

# Evaluation of Community and Government Engagement under the Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI)



Prepared by Sara Aviel

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## Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CWG    | Community Working Group  |
| KFOR   | Kosovo Force   |
| MCO    | Municipal Community Officer  |
| MISI-1 | Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative                        |
| MISI-2 | Municipal Integration and Support Initiative                           |
| NATO   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                                     |
| ORC    | Office of Returns and Communities                                      |
| PISG   | Provisional Institutions of Self-Government                            |
| PRM    | US Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration |
| RAE    | Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian  |
| SC     | Steering Committee   |
| SRSG   | Special Representative of the Secretary General                        |
| ToR    | Terms of Reference   |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program                                     |
| UNHCR  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                          |
| UNMIK  | United Nations Mission in Kosovo                                       |

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the findings from the Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI-1) evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is not to examine the overall implementation of the MISI program to date, but rather to focus on how particular approaches adopted by Mercy Corps may have led to the creation and/ or strengthening of relationships between local communities and Municipal level local government. Additionally, through this evaluation Mercy Corps, wanted to compare the different impact in ethnic majority versus ethnic minority communities in order to better understand the value of MISI interventions in communities of different ethnic compositions. The evaluation was conducted during the final phase of the MISI program, and will provide important feedback for program implementation to Mercy Corps as they begin the second phase (a cost extension of the program). During the evaluation, which focused on four Municipalities, an external evaluator undertook focus groups with four Municipal authorities as well as with a total of sixteen communities.

This report explores the impact that MISI-1 has had on community and local government relations and provides generalized findings, lessons learned, and recommendations to guide future programming.

### 1.1 Summary of Major Findings

- **Communities involved in MISI-1 reported more contacts and stronger relations with the Municipality as a result of this project.** Many members of community working groups felt they would not have gone as often to the Municipality if not for the program. However, the strength of these contacts and relationships does appear to also be linked to the cohesion within the community with better organized communities reporting a more structured approach to interacting with local government. The impact that MISI-1 had in strengthening intra-community structures is not clear.
- **Community working groups were more involved and engaged than the community-at-large, however differences varied according to the organization of the community.** In most cases, women and youth were significantly less aware of MISI activities.
- **Mercy Corps appears to have done an excellent job of taking ethnic relations into account in all of the mixed communities where MISI-1 worked.** All community working groups in multi-ethnic sites praised the way the project brought different groups together and strengthened cooperation between them. Many community groups felt the project improved relations within the community and especially noted improved ties between ethnic groups.
- **Municipal government authorities reported that they noticed the difference in MISI-1 communities, crediting them with being more active and organized.** Municipal authorities believed MISI-1 communities were more active in building relationships with local government, advocating for their needs, and organizing themselves.
- **The absence of an institutionalized representative from each village within a Municipality is a major obstacle to strengthening the relationship between communities and the Municipality.** Lacking institutionalized representation, communities overwhelmingly stressed the importance of having personal contacts at the Municipality from their village (i.e. Assembly members and/or Municipal staff) as a precursor for having ties to local government.

- **Communities were quick to articulate needs and requests they had made to the Municipality, but often struggled to answer what responsibilities they had to the Municipality.** Most responded with the need to pay taxes for property and utilities, and fees for documents.
- **All Community Working Groups in the targeted MISI-1 Program sites, including both engaged and less engaged communities, felt they could influence the Municipal government,** a sentiment that was more mixed among other (non-CWG) community focus groups. Since many in the CWG were already community leaders, one would expect them to feel more agency than other community members. Nevertheless, there is some indication that Mercy Corps played a role in strengthening this sentiment.
- **Tangible examples of Municipal support contributed to a community's sense of agency.** Community groups described a specific fulfilled request, usually an infrastructure project, as evidence of their ability to influence the Municipal government. Conversely, many of those most frustrated with their inability to influence the Municipal government described a litany of unmet infrastructure needs.
- **Communities and Municipalities were particularly impressed with Mercy Corps procedures and the emphasis on transparency and participation throughout the entire process.** Two Municipalities complained about the amount of paperwork and procedures they had to go through, but even so, continued to compliment the process as participatory and sustainable.

## 1.2 Summary of Recommendations

- **In communities with representative governing structures, Mercy Corps should seek to strengthen and complement their leadership through the MISI-1 project.** Mercy Corps should work with established leaders and village committees only after ensuring that these structures have the trust and support of the community.
- **In communities that lack an organized governing structure, Mercy Corps should facilitate the creation of one.** While this may take a considerable amount of time and effort, it is clear that it is one of the primary characteristics of an engaged community.
- **Mercy Corps should also work to involve groups that may have been previously excluded including women, youth, and minorities.** Mercy Corps should extend leadership opportunities to representatives of these groups and work with these representatives to promote greater involvement throughout all members of the community.
- **Mercy Corps should promote wider community involvement throughout the MISI project including greater mobilization for the initial open meeting and ongoing updates.** While the community working groups overwhelmingly appreciated being involved in every stage of the project, awareness amongst the larger community was often low.
- **Mercy Corps should work with Municipal governments to institutionalize contacts between the Municipality and communities.** This can include supporting the selection of official village representatives and holding regular meetings.
- **Mercy Corps should work with Municipalities to adopt relevant MISI procedures for all Municipal projects.** In particular, Municipal governments should be encouraged to standardize the selection criteria they use to determine Municipal support to communities, as well as more participatory and transparent processes.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Kosovo Context

Kosovo a province of what is now officially known as Serbia and Montenegro, has an estimated population of 1.9 million of which approximately 88% are ethnic Albanian Kosovars<sup>1</sup>, 7% Serbian Kosovars, and 5% are “others” (Bosniac, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Turk, and Gorani)<sup>2</sup>. Kosovo encompasses five regions, 30 Municipalities, 26 urban centers and 1448 villages<sup>3</sup>. Approximately 60% of the population lives in the rural areas and the average household has 5.6 members<sup>4</sup>. According to the 2004 UNDP Human Development report, slightly more than 47% of the population lives on less than \$2 per day, whereas 12% live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1 per day<sup>5</sup>.

Kosovo is currently recovering from 15 years of turbulent history culminating in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign in 1999, the displacement of over 800,000 Kosovars (mostly majority Albanian Kosovars), the subsequent displacement of Serbian Kosovars, and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Kosovar populations, and the looting and burning of property belonging to those members of the minority community who fled Kosovo. There are currently an estimated 220,000 displaced minority residents living in Serbia and Montenegro and to a lesser extent, in areas other than their homes in Kosovo<sup>6</sup>. Approximately 11,000 others have returned to their homes both spontaneously and through programs organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the US Department of State’s Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and others<sup>7</sup>.

With the conclusion of the conflict in June 1999, Kosovo was placed under the care of the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). During the past six years this provisional administration has been tasked with developing democratic self-governing institutions to quickly return Kosovo to economic, social and political stability. Key achievements have included the approval of the Constitutional Framework for the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG)<sup>8</sup>. The conditional institutions of self-government created under this framework include an Assembly, the President, Government, and courts. The handover of substantial legislative and executive powers to the PISG took place in 2002. The full impact of this change is now being felt as the various competencies are slowly trickling down to the Municipal level.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the names used for the ethnic communities are based on guidelines issued by the United States Office in Pristina.

<sup>2</sup> Human Development Report Kosovo 2004. UNDP, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Situation Analysis and Project Proposal for Supplementary Funding. Pristina, F.R.Y. UNICEF Programmes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1998, p. 11.

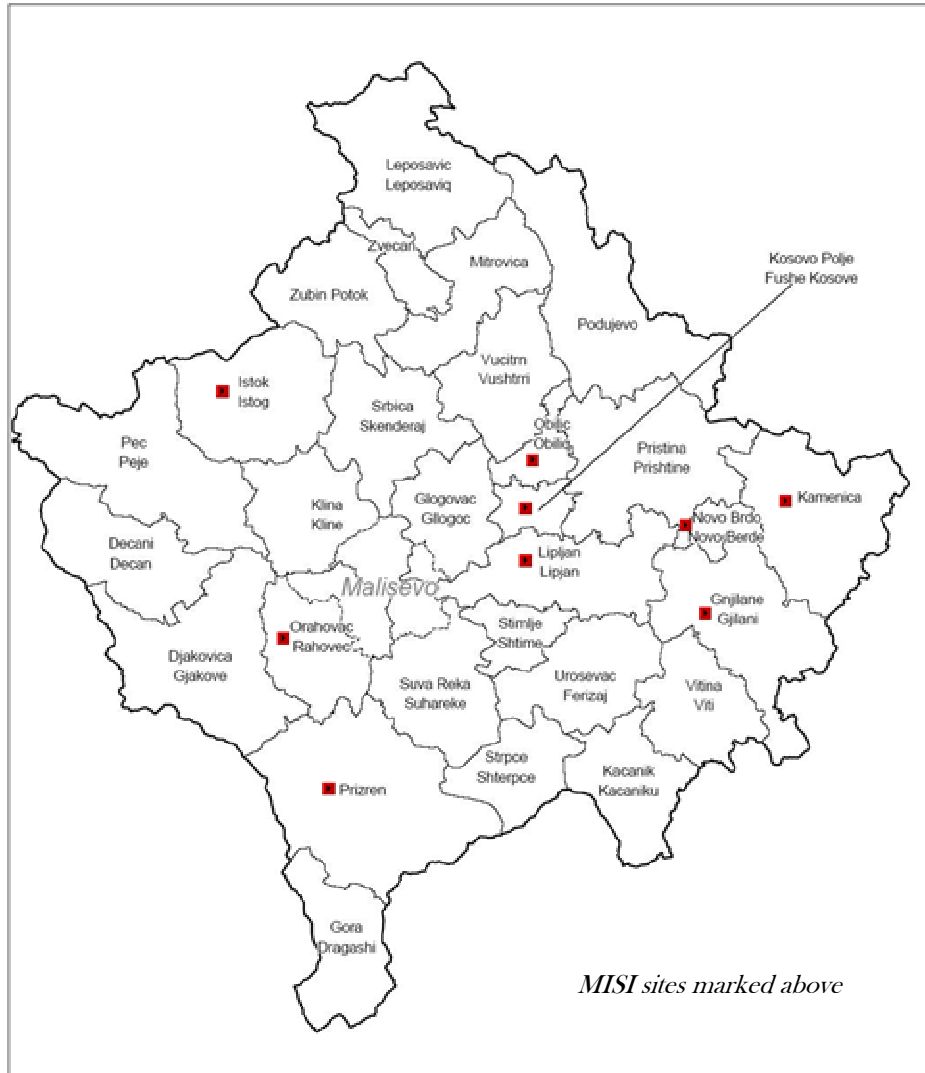
<sup>4</sup> Profile Kosovo. UNFPA, September 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Human Development Report Kosovo 2004. Fact sheet: Poverty. UNDP.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR News Stories. <http://www.unhcr.org>. Published 08/04. Accessed 09/28/04.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR News Stories. <http://www.unhcr.org>. Published 08/04. Accessed 09/28/04.

<sup>8</sup> The SRSG is essentially the representative appointed by the UN Resolution 1244 to govern Kosovo.



In order to gauge the progress made by the PISG in creating democratic, self-governing institutions an evaluation was undertaken in the fall of 2005, at the request of Kofi Annan, focusing on the fulfillment of the Standards. The Standards are a set of indicators in areas such as building democratic institutions, enforcing minority rights, creating a functioning economy and establishing an impartial legal system, which were created by UNMIK, with the input of the PISG and other key agencies in Kosovo. During 2005 “Standards before Status” was the mantra of UNMIK, and

fulfilling standards seen as a prerequisite to beginning discussions regarding the resolution of Kosovo’s final status.

Based on the results of the Standards Evaluation, the UN has decided to move forward with discussions on Kosovo’s final status. “There will not be any good moment for addressing Kosovo’s future status. It will continue to be a highly sensitive political issue. Nevertheless, an overall assessment leads to the conclusion that the time has come to commence this process.”<sup>9</sup>

As stated in the Standards Evaluation the PISG are making notable efforts in the sphere of minority return and reintegration, it is not clear whether major statements of intention to actively address issues related to return and reintegration will ‘slow to a trickle’ now that discussions are beginning on status.

<sup>9</sup> “A Comprehensive Review of the Situation in Kosovo”, Kai Eide, pg. iii, October 7, 2005.



## B. Program Overview

The Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI-1) has been operating since September 30, 2003. Focusing on nine Municipalities (Fushe Kosove / Kosovo Polje, Lipjan/ Lipljan, Obiliq / Obilic, Istog / Istok, Rahovec / Orahovac, Prizren, Gjilane / Gnjilane, Novoberde / Novo Brdo, and Kamenice / Kamenica)<sup>10</sup> in Kosovo, the program utilizes an incentive-based approach to encourage Municipal leaders and officials (rather than the international community) to take a leading role in the process of minority returns and reintegration. MISI-1 seeks to achieve its goal of enabling Municipalities to take a leading role in improving conditions for return and reintegration through the accomplishment of two broad objectives:

1. Municipal officials in nine Municipalities actively participate in the minority return process and work to reduce obstacles to return; and
2. Municipal officials and communities (majority and minority) cooperate to identify and complete infrastructure projects to reduce barriers to returns, in a maximum of 42 communities.

These program objectives were realized by a series of steps that directly worked with Municipal leaders and officials as well as with ethnic minority and majority communities.

1. Participating Municipalities formed Steering Committees (SCs) that coordinated their Municipality's MISI-1 activities.
2. SCs benefited from a targeted training and initial orientation session facilitated by Mercy Corps on the returns process, the existing support available for returns, and on the importance of transparent, responsive structures for governance and decision-making. Participating leaders and officials were also trained in appropriate methodologies and mechanisms successfully used earlier by Mercy Corps in Kosovo to mobilize communities to undertake self-help projects and to advocate for their rights.
3. MISI-1 staff provided Municipal leaders and officials with the technical assistance needed to develop their Municipal Action Plan. This is an innovative approach, which has subsequently influenced the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Office of Returns and Communities (ORC) and the Office of the Prime Minister to employ a somewhat similar approach<sup>11</sup>. MISI-1 Action Plans identify the local obstacles to minority returns and reintegration and the actions that will be taken by each Municipality to address these obstacles, within a set timeframe. The Action Plans are critical to the implementation of MISI-1 as they present tangible steps each Municipality is undertaking to demonstrate commitment to returns and reintegration.
4. Throughout the life of the MISI-1 program, Municipalities were required to continue to effectively address the obstacles to minority return and reintegration identified in their Action Plan. Mercy Corps monitored whether or not discernable efforts and improvements were being made through frequent meetings with the Municipal SCs as well as through a monthly report that SCs are required to submit. Municipalities that achieved progress in addressing obstacles were then eligible for infrastructure funding up to a value of €28,000 (approximately \$35,000).

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<sup>10</sup> Throughout the report all Municipal and community names are given in Albanian and Serbian.

<sup>11</sup> Under the 2004 Strategy for Sustainable Returns and the Standards Implementation Plan, each Municipality is now required to develop a Municipal Return Strategy (MRS). According to ORC the MRS "shall enable Municipalities to play a significant role in improving conditions for return and reintegration and assuming greater responsibilities for the sustainability of returnees".

5. The infrastructure projects were then identified and implemented utilizing participatory methods, such as open community meetings where residents of all ethnicities, genders and ages are invited to discuss local needs and to select a priority need to be addressed through a community infrastructure project. As part of this process, the Municipal leaders and officials facilitated open meetings in communities of all ethnicities, many in sites where no Municipal leaders and officials had ever before visited. This has been highly appreciated, especially by rural communities who often earlier highlighted the apparent lack of Municipal interest in their concerns as a key weakness of local government.

The MISI-1 Process, namely the creation of Action Plans and holding the Municipal Government accountable in addressing obstacles in its Action Plans, is unique in Kosovo. The program has been actively working to ensure that Municipal leaders and officials take responsibility for minority residents and that they understand that returnees and minority residents are in fact full citizens of Kosovo. At the same time, through the MISI-1 process, Mercy Corps is working to promote increased Municipal accountability and representation to all its constituents. Municipal support for improvements in infrastructure, social services and living standards in targeted minority and majority communities contributes to a more conducive environment for returns and reintegration. Ultimately, this leads to the overall goal of ensuring that Municipal leaders and officials take the leading role in the process of both returns and reintegration, rather than relying on the international community to do so.

MISI-1 is currently in the final stages of infrastructure projects in 42 communities in nine Municipalities, and is beginning to implement the cost extension approved by USAID known as the Municipal Integration and Support Initiative (MISI-2). While MISI-1 focused its efforts on Municipalities who had demonstrated commitment to improving conditions for return, MISI-2 will target some of the more challenging Municipalities which have shown resistance to engaging with the process. Accordingly, this study was conducted to understand the differences between engaged and less engaged communities and Municipalities and to document lessons from MISI-1 that can be applied to MISI-2.

### III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### A. Evaluation Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is not to examine the overall implementation of the MISI program to date, but rather to focus on the effectiveness of Mercy Corps' approaches in strengthening relationships between local communities and local government at the Municipal level. Additionally, Mercy Corps wanted to compare the different impact in ethnic majority versus ethnic minority communities in order to better understand the value of MISI-1 interventions in communities of different ethnic compositions.

As noted above, this evaluation will **focus exclusively on the relations that were created through MISI-1 activities between local communities and government.** Topics of special interest for this evaluation include:

- A. Channels used by local communities to relay needs and concerns to the local government, and the level of effectiveness and perceived obstacles related to these channels.
- B. Perceived responsiveness by communities regarding Municipal involvement in, and addressing of, local needs.

- C. Methods used by the Municipality to communicate policies and decisions to local communities, and the effectiveness of these methods in disseminating information.
- D. The level of awareness of local communities regarding avenues for citizen participation in local government.
- E. The level of power that the communities believe they have to hold their Municipality accountable, including direct examples of how communities have utilized this power.

## B. Evaluation Process

From July to August 2005 a range of activities were completed to evaluate if particular approaches adopted by Mercy Corps during MISI-1 led to the creation and/ or strengthening of relationships between local communities and local government (Municipal level) and the promotion of increased civic activism. The evaluation made use of a variety of techniques to collect and compare information. This process is described in depth below.

### 1. Defining “Engagement”

Numerous discussions were undertaken with Headquarters staff, the external evaluator, and MISI-1 management staff to define engagement. Facilitated meetings with senior level MISI-1 staff and the external evaluator were undertaken to come to a shared understanding of what engaged communities would mean in the MISI context. Key words that came to mind when defining engagement were: agreement, responsibility, cooperation, and actively working toward a shared goal/ interest. Some key outcomes of this meeting are included as Annex A. The final agreed definition is that **engagement is a process, a level of organization, and a state of mind**. Community mobilization and empowering communities to solve their own problems are important parts of the process, but engagement reflects a larger set of responsibilities and relationships. An engaged Municipality is one that recognizes its role in representing and acting on behalf of all its citizens and is proactive in soliciting and responding to the needs and concerns of communities, regardless of ethnicity, political party, or other identifying characteristic. An engaged community is one in which individuals understand their right to a responsive and accountable government at all levels, and recognize their responsibility to be proactive in achieving the realization of this right through bringing their concerns forward and working to ensure they are addressed.

Engagement involves a sense of ownership and stake in the governing process and an understanding of the need to participate. This internalization is critical to promoting sustainable methods and structures of addressing development priorities and empowering individuals, communities, and governments to create long-term change.

The following table provides a rough overview of how MISI-1 staff and the evaluator defined key characteristics of engaged and non-engaged communities.

| Characteristic | Engaged   | Non-Engaged   |
|----------------|---|---|
| Infrastructure | Good infrastructure, result of community lobbying local government and/or addressing it within the community. | Poor infrastructure, community does not lobby local government nor address issues on their own. |
| Leadership     | Well structured leadership, either in the form of one elected (and active) leader or through a leader         | Lacks a leadership structure. Most community members are unsure of the leader, and              |

|                           |  |   |
|---------------------------|--|---|
|                           | and committees.  | lack faith that the leader is working for the good of the community.          |
| Links to Municipality     | Has direct links to the Municipality, through community members who are part of the Municipal Assembly, or work at the Municipal building. | Community does not have any direct contacts at the Municipality.              |
| Intra-Community Relations | Good relations among clans, political parties, and/ or between ethnic groups.  | Poor relations among clans, political parties, and/ or between ethnic groups. |

## 2. Selection of Target Areas

MISI-1 Senior Management then began discussions and work to select Municipalities and communities where the evaluation activities would take place. From the nine participating Municipalities it was decided to focus on four Municipalities. Two of these Municipalities (Rahovec/Orahovac and Lipjan/Lipljan) were selected because of their perceived high level of progress during the MISI-1 Program. MISI-1 staff believed these Municipalities showed some of the key traits of engagement such as physically traveling to communities to solicit input and taking seriously the needs of local citizens. By the same token staff also selected two Municipalities (Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/Obilic), where these above mentioned traits were less evident. Similar discussions were also undertaken to select the most engaged as well as the least engaged community in each of the four Municipalities selected, a total of eight communities.

During the implementation of the evaluation, Municipal authorities in the four selected Municipalities were also asked to select one community that they felt was engaged, and a community which they felt was less engaged. A total of eight communities were added to the communities mentioned above.

## 3. Field Testing

Based on these discussions the management team then worked with the evaluator to finalize questions to be used with community focus groups, Municipal Steering Committees and Community Working Groups. At this time the evaluator and Senior Management also discussed the use of social mapping as part of the field research. Mapping exercises were first undertaken with staff at the office (to understand the usefulness of this tool), focusing on the question of “What connections does your community have?” The mapping tool and survey questions were later field tested with a rural community, and final adjustments subsequently made.

## 4. Focus Groups/ Interviews Undertaken

Focus groups were undertaken with the Municipal Steering Committee at the local government level in each of the four Municipalities. Additionally, interviews were undertaken with the Municipal President or Chief Executive Officer<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, focus groups and mapping exercises were undertaken in all communities selected by Mercy Corps and by the Municipalities. Focus groups in MISI-1 communities were done with Community Working Groups and with two

<sup>12</sup> In Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje a the Municipal focus group was completed with only the Municipal Steering Committee as the President and Chief Executive Officer were on summer holiday.

groups of persons not directly involved in MISI-1 activities. These groups were divided either by gender or by ethnicity in multi-ethnic villages. In non-MISI-1 communities (those selected by the Municipalities) one focus group was held per site.

In total four focus groups were undertaken with each of the Municipal Steering Committees, and an additional 32 focus groups were completed in village sites identified by Mercy Corps or the Municipality. A complete list of all community focus groups sites is provided as Annex B, whereas a list of all participants from Municipal focus groups is provided as Annex C.

#### IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Evaluation results have been organized around the topics of special interest for this evaluation:

- A. Channels used by local communities to relay needs and concerns to the local government, and the level of effectiveness and perceived obstacles related to these channels.
- B. Perceived responsiveness by communities regarding Municipal involvement in, and addressing of, local needs.
- C. Methods used by the Municipality to communicate policies and decisions to local communities, and the effectiveness of these methods in disseminating information.
- D. The level of awareness of local communities regarding avenues for citizen participation in local government.
- E. The level of power that the communities believe they have to hold their Municipality accountable, including direct examples of how communities have utilized this power.



*Above: Mapping exercise with women in Livragone/Vragolia.*

##### **A. Channels used by local communities to relay needs and concerns to the local government.**

Community groups had more contacts and stronger relations with the Municipality as a result of this project. Many felt they would not have gone as often to the Municipality if not for MISI-1. Many CWGs took advantage of the increased contacts and monthly meetings to raise issues beyond the MISI-1 infrastructure project. Malesi e Vogel/ Radoste brought up the need for more capacity in the community school. Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal discussed sewage needs in addition to the road, and learned about the possibility of streamlining

utility payments by combining sewage and trash in the same receipts.

##### **1. Community Structure**

For a community to be able to effectively relay local needs to their government structures, the community itself must be organized. To look at this in each of the 32 community focus groups conducted, communities were first asked to map out on a piece of paper the community's relationships—both within the community and without—highlighting the groups, institutions, and individuals that had an impact on the community. This exercise immediately highlighted a difference between engaged and less engaged communities.

All of the engaged communities described an **institutionalized structure within the village for formally discussing issues**. Two communities, Hence/ Ence and Livragone/ Vragolija described elaborate structures with committees for different sectors (i.e. education, agriculture, infrastructure, etc.) each of which has a village representative from all political parties. Malesi e Vogel/ Radoste described a more straightforward system in which each of the eight neighborhoods selected a representative to form a village council. Three of the other nine engaged communities chose committee members in an open village meeting. Whatever the structure or system, individuals in engaged communities were able to describe a mechanism through which village concerns were raised and addressed. It is also noteworthy that six of the organized communities also held regular open meetings.

*“Everything happens due to the organization of the village.”- Quote from a Hence/ Ence resident.*

One of the clearest indicators of organized, engaged communities is the **number of initiatives they have taken on their own within the village**. Engaged villages described with pride the number of infrastructure projects they initiated and completed on their own or with limited external funding. Engaged communities also highlighted the number of activities that went on in their village such as musical groups, sports teams, or women’s courses. When problems arose that could not be solved within the community, leaders would initiate requests to the Municipality, Kosovo Force (KFOR), or another entity that might be able to assist.

All eight communities defined as less engaged struggled with the social mapping exercise. As one Serbian Kosovar woman from Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal expressed, “As a community, we have relations with no one.” Some residents in these communities mentioned the existence of a village leader or committee, but did not know how they were chosen or what they did. As one man from Millosheve/ Milosevo stated, “The village leader is not good, he is not helping. We don’t know how he is selected.” Others could not identify any organized structure within their village where concerns could be addressed.

Village activities and completed infrastructure projects could be found in less engaged communities, but they were typically organized by international NGOs with limited community involvement, which as a result did not create a sense of ownership or accomplishment in the recipient community. As one man in Lagja Serbe/ Srpska Mahal put it, “here we have an expression, where there are too many nurses, the baby is not normal”, referring to the number of NGOs working in the neighborhood. Despite the many organizations working in this Serbian Kosovar neighborhood, community members felt their activities happened on their own and were not addressing the community’s priorities.

In some cases less engaged communities were clearly less developed and may have lacked funds or in-kind contributions to implement projects independently. However, in other cases it was clear that it was not ability, but initiative that was lacking. While some projects may be difficult to complete without additional support, less engaged communities would often complain about needs that they should have been able to address on their own. For example, a group of young men in Millosheve/ Milosevo complained about not having a good sports field because theirs was covered with trash. An organized community should be able to address this issue on their own and were this to come up again, Mercy Corps should not shy away from making such suggestions.

The MISI-1 program should be commended for requiring a significant amount of participation and effort on the part of community members and for involving them at every stage of the process. While taking initiative is more of an issue of attitude than skill, MISI-1 has laid the groundwork for this change of behavior to take place.

But even in more engaged communities (as well as in less engaged communities) women and youth revealed a much lower level of involvement in, and knowledge of, village structures. For example, despite a seemingly high level of overall engagement, there is not one woman on the village committee in Malesi e Vogel/ Radoste, despite the fact that many of the women interviewed expressed an interest in becoming more involved.

## 2. Intra-community Relations

**Relations within the village** contributed to both the level of engagement, as well as the ability to effectively utilize existing channels of communication. Many engaged communities began the mapping exercise by saying, “first of all, we have good relations within the village.” While good relations are not necessarily unique to engaged communities, as some less engaged communities also defined intra-community relations as good, it does seem to be a prerequisite. None of the eight communities defined as an engaged village expressed poor relations.

### *a. Inter-ethnic Relations*

Albanian Kosovar communities in particular brought up, without prompting, the issue of good relations with minorities within their village or with neighboring villages. Six communities would later express frustration that they did not receive fair levels of support, from the Municipality, NGOs, and the international community, in comparison to minorities. Yet other than this complaint, Albanian Kosovar communities were generally eager to communicate the positive relations they felt they had with minorities.

Minority communities would rarely bring up the issue of multi-ethnic relations independently, and when prompted, had varying opinions within the group. In mixed communities, minority residents generally felt there were good relations between ethnic groups within the village, but Serbian Kosovars, in particular, were less trusting of relations outside the immediate village.

Mercy Corps appears to have done an excellent job of taking ethnic relations into account in all of the mixed communities where MISI-1 worked. All community working groups in multi-ethnic sites praised the way the project brought different groups together and strengthened cooperation between them. Many community groups felt the project improved relations within the community and especially noted improved ties between ethnic groups. Although Rubovec/ Rabovce and Medvegje/ Medvece had always enjoyed good relations between their different ethnic groups, both described the MISI-1 project as an opportunity to strengthen these relationships by working together for a common goal.

*“this [MISI] helped us work together with Albanians and Serbians. Community involvement with both communities is the best way. Through this project, Serbian villagers feel like they are a part of Kosovo society and feel less isolated.”*

*Quote from a Serbian Kosovar CWG member in Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal, Rahovec/ Orahovac Municipality.*

### *b. Political parties*

The role of political parties was often brought up in discussions about community relations. Less engaged communities would often complain about the bitter relations between political party representatives. In some communities, political parties seem to have taken the place of traditional village structures. As one villager from Rascov/ Raskovo lamented, “Before the war we had a village leader, now there are just political parties. There are two political parties, each has their representative, and they have bad relations between them.”

Only two communities reported that their community had good cooperation between political parties, a point which was often brought up with a sense of pride as being an exception to the prevailing political climate. As one villager from Zatriq/ Zatric expressed, “We have different political parties here, but there is good cooperation. We are not divided by them. I wish all of Kosovo was like this.”

### **3. Political Representation**

**The absence of an institutionalized representative from each village within a Municipality is a major obstacle to strengthening the relationship between communities and the Municipality.** Indeed, the five communities without assembly members were noticeably less engaged and organized. Communities overwhelmingly stressed the importance of personal contacts at the Municipality from their village, Assembly members and/or Municipal staff. As one member of Rubovc/ Rabovce stated, “lots of people from this village work at the Municipality...these connections are how we have access and we contact them very often.” Municipal leaders often mentioned Assembly members as one of their main channels to communities, with comments such as “usually Assembly members make requests for their villages.” Departments may face more pressure to act for communities with Assembly members and may be more aware of the problems these communities face.

Villages without such connections are at a great disadvantage. The Chief Executive Officer of Rahovec/ Orahovac explained that the closed selection system based on political parties and lists results in disproportionate representation, “For example, Krushe Madhe/ Velika Krusa has four Assembly members, while some don’t have any. I think this is a defect, there should be one Assembly member for every village.” The CEO reported that overcoming pressure from Assembly members who prioritize their villages was a major struggle.

Party lists are a major challenge not only to creating an official representative from every village, but also for holding Municipal leaders accountable. Community groups and Municipal officials alike expressed frustration that voters were unable to select an individual for office but instead could only vote for a party. As one man from Llugaxhi/ Llugadzija expressed, “we want leaders to be selected directly from citizens because until now selection is based on political party, and we don't know who we are selecting. OSCE decided this system. We want selections like in the United States, where you know which person you are voting for.” The current party system seems to shelter Municipal officials from being directly accountable to their citizens.

In some cases, the village leader or village committee was able to substitute or supplement the role of official Municipal contacts. Political party activists or representatives were also an important link to political leaders at the Municipal level. Other times community members went individually, or



as a representative of just one neighborhood, to make requests to the Municipality. Some community members mentioned transport and distance from the Municipality as a major obstacle.

#### 4. Municipal Perceptions

**The Municipalities noticed the difference in MISI-1 communities, crediting them with being more active and organized:**

“Serbian communities saw that it is better to be active. Now they are more active and have more contacts.” -CEO, Rahovec/ Orahovac

“A key part was the relationship between communities and the Municipality. It helped communities to be aware of how Municipal government can work with communities. Communities learned how to be organized, how to cooperate with different ethnicities, how to make reports to Municipal government, what their rights are, and what they are free to do. Communities used to come with requests and expect it to be free, now villages understand community participation is key.” -Steering Committee, Lipjan/ Lipljane

“Another positive issue I discovered from this project is that leaders of villages and village committees learned how to decide on priorities. For example, in other villages, where we did not have MISI, in one meeting they would discuss all their needs and feel everything is a priority. One says “we don't have water”, another wants a road, another, electricity. We know they have all these needs, but they can't decide on what is the biggest need, the common need for everybody. In MISI villages, they say one need, stand behind it, and decide what they want to do.” -President, Lipjan/ Lipljane

“MISI had an impact on the idea of community participation with projects. We learned that if we have meetings and discuss with communities, they are ready to participate and help with implementation. It had an impact on making the Municipality take on more responsibility to participate and find money for projects.” -President, Lipjan/ Lipljane

“The project made them more active, and opened our eyes more. They come much more often.” -Steering Committee, Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje

Majority Albanian Kosovar Municipal officials also felt MISI-1 helped them improve relations with ethnic minorities. A member from the Obilic/ Obiliq SC made special reference to meetings they held in Palaj/ Crkvena Vodica and Plementine/ Plementina. A member from the Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje SC also highlighted the presence of different ethnicities at all meetings, and particularly noted that in the selection of infrastructure projects for funding, Serbian Kosovar villages voted for Albanian Kosovar villages.

*“Before MISI we didn't have this cooperation with ethnic groups...I don't remember having mixed ethnic meetings in communities before MISI.” - Quote from Obilic/ Obiliq Municipal Steering Committee*

## **B. Perceived responsiveness by communities regarding Municipal involvement in, and addressing of, local needs.**

### **1. Engaged versus Less Engaged Community Perspectives**

**Albanian Kosovar groups in both engaged and less engaged communities felt that minority or multiethnic communities seemed to get significantly more support from the Municipal government.** While some were resigned to this political reality, others expressed disgruntlement that their needs were always overlooked. Lipjan/ Lipljane Municipal authorities explained this favored approach as follows: “Sometimes Serbs and RAE are more supported because we try to show that they are equal with majority population and that they are welcome. We think they are satisfied with Municipal services.” The Lipjan/ Lipljane Municipal President also described more intensive efforts on his parts to make Serbs feel welcome, including more frequent visits to Serb villages and direct involvement in ensuring continued provision of utilities.

**Minority communities and less engaged communities often dismissed examples of Municipal support as aberrations.** In some cases less engaged communities did seem to have legitimate concerns regarding lack of Municipal support. An example of this was provided by the Albanian Kosovar community in Zatriq/ Zatric (defined by the Municipality as less engaged) had collected €50,000 and made a request for assistance in asphaltting a local road. One year later nothing has been done. In other cases, particularly in minority communities, there seemed to be a dissonance between the perception and reality. When asked whether the Municipal government had supported them in any way, the first reaction would be to complain that they don’t listen to them or help overcome their problems. Only when prodded further would they give examples of support.

### **2. Minority Community Perspectives**

**Serbian Kosovar communities often reported feeling isolated from both the Municipality and surrounding communities, and tended to associate primarily with other Serbian Kosovar communities.** Every Serbian Kosovar group brought up the freedom of movement issue. While some went into greater detail regarding their fears, many would just leave it at “we don’t have freedom of movement.” Others would launch into a more detailed political discourse. The resentment was particularly deeply felt in Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal, where the Serb community is confined to a small neighborhood within the larger Rahovec/Orahovac city. For example, one member of the Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal CWG, stated: “First, we don't have freedom of movement. We are waiting for freedom of movement in order for our lives to be better. Now all things are mixed with standards so we don't know if they [Municipality] are working just to achieve that. I don't agree that fulfilling standards should be connected with the independence of Kosovo. It is not good to mix human rights with a political issue. I'm sure that if the independence of Kosovo was not connected to standards, things would go faster. For example, it is very important to have freedom of movement, but never would I think that this is connected with the status of Kosovo. We don't ask to be given these rights because we know we already have these rights from God, we just want them.”

The issue of standards seemed to be an important motivating factor for Municipal officials, as well as a needed justification for Albanian Kosovar communities to support the increased attention given to minorities. However, the incentive of standards for status has generated significant

mistrust in minority communities. As a man from Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal expressed, “We think they support us just for standards—not just us, all minority members think like this. Why didn't they do it in 1999 and 2000?...Standards were imposed by internationals and first raised five years ago. Now they are paying attention because for the first time they are facing deadlines.” Similar sentiments were expressed by other individuals in the community who felt they were supported by the Municipality only due to pressure from outside forces.

Despite high levels of resentment and distrust, **Serbian Kosovar communities did express a desire and willingness to work with Municipal government on improving conditions.** A man from the Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal CWG laid out a detailed platform, which if met would improve relations with the community. “The relationship with the Municipal government would improve if the Municipal government did more on open issues that have been pending, including:

1. Restore Serb property rights.
2. Investigate status of missing/kidnapped Serbs.
3. Find people who committed acts against minorities and bring them to justice.
4. Provide access to the Serb cemetery situated in Albanian area, for five years we have had to do burials in the churchyard because we do not have access.
5. Increase support to returnees.

We are not expecting all, but progress on one or two would send a clear message to Serbs, that they have equal rights and are equal citizens.”

Municipal governments will need to be particularly proactive in order to earn the confidence of their minority constituents. While many issues are difficult and take time, making progress on those that are easily addressed, such as facilitating access to the cemetery, could increase the level of trust.

### **C. Methods used by the Municipality to communicate policies and decisions to local communities.**

#### **1. Public Meetings**

All of the Municipalities described public meetings as an opportunity for citizens to come forward and address their concerns. Municipalities used a variety of mediums to inform residents, including radio, newspaper advertisements, and public invitations. While most Municipalities were satisfied with participation levels, with some estimating attendance at over 100 residents, most communities generally lacked information about the event. Only four groups, all community working groups (three engaged and one less engaged), knew about the event in advance and participated. Many community members had heard about the meeting, but did not know the specifics while others had never heard about such meetings at all. When asked if the Municipal government held public meetings, one Serbian woman from Baimovc/ Babin Most exclaimed, “Never! Who’s going to talk to the stupid villagers?” While some questioned the futility of public meetings, many expressed a desire to participate, but lacked information about the meeting. Others described the city location as being difficult. Some thought that perhaps their village leaders went, but they did not know about it. Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje and Obilic/ Obilic described weekly open meetings with villagers, but only one community knew about it.

#### **2. Municipal Visits**

Communities generally dismissed Municipal visits as happening before elections or only in response to a community invitation. Community working groups were much more likely to have

met with Municipal officials during their visits and to have found them useful, while women were least likely to know about Municipal visits. Furthermore, minority communities were often skeptical of Municipal visits. One woman in Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal stated, Municipal officials come, “only when they have to do something observed by someone else, when there is KFOR or someone or a project or something.”

Municipal officials described frequent visits to communities, particularly in response to community requests. The Municipal president of Lipjan/ Lipljane states he makes village visits every two weeks, and made a particular effort to visit Serb villages more often. While it would certainly be beneficial for more Municipal officials to make regular visits to communities, part of the problem seems to be the communities’ expectations. Communities discounted Municipal visits that were made in response to an invitation, rather than seizing the opportunity to make additional invitations and contacts.

### **3. Media**

Only one engaged community reported that they received information through the media about the actions of local government.

### **4. Municipal Community Officer<sup>13</sup> (MCO)**

Minority communities overwhelmingly relied on the Municipal Community Officer (MCO) as their primary connection to the Municipality<sup>14</sup>. While this is clearly an important mechanism through which minorities can raise concerns, it appears to be replacing rather than facilitating traditional means of connecting with the Municipality. In Baimovc/ Babin Most, all three groups named the MCO as their only connection to the Municipality. Many were confused about the nature of his role, referring to him as the ‘president of the village’. As one man described, “There’s one president from village. Nobody knows how he’s chosen, what he does. No one knows what his abilities or duties are, what he can do for us, what he’s supposed to do. Regardless of that, we go to him.” In Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal, the MCO remained the primary channel, but while other connections were mentioned, ethnicity remained a common theme. As one member stated, “Our representative and vice-president at the Municipality is Serbian so we go through them. But he is the only Serb, so it is very difficult and he can’t always help.” The community working group also mentioned the monthly Mercy Corps meetings as a crucial connection to the Municipality.

Municipal officials discussed multiple contacts with Serbian Kosovar communities, but conceded that the MCO remains one of the principal channels. The Lipjan/ Lipljane steering committee noted that while the MCO remains an important contact for minorities, Serbian Kosovars have become much more active on their own recently, including attending public meetings and visiting the Municipality. The Obilic/ Obiliq steering committee also noted improved cooperation over the past two years.

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<sup>13</sup> The Municipal Community Officer serves as the official liaison between minority communities and the Municipal government.

#### **D. The level of awareness of local communities regarding avenues for citizen participation in local government.**

Communities were quick to articulate needs and requests they had made to the Municipality, but often struggled to answer what responsibilities they had to the Municipality. Most (15 communities of the 16 communities) responded with the need to pay taxes for property and utilities, and fees for documents. Whereas other responsibilities (i.e. maintain projects, participate in local elections) were rarely suggested by more than one community. And overall there was little difference between answers provided by engaged versus less engaged communities.

Less engaged communities recognized the need to pay taxes but explained their difficult economic situation. One woman from Baimovc/ Babin Most responded, “What responsibilities? I don’t even know where the Municipality is.” On the flip side at least one Albanian Kosovar community reported that they use the fact that Serbian Kosovar communities do not pay utility bills as a justification for them not to pay either.

#### **E. The level of power that the communities believe they have to hold their Municipality accountable.**

**All eight CWGs in all MISI-1 Program sites, both engaged and less engaged communities, felt they could influence the Municipal government,** a sentiment that was more mixed among other (non-CWG) community focus groups. Since many in the CWG were already community leaders, one would expect them to feel more agency than other community members. Nevertheless, there is some indication that Mercy Corps played a role in strengthening this sentiment. Rubovc/ Rabovce pointed to the MISI-1 infrastructure project as evidence of their ability to influence the Municipality. Lagja Serbe/ Srpska Mahal, despite severe criticism of the Municipality, conceded that recently there had been positive progress. Residents reported that they believed they would be able to influence the Municipal government if, “they are ready to listen to us, we can. Now, lately, we have the impression that they are ready.”

**Yet while progress has been made with CWGs, this perception often did not filter to the rest of the residents in a community.** This was particularly visible in Serbian Kosovar villages, where CWGs notwithstanding, no other Serbian Kosovar group felt they could influence the Municipal government. Additionally, women’s groups in all communities were less likely to feel like they could influence the Municipal government—half said they did not think it was possible.

Six of the eight MISI-1 CWGs who thought it was possible to influence the Municipal government linked the ability to influence the Municipality with the level of organization in the village. As one men’s group from Hence/ Ence stated, “We think we can have impact, but first we must be organized within our village, so we can go in an organized way.” Interestingly, this sentiment was shared even in villages that were less organized. Some lamented that perhaps if they were more organized and went more often to the Municipality they would be able to receive more support.

#### **1. Personal Connections**

Although six of the eight CWGs attributed their ability to influence the Municipality to the organization and initiative of community members, when asked whether the Municipality supports some communities more than others, the most frequently given response was that communities

which had personal connections to powerful people at the Municipality were supported the most. This problem seemed particularly acute in Obilic/ Obiliq where all four communities complained about the role of personal connections. In three of these communities, the influence of two powerful families was of particular concern. Interestingly, the Obilic/ Obiliq Municipal president, a member of one of these families, and the Steering Committee, was most insistent that all communities were treated equally.

Other Municipal leaders were more forthcoming. While they attempted to treat communities equally, they described a number of factors that could influence levels of Municipal support, including leveraging donor support or community participation, active Assembly or village leaders, the organization and initiative of communities and the prioritization of minority villages. One member of the Rahovec/ Orahovac Steering Committee expressed that though they try to give each village an equal share, often “the baby that cries gets the mother’s milk.”

## **2. Infrastructure**

**Tangible examples of Municipal support contributed to a community’s sense of agency.** All eight community groups described a specific fulfilled request, usually an infrastructure project, as evidence of their ability to influence the Municipal government. Conversely, many of those most frustrated with their inability to influence the Municipal government described a litany of unmet infrastructure needs. In several villages there was immense impatience with the slow pace of implementation of non-MISI-1 projects. Villagers described having organized significant community participation of funds only to face delays and lack of information regarding when implementation would begin. MISI-1 projects were able to avert this frustration by involving the community at every phase and setting clear expectations regarding the process. Communities clearly appreciated this involvement.

Communities and Municipal governments fall prey to the same pitfalls of politics everywhere—Municipal governments promise too much and then can not deliver, while communities often have unrealistic expectations. While it should come as no surprise that every community expressed a desire for more support from the Municipal government, engaged communities were much more likely to express appreciation for the support they had received and an understanding of the Municipal government’s limitations.

## **F. Other Findings**

### **1. Standards and Ethnicity**

Communities and Municipalities typically raised the issue of ethnicity on their own. Albanian Kosovar communities and Municipal officials were eager to describe the positive relations they had with minorities, while minorities were quick to complain about poor treatment. Yet what was most striking about these conversations was the politicization of language. Minorities rarely discussed their specific fears or limitations, but rather lamented their lack of “freedom of movement.” Albanian Kosovars, without prompting, would declare that ethnic relations were strong, and “standards were being met”. The Lipljane/ Lipjan President even credited MISI-1 with helping to fulfill ‘standards’ by overcoming obstacles for returnees through the action plans, and used this success in his reports to the government.. He commented, “Before the government even asked, MISI had asked.”

Politics regarding status issues have been so internalized throughout Kosovo that it often sounded as if individuals were using a set of talking points, rather than describing their own experiences. It is important to note that groups were never asked questions regarding status or standards so individuals raised these issues on their own.

#### *a. Serbian Kosovar Perceptions*

Serbian Kosovars often described good personal relations with select Albanian Kosovars, but had fears regarding the larger Kosovar majority society. In both Baimovc/ Babin Most and Rubovc/ Rabovce groups described good ethnic relations within the village. As one Serbian woman described relations in Baimovc/ Babin Most, “We have never had problems. We are neighbors and have good relations. Albanians bring us things from different Municipalities for shopping.” Yet while they have good relations within the village, most Serbs in both Baimovc/ Babin Most and Rubovc/ Rabovce would not go to the Municipality. Villagers in both locations discussed traveling to Gracanica/ Gracanice to shop or sell their vegetables, despite the longer distance, because of their fears.

Yet despite these fears, many Serbian Kosovars traveled to the Municipality when it was in an official capacity, either because they work there or, as members of the CWG, attended meetings there. As one woman from the Baimovc/ Babin Most CWG, expressed “We go. Those who have habits to go, they go. But others you cannot persuade, they are afraid.” MISI-1 procedures, which include monthly meetings at the Municipality, have been an important mechanism for breaking down previously held fears and establishing these ‘habits to go’. In some places, the reality may not be as dangerous as the perception, but addressing the perception is equally important and often even more difficult, as it can be less tangible. Municipal government officials and Mercy Corps should work with minority communities to understand the nature of their fears and specific ways these concerns could be addressed. For example, one Serbian Kosovar woman in Rubovc/ Rabovce was reassured at an interethnic meeting that was organized after the March riots, during which Albanian Kosovars guaranteed that they would protect their Serbian Kosovar neighbors. Confidence-building measures such as these should be a priority.

While Municipal officials have a responsibility to take the lead in reassuring minority communities, minority communities must also meet them part of the way. Minority communities and Municipal officials both described projects initiated by international NGOs and institutions, in which the Municipal government was bypassed and minority community participation was limited. Accordingly, a culture of entitlement is pervasive and minority communities ascribe any unmet need as evidence of intended deprivation by government officials. The MISI-1 program is helping to change this, and the difference in perceptions of minorities who are involved in the project through the CWG and those who are not is telling. However, perhaps the most important driver of progress is the decision to commit to a life in Kosovo. As a Serbian Kosovar member of the Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje Steering Committee explained, the reason why minority communities in Fushe Kosovo/ Kosovo Polje, “are very active is because they are interested in staying here and so are working for it. If they are interested in living in Kosovo, they are more active and doing what they can.”

#### *b. Albanian Kosovar Perceptions*

While most Albanian Kosovar focus groups highlighted the good ethnic relations they had with minorities, many also expressed dismay at what they perceived as the unfair distribution of aid. As

one man in Llugaxhi/ Lugađzija said, “a lot of NGOs are only helping minorities. I'm not against this, but they should keep in mind the majority of the population is Albanian and should help both.” Many saw the increased attention as political, as one Albanian Kosovar woman from Medvegje/ Medvece straightforwardly summed up, “they are doing more for Ashkali houses because they have to fulfill standards.”

Development assistance in Kosovo is now rarely seen as going to those most in need, and its use as a political tool is causing resentment. As the resident from Llugaxhi/ Lugađzija continued, “There was a project plan to change the electricity network but then USAID changed its priority and said money should be invested in Serbian villages. Even so we like the American people, but in this case they didn't work right. The people that killed us get a donation from USAID.” Donors and NGOs must tread carefully to ensure that their work is alleviating rather than exacerbating ethnic tensions. For some, the promise of standards being fulfilled, and ensuing independence, is enough to justify minority preferences, but others are growing increasingly impatient.

Some Albanian Kosovars felt that there was a difference between what the Serbian Kosovars would say privately and publicly, and attributed this difference to pressure from Belgrade. For example, the President of Lipjan/ Lipljane described working with Serbian Kosovar communities for weeks to address an electricity issue, in which he told them, “I don't need you to be victims for politics because in Belgrade they have electricity. They are using you like examples to say, look they left them without electricity...be sure, I am taking more care for you than people from Belgrade.” When asked whether Serbian Kosovar communities accepted his authority as their leader, he responded, “They accept me only when they need something like infrastructure and electricity, but only privately. Anything officially, they don't accept. In Serbian Kosovar villages, there is a political problem, from the impact of politics from Belgrade and from people who do not accept the status of Kosovo.”

Albanian Kosovar community members had difficulty understanding Serbian Kosovar mistrust, and often blamed outside forces. In discussing the good relations Miradi e Ulet/ Donje Dobrovo shared with neighboring Serbian Kosovar communities, one villager remarked, “I don't know why they don't like to mention that we have good relations. My Kosovar Serb friend said that we are afraid to say we recognize Kosovo because of Belgrade Serbs. They don't let us cooperate. We want to live together.”

The linkage of standards and status has created powerful incentives with both positive and adverse consequences. Albanian Kosovar government officials are motivated to be proactive in addressing minority needs, while Albanian Kosovar community members are more understanding of minorities receiving increased development assistance. Albanian Kosovars focus groups were eager to extol the good relationships they have with their minority neighbors. Meanwhile, many minority communities often seemed to feel that acknowledging positive progress was a difficult concession, given only grudgingly. Positive gestures by Albanian Kosovars were viewed with suspicion and their motives were questioned. Language, development assistance, and neighborly sentiment are highly politicized, which are exacerbated, both intentionally and unwillingly, by the Serbian Kosovar government, Kosovar political parties, and the international community.



## 2. General Perceptions about Mercy Corps' Work

With only a few exceptions, **Community Working Groups and Municipal Steering Committees expressed high levels of satisfaction with every aspect of the MISI-1 program.** It should come as no surprise that the only repeated suggestion for improvement was for Mercy Corps to increase the level of funding.

### a. Training

Community working groups were impressed with the 12 training sessions they received and found them useful in a variety of ways. Many groups appreciated learning how to address community needs and work with the Municipality. At first, the CWG from Lagja Serbe/ Sprska Mahal complained that the trainings held up the infrastructure project, but stated that “In the beginning, we did not like these sessions because they were a little complicated, but step by step you can tell that you can benefit from them and create a way to implement projects.” The Medvegje/ Medvece CWG noted that now they know how to make official requests “based on rules and laws.” The CWG from Hence/ Ence praised the organization and relevance of the training sessions, stating that, “Every session was very interesting to us. Every work done based on this training material will surely be very successful. Everything was explained in a very democratic way, there was no room for confusion of citizens. I am sure it will help us solve problems and take initiatives for our own projects.” The Hence/ Ence CWG also commended the Mercy Corps’ outreach officer for being very prepared and open.

Many noted that the training had an influence beyond skills including working with different ethnic groups, increasing the involvement of women, and improving relations between the community and the Municipality. The CWG from Baimovc/ Babin Most, raved that, “every seminar had

*“[the training] was very good because it obligated the Municipal government to come to training sessions... and had a strong impact by making a bridge between the Municipality and community...and gave us a higher level understanding of democracy.”- Quote from the Rubovc/ Rabovce CWG*

been useful...we spent time together as a community, solving problems. If I have a problem, it doesn't matter what ethnicity, we will work together, to find a donor and find a solution.” A man on the Livragone/ Vragolija CWG noticed a big change with regards to women’s involvement as a result of the training, stating that, “Women who were involved in the Mercy Corps CWG are more active in the village governing committee, attending the meetings every two weeks. At first I

questioned this condition [of requiring women on the CWG], but saw after training that it was good to have their participation.”

### b. Infrastructure Projects

Community working groups were generally appreciative of both the infrastructure projects and the process through which they were implemented. In Medvegje/ Medvece, the CWG valued the, “combination of funding through community participation, the Municipality, and Mercy Corps” as a way to make the project ‘realistic’. The CWG in Hence/ Ence attributed the success of the project to the high level of access they had throughout the process and compared it to a water project implemented through the ministry that failed because it was done at a “high, central level” without community input. Malesi e Vogel/ Radoste raved that, “Everything was very good. What Mercy Corps said, they did. The only improvement would be more money. Mercy Corps was very helpful, sincere, and serious. We really needed the sewer project.”

While most groups were satisfied, there were some concerns about both the selection and implementation of projects, particularly among community members not directly involved in the project. In Rubovc/ Rabovce, a group of Albanian men complained that the asphaltting of the road did not include the section where they lived. In Baimovc/ Babin Most, a group of Serbian women complained that the sewage smelled because the hole was not made deep enough. While in Hence/ Ence there were disagreements as to where the branches of the sewage system should extend. Although the community eventually solved the issue themselves, some were upset that Mercy Corps did not do more to intervene.

In Millosheve/ Milosevo, there were severe disagreements as to the selection of a cultural center as the infrastructure project. One woman said, “Everything done is important, but how many times did we say sewage was our priority?”<sup>15</sup> There was also significant confusion and suspicion as to who was driving the selection of the infrastructure project. Both Mercy Corps and the Municipality were blamed. One man noted, “We said we would like sewage, but the Municipality said the NGO wanted money for the cultural center.” He also felt that one member who works in the Municipality pushed the cultural center as a priority for his personal gain, noting that, “He decided this because they will use his company to construct building<sup>16</sup>.”

Complaints are to be expected in any project, as it is impossible to please everyone. Nevertheless, some of these concerns may have been tempered had Mercy Corps worked more with CWGs to ensure that information is regularly dispersed to the wider community at-large about every stage of the process—from the selection of infrastructure priorities to the selection of companies. Community working groups demonstrated a much higher level of satisfaction, in part because they were aware of the constraints and appreciated the transparent procedures. In more engaged communities, information about the process and selection of projects was shared more widely, and satisfaction among the community ensued. However, in less organized communities, groups not involved in the project knew little or nothing about how the project was selected and organized, and were less likely to be satisfied as a result.

### *c. Process*

Communities and Municipalities were particularly impressed with Mercy Corps procedures and the emphasis on transparency and participation throughout the entire process. Two Municipalities complained about the amount of paperwork and procedures they had to go through, but even so, continued to compliment the process as participatory and sustainable. Here is a sample of what they had to say:

“Mercy Corps is different from other NGOs because Mercy Corps did not just ask for community participation with funds, but in all parts of the process. In the selection of the project, companies, contractors, and communities must participate. With Mercy Corps we were cooperating together on the project, with the companies, for all problems. With other NGOs we have access just in beginning, but can not interfere later on. With Mercy Corps we worked together throughout.

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<sup>15</sup> During MISI implementation a sewage project was being planned for the community, using Municipal and community funds. This project is now nearing completion.

<sup>16</sup> The construction company selected, through a joint committee composed of Municipal, community and Mercy Corps representatives was not a local company, nor did it have any ties to the community.

Also, what is very important is that Mercy Corps cared about how the project would be maintained. Other NGOs mention maintenance, but when their project was done, it was just on paper. With Mercy Corps, they continued to be interested and followed up.” -CEO, Rahovec/Orahovac

“It is very professional how Mercy Corps works. What I liked the best was the tendering. During contractor selection, I saw that everything was correct- you do not support one more than another. The company that won had more points based on criteria.” -CWG, Lagja Serbe /Sprska Mahal

“The MISI program is crowded with paper. Mercy Corps asks for a lot, but we understand that it is a process.” -Steering Committee, Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje

“We learned a new method of how to select priorities for projects--to have not only Municipality decide priorities, but the communities also.” -Steering Committee, Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje

“Everything was very good, very transparent, and exact on deadlines. The biggest thing that convinced communities was the chance to select the contractor, the transparent tender process, and participating in the selection. The Municipality and community get the same vote. The management was fair and correct. Mercy Corps staff were very strict to fulfill project standards for project implementation. Their help was excellent, couldn’t be better.” -Steering Committee, Lipljane/ Lipjan

Majority Albanian Kosovar Municipal officials also felt MISI-1 helped them improve relations with ethnic minorities. A member from the Obilic/ Obiliq SC made special reference to meetings they held in Palaj/ Crkvena Vodica and Plementine/ Plementina, stating “Before MISI we didn’t have this cooperation with ethnic groups....I don’t remember having mixed ethnic meetings in communities before MISI.” A member from the Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje SC also highlighted the presence of different ethnicities at all meetings, and particularly noted that in the selection of infrastructure projects for funding, Serbian Kosovar villages voted for Albanian Kosovars.

### **3. Municipal Feedback on Increasing Community Engagement**

Municipal authorities and Steering Committees were asked how they would increase community engagement during focus groups - assuming they had unlimited resources.

Many of their suggestions are easily implemented without significant additional resources:

- Try to be very transparent and open with each community;
- Take Municipal invitations to every village for open meetings and other Municipal events;
- Distribute monthly assembly meeting agendas to every village;
- Create a bulletin board in every village for posting of information;
- Organize sports and cultural activities to improve inter-ethnic relations;
- Organize monthly public meetings in villages;
- Give communities more access in creating better strategic development plans;
- Compensate one individual from each village for travel to the Municipality for meetings;
- Make more contacts within villages through events, including sports and cultural activities; and
- Institute official elections of village representatives.

Other Municipal suggestions are much more costly to implement. Some could be adapted at a reasonable expense, while others may not be cost-effective:

- Establish a Municipal office and representative in every village;
  - Constructing an office in every village would be excessively costly, but the Municipal government could facilitate the selection of a representative in every village and solicit their involvement in Municipal decision-making.
- Fulfill more community requests;
- Invest more funds in infrastructure projects, with higher Municipal participation;
- Create a user friendly Municipal webpage;
- Provide more services in villages, such as issuing documents, so that villagers don't have to waste their time coming to the Municipality;
  - While hiring staff for each village would be costly, Municipal staff could establish a rotation schedule among villages to provide services, perhaps out of the local primary school
- Create better infrastructure to have appropriate meeting spaces in each village;
  - Creating new infrastructure may be costly, but officials could open access to existing infrastructure, such as schools, to facilitate meetings.
- Fulfill employment needs;
- Create better conditions for credit;
- Create regional radio and television stations;
- Institute open selections so that citizens vote directly for the name of the Municipal president. If Municipal presidents are voted for directly, it will create greater obligation, discipline, and responsibility.

Municipal governments must be encouraged to implement many of their own suggestions and continue to think creatively about ways to increase community participation and involvement.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Characteristics of Engaged and Less Engaged Communities

#### 1. Community Governing Structures

**In communities with representative governing structures, Mercy Corps should seek to strengthen and complement their leadership through the MISI project.** Mercy Corps should work with established leaders and village committees only after ensuring that these structures have the trust and support of the community. However, Mercy Corps should also work to extend leadership opportunities to groups that may have been previously excluded, including women, youth, and minorities.

The community working group structure works well for communities that already have an organized village governance system. However, if there is not an organized village structure, Mercy Corps and the Municipal government should work to create one. While this may take a considerable amount of time and effort, it is clear that it is one of the primary characteristics of an engaged community. Community working groups may not last past the project and an

institutionalized leadership is important for mobilizing the community in the future. Villages with organized structures were notably more engaged than those without.

In creating the village leadership structures, Mercy Corps, communities, and the Municipal government should:

- Ensure the selection procedure is participatory and transparent.
- Include minorities, women, and youth in the governing structure in a meaningful way.
- Mandate that the structure is nonpartisan either by omitting references to political parties or by ensuring that all parties are represented. This choice will depend on the specific nature of political parties in the village.
- Institutionalize contacts between the Municipality and communities.

## **2. Intra-Community Relations**

Creating good relations within villages is best addressed by villagers themselves. Nevertheless, **Mercy Corps should assess and take into consideration the nature of relations within communities.** In particular, Mercy Corps should be aware of the role of political parties in the village. In some cases, the best way to deal with the political parties may be to involve representatives from each party together, while in other cases the best strategy may be to not bring up the issue at all. In all cases, Mercy Corps should ensure that community projects are undertaken in a nonpartisan way.

### **B. Influence and Support at the Municipal Level**

#### **1. Responsibility**

While many of the Mercy Corps trainings address community participation, the notion of civic responsibility and duty must be further reinforced. Mercy Corps should consider reinforcing this issue through its training sessions, which are held in local communities, but also attended by Municipal authorities. Training sessions should stress the link between fulfillment of civic responsibilities and community benefits, as well as an awareness of both the responsibilities and limits of Municipal government. Most importantly, communities should understand their role in holding government officials accountable.

#### **2. Municipal Support**

**Mercy Corps should encourage Municipal governments to adopt the transparent and participatory processes used with the MISI-1 project for all their work with communities, including:**

- Adopting specific selection criteria for Municipal support to communities
- Informing and involving communities throughout all stages of projects
- Setting obtainable timelines and realistic expectations for project implementation
- Consulting with minority communities on a regular basis, and soliciting their input in the drafting of Municipal government action plans.

Municipalities lack standard guidelines for choosing which communities should receive support and communities were often suspicious of the decision process. In contrast, CWGs praised the transparent MISI-1 project selection criteria. **Mercy Corps should work with Municipalities to develop a standard set of criteria for choosing priority infrastructure projects and involve communities in the selection process.** Criteria should include:

1. Levels of community participation based on assessments of a community's ability to contribute
2. Number of beneficiaries
3. Degree of need for the project
4. Community involvement in monitoring and maintaining the project

### **3. Publicize Successes**

In less engaged communities, many community members were unaware of the Municipal government's support for MISI projects. Mercy Corps and the Municipal government should work together to publicize and highlight the work the Municipal government is doing in support of communities. Communities that perceive their Municipal government to be responsive will see a reason for becoming and remaining engaged.

### **4. Institutionalize Connections between Communities and Municipalities**

The use of party lists is problematic as some communities lack any form of representation at the Municipal level, while others have numerous representatives. Furthermore, the lack of individual names on the ballot denies citizens of one of the most basic accountability mechanisms in democratic countries by not providing a way to vote individuals out of office. Many of the connections between communities and Municipalities are informal, and many communities lack information for how to get involved. **Accordingly, Mercy Corps and the Municipal government should explore institutionalizing contacts by:**

1. Reviving the old system of "bashkesi locale/ mesna zajednica", in which there is a representative at the Municipality for every cluster of four or five villages. This representative would then hold regular meetings with the village leaders of each village in the "bashkesi locale/ mesna zajednica".
2. Holding monthly meetings at the Municipality with all village representatives or leaders. This was done on a smaller scale with all MISI-1 communities, and communities appreciated the regular access.
3. Policies and opportunities for community involvement at the Municipality should be widely publicized. For example, many communities were unaware that their Municipality held regular open meetings and were uninformed about town hall meetings.
4. Organizing regular open meetings in communities with Municipal officials.

**The Municipalities should do a better job of informing citizens about public and open meetings, as well as other ways of contacting the Municipality.** Municipalities should fully utilize all available media including newspaper and radio, as well as extending invitations to every village. Village leaders should ensure that they extend invitations they receive to the rest of the community. Village leaders may want to consider holding an open meeting in the village to decide on priorities to address at the Municipal open meeting. Village leaders should also consider arranging transport for other villagers who may want to attend. The Municipality should explore holding smaller open meetings in each cluster of villages.

### **5. Expand the role of Municipal Community Officers**

**Mercy Corps should encourage the MCOs to facilitate connections between minority communities and the Municipality rather than act as the sole intermediary.** The MCO can help facilitate these connections by holding meetings within the village and clearly explaining the role of the MCO and alternative ways of contacting the Municipality. Mercy Corps' monthly project meetings played an

important role in establishing an alternate avenue for minority representatives at the Municipality, but this did not seem to spread beyond the community working group.

## **6. Promote Greater Community Involvement**

**Mercy Corps should work to promote community involvement beyond the community working group.** Community working groups were involved in every stage of the project from initial selection of projects to final implementation. However, involvement among the larger community varied, and in many cases awareness was low amongst individuals not directly involved with MISI-1. Focus groups of individuals not in the community working group revealed a much lower level of awareness of the project and lower levels of engagement both within the community and with the Municipality. In organized communities, men were generally aware of some of the details regarding the project, but awareness among women and youth was low. In order to increase engagement among the community as a whole, more attention should be paid to involving the wider community throughout the MISI-1 implementation process by:

1. Prioritizing mobilization for the initial open meeting, including posters in all public places, and use of community leaders as liaisons.
2. Mandating working group members to update community on progress throughout.
3. Invite community members to relevant training sessions, particularly the explanation of the functioning of the Municipal government.
4. Encouraging Municipal officials to stay after training sessions to hold open meetings.
5. Involving media in publicizing successes.
6. Prioritizing involvement of women. Encourage women members of the CWG to serve as liaisons for other women by keeping them informed and soliciting their input.
7. Prioritizing involvement of youth. Have a youth representative serve on the CWG and serve as a liaison for other youth by keeping them informed and soliciting their input.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

As this evaluation has made clear, MISI-1's effects extend beyond infrastructure projects to include crucial, but less tangible, benefits related to improving community and Municipal engagement. Community members and Municipal officials who were directly involved with the MISI-1 project are on the whole highly motivated and engaged and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Mercy Corps helped establish and/or strengthen an important link between community working groups and Municipal steering committees. While engaged communities will likely possess the initiative and organized leadership structures to exploit this strengthened link for their advantage in the future, it is unlikely that unengaged communities will be able to do so. Accordingly, Mercy Corps should work to institutionalize these critical channels.

Both communities and Municipalities greatly appreciated the emphasis Mercy Corps placed on transparency and participation throughout the implementation of the project. Mercy Corps should capitalize on the widespread community and Municipal support of MISI procedures by encouraging Municipalities and communities to institutionalize transparent and participatory approaches for all of their initiatives.

Similarly, while Mercy Corps was tremendously successful in ensuring that community working groups had minority and female representation, within the greater community women and youth

were notably less involved and aware. Mercy Corps should use the representative nature of community working groups to promote greater involvement amongst the larger community.

The challenge for Mercy Corps going forward will be to ensure that MISI's remarkable achievements become more deeply rooted. MISI's core approach has proven itself to be effective; the remaining challenge is to widen and institutionalize the approach to ensure the benefits extend beyond those directly involved.



## **ANNEX A: MISI STAFF DEFINITION OF AN “ENGAGED COMMUNITY”**

- Why should Municipal Government engage Communities? Team responses: They have a responsibility to communities, it is the law, they are the responsible authorities, they were elected by the community, etc.
- Why/ how should communities be engaged with Local Government? Team Responses: Communities should participate in public meetings; they should actively work to find out about budgets; they should find out about assembly meetings and attend meetings; they should independently set up meetings with local government and push the Municipality for results; and because it is their right.
- What does an engaged community look like? Team responses: They have received tangible benefits from local government, such as infrastructure; often times they themselves as a community will have contributed (i.e. financially or through labor) to these projects; they actively advocate their needs to the Municipality; they are more informed about what is going on in the Municipality (i.e. budgets, meetings); they feel comfortable approaching Municipal government.
- Is the process of engagement different for majority as opposed to minority communities? Team responses: Yes, for minority communities the local government may need to actively encourage minority communities to become involved.
- How can we tell if a community as a whole is truly engaged, or if they simply have a strong, well-connected leader? Team responses: In communities where the leader is strong, but the community as a whole is not truly engaged, funding from the Municipality may only benefit the leader and/ or his neighborhood an example of this might be infrastructure projects which only cover a portion of a village; truly engaged communities often have a long history of volunteerism or community mobilization to improve their own community; truly engaged communities do not have inter-clan or inter-neighborhood conflicts.

## **ANNEX B: COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS SITES**

### **1. Most Engaged Municipalities**

#### **Rahovec/Orahovac**

- Most engaged communities: Malesi e vogel/Radoste (Albanian Kosovar), Krushe e Madhe/Velika Krusa (Albanian Kosovar)
- Least engaged communities: Lagje Serbe/Serb Mahalla (Serbian Kosvar), Zatriq/Zatric (Albanian Kosovar)

#### **Lipjan/Lipljane**

- Most engaged communities: Rubovc/Rubovac (Multi-ethnic community of Albanian Kosovar and Serbian Kosovar), Llugagji/Ljugadji (Albanian Kosovar)
- Least engaged communities: Medvec (Multi-ethnic community of Albanian Kosovar and Ashkalie Kosovar), Baice/Baice (Albanian Kosovar)

### **2. Least engaged Municipalities**

#### **Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje**

- Most engaged communities: Henc/Ence (Albanian Kosovar), Miradi e Ulet/Donje Dobrevo (Albanian Kosovar)
- Least engaged communities: Livragone/Vragolija (Albanian Kosovar), Pomozotin (Albanian Kosovar)

#### **Obiliq/Obilic**

- Most engaged communities: Millosheve/Miloševo (Albanian Kosovar), Raskove/Raskove (Albanian Kosovar)
- Least engaged communities: Bajmovc/Babin Most (Multi-ethnic community of Albanian Kosovar and Serbian Kosovar), Dardhishte (Albanian Kosovar)

## **ANNEX C: MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES INTERVIEWED**

Rahovec/Orahovac Municipal officials interviewed:

Ibrahim Kryeziu - Chief Executive Officer

Qamil Cena- Dept. Plan/Economy,

Faredin Shehu- Dept. of Sport, Culture and Youth

Teuta Jaha - Dept. of Urbanism

Kolasinac Slavisa - Municipal Officer for Return

Lipjan/Lipljan Municipal officials interviewed:

Xhevat Olluri - Municipal President,

Xhelil Murati - Dept. of Urbanism

Obiliq/Obilic Municipal officials interviewed:

Ismet Hashani - Municipal President

Kemajl Hashani - Dept. of Urbanism

Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje Municipal officials interviewed:

Abdullah Prebreza - Dept. of Urbanism.

Jakup Dumani - Dept. of Economy/Development

## ANNEX D: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK

### Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI) Evaluation Kosovo

**1. Overall goal:** The MISI Program has recently received a twenty-one month cost extension, which moves its end date from July 31, 2005 to December 31, 2007. With a view to lessons learned which could be incorporated into program undertaken during the extension period, Mercy Corps Kosovo wishes to evaluate the impact MISI may have had in improving relations between local government authorities and majority and minority communities and in stimulating residents to become more pro-active in local government.

**2. Background:** In October 2003 Mercy Corps began implementing the USAID-funded program: *Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI)*. The overall goal of MISI is to enable municipalities to take a leading role in improving conditions for return and reintegration. During MISI implementation particular focus is being placed on strengthening communication links between municipal officials and leaders of the minority and majority communities in nine Municipalities, as well as addressing priority municipal and community non-infrastructure and infrastructure barriers to returns and reintegration. Throughout MISI implementation these nine municipalities are working closely with the communities they represent and will undertake initiatives to address barriers to return and reintegration. In addition the MISI process relies on ensuring that local government understands returnees are in fact citizens of their Municipality and therefore should be treated as such. With this view comes the need for local government to engage with minority residents and in turn minority residents must also use these newly formed connections to lobby local government regarding needs.

Although MISI is now completing its original cooperative agreement with USAID, a cost extension has been approved. With the opportunity to extend this program Mercy Corps Kosovo believes it is an appropriate time to evaluate one of the key aims of the MISI (improved communication between local authorities and communities) in order to gauge program impact to date, refine the program approach, and look at creative methods of institutionalizing contact between the two parties. Therefore the evaluation will look specifically at the quality of, and ongoing impact of, activities undertaken to improve communication between local authorities and local constituents. The evaluation will focus on capturing any changes in behaviors and practices of communities (both ethnic minority and majority communities) in how they relate to local government, and vice versa.

**3. Purpose of the Evaluation:** The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the implementation of the MISI program to date, paying special attention to how well the particular approaches adopted by Mercy Corps led to the creation and/ or strengthening of relationships between local communities and local government (Municipal level) and the promotion of increased civic activism. Mercy Corps is specifically interested in understanding which types of activities/interventions had the greatest impact on improving local government/ community relations and interaction. Additionally Mercy Corps is interested in comparing the different impact in ethnic majority versus ethnic minority communities in order to better understand the value of MISI interventions in communities of different ethnic compositions.

As noted above rather than evaluating all programmatic aspects of MISI, this evaluation will instead focus exclusively on the relations that were created through MISI activities between local communities and government. Potential topics of special interest for this evaluation will include:

1. Methods used by the Municipality to communicate policies and decisions to local communities, and the effectiveness of these methods in disseminating information.
2. Channels used by local communities to relay needs and concerns to the local government, and the level of effectiveness and perceived obstacles related to these channels.

3. Perceived responsiveness by communities regarding Municipal involvement in, and addressing of, local needs.
4. The level of awareness of local communities regarding avenues for citizen participation in local government.
5. The level of power that the communities believe they have to hold their Municipality accountable, including direct examples of how communities have utilized this power.

#### **4. Scope and Methodology**

The evaluation will be led by a qualified external evaluator, available from the Mercy Corps intern program. The evaluation will take place over 6 weeks, all of which will be spent in Kosovo. The evaluation will be supported by MISI senior staff, including the Program Director, Deputy Program Director and Municipal and Community Outreach Manager. A driver and a MISI outreach officer (who will also act as a translator) will be available to work on the evaluation. The evaluation should be as participatory as possible so that MISI staff have the opportunity to develop their own M&E skills, and will be better able to apply lessons learned to future programming.

The methodology will include document review and interviews and/or Focus Group Discussions with Mercy Corps staff, Municipal authorities and community residents. During the evaluation the first step will be the creation of the appropriate tools, namely focus group questions and interview questions to be used with Municipal authorities and communities. This step will be completed in cooperation with MISI senior staff.

Once the tools are completed the evaluator will then work with MISI staff to select target communities for undertaking focus groups in each of the nine Municipalities. During this step it is suggested to randomly select communities involved in MISI, as well as communities not involved in MISI. This will present control groups from each Municipality, whose answers can be compared to those of the MISI communities surveyed.

During implementation of the evaluation, the focus and tools used might change somewhat in order to create a more cohesive, useful final report. The evaluator should consult with Mercy Corps over all recommended changes.

#### **Timeframe and logistics**

Assuming an evaluator can be in Kosovo by June 1, the following dates will apply:

July 9, 2005- Arrival in Prishtine/ Pristina

June 11- Briefing with MISI staff about the program and work completed to date (the evaluator will have already received and reviewed key MISI documents including the original project proposal, some quarterly reports and the mid-term evaluation).

July 12-14 Review and revision of indicators (possibly proxy indicators) for the purposes of this evaluation, and evaluation tools (i.e. focus group questions, surveys, etc.) already created by MISI staff. Creation of a workplan outlining schedule for field visits and report writing, and selection of target communities and Municipal officials.

July 15- August 4- Undertake field visits to communities (both ethnic majority and minority sites) and Municipalities to discuss program implementation and impact with program beneficiaries, and local municipal officials.

August 5-11- Analyze results of all field visits and prepare first report draft.

August 12- First draft of report to MISI team and PDX

August 16- Comments back from MISI team and PDX

August 17-19- Revise draft and send out final version

July 14- Depart Prishtine/ Pristina

August 20- Depart Prishtine/ Pristina

August 22-26- MISI team translates evaluation report and sends to local Municipal authorities and a limited number of community leaders for feedback.

August 22-26- Evaluation report sent to USAID MISI CTO, and wider Mercy Corps staff (i.e. John Westerman, Anna Young, Dayna Brown, etc.) for feedback.

August 29- September 2- Feedback incorporated and report finalized.

September 5-9- Final report translated and disseminated

### **The Evaluation Report**

The final evaluation should consist of:

- Executive summary and main findings (not to exceed three pages),
  - Main text, (not to exceed 30 pages) to include index, evaluation methodology, commentary and analysis.
- The document must include recommendations (highlighting lessons learned) for future MISI programming as related to interactions between communities and local government. The recommendations should specifically highlight methods of institutionalizing contact between communities and local government, paying special attention to minority communities.
- Appendices, to include evaluation SOW, list of persons interviewed and documents reviewed, and copies of tools used.

Mercy Corps staff, the donor USAID, and local Municipal authorities will be the primary users of the evaluation results. This user focus should be emphasized in all interactions with key informants.

The report should feature lessons learned with an emphasis on problem solving. Descriptions of achievements and best practices also form the key outputs.

### **Existing Information Sources**

Internal and external documentation

- MISI proposal(s) and quarterly reports
- MISI Internal Mid-term Evaluation

Key informants

- MISI program staff
- Community members
- Municipal authorities
- Representatives of USAID/ Kosovo
- Mercy Corps Kosovo management