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**ALBANIA**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Tax Payer Services Improved in Shkodra

**SHKODRA, MARCH 30-31, 2010** The Mayor of Shkodra, Mr. Lorenc Luka, and USAID Officer Stephen Herbaly launched today a new computerized tax system for the municipality. 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 municipality and improved services for citizens.

Until now, Shkodra's tax department had to do the majority of its work manually. With the new computerized system, the tax department 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 that Shkodra can deliver higher quality services to its 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. Shkodra 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 6 municipalities, including Lezhe, Fier, Fushe-Kruje, Korce, Pogradec, and Shkodra. In total, USAID/LGPA is contributing more than 370 million Lek to computerize 10 municipal tax departments including more than 4.1 million Lek in Shkodra.

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.

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