



**USAID**  
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**USAID Kosovo EMPOWER Private Sector  
Newsletter No. 5, August 2015**

## EMPOWER THROUGH JOB CREATION!

### FAST FACTS

#### Supporting Diverse Business Ideas

In July 2015, USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector signed a total of **7** grant agreements, expected to create at least **177** new jobs. **2** of these companies operate in the north of Kosovo.

The business ideas these grants support are diverse:

- 4** wood processing companies
- 1** fashion designer
- 1** wet wipes producer
- 1** outdoor tourism provider

Wet-wipe producer **Ultra Cosmetics**, casual suits for men by **Yilka Brada**, and via-ferrata style climbing sets for **Outdoor In** are our newest beneficiaries.

### Increasing Efficiency, Productivity and Number of Jobs in the Wood Processing Sector

In July 2015, through EMPOWER Private Sector grant scheme, USAID provided assistance to four wood processing companies. Expected results are varied: new furniture products to be produced, existing production efficiency to be increased, production capacities to be expanded to meet export demands, and new factory to be opened that will substitute imports. Most importantly, thanks to these four grants, over 140 new jobs in this sector are expected to be created.

The grant will enable "Marković" company in Zubin Potok, a family-owned business, to purchase a CNC machine, and construct a storage space. The company will expand the range of products by adding living room tables, chests and other items, all made of solid wood thus having a competitive edge in the market.

With the financial support received from EMPOWER Private Sector, "Elnor" will invest in additional equipment that will increase efficiency and productivity of chairs, tables and kitchens, which in turn will increase competitiveness in the export markets.

"Shehu" is another family-owned business looking to construct a new factory to increase production of wooden stair sets and high-tech entry doors for the Kosovo market and for exporting in neighboring countries. With the grant received, the company will acquire the needed advanced technology.

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*"As the project was nearing its completion, we needed financial support to install the new line." – grant beneficiary Ekrem Shahini, owner of Palma.*

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*New automated machine at PALMA increases production volume and efficiency*

Substituting imported furniture with its own production is the business idea of "Palma" that received support from USAID. The company will soon start with new production line of kitchens and bedrooms to be sold in Kosovo and Switzerland initially.

USAID's assistance to the Kosovo wood processing industry seeks to expand export and sales, develop new quality products, upgrade workforce skills and improve access to finance, with the ultimate goal of creating more jobs.



Over 50 apparel companies got together to establish the Kosovo Apparel and Marketing Association (KAMA)



Alicia English, David King and Jakob Modeer at second wood biomass fuel value chain meeting



USAID's Scott Cameron and David King observe the process of frame production



Meeting with women associations, NGOs and business owners in Gjilan/Gnjilane

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## Supporting the Success of Kosovo Companies

Kosovo apparel producers have the potential to serve a much larger market. To promote domestic and international business networking and the competitiveness of the Kosovo apparel companies, USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector supported the establishment of the Kosovo Apparel Marketing Association (KAMA), a non-profit body to build exposure and create new market opportunities.

## Let's Talk About Energy Efficiency!

EMPOWER Private Sector organized the second meeting of the wood biomass fuel value chain cluster group. This value chain begins in the forest with the raw material for pellet production, extends to pellet/briquette producers, proceeds to stove/boiler manufacturers, and finishes with installed use in households, businesses, and institutions. Participants consider it is necessary to undertake steps to coordinate forest management, product testing and certification, public awareness and promotion, and consumer / business finance for adoption of energy-saving technologies.

## Women in Focus

### Closing the Gender Gap: Young Woman Finds Her Vocation in Frame-Making

Milena Rašković is a 26 year-old woman from Zubin Potok. About two year ago, she was unemployed and looking for a job. One day, Milena heard a radio ad that "Marković" company had an opening. Although she had no prior experience or training in wood processing, she decided to apply. She got the job. Now, Milena is a skilled woodworker, especially when it comes to wooden frames.

Milena really enjoys what she does. "It is an interesting job. I can see the end result right away. At the beginning I was afraid but not now; now I have learned how to do a lot of things. This is a type of job I would suggest to all my friends."

New skills make women more employable and enable them to make a decent living for themselves and their families, and advance economic growth overall.

### Investing in Women Has Great Returns

USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector met with women's organizations and NGOs operating in the region of Gjilan/Gnjilane and surrounding municipalities. They shared stories and lessons learned from their work to improve the lives of women and girls. More training and employment opportunities and awareness raising on the role that women can play for the economic growth of the country are needed, they said.

**USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector, which started in July 2014, is a five-year project designed to stimulate large-scale job creation by elevating the competitiveness of Kosovo firms. The project is funded by USAID, and is implemented by Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd.**