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## A Study Tour Sparks New Ideas

**Lawyer from Turkmenistan uses new knowledge to further tourism development**



Photo: British Embassy in Kazakhstan

***“My trip to the United States helped me understand the need to develop internal tourism and promote infrastructure development in Turkmenistan.”***

- Zalina Rossoshanskaya is the director of the Turkmenistan-based Bosfor Community Non-profit Center

A USAID-sponsored study tour enabled a community activist to create new services for businesses in support of tourism development in Turkmenistan.

Zalina Rossoshanskaya is the director of the Turkmenistan-based Bosfor Community Non-profit Center, a branch of the national Youth Union. Bosfor provides consulting services for businesses and educational programs that are focused on young people and other target populations.

In 2008, Rossoshanskaya participated in a study tour to the United States, organized by the USAID Community Connection Program. Together with eight other representatives of Turkmenistan's travel companies and community centers, Rossoshanskaya visited San Diego, California to learn about the U.S. tourism industry and modern practices in the tourism field.

Even though tourism development has been declared a priority sector in the country, the effort is still at its infant stage. The country needs investments and infrastructure to start capitalizing on its tourism potential.

“In the United States, I realized how important it is to develop infrastructure in order to attract and retain streams of visitors,” says Rossoshanskaya.

Since the study tour, Rossoshanskaya and her colleagues have reviewed Turkmen legislation in the area of tourism and completed a comparative analysis of the relevant legislation in the former soviet republics and the United States of America. Rossoshanskaya also successfully applied for a grant from the U.S. Embassy to create a tourism-focused website. The website now provides entrepreneurs, potential business partners, and general public with information on the Avaza National Tourist Zone, lists related legislation, and provides on-line consultations on legal issues related to the country's tourism sector.

Together with her colleagues at Bosfor, Rossoshanskaya consults companies from Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Russia on legal issues related to investments into Turkmenistan's tourism development. In 2009 alone, Bosfor provided tourism-related consultations to about 100 foreign companies. “My trip to the United States helped me understand the need to develop internal tourism and promote infrastructure development in Turkmenistan,” says Rossoshanskaya.