

PIN – Czech Development Agency

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Balkan Sunflowers and People in Need, a Czech-based international non-governmental organization, have signed an MOU for a multi-faceted project to run through December 2013.

“Inclusive Education in Kosovo” will support making education a reality for children from Kosovo’s most disadvantaged communities in the town of Fushë Kosova. Further, the project will strategically leverage outcomes through support of two programs: the School Mediators program, and the Strategy Project. People in Need (PIN) provides relief aid and development assistance, while working to defend human rights and democratic freedom. At home, People in Need administers social integration programs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and provides informative and educational activities. PIN is one of the largest organizations of its kind in post-communist Europe, and has administered projects in thirty-seven countries over the past fourteen years.

Balkan Sunflowers volunteers first cooperated with People in Need in Peja/Pec Kosovo in 1999-2000. “People in Need made a great contribution in the immediate post-war period. We’re excited about the possibility to work again with them in a project designed to significantly improve the position of minorities throughout Kosovo,” according to Rand Engel, BSF Coordinator.

The project partnership between People in Need and Balkan Sunflowers is being financed by the Czech Development Agency (CzDA). “The agency reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main tasks of CzDA are to identify, formulate, implement and monitor projects in priority partner countries, to award grants to NGOs and to conduct professional training for Czech ODA staff.”

The three aspects of “Inclusive Education in Kosovo” are intended to be mutually supportive. The project provides partial support to the Fushë Kosova Learning Center, our largest program, and often a model for other centers. The School Mediators program works in 10 municipalities, cooperating with schools, municipal institutions, parents, learning centers and communities. Local mediators help identify problems, get children registered for school, and bring drop-outs back to school. Early intervention can also help solve problems before children quit school. The Strategy Project will also work in 10 municipalities. The government of Kosovo has adopted the “Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo” and further an action plan for this Strategy. Nevertheless, most municipalities do not have municipal action plans or budgets for the Strategy. This means that though there is a good plan and framework there is little practically actually happening. The project’s Strategy Advocates in the 10 municipalities will be responsible to ensure that the municipalities know about the Strategy, and advocate for adoption of municipal action plans, and even more importantly for finding budgets for those municipal action plans. They will monitor and report on what is happening in their municipality. To do this, they are empowered to build networks, and find partners to help make the Strategy real and working. At the central level the BSF-PIN project will support these field workers and advocate for the same kinds of action and implementation in the government as a whole. This leveraging is meant to incorporate change “and budget “ for the long-term.