Project – Building Secure Communities in the Western Balkans

Project Name: Building Secure Communities in the Western Balkans

Geographical Focus: Areas of multi-ethnic diversity in Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Main Beneficiaries: Local communities

Project Overview

Community security is essential for minimising both tension and mistrust at the local level, particularly in areas of multi-ethnic diversity throughout the Western Balkans. Accordingly, this project is designed to create conditions that improve community security by mobilizing local communities to identify and assess security problems, produce in-depth action plans to address such problems and initiate practical activities aimed at improving security at the community level. In doing so, this project aims to stimulate civic activism, volunteerism, public communication and corporate social responsibility, whilst simultaneously improving co-operation and communication between local communities, municipal governments and policing structures.

1) Background and Justification

Community insecurity, whether real or perceived, is a major source of tension and mistrust between various ethnic groups throughout the Western Balkans. Fears of crime, violence, intimidation, disorder or anti-social behaviour serve to antagonise intra- and inter-ethnic relations by undermining and damaging the very fabric of social life. Police and other security providers are, however, often under-resourced and cannot respond effectively, whilst local citizens feel powerless with respect to their security concerns. Effectively addressing the issue of security, therefore, requires a partnership-driven approach between those local communities afflicted by insecurity and those responsible for providing public security. This project aims to tackle a range of 'soft' security problems, such as dangerous traffic systems, pollution, petty crime, poor police-community relations and inter-ethnic tensions, by mobilizing inputs from local communities, voluntary groups, municipal governments, businesses and donors.

By encouraging members of the local community to work together to identify, discuss and develop solutions to their security concerns through a series of practical, affordable and realistic initiatives, this project will enhance the capacity of local communities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and municipal governments in the Western Balkans to work in partnerships to provide effective security

to their constituencies, as well as to help communities better understand their security problems and work closely with institutions to address them. This project will simultaneously improve the accountability and responsiveness of municipal governments and the security forces, strengthen civil society, support conflict prevention and improve the general security situation in the Western Balkans.

A further objective of this project is to promote civic activism and volunteerism at the local level by stimulating community-led initiatives. It also aims to promote the involvement of local businesses in supporting regeneration activities, either through direct financial or technical assistance, or through volunteerism. As such, this project will provide an ideal platform for promoting the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) amongst small and medium enterprises in the Western Balkans. It is also hoped that the community security initiatives stimulated by this project will prompt other neighbouring municipalities and communities to undertake similar activities, whilst complementing efforts to promote community-based policing and the notion of municipal safety more broadly.

2) Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to enhance the capacity of local communities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and municipal governments in the Western Balkans to work in partnerships to provide effective security to their constituencies and to help communities better understand their security problems and work closely with institutions and businesses to address them.

Other objectives of this project include:
- to ensure that local communities and CSOs are increasingly proactive with respect to dealing with their security concerns;
- to foster regular and open co-operation and communication between local communities, municipal governments and police structures, particularly through informal channels of communication;
- to promote civic activism, volunteerism and corporate social responsibility through community-driven initiatives;
- to strengthen the accountability of municipal governments and other local institutions, particularly the police service, to the communities that they serve;
- to improve the responsiveness of municipal institutions to local communities, thereby ensuring the delivery of public services in line with local needs;
- to promote a positive understanding about the role and purpose of both CSOs and an

active civil society in the Western Balkans.

3) Activities

This project would include the following specific activities, implemented over the course of 12-18 months in order to ensure both long-term sustainability and replication elsewhere in the region:

a) Selection of Participating Local Communities

b) Building Widespread Local Support for the Project

c) Comprehensive Community Assessment of Security Problems

d) Joint Planning to Address Identified Security Problems

e) Developing Community Security Plans

f) Implementation of Security-Related Activities

g) Promotion of Successes and Exchange of Best Practice