



SUCCESS STORY

Alumni Return to Their School in Kosovo to Lead Change

Armed with U.S. degrees, former students are now part of staff



Fitim Selimi is using his advanced education to effect change at Prishtina High School, a private American school in Kosovo.

Photo by: USAID Transformational Leadership Program

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December 2016—Four graduates from Prishtina High School in Kosovo have earned Master’s Degrees in the United States—and returned to their high school to turn it around as staff members.

Fitim Selimi was working as a teaching assistant at Prishtina when he received his USAID scholarship in 2014. Fast-forward two years later. After graduating from Willamette University with a Master’s Degree in business administration, Selimi returned to the high school as business manager and human resource manager.

“I decided to rejoin Prishtina High School because I felt the need to give back to the education system in Kosovo,” said Selimi.

Three other alumni joined him. Marigona Morina, who graduated from the University of Arkansas with a Master’s in education, is teaching social sciences at the high school. Yll Sadikaj, who graduated from North Dakota University with a Master’s in electrical and computer engineering, is teaching computer science. And Arben Kacanollu, also a Willamette University MBA graduate, has been helping with marketing and strategy.

Through their collective efforts, this year’s student enrollment at the high school increased by 175 percent. Effective restructuring of the teams, a new marketing strategy, with a special focus on social media marketing helped reach these results.

Basically – prior to them taking over, Prishtina High School rarely did any marketing and mainly relied on word-of-mouth for recruiting new students.

“What sets Prishtina High School apart is that we have high-quality standards, rigorous teaching and a passion for education. Our facilities are top-notch as well,” said Selimi. “We want to bring a sense of teamwork, and encourage hands-on experiences.”

Selimi and the others are grateful for the opportunity to have studied at a U.S. university as part of USAID's [Transformational Leadership Program—Scholarships and Partnerships](#) program.

“My MBA in the U.S. was very hands-on and focused a lot on team building and leadership,” explained Selimi. “When combined together, these skills taught me how to manage change and run an organization.”

Four months into their work, improvements at the school are already visible. The alumni have approached local businesses to help prepare high schoolers for standardized testing and to introduce coding. They are also looking into expanding their catalogue of hands-on business trainings for students.

Selimi, Morina, Kacanolli and Sadikaj are among more than 260 Kosovo youth awarded a U.S.-based Master's Degree or professional certificate through USAID's Transformational Leadership Program—Scholarships and Partnerships program. The five-year activity, which started in 2014, strives to develop a cadre of leaders that will drive change in priority economic, political and social areas in Kosovo.