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PRESS RELEASE

Tax Payer Services Enhanced in Korça and Pogradec Municipalities

KORCE/POGRADEC, MARCH 30-31, 2010 The Head of the USAID Mission in Albania, Joseph C. Williams, the Mayor of Pogradec, Artan Shkempi, and the Mayor of Korce, Niko Peleshi, launched new computerized tax systems in the respective municipalities. The system, which was developed through USAID's Local Governance Program in Albania (LGPA), allows for more efficient and effective administration of tax collections and services that will lead to greater tax revenue for the cities and improved services for citizens.

Until now, both Korce and Pogradec's tax departments have done the majority of their work manually. With the new computerized system, the tax departments will more accurately be able to calculate tax bills and track tax payments, and even develop the necessary revenue projections and analyses so important for city planners and officials. Computerizing the tax system will help the city improve tax collection and increase tax revenues so the cities can deliver higher quality services to their citizens. It will also reduce the number of one-on-one interactions with tax officials, which are cited as a source of corrupt practices.

The tax system is part of a broader initiative to improve tax payer services at the municipal level. In both cities, the municipal tax departments are working closely with small business associations to improve the relationship and enhance information exchange between local tax officials and the business community. In addition, Korce and Pogradec recently developed, with USAID/LGPA support, a series of tax leaflets to inform business and citizens of their tax responsibilities, thereby simplifying the process for local tax payers.

To date, USAID/LGPA has introduced computerized tax systems in 5 municipalities, including Lezhe, Fier, Fushe-Kruje, Korce, and Pogradec. In total, USAID/LGPA is contributing more than 370 million Lek to computerize 10 municipal tax departments including almost 3 million Lek in Pogradec and 3.5 million Lek in Korce.

USAID's Local Governance Program in Albania (LGPA) works with ten municipalities throughout Albania to foster local economic growth, improve local governance, and strengthen civic and private sector engagement in local development. LGPA's partner municipalities are: Elbasan, Fier, Fushe-Kruje, Gramsh, Korçe, Kukës, Lezhe, Librazhd, Pogradec and Shkoder.