



SUCCESS STORY

Town of Humor Has Lots to Smile About

Community Fund Galvanizes Local Giving to Transform Local Hospital



Photo: USAID

The renovated intensive care unit at the Gabrovo Hospital.

“Our latest common initiative showed that competitive and strong companies can pool their efforts and contribute to a common cause.”

--Dr. Borislav Paralchev, Director of the Gabrovo hospital

The people of the Central Bulgarian town of Gabrovo are famous for their sense of humor and their financial prudence. One of the jokes circulating around the so-called “Town of Humor” explains that all coffee spoons in Gabrovo have a hole in the middle to make sure that you don’t take too much sugar. Gabrovo people are not only frugal but among the most entrepreneurial in Bulgaria. A worthy cause can always make them loosen their purse-strings.

The Gabrovo Community Fund was established under the USAID Community Funds and Social Enterprises (CFSE) program in 2002. Thanks to the Fund’s fundraising efforts and the contributions of individuals, businesses, and institutions, the Gabrovo Hospital, which serves 100,000 people in 5 communities, was significantly refurbished in the last 4 years.

The Community Fund had its first successful fundraising campaign in September 2003. A total amount of more than \$35,000 was secured through contributions by the Gabrovo Municipality, local firms, and citizens and was matched by USAID. The money was used for a much-needed renovation of the intensive care unit.

In 2005, Community Fund Gabrovo helped establish a Center for Prevention of Women’s Cancer Diseases at the Gabrovo Hospital. NGOs working for cancer prevention, local businesses, and citizens contributed financially and in-kind. The center is the first of its kind in the Gabrovo region and serves more than 30,000 women from Gabrovo, Tryavna, Sevlievo, Dryanovo, and the surrounding villages.

The Community Fund’s latest initiative was the renovation of the hospital’s maternity wing. The window frames were replaced with PVC fittings, the newborn reception area was decorated with a colorful mural, and local companies donated baby cribs. The total contribution of the community amounted to more than \$96,000.

The Community Fund uses a simple but effective scheme: wide community discussions with participation of all stakeholders in order to identify urgent local problems, followed by identifying the most appropriate solutions and carrying out fundraising campaigns. The Fund’s successful projects in Gabrovo makes people believe that together they can make change happen and influence the quality of their lives.