



## NEWSLETTER

### February 2011

#### New Possibilities for the Informal Collectors of Plastic Waste



*Integration of informal waste collector's priority of the USAID Plastic Recycling Project*

For the first time in Macedonia, informal plastic waste collectors have been officially recognized as making significant contributions to modern waste management. Collecting plastic waste is the only source of income for most informal collectors, comprised mainly of the most vulnerable members of society - predominately Roma. Now, USAID will work with partners to help them register their activities and become a legal part of the formal waste management system.

The USAID Plastic Recycling Project has established a new partnership with all parties working to include informal collectors in the existing recycling and waste management system, including the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Employment Service Agency, the City of Skopje, Public Utility Company "Komunalna Higijena" and PAKOMAK (the first authorized entity for management of packaging waste). On January 27th, the partners signed an agreement to cooperate in resolving the social, health, employment and waste management issues of the informal collectors.

USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz stated that this agreement "will not only help improve the lives of those who have been informal waste collectors, it will also improve the recycling industry in Macedonia, thereby benefiting all who live here by reducing the accumulation of waste." He also called on the Government of Macedonia to "continue to provide financial support for the integration of marginalized groups in society and allow them to take an active role in their development with human dignity."

The USAID Plastic Recycling Project will target 500 informal collectors from the municipalities of Skopje, Tetovo, Kumanovo, Strumica and Bitola, focusing on increasing their knowledge and abilities related to basic business skills, negotiations with buyer companies, and compliance with legislation. Informal collectors interested in starting up their own businesses will be supported through the Project's self-employment initiatives and grant schemes.

This project follows on a previous Plastic Recycling Project (2005-2009) that helped develop the recycling industry in Macedonia and made the country a regional leader in collecting and recycling plastic bottles.

## New Opportunities from Old Traditions

From the capital city of Skopje, a dusty asphalt road leads into the rural Municipality of Studenichani, where traditional life and culture dominate this largely Albanian community. Like many rural communities in Macedonia, economic development is a key concern for Studenichani's residents. The general unemployment rate is 33.80%, and unemployment among Albanian women is the highest, at more than 90%. Families often struggle to meet basic needs, and many Albanian women strive for opportunities to contribute to household income without abandoning their cultural and religious traditions.



*Members of Artizanati (left) meet with USAID/MLGA Local Economic Development Specialist, Rozalija Vasilevska. USAID promotes local economic development by providing access to technical assistance and resources that bring government, civil society and citizens together to solve problems.*

The USAID Macedonia Local Government Activity (MLGA) is helping Albanian women both in Studenichani and in the western Macedonian village of Tearce to work together and develop income opportunities by creating a new organization to market hand-made embroidery and other traditional art works. Through an economic development grant to Foundation Euro Center, more than a hundred women are learning the basic skills of organization, entrepreneurship, marketing and promotion for their home-made products.

*"I have been married for several years and we live together with my brother-in-law's family" said Ms. Makfire Shabani of Studenichani. "It is quite difficult not having a house of our own, but that's impossible with only my husband's salary. I make embroidery, and learned that women I know sell some of their embroidery to help support their families. Thanks to USAID, I will be able to sell some of my embroideries legitimately, and provide some extra income in our family."*

The USAID grant to Foundation Euro Center provided the means to bring local governments together with residents and local civic organizations in Studenichani and Tearce to develop a strategy to address shared concerns. This model will also be used in other rural areas facing similar challenges to break the cycle of economic disadvantage suffered by marginalized communities.

By bringing citizens, civic organizations and local governments together, USAID is helping Macedonia support economic development opportunities for women and disadvantaged communities, which also respect the cultural diversity of the country .



*Women hand crafts artists at a meeting of the new non-governmental organization, Artizanati. This organization will provide a legal and legitimate means for local women artisans to market their crafts and avoid the cultural stigma associated with informal street sales that often exists in marginalized communities*

## AJM Successfully Elects Its New Governing Bodies

A strong association of journalists is crucial for sustaining professional and independent media in any country. To effectively fulfill this mission, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) initiated a reform process in 2009 designed to make the association a more transparent organization that would better meet the needs of its members.



The AJM Working Group, comprised of Association representatives and a group of other enthusiastic journalists, continued to carry out the reform process throughout 2010. The focus of the AJM Working Group's reform process is based on the findings of an AJM performance assessment conducted through the USAID Human and Institutional Development Program (HIDP). Specifically, the assessment recommendations called for revision of the AJM governing statute, defining the roles and responsibilities of AJM professional staff and volunteers, and ensuring proper composition and election of AJM bodies.

To support the Association in implementing these recommendations, HIDP provided support from both international and domestic experts in the field of association management and journalism, including legal expertise in the operations of non-for-profit associations. This support resulted in a revised statute that was shared with journalists nationwide via a number of regional debates and workshops during which feedback was sought and suggested revisions were discussed. The finalized statute incorporated this feedback and modified the AJM's voting system and management structure. Additionally, the association applied an internationally accepted definition of the profession to ensure that AJM membership is made up of valid journalists.

After a year of intensive work on the revisions to the statute, the AJM conducted a campaign directed at all journalists, focusing on the AJM Elective Assembly. On December 11, 2010, the Elective Assembly was held, bringing together 253 journalists from throughout the country. A new president and new governing bodies were democratically elected, laying a solid foundation for the future functioning of the AJM.

*"I believe that without this persistent and constructive support, we would not have been able to accomplish the desired results," said Saso Ordanovski, Director of VeVe Group, a journalist and also a member of the AJM Working Group, "Now that this phase of reforms is over, and now that AJM has new, legitimate and democratically elected governance that is in accordance with the revised statute, we hope that AJM will use the positive energy accumulated around it and will continue consolidating and advancing the work of this oldest association in the country."*

## USAID Newsflash

**EXIM Reflects the Success e-Government Efforts:** A recent evaluation of EXIM (the Single Window for Export/Import Licenses and Quotas) shows that 84% of users surveyed found that the system saved them time and money in obtaining necessary licenses, and that it is very to extremely easy to use. USAID, through the e-Gov Project, helped the Government of Macedonia develop and implement EXIM in cooperation with the Customs Administration and fifteen other government institutions, as part of the Trade Facilitation Single Window Initiative. The evaluation, conducted by Internews Network, showed that more applicants prefer the system's electronic submission to paper submission: of the 34,855 license applications submitted in 2009 (the first full year of EXIM's operation), 69% were submitted electronically, compared to 87%, of the 51,211 applications in 2010. In addition, the number of electronic quota applications submitted by the trading community almost doubled: from 3,775 in 2009 to 7,165 in 2010. Survey respondents considered the main benefits of using EXIM to be that it provides all the information necessary for the licensing process (67.5%), reduces the administrative burden (57.5%), and is available 24/7 (56.3%). The e-Gov Project works to enhance the efficiency and transparency of public institutions, improve the quality of government services and make Macedonia more attractive to the investment community.

**New Law on Case Management:** The Macedonian Parliament adopted the Law on Case Management on December 29. The law, which was prepared with support from the USAID Judicial Reform Implementation Project, will prevent backlogs and delays in processing cases. It imposes responsibilities on court presidents, judges, heads of departments, court staff and committees for backlog and delay reduction in each court. The law also regulates the posting of all court decisions on the court websites and the establishment of public relation offices.



**Close-out of BEA:** Over the last four years, the USAID Business Environment Activity (BEA) worked to remove constraints and bureaucratic impediments to economic growth and business development in Macedonia. The project helped develop non-bank financial products. The project worked directly with the government, its ministries and agencies, and private sector businesses and associations to facilitate

effective dialogue between the public and private sector to improve the quality of commercial laws and regulations, and ease their drafting, implementation and compliance. This led to the annual Conference on Export Enhancement, the Regulatory Impact Assessment, and the first municipal Social Economic Council.

BEA supported trade facilitation through establishing a "single window" for exports and imports that eliminated long licensing procedures and other administrative obstacles to exporters and importers, standardizing 66 different licensing procedures from 16 different institutions and making all relevant information available in one place. The project was also instrumental in the establishment of the Public Procurement Training Centre, which produces high-level professionals in public procurement. There still is an urgent need to streamline and better coordinate the process for attracting investment and to clarify public sector roles and responsibilities in this regard, and USAID will continue to support Macedonia's economic reforms to address these issues.



## New Projects and Activities

**Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network:** USAID has launched the YES Network to help youth gain relevant skills that will enable them to participate in the modern economy. This five-year program will focus on building a public-private dialogue to better match the skills required in the labor market with those developed in schools, and on improving the “supply” of future workers by creating Career Services Networks in anchor municipalities in two or three pilot regions. The program will target students in their final year in Macedonia’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools, unemployed registrants with the Employment Service Agency (ESA), and other out-of-school youth, aged 15-24. The YES Network activity will be implemented by the Education Development Center.

**Creative Businesses Project:** The Macedonian Trade Artisans Association (MATA) will implement a new three-year project to foster the development of the creative industries sector in Macedonia, and create opportunities for long-term employment and increased income for creative micro and small enterprises. The Project will provide comprehensive legal, technical and initial financial assistance to unemployed youth and women to help them establish fully operational and functional businesses in the creative industries sector. Technical assistance will focus on product development, marketing readiness, designer mentoring, marketing and sales. The project will also help the Creative Industries Center of Skopje to set up a Computer Laboratory and a Design and Resource Library that will offer easy access to Internet, books, and professional magazines to its members.

**Business Without Borders Project:** This new three-year project will work to accelerate economic growth in southwestern Macedonia by facilitating the startup of new enterprises as well as the growth and competitiveness of existing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The project will focus on creating jobs and employment opportunities for the young, vulnerable and unemployed. Through the activities of the Business Start-Up Center-Bitola (the project implementer), its business incubator, and local & regional partners in the public, private, civil-society and academic sectors, the project will improve the regional framework of MSME development.



**USAID | MACEDONIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**United States Agency for International Development**

U.S. Embassy, Samoilova 21, 1000 Skopje, Macedonia

**Telephone:** +(389) 2 310 2000; **Fax:** +(389) 2 310 2463

**USAID Communication office:** +(389) 2 310 2314, [skellman@usaid.gov](mailto:skellman@usaid.gov); [bvelickovska@usaid.gov](mailto:bvelickovska@usaid.gov)

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia’s transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information about USAID programs on economic growth, education, democracy and governance, please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.