



**USAID | SERBIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# USAID ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS 2001 - PRESENT



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*On the cover: USAID assistance programs have provided Serbian entrepreneurs like Ajla Skrijelj with the skills and equipment to start their own businesses.*

Through the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action project  
USAID helped revitalize communities throughout Serbia.



USAID donated computer equipment and furniture to seven schools in municipalities most affected by the migrant crisis—helping the communities to accommodate migrant children while still meeting the needs of their own children. School Sremski front in Sot, Šid.



USAID helped 12 small shoe companies from the south and south-west of Serbia unite to form a cluster. Working together, these former competitors now collectively take on larger orders from some of the world's top designers.



An election bus that toured Serbia helped inform citizens about different election systems and their effects on everyday life.



# USAID ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTS 2001-PRESENT

**2001-2018: \$786 million**

Since 2001, USAID has invested over \$786 million to support Serbia's economic and democratic development. This is part of the \$1 billion in total assistance from the Government of the United States. In partnership with Serbia's Government, the private sector and civil society, USAID's programs help make Serbia's economy more competitive; strengthen the rule of law; bolster government operations; improve the regulatory environment for media; and combat corruption.

# COMPLETED PROGRAMS - LASTING RESULTS

Since 2001, USAID has partnered with Serbian government and non-governmental organizations to strengthen the rule of law, improve the business environment, make Serbia's economy stronger, and increase good governance.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

For more than a decade, USAID worked with Serbian counterparts to form the building blocks for an open and transparent market economy that will move Serbia closer to EU integration and make Serbia an attractive destination for investments. USAID assistance has helped Serbia modernize laws and regulations that fueled economic growth, increased Serbia's competitiveness and made it easier for businesses to operate and prosper in Serbia.

**BANKING AND CAPITAL MARKETS:** USAID helped Serbia modernize its banking, insurance, investment funds and pension funds in Serbia, as well as introduce value-added tax (VAT) and modern wholesale and retail payment systems.

**REGULATORY REFORMS:** USAID has helped Serbia adopt and implement regulations that enabled businesses to operate and prosper. Working with the Government of Serbia, the private sector and civil society, USAID supported reforms that made obtaining construction permits and complying with business inspections easier and more transparent.

**Construction reforms** have generated increased construction activity and construction-related jobs and according to the World Bank's 2018 Doing Business Report, made Serbia the tenth best country in the world for ease of obtaining a con-



*USAID supported the development and implementation of reforms to Serbia's construction permitting regime.*

struction permit. (Prior to USAID's assistance on construction reform, Serbia was ranked 186th).

**Inspection reforms** have standardized inspection practices and provided for greater oversight of inspectors; in addition, provisions of the law related to inspections of unregistered businesses led to a rapid increase in the number of officially registered businesses—moving companies out of the shadow economy, where a lack of regulatory enforcement had opened a myriad of opportunities for corruption among businesses as well as regulators. Both reforms have decreased opportunities for corruption.

**A new Labor Law** adopted in 2014 with support from USAID has made the labor market more flexible and Serbia more attractive for foreign direct investments.



*To help make business inspections more transparent and less burdensome, USAID facilitated "Open Days" between inspectors and businesses that helped businesses comply with new regulations.*

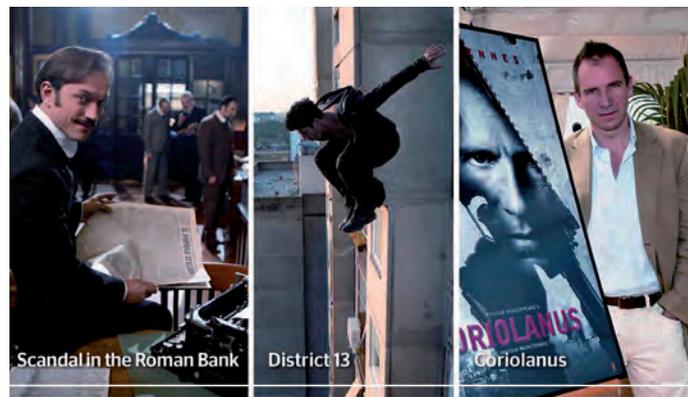
**ACCESS TO FINANCE:** The USAID-assisted Opportunity Bank of Serbia has provided more than €514 million in loans to micro-enterprises, small agricultural producers, and others who cannot access loans elsewhere. The loans have helped create 39,000 new jobs and sustained over 200,000 jobs.



*With the help of a microfinance loan from USAID's partner Opportunity Bank, Siniša Milinković from Rušanj was able to repair his mobile beekeeping bus.*

**ATTRACTING INVESTMENTS:** USAID worked with municipalities throughout Serbia to attract foreign investments and create jobs. USAID established 32 Local Economic Development Offices that fostered local economic development, and nine Business Improvement Districts that increased business volume in central pedestrian zones in some of Serbia's largest towns.

**COMPETITIVENESS:** Between 2007-2011, USAID assisted firms in high-potential sectors like renewable energy, information and communication technology, construction services, and film, leading to more than \$250 million in sales and exports. USAID supported training for 1,800 people in marketing, trade show participation and international standards.



*USAID worked with Serbian film producers to form the Serbian Film Commission. The commission attracts foreign productions and helped Serbia to regain its status as an international filming destination.*

**AGRIBUSINESS:** The USAID Agribusiness project, which operated from 2007 to 2012, helped hundreds of firms—including many run by women and young entrepreneurs—prepare for trade fairs and enter new markets, resulting in the sale of over \$120 million worth of Serbian food products, primarily for export to regional markets. The success of these firms resulted in the creation of more than 7,000 new jobs.



*With USAID assistance, Serbian agribusinesses, such as this maker of ajvar, participated in international trade shows—increasing their access to new markets.*



USAID helps Serbian firms introduce international quality standards and increase sales. Cerak, Vranje.



Svetlana Mitrović is one of several dozen unemployed women who were able to find a job after passing courses at the USAID-supported Womens Education Center.

**PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN VULNERABLE AREAS:** USAID helped businesses and entrepreneurs in south and southwest Serbia develop, grow and enter new domestic and foreign markets. USAID support to 184 firms between 2013-2018, resulted in the creation of 487 full-time jobs and 159 part-time jobs. Seventy-one youth- and women-owned SMEs received grants to purchase more than \$761,000 of equipment—helping them to grow and become more competitive. Previous support to firms in south and south-west Serbia between 2006-2013 helped partner firms to enter new domestic and foreign markets, which resulted in the creation of 400 new jobs and generated \$13.8 million in sales from trade fairs.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** In partnership with the private company Insert, Ltd., and the Municipality of Ruma, USAID established, equipped and staffed a *Women's Education Center* (WEC) in Ruma in 2015. WEC helps unemployed women acquire new skills in demand by the private sector. Dozens of women have been able to obtain employment based on their improved skillsets.

**YOUTH TECHNOLOGY STARTUPS:** USAID has helped to establish IT and innovation centers in Niš, Novi Sad, and Belgrade. For instance, in 2014 it helped found the ICT Hub in Belgrade. The ICT Hub helps young, highly-skilled individuals and talented software developers grow as technology entrepreneurs and project managers. The Hub has helped more than 40 startups since its inception.



USAID helped Serbian footwear manufacturers increase production and create new jobs. Stefi Komerc, Vranje.

Uroš Mijalković is one of many successful technology entrepreneurs whose gaming application got off the ground with support from the ICT Hub, which was co-founded by USAID.



# COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE:



USAID reconstructed and renovated schools across Serbia. School in Bestovac, near Leskovac, Serbia.

**REVITALIZATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES:** In the early years of its assistance (2001-2007), USAID financed more than 5,000 projects that improved infrastructure, renovated schools, health clinics and community centers, and supported priorities identified by local communities.

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:** USAID helped 62 municipalities achieve Enhanced Disaster Resilient Status, trained 1,400 emergency workers from 120 municipalities, and supported the passage of a new Law on Emergency Situations (2009), the first in 20 years.

**RESPONSIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:** U.S. assistance introduced e-governance solutions in 83 municipalities and established 32 Citizen Assistance Centers across Serbia—making it simpler for Serbians to complete tasks such as changing their official residences or registering marriages and births.



USAID worked with local governments to establish 32 Citizen Assistance Centers throughout Serbia, providing citizens with improved government services. Citizen Assistance Center in Zrenjanin.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** USAID has also helped communities respond in time of crisis. For example, USAID provided more than \$2 million in assistance to Serbia to respond and recover from the 2014 floods. USAID also provided \$2 million to Serbian communities affected by the migrant crisis. This assistance helped municipalities improve social and health services — positioning them to respond to the crisis and improve services to all their citizens. Support included a new reservoir in Preševo that helps ensure a reliable source of potable water to its residents; a new emergency care center at Bosilegrad's health clinic; medical equipment and public kitchen in Subotica; new school facilities in Kikinda, as well as other upgrades.



USAID support for infrastructure renovation and donations of equipment — such as this liquid waste cleaning truck for the city of Šid — helped communities cope with the effects of the migrant crisis.



*The migrant crisis put unforeseen demands on Serbian communities' infrastructure and services. USAID worked with these communities to enable them to cope with the crisis and to welcome migrant children, such as these children.*

**RECONSTRUCTION OF BELGRADE YOUTH CENTER:** In 2007 the Belgrade Youth Center received \$1.2 million in U.S. assistance for the reconstruction of the concert hall, its facade and roof/summer terrace – enabling the Youth Center to provide cultural offerings to Serbia's youth.



*The U.S. supported renovation of the Belgrade Youth Center's concert hall has provided space for cultural events such as the Belgrade Jazz festival.*

## RULE OF LAW:

For more than a decade, USAID has worked to improve access to justice, case management and court efficiency. These improvements have resulted in cases being tried more quickly and efficiently, which in turn has fostered greater trust in Serbian justice institutions among citizens, businesses and investors.

**COMMERCIAL COURTS:** Between 2004 and 2008 USAID helped connect commercial courts into one computer network and helped cut case backlog. A case management system in all 16 courts and High Commercial Court enhanced efficiency and transparency. The system was later rolled out to all basic and high courts by the Ministry of Justice.



*USAID helped the Supreme Commercial Court in Belgrade introduce a case management system that allows it to track the work of all first grade courts.*

**SUPREME COURT OF CASSATION:** From 2015-2017 USAID helped the Supreme Court of Cassation introduce centralized statistics within all basic courts on case backlogs, case duration, and court performance—supporting efforts to reduce backlogs and shorten case duration.



*Vršac Basic Court's former Acting President analyzes case backlog reduction results. Ten USAID partner courts reduced their combined backlog by more than 50 percent.*

**BASIC COURTS:** Between 2009-2014 USAID helped reduce case backlogs by more than 50 percent and improved case-processing efficiency in 10 partner courts.

**HIGH COURT COUNCIL:** The USAID-developed software used in all courts enables data collection on resources and finances. Using these tools, the High Court Council was able to raise the amount allocated to the courts in 2014 from 300 million to approximately 1.3 billion dinars.

**MISDEMANOURT COURTS:** USAID assistance has helped renovate misdemeanor courts throughout Serbia and improved court operations through case management systems and elec-



*The USAID-funded renovation of the Belgrade Misdemeanor Court streamlined court operations, improved case management, and made it easier for citizens to pursue justice.*

tronic registries. This has generated more than 100 million euros for Serbia's budget through the collection of court costs and fines and the reduction of problematic case backlogs by up to 80 percent in some courts. Support to the misdemeanor courts has raised voluntary compliance with fines from 30 percent to more than 70 percent.

**JUDICIAL TRAINING:** USAID helped establish the Judicial Training Academy in Belgrade and regional offices in Novi Sad and Kragujevac where all Serbian judges are trained. USAID helped the Judicial academy develop an electronic learning platform for the judiciary (e-Academy). Judicial education directly impacts the predictability, efficiency and fairness of the judiciary, on which citizens depend.

**PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS:** USAID helped Serbia adopt and implement one of the first Whistleblower Protection Laws in the region, making it easier and safer to report corruption and fraud. As part of the support, USAID set up a hotline by which people can safely report corruption and abuse of public resources. It trained more than 1,200 judges and judicial staff on how to adjudicate whistleblowing cases. The law has been shown to work. As of June 2015, four final decisions have been made in favor of whistleblowers—often providing financial compensation and restoring their positions. More than 25 whistleblowers have been provided temporary protections as their cases have moved forward within the judicial system.



*USAID helped develop and implement Serbia's Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers. Marija Beretka won a whistleblowing case against her employer in 2017.*

# STRENGTHENED CIVIL SOCIETY:

Since 2001, USAID provided nearly \$100 million to build long-term democratic and social reforms by strengthening the capacity of grassroots and national-level civil society organizations (CSOs) across Serbia to advocate for issues of importance to Serbian citizens.

**CAPACITY BUILDING:** Between 2006 and 2013 USAID supported over 230 CSOs throughout Serbia and trained more than 1,500 civic activists and leaders from 258 CSOs in advocacy techniques and citizen engagement. USAID's support led to the establishment of the National Alliance for Local Economic Development in 2006. NALED has encouraged businesses, entrepreneurs and government to embrace reforms that have improved the ease of doing business in Serbia. USAID and NALED designed and introduced the Business Friendly Certification (BFC) process that serves as a seal of quality for investors coming to Serbia; the BFC process has now been adopted as a successful model by other countries in the region including Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro and Croatia. USAID supported the founding of the Center for Free Elections



*The Mayors of five municipalities certified as business friendly proudly hold their certificates. Belgrade, June 2010.*

and Democracy (CeSID) and helped it develop the skills necessary to play a constructive oversight role in election monitoring in Serbia and in the region.

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:** USAID helped establish the Responsible Business Forum, gathering members from leading companies to encourage increased social responsibility and philanthropy. USAID also helped establish the VIRTUS Corporate Philanthropy Excellence Award to recognize outstanding philanthropic contributions of socially responsible businesses and individuals.



*USAID provided youth with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to work and play together, creating socially inclusive communities.*

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:** USAID supported persons with disabilities (PWDs), helping them connect with members of parliament so their concerns are taken into consideration when creating laws and policies. Amendments to the Serbian Criminal Code recommended by USAID improved the standing of PWDs by defining a more severe penalty for sexual abuse of PWDs (that is equal to the penalty for the same crime committed against non-disabled persons). Also, USAID helped push for changes to the Law on Protection of Discrimination of PWDs that enabled PWDs with guide dogs to gain access to public spaces, including polling places. USAID also helped connect more than 1,700 youths with and without intellectual disabilities through sports fostering inclusive societies.

## OTHER:



USAID-sponsored trainings for journalists helped increase professional journalism in Serbia.

**MEDIA:** USAID assisted the development of independent media as successful commercial businesses. USAID funded sources of serious news and investigative reporting, including the BETA news agency and the former B92 TV, radio stations, internet news. Between 2001-2012 nearly 1,500 journalists and other media professionals received training and more than 250 media outlets received USAID assistance.



USAID and the Divac Foundation helped youth from 97 local communities implement 381 youth-led initiatives, fostering a new generation of young leaders.

**YOUTH:** Several thousand youths have been trained in entrepreneurship by USAID; hundreds have found jobs or launched new businesses. Also, USAID supported the Serbian Ministry of Youth during the adoption of a National Youth Strategy and in establishing more than 70 youth offices around the country. Some 31 Youth Offices have adopted Youth Entrepreneurship Action Plans benefitting 12,580 youths. More than 850 students from south Serbia and Sandžak have been given internships to develop job skills. USAID supported organizations that linked youth and local governments to promote youth-led community development solutions impacting more than 130,000 members of 97 local communities.



Victoria Šljuka is one of nearly 56,000 women who received a micro loan from Opportunity Bank Serbia (OBS), which was established with USAID support in 2007.

**WOMEN:** Working with civil society, USAID helped establish the Women Leadership Academy that between 2015-2017 provided Leadership training for 130 emerging women leaders of whom 40 percent were elected for the first time or gained higher political office or higher positions within their party after participating. In partnership with the Development Agency of Serbia, between 2013-2018, USAID Serbia helped 48 women from south and southwest Serbia start their own business and provided grants for them to purchase equipment. USAID helped establish Opportunity Bank Serbia in 2007 that provides micro lending to clients that cannot ordinarily access financial services from traditional banks. By mid-2018 the bank provided close to 56,000 loans to women entrepreneurs, helping women become key drivers of economic growth in their communities.





*Serbian youth participate in a national entrepreneurship competition supported by USAID.*



*USAID partnered with the Food Technology Park in Leskovac to establish a research and development plant that helps food processors develop new and improved products.*



*USAID built new water reservoirs in Preševo and Tutin that provide a reliable quantity of potable water to residents.*



*USAID supported the renovation of the kindergarten in Basaid, Kikinda, to provide a safe environment for migrant and local children to play and learn together.*



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