

2. Development of Business Linkages:

Several partnerships have undertaken initiatives to develop contacts between business communities in their cities and have subsequently supported the exchange of business delegations. *Vidin and West Carrollton, Veliko Turnovo and Golden, Blagoevgrad and Auburn, Haskovo and Abington, and Silistra and Kettering* organized visits between businessmen in Bulgaria and in the United States, undertook marketing initiatives and worked on the introduction of Bulgarian products to the American market, helped establish working relationships between the Chambers of Commerce and other Business Development organizations in the twin cities as well as develop business linkages between private companies.

3. Rotary Clubs Collaboration:

Several partnerships deepened their cooperation through local Rotary Clubs. The linkages between the Rotary Clubs of Vidin and West Carrollton, Pazardjik and West Bend, Turnovo and Golden, Silistra and Kettering developed effective exchanges. The West Carrollton Rotary Club donated computers to a high school in Vidin and provided investor contacts for the city. The Rotary Clubs of Veliko Turnovo and Golden outlined projects in the area of tourism development. The Brunswick Rotary Club was involved in the arrangement of donations for the City of Razgrad as well.

4. Humanitarian Assistance and Donations:

- a. Following its tradition from the previous years, The City of Brunswick donated four desktop computers, with a full set of printers and monitors, three laptops and a video camera to the City of Razgrad. A second donation of medical supplies for the Community Hospital in Razgrad was also organized and delivered in 2001.

- b. In 2001 the City of West Bend donated two laptops and two desktop computers along with a donation of clothes, books and school supplies to the Municipality of Pazardjik. In addition, a second large donation for Pazardjik consisting of 100 PCs, 30 printers, clothes, books, toys, blankets, firefighter gear and other materials was organized and prepared for shipment. The City of West Bend has made extraordinary humanitarian contributions, which are highly valued and supported by the City of Pazardjik. The donation is envisioned for Pazardjik schools, low-income families, Roma minority groups, libraries and the local fire station.
- c. The City of Kettering organized a fundraising campaign to support the Silistra Danube Park improvements. About \$1800 USD was collected from Kettering citizens and donated to the City of Silistra, for the construction of a new recreation area for adolescents including a skateboard facility.

II. PROGRAM RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

In the five years of its existence the Bulgaria Technical Twinning Program has initiated many innovative practices in Bulgarian Municipalities. The third phase of the program has had a widespread impact. The integrated approach used for the implementation of the various program components contributed to the increase in the technical impact of the joint cooperation, an enhancement in the experience, skills and knowledge of municipal officials, experts and community NGO representatives. These efforts also widened the range of the Bulgarian municipal beneficiaries and demonstrated the growing effectiveness of the technical projects, and a greater community involvement. The opportunities to replicate successful projects and seminars that were organized and conducted in the two-year course of the program further strengthened the technical capacity of the Bulgarian municipalities and improved their understanding of modern local government concepts. The participating US cities have also benefited from the program, gaining an appreciation for the enhanced creativity and potential of their teams, work experience in an international environment, and involvement in global development efforts.

A. Overall Impacts

1. During the third phase of the program four additional Bulgarian/American partnerships were established, in addition to the seven formed in the previous phases. The new partnerships demonstrated a high commitment both to the overall program goals and the partners' bilateral relationships. Through jointly designed and implemented technical projects, these partnerships explored new areas of cooperation and developed innovative practices.
2. Four partnerships from Phase I and II successfully continued their cooperation in the third phase, further building on their experience and enhancing the effectiveness of their program areas and technical projects.
3. For the first time, successful projects, management practices and working models were replicated in five Bulgarian Municipalities, which were non - direct

participants in the Program, thus expanding the circle of beneficiaries of this positive experience.

4. The new areas of cooperation enabled the partners to develop innovative practices in: *Park Revitalization, Urban Planning, Public Infrastructure Management and Maintenance and Solid Waste Management.*
5. The most valuable innovative practices developed throughout the course of Phase III, which are replicable and can serve as models for other Bulgarian cities are:
 - Park redevelopment with active citizens involvement projects (Vidin/West Carrollton, Silistra/Kettering);
 - Creation of a Development Plan for reuse of a former military site to enhance the community's economic vitality (Veliko Turnovo/Golden);
 - Municipal asset and financial management program for public infrastructure (Veliko Turnovo/Golden);
 - Redesign and reorganization of landfill operation and the implementation of corrective measures to prolong a landfill's life extension. (Blagoevgrad/Auburn);
 - Electronic marketing profiles and business information websites (Blagoevgrad/Sliven/Auburn, Vidin/WestCarrollton, Gabrovo/Portage);
 - Municipal orientation program for investors (Haskovo/Abington);
 - Regional tourism development strategy (Razgrad, Shoumen, Veliko Turnovo);
 - Industrial Park for SMEs development (Pazardjik/West Bend);
 - Local Economic Development through the Establishment of a Business Incubator (Silistra/Kettering);
 - Development of Municipal Marketing Strategy to Attract Investment (Vidin/West Carrollton; Silistra/Kettering).
2. Within the traditional areas of cooperation (Economic Development), ten Bulgarian Municipalities including three replicant cities, worked on developing municipal marketing strategies and created marketing tools necessary to promote the benefits the existing resources in order to attract businesses, investments and tourism;
3. The funds made available through the Program's Partnerships Support Fund (PSF) in support of the practical implementation and completion of partnerships projects and replication activities significantly maximized the effects of the technical cooperation.
4. All Bulgarian participants gained relevant first-hand knowledge, received expert assistance and valuable information, acquired new skills and learned innovative practices through collaboration on overall municipal management activities.
5. The capacity of the Bulgarian partners improved and best practices were developed in the following areas: *Local Economic Development*, more specifically: principals of a market oriented economy, practices for creating a favorable environment for attracting businesses and investment, incentives for stimulation of SME development, development of a marketing strategy and tools to market the City, industrial parks development, the establishment of public/private partnerships, etc;

and Citizen Participation including: the principals of public discussion, the effective polling of citizens, and the broad involvement of community groups and citizens in setting goals and priorities, decision making, strategic and urban planning and park redevelopment.

6. The partnerships' cooperation led to increased citizen participation. The Program created more opportunities for community-based and non-governmental organizations as well as citizen groups to be directly involved in the implementation of community projects and the local governance processes. There was widespread citizen participation in many of the projects, thus becoming an area of success that correlated with the implementation of other projects.
11. The practical application and adaptation of US practices to the Bulgarian environment had a very positive impact on the overall governance practices in Bulgarian participant cities.
12. The involvement in the Technical Twinning Program enhanced the effectiveness of other donor-supported initiatives in Bulgarian twin cities. Projects under the Program were in many cases effectively integrated with on-going initiatives and brought about more complex and comprehensive results. (i.e. the creation of a business incubator, river bank improvements, park areas renovation, etc.)
13. FLGR and US partners provided effective training of the Bulgarian Municipal Management, City Councilors and specialists occurred through training events conducted in the Bulgarian cities and through thematic seminars for Bulgarian municipalities countrywide. These training efforts further contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Bulgarian local governments.
14. The Program promoted the establishment of professional and personal relationships and contacts, strengthened the linkages among municipal administrations, business people, NGOs, educational and cultural institutions, and families in the respective Bulgarian/US communities;
15. The humanitarian assistance and donations provided by the US partner cities over the past years to their Bulgarian twin towns amounts to over \$150,000, an invaluable contribution that brings the American and Bulgarian communities closer.
16. Through continuous institutional support and collaboration with ICMA, FLGR strengthened its capacity for more effective provision of technical assistance to Bulgarian municipalities, dissemination of information and innovative practices in local governance, encouragement of beneficial forms of international municipal cooperation and local development initiatives.

B. Impact by Partnerships:

1. Municipality of Silistra/City of Kettering, Ohio

Economic Development:

In the area of Economic Development, partners from Silistra and Kettering initiated and successfully implemented three projects of significant importance to the Bulgarian city in light of the ongoing economic changes and the necessity to encourage local economic growth. The projects aimed at creating employment opportunities, marketing the city

resources to attract and recruit businesses, and determine incentives for economic development. These projects attained and exceeded the goals of the partnership and led to the following practical outputs:

- a. The establishment of a business incubator, resulting in 60% of the target area occupied by businesses, 28 new jobs created, and the redevelopment and improvement of a neighborhood area into “ the Incubator Garden.”
- b. The development of a set of marketing materials presenting the economic potential, business atmosphere, business benefits and quality of life in Silistra. This set of marketing materials has been published twice so far. It is one of the tools of the implementation of an overall marketing strategy of Silistra. It was successfully promoted and disseminated at investment and business forums in the Dayton, Ohio area and through targeted mailing in United States and Europe.
- c. The principals of the business incentives program have been outlined and presented as a draft incentive plan to the City Council of Silistra and the Privatization Fund Management Board. Given that none of the expected legislative changes to provide more freedom to local governments in Bulgaria have yet been approved on a national level, the Silistra package of incentives is subject to further discussion and approval by the City Council. However, this first attempt by a Bulgarian Municipality must be recognized as a valuable effort for providing practical support to businesses through an incentives package. All three projects produced important benefits related to the economic vitality of Silistra.

Park Redevelopment:

In the area of *Park Redevelopment* partner cities achieved remarkable results, having developed a Master Plan (Conceptual Design) for the renovation and future development of the Danube Park in Silistra with active citizen involvement, as well as the implementation of small renovation projects in the park. Several major accomplishments were achieved as a result of the Danube Park Redevelopment Project including the full inventory and the definition of park features in harmony with community needs through the participation and direct involvement of citizens, volunteer groups, local NGOs, community based organizations and municipal staff. Development of the actual Danube Park Concept has been completed and verified through two public discussions, and small renovation projects in different areas of the park have been implemented. These projects include the development of a recreation area for adolescents with a skateboard facility, the Kettering Corner, and the Donors Alley. Many other park improvements have taken place such as riverbank and central alley renovation, which contributed to the new look and image of the park. The project produced numerous benefits, most noticeably an increase in public participation and a greater appreciation of and pride in the city by the citizens.

2. Municipality of Vidin/City of West Carrollton, Ohio

The Cities of Vidin and West Carrollton have been successfully involved in the design and development of the Vidin Danube Riverfront Park, economic development marketing efforts, the creation of a special Information Business Website, and the Industrial Park concept development.

Economic Development:

One of the most successful outcomes of the partnership cooperation is the design, development and completion of a business information page in both English and Bulgarian, launched on the Internet at www.municipality.vidin.net. This business web site is a model for other cities in the country and contains comprehensive business information targeted to respond promptly and effectively to potential investors. The project created an important marketing tool for the Municipality in its efforts to promote Vidin's economic potential and investment opportunities. As a part of the overall marketing efforts the partners also outlined a marketing strategy for the Industrial Park for Small and Medium size Businesses in Vidin. The cooperation on the Industrial Park project resulted in identifying the most attractive land with a strategic location, developing the key aspects for its creation and securing public support from the Vidin business community. This initiative has been supported by a decision of the Vidin City Council for the development of a Detailed Regulation Plan for the Industrial Park lot. Both projects have been of great importance to the potential economic growth in Vidin, and the city's future as a whole. Both partner cities have been active in encouraging business linkages between their communities and the partner business delegations, have organized promotional events for the products of Vidin firms in the Dayton, Ohio area as well as used West Carrollton's team capacity to promote and market the Vidin region as a place for business opportunities.

Green Areas Development:

The cooperation in Green Areas Development was extremely beneficial for the City of Vidin, providing planning, design and management tools aimed at improving the park's aesthetics and functionality for future generations. The Conceptual Design of the Danube Riverfront Park was completed with the outstanding dedication and technical assistance of a group of volunteer landscape architects from West Carrollton who worked in constant collaboration with their Vidin counterparts. The new park design provides a development strategy for the next 5-10 years, flexibility for making changes and serves as a tool for managing annual budgets and applying for funds from external sources. The whole project was implemented with the active involvement of community groups, citizens, school students and local NGOs, who embraced and supported the park renovation, adopted some park property and dedicated volunteer work to the park preservation. Some of the design ideas of the park, such as the Grande Entrance, have already been implemented. As a result of these activities, the beauty of the park was improved and the forthcoming park improvements will complete its transformation into a preferred place for rest and recreation for Vidin's citizens.

3. Municipality of Veliko Turnovo/City of Golden, Colorado

The Cities of Veliko Turnovo and Golden explored new areas of cooperation in Phase III and achieved remarkable results implementing two major projects.

Urban Development:

In the area of Urban Development, the partners developed a Strategic Plan for the Redevelopment of the Old Military School site in the downtown area of Veliko Turnovo with emphasis on a more effective use of the property to enhance the economic vitality of the community. In addition a team of Bulgarian architects completed a detailed Development Regulation Plan of the site, which will allow the implementation of the first phases of the property allocation and the redevelopment project. Innovative approaches, including market-driven land-use planning and wide community participation were used in the process of project implementation, which greatly increased the awareness and interest of community stakeholders and citizens while ensuring support for site redevelopment. The completion of this project has a great value for the City of Veliko Turnovo and is a useful model for other municipalities.

Public Infrastructure Management:

The partner cities have worked together on the development of an Asset and Financial Management Plan of Public Infrastructure. The implementation of this project resulted in an asset and financial management program that allows the City of Veliko Turnovo to accurately plan for short and long-term infrastructure needs, estimate the costs of annual repair and determine on-going financial requirements. The Program also provides comparative options showing the additional costs that the city will incur if it fails to meet the needed investment level in the infrastructure. This project has a direct practical application and is an innovative practice for Bulgarian municipalities. It is a tool for effective planning and infrastructure maintenance, saving thousands of levas to city budgets. As one of the most successful best practices, the Asset and Financial Management Plan of Public Infrastructure was discussed and dispersed through a three-day training course for 30 experts from 14 interested Bulgarian Municipalities. As a result of the training seminar several requests for replication of this project in other Bulgarian cities have been filed with the program coordinators at FLGR.

4. Municipality of Pazardjik/West Bend, Wisconsin

Economic Development:

In the focus area of Economic Development the partners successfully developed a Business Development Plan for the creation of an Economic Zone for SMEs in Pazaradjik. The project aimed at finding sustainable solutions to the problems of small and medium-size businesses in line with the priority goals set in the municipal economic development plan. The completed plan for the creation of an Economic Development Zone included lot sale process, creation of a municipal corporation, and plans for a municipal bonds issue and/or application for EU pre-accession funds to finance the ED zone infrastructure. The success of the project was due to the partners' efforts to seek support and involve the local business community in the process as well as in the marketing strategy. A special brochure for the zone has been produced, presented and disseminated to businesses, banks and other business development organizations, generating interest that has already resulted in 45

inquiries as well as interest among large foreign investors. These are the first signs indicating that the project has started to encourage private entrepreneurs from the region and abroad to consider relocation leading to the creation of new businesses in Pazardjik. The ED zone will contribute to the favorable development of the SMEs, new jobs creation and an increase in local revenues. This project is a great example for many Bulgarian municipalities that are committed to support the SME development in their communities.

Urban Development:

In the area of Urban Development the teams of Pazardjik and West Bend worked on developing a management plan to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Municipality of Pazardjik. The creation of a GIS and its implementation is an on-going process, which has been successfully initiated and advanced in accordance to the developed management plan. With the accomplishment of the management plan the opportunity to meet actual needs has grown significantly. The developed system design has also generated new options to further proceed in GIS creation. The Pazardjik team expects to complete the GIS creation in the fall of 2002. This will enhance and modernize the municipal technical office and result in better delivery of services. The development of the GIS will allow the municipal administration to make quicker management decisions related to territorial and infrastructure development as well as to provide more effective services to the utility companies, fire and police departments, civil protection departments, tax and legal authorities, private developers and citizens.

5. Blagoevgrad/Auburn, Alabama

Since its inception the technical twinning between Blagoevgrad and Auburn has been an example of outstanding efforts, dedication and involvement under a wide scope of activities for the benefit of both communities. Through their continuing partnership in the third phase, the two cities further developed and expanded upon the areas of cooperation by implementing projects in Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Solid Waste Management and replicated best practices in the City of Sliven. The most important results are as follows:

The Blagoevgrad Strategic Development Plan 2015 was further developed in the areas of Education and Social Care. For the development of the two areas, the City of Blagoevgrad used the participatory and consensus-building methodology applied in the previous phase. A wide range of community-based organizations, local NGOs, educational and social care institutions and citizens were involved through work groups and a steering committee, contributing to the development of the vision, strategic directions, tasks and resources for the fulfillment of the plan. The two areas of the plan have been successfully completed and incorporated as integral part in the overall Strategic Plan of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad - 2015.

Economic Development:

Under the Economic Development area of cooperation the partners developed an Electronic Marketing Profile of the City of Blagoevgrad, launched it on the Municipal Website and published hard copies in English and German. As part of the marketing strategy, a video promoting Blagoevgrad's strengths and opportunities was produced. As a result of this project, the City of Blagoevgrad now possesses a set of marketing tools to assist in the overall municipal policy of encouraging local economic development. In the process of preparing their bids on municipal projects, private investors used and benefited from the Marketing Profile. The partners also developed and applied the model of Public-Private Partnership for the operations of a commercial center in the City of Blagoevgrad.

Solid Waste Management:

One of the most valuable innovative practices developed by the partnership under the current phase was the project for the redesign and reorganization of landfill operation and implementation of corrective measures for landfill's life extension. Based on the identified goals and tasks in the Municipality Solid Waste Management Plan, which was developed by the partnership in the previous phase, partners prepared a plan to improve the Blagoevgrad landfill's environmental standards, to extend the life of the landfill and to reduce the landfill's negative environmental impact. A broad array of community representatives were involved in the project including students and lecturers from the two universities in Blagoevgrad, municipal councilors and citizens, NGOs, regional agencies for environmental protection and others groups. The active involvement by the community of Blagoevgrad resulted in the reshaping of the public attitude and municipal government approaches to solid waste management. The project has been very successful in having improved the design, maintenance, operation, and safety of the landfill. In addition, with the application of the corrective measures, the life of the landfill was extended by at least 10-15 years. The project can serve as a model for most Bulgarian municipalities on how to improve basic environmental conditions in a city through new management practices, new ways of thinking among citizens, yet with limited financial resources.

Replication Efforts:

Through its commitment to share its best practices with other Bulgarian Municipalities, the partnership of Blagoevgrad/Auburn has successfully replicated the Marketing Profile Project in the City of Sliven. The Project involved the development of an information toolkit presenting the strengths of the Municipality of Sliven in a user-friendly format. The toolkit has been distributed to potential investors to promote business opportunities. The Marketing profile of Sliven has been developed in electronic format and launched on the Internet at: www.obshtina.sliven.net, which allows timely updates and specific printouts to satisfy users' needs. The City of Sliven benefited from this project by making the first step toward the development of a municipal marketing strategy. The partners' cooperative efforts went beyond the replication project, and a productive trilateral partnership with the City of Sliven was established. The teams of the three cities shared best practices in other areas of local governance and identified new ideas for mutual cooperation.

6. Municipality of Razgrad/Brunswick, Ohio

The partnership collaboration in the third phase resulted in strengthening the achievements and further expanding program areas allowing the creation of new products for the benefit of the community of Razgrad and the region.

Project on Development and Adaptation of Training Modules:

Nine training modules have been developed during Phase III of the program. This project aimed at expanding the range of services and providing the Center for Economic Development (CED) of Razgrad with marketable products. The training modules developed were: Strategic Planning, General Marketing, Marketing of a Municipality, Teaching English, Tourism Development, Business Incubator Development and Operation, Economic Demography, Training of Trainers and Municipal Budgeting.

Two of the modules, Teaching English and Municipal Budgeting have been successfully used through two training courses organized and conducted by the CED in 2002 allowing training of finance experts from seven neighboring towns and improving language skills of citizens from the community. The project implementation increased the capacity of the CED and its staff, expanded the services provided by the center and created opportunities to generate revenues for the operational sustainability of the center.

Development of a Regional Tourism Strategy:

Recognizing the insufficient attention paid to the Razgrad's tourism potential, the partnership decided to focus their efforts in the area of development of a tourism strategy for the region. In the course of the project implementation Razgrad successfully partnered with the cities of Shoumen and Veliko Turnovo, which led to the development of a Regional Tourism Development Strategy and a Work Plan containing guidelines for practical implementation. The participating communities created a database of tourist sites, developed and printed an impressive Tourist Marketing Brochure, containing information on more than 60 sites, and identified channels for information dissemination through tourist information centers established in Veliko Turnovo and Razgrad. The tourist information center in the City of Shoumen is currently being established. The development of the Regional Tourism Strategy is an excellent example of uniting efforts and cooperation among Bulgarian Municipalities based on common needs, aimed at creating and offering attractive tourist products, with the ultimate goal to stimulate and support local economic growth. The Regional Tourism Strategy project raised interest among other Bulgarian Municipalities, eager to get involved and network with the core group of cities.

The City of Razgrad Marketing Profile:

The City of Razgrad further advanced their marketing efforts from the previous phase with the development of an electronic database, and published on CD-ROM a more comprehensive Marketing Profile. Consistent with modern technology, this product incorporates a wide range of economic, social and cultural information, having the additional advantages of minimum costs and the possibility of regular updates. The success of this project supports the expansion of Razgrad marketing efforts.

Replication of Best Practices in the City of Novy Pazar:

The Municipalities of Razgrad and Novy Pazar collaborated on developing a Marketing profile project. Partners completed and published the first Marketing Profile of the City of Novy Pazar. The product contains optimized information, to respond to the interests of potential investors and is a marketing tool that supports Novy Pazar’s efforts towards general economic revitalization. The City of Razgrad was able to successfully share its knowledge and experience in developing marketing instruments with a third Bulgarian City, replicating best practices developed in the previous phase.

7. Gabrovo/Portage, Michigan

In the third phase the partnership continued working on the major areas of technical cooperation, which were Citizen Participation, Economic Development and Public-Private Partnerships, further building on their best practices and achieving tangible results.

Citizen Participation:

The city partners collaborated on a new project: the creation of a Municipal web-site, which was successfully developed and launched with an interactive component allowing it to receive feedback from citizens on the wide scope of information and services provided by the Municipality. This resulted in improving the information provided and increasing citizen awareness and understanding of municipal services. As an additional component of the Gabrovo Website, an electronic Business Profile has been developed by the partners and launched on the Internet with the specific purpose of responding to the needs of potential investors and promoting the business opportunities in the city. The information currently can be found on the following temporary address: www.edabg.com/dev/gabrovo soon to be updated to www.gabrovo.bg. The Business Profile of Gabrovo was also published as a hard copy and widely disseminated. Both the electronic and printed Business Profiles of the Municipality of Gabrovo are excellent marketing tools aimed at attracting businesses and foreign investment.

Economic Development:

The counterparts have replicated their best practices encouraging public-private partnerships (PPP) for economic development in the cities of Tryavna and Sevlievo. The outcomes of the replication of the Public-Private Partnership project in the communities of Triavna and Sevlievo show successful private investment, added revenue and job creation for the replicant municipalities.

The City of Triavna:

- Initial bidding price for the lot “Former school” **\$11,985.00**
- Sale price **\$15,007.00**
- Functional destination **Hotel**
- Commitment to invest in building **\$50,000.00**
- New jobs to be created **10**

The final output of PPP methodology applied to this property has been highly valued by the City of Triavna, given that the lot had been on the market for years.

The City of Sevlievo

- Initial bidding price **\$10,310.00**

- Sale price **\$14,520.00**
- Four lots of municipal land sold for commercial and industrial purposes
- Commitment to invest in infrastructure **\$5,000.00**
- New jobs to be created **12**

The replication of PPP best practices was successful through the application of creative approaches of municipal property sale. It provided the opportunity for two more cities to learn and understand the PPP principals and to increase their capacity to implement PPP practices in the Bulgarian environment. To disseminate the best practices on Public-Private Partnership, Gabrovo, in collaboration with Portage, published a handbook on project results, which is currently being disseminated among Bulgarian municipalities. The valuable initiatives by the Municipality of Gabrovo under both areas of cooperation led to improving citizens' information and encouraging economic development in the region.

8. Municipality of Haskovo/ Abington, Pennsylvania

In the third Phase of the Program the partnership developed and implemented a multi-component program (Corporate Office Center- Industrial Park Project) and an action plan to attract investment to the Municipality of Haskovo and to create favorable conditions for the economic revitalization of the region. Tangible results in line with the overall goals of technical cooperation were achieved. Under each component of their multifaceted program, the achievements have been very successful and can be summarized as follows:

Marketing Program for the Municipality of Haskovo:

In the course of the Program the Municipality of Haskovo developed, published and disseminated a comprehensive set of Marketing materials: Marketing Profile of the Municipality of Haskovo containing business information; the Registry of Haskovo firms and their profiles' promotional material; the Tourist Profile of the Municipality of Haskovo together with the city map of the down town area and its tourist attractions; and a DVD presentation of the Haskovo region as a location for business opportunities.

Along with the development of the marketing tools, the City of Haskovo implemented several marketing initiatives used to present the business opportunities in the region to domestic businesses, foreign businesses, investors, as well as to economic development and business support organizations.

Orientation Program:

The Orientation Program for potential investors has been developed including a packet with 12 categories of information on major aspects of business, life, culture and history. The Orientation Program is flexible and can be tailored to the individual needs of each potential investor by a team of qualified municipal experts. The Orientation Program of Haskovo is an innovative practice for Bulgarian municipalities and could serve as a model for providing business-oriented services.

Industrial Park Project:

Partners from Haskovo and Abington created a development strategy for the Northern Industrial Zone of Haskovo to be marketed as an attractive place for business operations. The Strategy contains the municipality plan to attract businesses using the existing

advantages and guidelines for incentives that could be offered. As a result of the Haskovo team efforts, there has been an increased interest in the industrial park; some new businesses have already relocated while others are in the process of starting their business operations at the industrial park site.

Replication Activities:

The City of Haskovo successfully shared their marketing experience with the City of Harmanly and replicated the Marketing Profile Project. The marketing brochure of the Municipality of Harmanly was updated in both languages and published, being Harmanly's first promotional material. The City of Haskovo provided additional consultations to other neighboring cities and disseminated information on municipal marketing policy through the Regional Association of Municipalities "Maritza". The end results of the overall collaboration of the Haskovo/Abington partnership were very beneficial for achieving the final goal: improving the business climate and supporting economic development in the region. The successful completion of all their Phase III projects brought about high recognition of their efforts – the FLGR first prize for innovative practices in the area of "Municipal Marketing".

C. OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Institutional Development and Sustainability Strategy for FLGR

The collaboration with ICMA under the institutional management support component of the Program allowed further capacity building of the overall FLGR staff. Through workshops, short-term consultative visits to Sofia and Washington, and study tours, ICMA provided FLGR staff with targeted training and program development in the following areas:

Proposal Writing and Review, Program Monitoring and Evaluation, Communications Techniques, Information Collection and Dissemination, Effective Services Provision, Publications and Program Marketing, Organizational Networking and Development of the Organization's Sustainability.

Under the Institutional Building component of the Technical Twinning Program, US and European consultants worked with FLGR team on the organization's sustainability strategy. Both consultants brought to the table significant NGO development experience. The second consultant was hired with the special task to develop the European specific section of the overall sustainability strategy.

During an initial visit in June 2002, US consultant Lorel Donaghey met with the team members and discussed the basic components of a Sustainability Strategy for FLGR: strategic relationships with diverse donors, fee for service and cost recovery, corporate sponsorship and fundraising, relationship with the Association of Bulgarian Municipalities (NAMRB), need for a dedicated development director and increased staff development. Three working groups were formed to develop business plans for marketing FLGR trainings and publications and to formulate the necessary changes of the Internal Framework. Ms. Donaghey also met with a number of representatives from outside

organizations in order to develop a well-rounded understanding of the external factors that might have an impact on an effective sustainability strategy.

In July 2002 the executive management team of the Foundation went on a Study Visit in the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The purpose of the visit was to assist FLGR to develop its capacity as a sustainable organization through exchange of experience and information on organizational development, strategic planning, business planning, and skills development. FLGR representatives had two training sessions with European consultant Ms. Chris Cardy at the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (I&DeA) based in London, and a number of meetings with various NGOs from Western and Central Europe such as the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) from Ireland, the training organization of the Czech local authorities – FALA, the Czech and Hungarian NGO Information Centers (ICN and NIOK), the Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights – DemNet in Budapest. The meetings were extremely useful in terms of establishing partnership links and defining the directions of FLGR development as an independent and sustainable organization working on various projects and programs.

The study tour was followed by further efforts in Sofia when the two international consultants continued the detailed work with the FLGR team. The consultative sessions focused on the following topics:

- Identifying FLGR capacities and strengths and how to promote them to EU and US donors;
- Business Plans and Internal Framework;
- Awards Programs – Practices from Abroad;
- Preparation of projects, building partnerships and identifying potential donors – new approaches and special focus on the EU project cycle;
- Preparing a Plan for follow up steps (tasks, activities, responsible persons, outputs and timeline) according to the main components of the Sustainability Strategy.

Ms. Donaghey and Ms. Cardy also conducted meetings with representatives of the British Council (DFID) and the EU Delegation in Sofia to assess potential new donor support and identify opportunities for FLGR to start professional cooperation with these organizations. The outputs of the meetings were very positive. As a result FLGR has started to work to design and obtain funding from the DFID for a future local government assistance project.

The participation at BTTP and cooperation with ICMA has assisted the Foundation to develop a solid level of capacity and establish good reputation as an organization with great knowledge and expertise in the areas of local government, regional development, training and information provision and policy change.

2. Other Results

- a. During the third phase of the program through the continuous institutional partnership with ICMA, FLGR's team capacity to independently manage the

program, administer small project assistance grants for Bulgarian local governments, enhance the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program and provide technical assistance in international development programs to local authorities was further strengthened.

- b. As a spin-off of the Program and as a result of the competent assistance provided by FLGR program team, a new partnership for technical cooperation between the Regional Governments of the US state of Montana, Bulgaria and Malopolska, Poland, was initiated, established and developed.
- c. As a result of the provided institutional support, FLGR was able to develop and effectively improve the methodology of monitoring and evaluating major programs, update the training modules on Citizen Participation for Bulgarian Municipalities, develop, produce and disseminate a weekly electronic newsletter, develop guidelines of the Sustainability Strategy, and a draft business plan of the organization.
- d. In the course of program's implementation, FLGR has been widely spreading information on project development, best practices, lessons learned and overall impact through its monthly newsletter, E-weekly newsletter, special publications and pamphlets reaching a large audience, including: Bulgarian Local government officials and practitioners, regional associations of Municipalities, NGOs, regional and national government institutions and Members of Parliament.
- e. The most successful practices developed under the technical twinning projects were included in the Innovative Practices Network (LOGIN), disseminating through both the Internet and brochures the best practices developed in different areas of local governance throughout the country and abroad.
- f. Based on the accumulated experience from Program Phase III, the FLGR team is developing and preparing for publication a Handbook on International Cooperation of Local Authorities to serve as guidance and to promote the most effective forms and achievements of international municipal partnerships. The Handbook will be disseminated among all Bulgarian Municipalities, Municipal Associations, and a wide variety of partner organizations and other interested institutions.
- g. FLGR further developed its Twinning Database incorporating twinning links and partnerships of over 80 Bulgarian Municipalities with cities worldwide. The Twinning Database is launched on the FLGR Website and contains targeted information on areas of cooperation and technical projects developed under the Technical Twinning Program. It is available to a broad array of users.

III. BEST PRACTICES SYMPOSIUM “LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO NATIONAL CHALLENGES”

At the end of the 24-month period of Program Phase III, a final Best Practices Symposium convened on June 19-21, 2002 in Varna, Bulgaria. Over 80 participants representing the eight Bulgarian/US partnerships, as well five Bulgarian replicant municipalities and guests

from Serbia and Romania attended the final event. US Ambassador to Bulgaria James Pardew and USAID/Bulgaria leadership were honorable guests and assisted in assessing the implementation of Program Phase III and its outcomes. They gave high recognition of the achievements of the Bulgarian/US cities' collaboration and declared support for future initiatives of the local authorities. On behalf of the Bulgarian National Government the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Regional Development, Kostadin Paskalev and the former Mayor of Blagoevgrad sent a congratulatory letter to all participants in the Program wishing future success in their endeavors.

The Best Practice Symposium was of considerable importance to all program participants in terms of summarizing tangible results achieved during the third phase, sharing experience on best practices developed in new areas of local governance, disseminating and encouraging the replication of valuable projects and working models, providing recommendations for the sustainability of the achievements and sharing innovative practices among Bulgarian local governments.

The participating partnerships and the Bulgarian replicant cities, having selected the most successful projects resulting from their technical cooperation, delivered 13 joint presentations as case studies at the final conference. The presentations covered a wide range of best practices developed in the following areas:

- Economic Development and Marketing;
- Municipal Land Sale/ Public Private Partnerships;
- Environmental Management;
- Citizen Participation in Park Revitalization;
- Technology in Management.

The best practices shared at the conference demonstrated significant growth from the achievements from the previous phases, integrity of approaches used in finding local solutions to nation-wide problems, expanded citizens involvement, and the enhanced capacity of the Bulgarian local governments. The strategy for sustainability, popularization and future implementation of municipal best practices nation-wide was the major topic of the final panel discussion by the leaderships of the Bulgarian partner cities.

The Final Symposium "Local Solutions to National Challenges" was a forum for analysis and evaluation of the achievements, and for sharing successes in all aspects of the technical cooperation. Special attention was paid to the benefits that this model of cooperation between partner cities from different countries creates. All participants recognized that the partnership between Bulgarian and US cities has been extremely useful, effective and mutually beneficial, declaring commitment to continue their relationship and cooperation in the future irrespective of the availability of USAID program funding. Several letters of thanks were received from Bulgarian Mayors and US City Managers highlighting the top success of the Best Practices Symposium and its value to all participants.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program has become a model of effective technical cooperation between cities for municipal development. Through the expanded effort of the partnerships, the third phase accumulated stronger positive experience and achieved significant practical results thus proving once again the overall success of the program.

During the third phase, FLGR and ICMA made a further step toward evaluating the effectiveness of the program and the impacts of the technical collaboration.

Based on a mid-term evaluation of the program conducted in 2001 and on results of the technical partnerships shared by Bulgarian and American participants during the final Phase III Best Practices Symposium, the following conclusions and recommendations are of utmost importance:

A. Conclusions

1. The Twinning Program is a need based and technically focused initiative strongly supported by both Bulgarian and US participants;
2. The Twinning Program impact is significant and has positively affected governance practices in Bulgarian participant cities;
3. The projects developed under the program allow Bulgarian local governments to attract funding from national and external sources for their implementation;
4. The dedication and competence of technical experts from twin cities played a key role for the successful completion of projects with observable results;
5. The resources, information, knowledge and practical experience made available to each partner resulted in increased local technical expertise;
6. The valuable training that took place in the third phase broadened the understanding of Bulgarian municipal officials of modern local governance practices from participating cities.
7. Learning experience and transfer of technical skills allowed professional staff development within both Bulgarian and US twin cities and subsequently their respective community-based organizations;
8. Involvement in Program implementation led to changes in the mentality of the Bulgarian participants and their understanding to seek broader citizen input into problem solving, becoming more market and business oriented.
9. A direct result of the program is the enhanced partnership between the Municipalities and a broad array of local NGOs, business community, citizens groups and educational institutions and others.
10. Trusting and effective working relationships and friendships were established among city administrations, city council representatives, professionals, partner families and the communities of the twin cities as a whole;
11. There is growth, maturation, self-confidence, and trust among Bulgarian municipalities as they learn from the experience of the partner communities involved in a technical twinning relationship.
12. All participants are prepared to and some have already initiated different activities to support sustainable development of the partnerships established in phase I, II and

III of the program, but more considerable results could be achieved with the availability of additional funding provided by USAID in a potential phase IV.

13. FLGR and ICMA play an important role for the success of the program through an effective on-going facilitation, management, guidance and support provided to participants.

B. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been put forward by the participating municipalities:

1. Program participants should provide consultation and assistance to neighbouring Bulgarian municipalities in order to share accumulated experience and knowledge gained through the participation in the BTTP;
2. FLGR/ICMA should widely disseminate successful practices developed under the program including: publishing a comprehensive handbook with successful projects grouped under topical areas and conducting a series of thematic seminars for other municipalities.
3. Define topics in demand within the range of the program areas and establish work groups to develop manuals summarizing the positive results of all technical twinning projects implemented in the respective field. Program participants also suggested the development of manuals and the formation of groups of trainers who are able to present the modules. (These activities require funding and training of trainers);
4. Involve the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria as well as the Regional Associations of Municipalities in the dissemination process of innovative practices developed under the Program;
5. Program participants should support the sustainable development of the Technical Twinning Partnerships by signing Sister Cities Agreements where possible and continue to involve strong NGOs and community based organizations in the twinning process to widen the basis for sustainability;
6. Replicate the successful technical projects in other Bulgarian municipalities, which will provide opportunities for Bulgarian municipalities to apply for EU pre-accession funding as a group. (The wide replication of the Infrastructure Management project developed by the partnership Veliko Turnovo/ Golden would be an excellent example in this regard.)
7. Ensure expanded networking between the participants in the three phases of the program: meet periodically or at a minimum maintain contact over e-mail, which will allow each participating municipality to share the resources of all participants in the program.
8. Encourage results -oriented local and national media coverage;
9. Continue to further involve City Councils to assure understanding of program importance and implementation of projects.

C. Additional Comments

During the third phase of the program certain weaknesses with regard to overall program implementation and lessons learnt were identified:

1. Due to the specifics of each project, in several cases project implementation requires more time for completion than initially projected.
2. Changes in national standards and a delay in adopting adequate laws or amendments to current legislation hindered the timely and fullest implementation of initiated projects in certain cases;
3. In a few cases because of the low capacity of the Bulgarian partner city staff, additional training was needed. The program responded to the emerging needs by providing training through FLGR to support project understanding and implementation.
4. Introduction to the project and training on best practices developed is strongly recommended in order to replicate activities and in the selection of replicant cities;
5. Partnership Support Fund is an important funding tool supporting practical project implementation and should be envisioned in a potential Phase IV. Bulgarian Municipalities demonstrated strong motivation and ability to provide matching funds for the PSF funded projects.
6. Additional funding made available by USAID to support successful and viable projects in a new Program Phase would significantly contribute to their sustainability;

FLGR and ICMA will continue to work together towards further strengthening the effectiveness of the program, stimulating and supporting the dissemination of best practices, and expanding the number of beneficiaries from the international technical cooperation.

END OF REPORT