



June NEWSLETTER



Ms. Renata Kutera Zdravkovska (right) and Ms. Andijana Spirova, the curator of the Mother Teresa Memorial House, with a group of visitors at the museum

Renata Kutera Zdravkovska – New Director of the Mother Teresa Memorial House

With the understanding that a culturally educated workforce plays a key role in promoting the cultural heritage of a country, the USAID Human and Institutional Development Program (HIDP) supported Ms. Renata Kutera Zdravkovska, Marketing Manager of the Museum of Macedonia, to attend a Masters Program of Culture Management at the prominent Jagiellonski University in Poland. The Masters Program enabled her to learn contemporary approaches to the work of cultural institutions and to gain the advanced skills and knowledge necessary for improving the work and increasing the visibility of the Museum of Macedonia.

Museums are a nation's memory bank, preserving, protecting and showcasing its rich history and tradition. As state funded institutions, Macedonian museums are facing difficult times,

because they cannot carry out all of their promotional activities with limited government funding that decreases every year. Hence, museum managers must become more proactive and undertake new activities which will attract visitors and thus generate additional income, making them more financially sustainable. They must transform museums from storage facilities for cultural and historic artifacts into institutions that breathe life into those artifacts by organizing social and cultural events around them. But to do this requires management and marketing personnel with specialized knowledge of cultural institutions.

After successfully completing the Masters Program, Ms. Kutera Zdravkovska opened a store in the city center and developed other new markets for the museum to sell an extensive range of products related to its collections, including at conferences and other important state events. She also had promotional materials produced, set up a museum information billboard in the center of Skopje, and implemented a number of special projects for the Ministry of Culture, all contributing to increasing the museum's financial stability.

Recognizing Ms. Kutera Zdravkovska's outstanding professional capacities, in January of this year, the Macedonian Ministry of Culture asked her to become Director of the new Memorial House dedicated to Mother Teresa's spirituality, humanity and charity. In her first four months as Director, she has already achieved significant results promoting the Memorial House to both the domestic and international public. Her successful cooperation with many tour operators has resulted in organized visits for tourists interested in the life and deeds of Mother Teresa. She hosted a delegation from the Ministry of Culture of India which is producing a documentary about the Memorial House, which will raise international awareness of this unique monument in Macedonia. Ms. Kutera Zdravkovska and her staff are working on organizing educational workshops and a unit at the museum to produce souvenirs, to attract more visitors and promote the Memorial House as a center for cultural and social events.

Talking about her future plans, Ms. Kutera Zdravkovska said: "We are working on producing and selling souvenirs, we have opened our library with spiritual books to the public, we will organize open cinema performances during the summer period, and all with one aim, to attract more visitors to Skopje and Macedonia, to the home dedicated to the spirit and mission of love in recognition of Mother Teresa's deeds".

The HIDP provides training and technical assistance, focusing on USAID's targeted sectors: democracy and governance, economic growth, and education. The program also conducts organizational performance assessments of key Macedonian institutions, following up with targeted interventions to improve their effectiveness.



Volunteerism activity at city square in Ohrid

Changing Attitudes Toward Volunteerism in Macedonia

The mission of the Youth Cultural Center (YCC) in Bitola, established in 1999, is to get young people involved in their communities. With support from the USAID Civil Society Strengthening Project (CSSP), YCC has expanded its advocacy throughout Macedonia by establishing a National Volunteer Center in Bitola and working with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help them serve as 'Volunteer Information Points' (VIPs) for their regions. YCC mentors the VIPs, which serve as resources to both volunteers and NGOs in their communities, and play a significant role in getting out the message that volunteering is fun and rewarding.

YCC selected five NGOs in different cities (Kavadarci, Delcevo, Tetovo, Ohrid, and Debar) to become VIPs. While each VIP was chosen because of its history of working with volunteers, none had any prior experience in promoting volunteerism. YCC helped each NGO set-up a volunteer referral system, develop strategies to promote volunteerism locally, and organize their own

volunteer actions. In addition, YCC provided training in volunteer management and camp leadership, and guidelines on how to approach local institutions to secure volunteer placements.

YCC uses creative and engaging outreach campaigns. To launch the VIP network, young volunteers traveled to each of the VIP cities, organizing volunteers to collect litter, clean school yards and help at children's centers. At each location, they set up booths with posters, brochures and live performances to further promote their cause. YCC worked with each of the VIPs to stage 'volunteer happenings' to generate excitement about volunteering. These events, usually held in the town square, had music, dancing, and the opportunity for passers-by to make or buy arts and crafts. The proceeds were donated to a center for children with disabilities.

During the initial two-year CSSP-funded project (2006 – 2008), YCC and the VIPs recruited 611 volunteers and raised 7,900 MKD in cash and 283,150 MKD in in-kind resources. The impact on the participating VIPs has been profound. According to Petre Mrkev of the Council for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency in Kavadarci, his organization's participation as a VIP has "enabled us to make a big step in the promotion of volunteerism [and] also to further promote our organization at the local level as an important partner that fosters active participation of young people in democratic processes. We have regular contacts with local institutions that inform us every time there are possibilities for new volunteering positions. These activities have provided young people with the extraordinary opportunity to practice knowledge from the university, but also to gain new skills and, probably the most important, the self-confidence that they are capable of working and creating something."

Since its initial CSSP project ended, YCC has extended its support to two new VIPs at NGOs in Prilep and Sveti Nikole, and continues to recruit and place volunteers nationwide. With follow-on funding from the American Embassy and the Balkan Trust for Democracy, YCC has recruited 120 additional volunteers and has already placed 50 of them in 45 different institutions in seven cities across Macedonia.

YCC has a new grant from CSSP to help establish a system for accrediting non-formal education programs. It is a member of the South East European Youth Network, and a contact point in Macedonia for the European Volunteer Service. The CSSP is implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities.



Strategies and methods to combat the global capital market slowdown and to improve secondary market liquidity

Strategies for Combating the Global Economic Slowdown in Macedonia

The Tenth Jubilee Conference of the Macedonian Stock Exchange (MSE) took place in Ohrid from April 23-25, 2009, providing an opportunity for investment professionals to strategize on ways to combat the global capital market slowdown and to improve secondary market liquidity. The USAID Business Environment Activity (BEA) was the main sponsor of the conference, bringing together representatives of the largest investment funds, potential investors, banks, regional stock exchanges, brokerage houses, regulators, auditors and capital market experts to discuss the current situation of both the global and local capital markets and to contemplate future prospects.

BEA moderated a panel on foreign investors' perceptions of the Macedonian capital market environment. Panelists included managers/directors of *Hypo Group Alpe Adria* (Austria), *HPB Invest* (Croatia), *Ilirika* (Slovenia), and *Financia Group* (Bulgaria). They emphasized that Macedonia's current main challenges are market liquidity and small market size. While noting that significant progress has been made in several areas over the last decade in Macedonia, the panelists agreed that more work is needed to enhance knowledge in the areas of capital market operations and financial management.

BEA invited a representative of the multinational *Atlantic Group* to present a case study of their initial public offering (IPO) experience. The presentation covered everything from IPO preparation to life as a public company. *Atlantic Group* is involved in production, development, sales and distribution of consumer goods. At the end of 2007, the company successfully launched an IPO of 31.01% of its share capital, and used the resulting income for further development and growth. They heartily recommended use of IPOs as a means to finance company projects, particularly when a company is profitable and has a clear vision of its future.

BEA also hosted a presentation on corporate bond issuance during times of financial crisis. The Director of *Stater Bank*, Skopje, explained that currently, only a few companies in Macedonia are considering the use of corporate bonds as an alternative source of finance. He said this is not only due to a lack of knowledge among managers, but also to regulatory constraints that must be eliminated for bond issuance to become more attractive. The main risk with bonds, he stressed, is that a company may default on its payments if it becomes insolvent.

During the conference, BEA Chief of Party Aleksandar Shahov and MSE Chief Executive Officer Ivan Steriev signed a Memorandum of Understanding on their future cooperation. The MSE is the key institution of the domestic capital market that aims to ensure a transparent and liquid market for its listed companies. Since 2006, BEA has cooperated with the MSE to implement a wide-ranging corporate governance program. In the coming months, BEA and the MSE will work together to further improve the transparency of publicly held companies and to initiate IPOs by large Macedonian companies.



Macedonia's Electoral Quota System is a Model for Gender Participation



(from l-r) Binia Salwa (Sudan), Ermira Mehmet (Macedonia) and Tabitha Kenyi (Sudan) take time for a photo during the conference

Hoping to share Macedonia's positive record of increasing women's participation in political institutions, Macedonian Member of Parliament Ermira Mehmeti went to Kampala, Uganda to take part in the "Women Leading in Parties and Campaigns" Regional Conference coordinated by the International Republican Institute (IRI) from April 14 to 16, 2009. The conference aimed to empower women leaders in east Africa by developing strategies to overcome the challenges they face in political parties, building mentoring relationships between senior and young women leaders, and establishing networks among them. The USAID Political Party Strengthening Project supported Ms. Mehmeti's participation. Describing the experience, she stated, "this conference was a great opportunity for networking and strengthening communication between women, a process...essential for building successful careers for women in politics."

Ms. Mehmeti gave a plenary presentation on the development and success of Macedonia's proportional representation system. In 2006, largely due to the advocacy of women leaders, the Macedonian Women's Lobby and the Women's Parliamentary Club, Macedonia adopted an electoral quota system which has allowed talented women like Ms. Mehmeti to achieve leadership positions in the Macedonian political system. The election code stipulates that one in every three positions on a party's candidate list for parliament and for municipal council must be filled by a woman. In a proportional system, an individual's priority position on a candidate list is significant because the party will fill the number of seats it wins with candidates in the order their names were placed on the list. Thus, the one in three stipulation ensures that women are placed at the "top" of candidate lists so that they are included among the winning places.

The quota system has dramatically increased the number of women in elected offices. In the 2006 elections, 36 of the 120 parliamentary seats were secured by women, increasing their representation from 21% to 30%, and currently, women hold 38 seats. In 2005, women secured 23% of the municipal council seats across the country, whereas their previous representation had been only 8%. Although the final count from the 2009 elections is not yet available, it is projected that women may now have 26.8% of those seats.

Describing the women she met at the conference, Ms. Mehmeti noted, "It was truly striking to see their determination and commitment to bring democracy to their societies and to secure a decent, dignified and respected position for women within their societies wrecked by wars, poverty or even lack of basic living conditions....Their spirit, their views and understanding of this battle are a true inspiration to every woman aspiring to join politics and reach senior positions within parties but also in government."

The USAID Political Party Strengthening Project in Macedonia, implemented by the IRI, has worked to increase the participation of women in political and government institutions since 2002.

For more information about USAID programs on economic growth, education, democracy and governance please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>