



The Challenger

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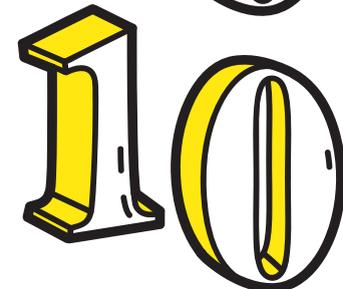
COVER PHOTO AGON NIMANI

**DigData
Challenge
enabling greater
transparency**

↳ **BITS AND PIECES**
Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett reflects on his favorite Kosovar product while Krenar Bujupi and Meredith Perry collaborate on the editorial about the importance of open and accessible energy data.

↳ **NEXT GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**
MFK's gender specialist Violeta Rexha walks us through the impressive Women in Energy Program. WEE Smart and Advanced Grants successfully concluded and the third grant component launches soon.

BITS AND PIE



QUARTERLY EDITORIAL

FAVORITE PRODUCT

PHILIP S. KOSNETT, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

DIGDATA CHALLENGE ENABLING GREATER TRANSPARENCY

KOSOVO—PRODUCED PROTECTIVE MASKS

THE CHALLENGER

Truthiness, as defined by the American comedian, Stephen Colbert, is “what you know in your heart;” that is, the quality of seeming or felt to be true even if not necessarily true. Misperceptions reign in an environment where truthiness is prized over the use of data and analysis in civic discussion. This was a challenge alluded to nearly four years ago in the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s Kosovo Constraints Analysis. This report cites myriad examples of government data being dated, poor, withheld, unavailable, non—machine readable, or difficult to obtain. The manifestation of this closed data environment was an adversarial political culture, where policymakers and civil servants clung to data in attempt to control information about government performance, misperceptions reigned, investors were skittish and citizens complained on the basis of what felt true rather than the (unavailable) data demonstrated.

In the ensuing four years, the MFK has launched the Dig Data Challenges, open data competitions designed “to foster productive partnerships between the Government, private sector, and civil society, support innovation in data use and analysis, and develop a culture of information sharing and evidence—based decision—making.” These competitions, the third of which was launched on 19 January 2021 have incentivized citizens, civil society, the media, academia, think tanks, the private sector, and civil servants to come together as solution—oriented partners using “open data to help produce tools and analysis that responds to Government needs, thereby creating examples of constructive relationships.”

The latest example of this culture change comes from Kosovo’s Energy Regulatory Office (ERO). Both prior to and as part of their partnership in the Energy Dig Data Competition, the ERO’s enthusiastic public release of open, accessible energy data has strengthened their transparency and enables increased public involvement in the energy sector.

The Energy Dig Data Competition is an opportunity to address the frustrations that can come from opaque government decision—making particularly vis—a—vis more specialized institutions such as ERO. Prior misperceptions and distrust of ERO by the private sector and civil society can either be challenged by the data or channeled into evidence—based interventions. Engaging on these terms is not only a low—cost, low—effort tactic to promote government institutions’ trust and credibility with citizens, it also can lead to creative, cooperative problem—solving.

ERO’s willingness to share data is the first stage in demonstrating the value of open data in Kosovo’s political culture. **Publishing the data in easily readable formats holds the government and the institutions liable to public scrutiny—but also open to public solutions. This dynamic establishes greater citizen trust in government institutions.** It is in this spirit that MCC and MFK will continue to push for Kosovo’s government and other institutions to open and publish their data, and to empower individuals, civil society, and the private sector to create useful solutions that empower citizens to understand what the government is doing, navigate the complex challenges that they are facing, and advocate for better opportunities.

Krenar Bujupi, Energy Data Advisor for Resonance
Meredith Perry, Open Innovation Advisor, USAID

Kosovo, like the rest of the world, is facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID—19 pandemic. The question is how we balance and address urgent medical needs on the one hand, with the need to educate our children and restore the economy on the other?

First, let me say no country has all the answers and it is vital we continue to pool our knowledge and exchange ideas as we move forward. Second, I believe managing the pandemic goes hand—in—hand with preparing for an eventual economic recovery. The Government needs to mobilize all domestic resources and demonstrate a fully coordinated approach. Ultimately, fighting COVID—19 is a job for every citizen. Protecting your neighbors by properly wearing a mask, keeping your distance, and washing your hands is the best way to show your pride and unity.

Throughout the years, American development agencies have supported Kosovo’s farmers to develop many new agricultural products, like berries, saffron or asparagus, and we have helped industries such as furniture—making and technology, but this year the product I’m most proud to see is Kosovo—made masks, with flags (or flowers!) being worn on the streets of Kosovo. Although, I will also say, I wish I saw many more face masks being properly worn than I do.

There are still many unknowns about the virus, however, numerous studies find breathing polluted air over many years may itself worsen the effects of COVID—19, and early studies suggest even vaccinated people can be carriers for the disease. So masks are here to stay. Beyond COVID—19, we know air pollution causes major health problems. Moreover, MCC’s constraint analysis for economic growth in Kosovo identified high levels of pollution as a barrier to growth. With very little specific data on the impacts of pollution on public health, wearing masks is a good way to mitigate the risks of both COVID—19 and air pollution.

The United States remains committed to assisting Kosovo in addressing barriers to growth and investment, and having a healthy workforce is a critical need for businesses. MCC is supporting the Government of Kosovo to effectively monitor and report on health and environmental indicators to help policymakers shape better policies that tackle air pollution, as well as increase the awareness of the general public.

In the meantime, be safe and wear a mask!

CES

FAVORITE NUMBER

67

The number of contractors or consultants hired by Millennium Foundation Kosovo since 2018. 75% of these companies are from Kosovo, thus showing direct impact MFK funding has for Kosovar economy.

DEVELOPMENT NEWS



MCC REAFFIRMS ITS SUPPORT FOR CONTINUING COMPACT DEVELOPMENT IN KOSOVO

The Board of Directors of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) held their quarterly meeting, on December 12, 2020, where they re-ongoing U.S. Government grant assistance. **During the meeting, MCC Board reaffirmed its support for continuing compact development in Kosovo.**



USAID SIGNED A NEW AGREEMENT WITH KOSOVO GOVERNMENT WORTH \$33 MILLION

Kosovo and the U.S. Government signed a new bilateral development cooperation agreement which makes available another \$33 million out of a planned total of \$161 million from the United States through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in support of Kosovo on its journey of self-reliance. USAID will help Kosovo increase government accountability and leverage new democratic and economic opportunities.



GERMANY ANNOUNCES 72.1 MILLION € IN GRANTS, LOANS FOR ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT IN KOSOVO

Kosovo will receive 72.1 million € from Germany for projects including wastewater treatment, energy efficiency improvements, and renewables. In the next two years, Germany will focus on improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of renewable energy, mainly solar energy. Main beneficiaries will be the district heating company Termokos and transmission system operator KOSTT.



KOSTT AND AIR ENERGY SIGN AGREEMENTS FOR 100 MW RENEWABLES

Kosovo's transmission system operator KOSTT and Air Energy 2 signed the agreements for the connection of the three facilities to the transmission system. The construction of the power plants is planned for 2021 and the three renewable energy projects include wind farms PE Kamenica-1 and PE Kamenica-2 and solar power plant PS Kamenica-3.

QUARTERLY QUOTE

"MFK's investment, supported by MCC is essential for the citizens of Lipjan, considering that energy efficiency retrofits will undoubtedly help save energy in apartments, thus directly affecting the wellbeing of our citizens"
—Mayor of Lipjan, Imri Ahmeti on the signing of the MOU on AER

"MFK's Air Quality Project is happening at a time when Kosovo is dealing with a very poor air quality. Improving the citizens' access to environmental data is of a great importance as it helps increase public participation in decision-making thus impacting decision quality and implementation."
—Antigona Ukehaxhaj, Specialist of Public Health at the National Institute of Public Health of Kosova, NIPH

"Open Data challenges have been launched to enable Kosovo institutions open their data sets for public scrutiny but also establish platforms of cooperation with the civil society and the private sector in proposing solutions for the challenges in economy, environment, rule of law and other critical fields."
—Petrit Selimi, CEO of Millennium Foundation Kosovo



If you witness fraud and corruption during your interaction with MFK or the implementing partners report here ↓

mcc.gov/reportfraud

FAVORITE TWEETS



UN KOSOVO TEAM
@UNKOSOVOTEAM

'By working on environmental protection & preventing air pollution, we will be contributing to #sustainabledevelopment in all areas of life!' — @UlrikaR_UN during Air quality Donor Coordination Meeting @UNDP_Kosovo @MCCgov @MFKosovo #Kosovo Hydro— Meteorologic. Ins.&partners



MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE
@MCCGOV

MCC's Women in Energy scholarship program in #Kosovo is providing girls with scholarships to study science, technology, engineering + math (STEM) — preparing them for careers in the energy sector. MCC is committed to strengthening economic opportunities for women! #STEMDay



U.S. EMBASSY PRISTINA
@USEMBPRISTINA

Proud of @MCCgov & @MFKosovo efforts to empower women in the energy sector. "Blerona is completing her degree and will return to #Kosovo... to work as a lecturer with a focus on renewable energy and to train the next generation of women in energy in Kosovo.



MILLENNIUM FOUNDATION
@MFKOSOVO

MFK with the support of @MCCgov will soon support development of the new modules in Kosovo's Court Management and Information System and will help Kosovo Judicial Council to increase transparency by releasing important judicial data to the public.

OPENING THE SECTOR



↳ VIOLETA REXHA,
GENDER AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION SPECIALIST AT
MILLENNIUM FOUNDATION
KOSOVO (MFK)

MFK'S GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES ARE ADDRESSING FUNDAMENTAL GENDER DISBALANCES IN KOSOVO'S ENERGY LANDSCAPE

THE CHALLENGER

—Women in Energy aims to strengthen economic opportunities for women and girls to play an active role in Kosovo's economy. Investing in women's economic empowerment is fundamental towards gender equality, reducing poverty and inclusive economic growth.

MFK's activity Women in Energy has two approaches: one aims to encourage more women and girls to be employed in the energy sector and the other one is to help women entrepreneurs to strengthen their business through efficient use of energy.

Next year, 28 women MFK scholarship recipients will be back from their energy studies in the US to contribute to Kosovo's energy sector. 200 women from universities will have a paid internship for 6 months under MFK's WE Internship Program, and the first 14 interns from this program are already working for three months in the host energy companies. Supporting women to gain advanced education and working experience in the energy sector will boost the employment of more women in the sector and reduce gender inequality in this sector mainly dominated by men.

Women In Energy Entrepreneurs

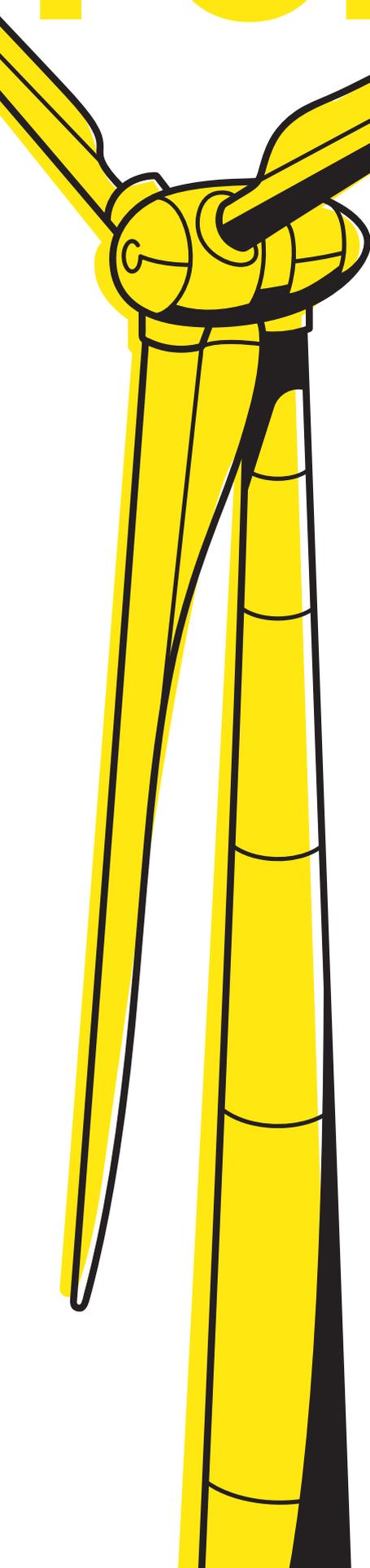
Another MFK's program launched recently, the Women Entrepreneurs in Energy (WEE) support women entrepreneurs with technical assistance and financial incentives to help grow their business. Women-owned businesses in Kosovo make fewer than 10% of the economy's businesses. Challenges and barriers to Kosovar women entrepreneurs persist, with limited possibilities for access to finance or know-how.

20 Kosovar women owned entrepreneurs selected in the competitive process, are attending for a month now the Businesses Acceleration Program, part of the WEE program in partnership with the Santa Clara University's Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship.

The program provides women entrepreneurs with a coaching program with personalized business coaching and mentoring. The program will continue for 6 months and contains intensive customized individual coaching and mentoring by international and local experts on business management, finance and planning. Women entrepreneurs participating in this program will be also supported to understand how to improve energy efficiency in their operations and how they can benefit from available program financing for energy efficiency.

At the end of December, MFK launched calls for grants from its Women in Energy Entrepreneurs (WEE) program inviting women entrepreneurs to apply for grants. There are three types of grants available to accommodate different needs of women entrepreneurs across the country: small, medium and larger grants.

THE ENERGY FOR WOMEN



—MFK has launched an internship program, enabling 200 women to gain a paid working experience in Kosovo's energy sector, we spoke to three interns about their experience so far:



"My internship at KIMERK has equipped me with great research skills, and conducting research has become my favorite thing about my job. Research helped me understand in depth some of the biggest challenges that companies in the energy sector face, especially when it comes to energy generation, what the causes are, as well as what some of the best solutions could be for those issues that are affecting businesses in Kosovo."

**—ELITA QARKAXHIJA
ENGINEER/RESEARCHER AT KIMERK**



"The renewable energy sector in Kosovo and the rising opportunities that this industry offers, has aroused my interest in pursuing this field. This internship opportunity in one of the leading energy companies in the country, is something I greatly appreciate, and I strongly believe that by the end of the internship period, I will be able to practice my career professionally in any company of this sector. MFK's Internship Program is a golden opportunity for young women who want to start their career as engineers in Kosovo."

**—VESA RAMADANI
RENEWABLE ENERGY ENGINEER AT ELEN**



"MFK's WE Internship Program is an excellent opportunity for women in Kosovo. Apart from attending my studies, here at IETL, every day I get to learn more about the energy sector and other things helpful for my career. It has also made me more confident in sharing my opinion and ideas with others. I am very grateful that MFK is offering such opportunities for professional growth to me and other women in Kosovo."

**—ILDA THAQI
MENTOR ASSISTANT AT IETL**

MFK ACTIVITY

1

MFK TO PROVIDE OVER 2,600 HOUSES WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY SUBSIDIES

Over 2600 houses and individual apartments will be made energy efficient through the HER package of the Subsidies for Energy Efficiency in Kosovo (SEEK) project. Through "Household Efficiency Retrofits" (HER) Kosovar families can apply for subsidies to renovate their housing units through improvements in thermal insulation of walls, roof insulation as well as energy efficiency equipment upgrades.

The specific goal of the HER Package is to reduce electricity consumption in the residential sector with a special focus on reducing the use of electricity for heating and promoting the use of energy efficient heating equipment.



2

MFK SIGNS AGREEMENTS WITH LIPJAN AND MITROVICA TO BRING INVESTMENTS IN RETROFITTING APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES

MFK reinforced its partnership with the Lipjan and Mitrovica by signing Memorandums of Understanding with both municipalities on the implementation of the Apartment Building Efficiency Retrofits (AER) project.

The MoU aims to reinforce collaboration that ensures successful implementation of the AER project activities and support MFK's continuous efforts to improve electricity supply through promoting energy saving measures. Municipalities participating in this program were chosen by the World Bank.



3

STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE ON AIR QUALITY COMMITS TO STRENGTHENING COORDINATION IN TACKLING AIR POLLUTION

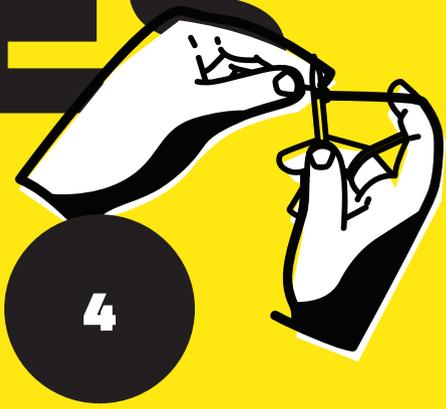
Together with the National Institute of Public Health (NIPH) and NIRAS, the implementing partner for the Environmental Data Collection project, MFK organized a virtual conference for stakeholders, aiming to ensure coordination and strengthen cooperation in tackling air pollution in Kosovo.

More than 50 stakeholders and experts from the government, academia, civil society, local and international organizations, and media, were gathered to reflect on the air quality challenges as well as discuss further action to improve it through public understanding and awareness raising.

The Conference resulted in an agreement for full coordination between stakeholders in tackling air pollution and health impact, as well as concrete remedies and actions that should be taken by institutions and citizens.



IES



WE CALL FOR SMART AND ADVANCED GRANTS CLOSED—OVER 400 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS APPLY

In late December, 2020, MFK launched the call for grants through its Women in Energy Entrepreneurs (WEE) program. Through the Smart and Advanced Components, MFK will help women entrepreneurs invest in energy efficiency measures to enable them to grow their businesses through a more efficient use of energy.

The WEE team hosted an informative workshop which turned out to be a huge success. Around 200 women entrepreneurs participated in two webinars aiming to help them to better assess and understand the suitable solutions for a more efficient use of energy in their day to day business practice.



\$300.000 DIGDATA CHALLENGE ON ENERGY LAUNCHED—AN INFORMATIVE WORKSHOP CONCLUDED

In mid January, MFK launched the national Open Data Challenge on Energy, inviting open data movers, shakers and opinion-makers, start-ups, civil society, the private sector, academia, journalists, designers, technology innovators, and creative problem solvers to submit proposals on how open data could be used for better energy choices and policies.

To better inform grant applicants on the power of data and its importance towards finding solutions to current issues we are facing in regard to the energy sector, a workshop on DigData Energy was held virtually, bringing together around 50 interested applicants and a series of widely known data experts from international institutions and companies.



The Challenger

This newsletter is published by **Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK)** to inform the public on the projects implemented within Threshold Program, supported by the Millennium Challenge Corporation / Opinions and other information in this publication are not necessarily reflective of the opinions of MFK, MCC, or other partners in the Threshold program / **Edited by:** Petrit Selimi, Rina Abazi, Rina Meta / **Contributors:** Ambassador Philip S. KOSNETT, Krenar Bujupi, Meredith Perry, Violeta Rexha / **Cover Photo:** Agon Nimani / **Design and Illustrations:** Studio PERMANENT (Nita Salihu Hoxha, Edvin Susuri, Urtina Hoxha, Elvira Thaqi) / **Contact:** MFK, The Governmental Building Migjeni Str 21, Floor 9, 10000 Prishtina, Kosovo / **Email:** office@millenniumkosovo.org

BECOME AN MFK SUPPLIER

Millennium Foundation Kosovo (MFK) has developed the procurement tools which allow citizens to follow online what MFK is buying, at what price, in what way and of what quality.

MFK ensures that all the procurement activities are undertaken in furtherance of the Threshold program that comply with MCC Program Procurement Principles: open, fair, and competitive procedures used in a transparent manner to solicit, award, and administer contracts.

Furthermore, MFK has developed a well-structured and defined outreach plan to promote upcoming procurement opportunities in order to maximize the efforts of competition among qualified suppliers, consultants, and firms and effectively enhance MFK's procurement outreach. There are various outreach tools that are used such as MFK's website, the Development Gateway Market website at dgmarket.com ("dgMarket") and the United Nations Development Business online website at devbusiness.com ("UNDB Online"), mailing list, US embassy channels, local newspapers, MFK Newsletter, Chamber of Commerce, social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) and in media outlets as appropriate.

As a result of this promotion, we have had contracted more than 67 suppliers from different countries.

The information below is intended to answer some of more common questions and queries.

How can I improve my chances of winning an MFK contract?

- Make sure that you read the documents and instructions carefully and clarify anything you do not understand.
- Take note of the weightings of the evaluation criteria and answer appropriately to that.
- If there is a pre-conference event, this is a great opportunity to learn more about the contract.
- Make sure you have answered all the mandatory requirements.
- Give your best realistic price. We cannot renegotiate the price after the response has been submitted and the reasonable price analysis will be conducted.
- Give evidence and examples of any relevant skills and experience in quality questions.
- Use feedback received from any previous failed bids.

What type of things does the MFK purchase?

The range of goods and services required across all MFK services is vast.

Examples include: Air quality equipment, Heating meters, Construction, vehicles, office equipment, furniture, IT hardware, consultants, for more details please see the General Procurement Notices published in MFK Website millenniumkosovo.org/work-with-us/procurement/general-procurement-notice/

What is the procurement process?

MFK conducts its procurements using Open competition as the basis for efficient public procurement. The goods, works, consulting and non-consulting services obtained through an open and competitive bidding process open to eligible suppliers and contractors.

Who can I contact for more information on procurement?

MFK has a dedicated Procurement Team that is responsible for issuing and receiving all tenders and managing contracts.

Alternatively, you can email any general procurement queries to procurement@millenniumkosovo.org

How do I find out about supplier opportunities?

All current tenders for the goods, works, consulting and non-consulting services are advertised on the MFK website millenniumkosovo.org/work-with-us/procurement/ongoing/

How are tenders evaluated?

In the list of evaluation criteria, cost quality and eligibility are usually the most important criteria.

Details of the specific evaluation criteria and the relative weighting of the criteria are included in the tender documents that suppliers receive with the solicitation documents.

How can I improve my chances of winning an MFK contract?

You need to clearly demonstrate that you can meet the required standards and service delivery requirements at the most economically advantageous cost.

How are contracts monitored?

The contractor will be expected to deliver or provide the service in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract papers and proposals on how to carry it out.

Suppliers and contractors working for the MFK are regularly monitored to assess their compliance with predefined performance criteria. The contract conditions are strictly applied and explanations sought if a contractor fails to perform to the levels required.

What options do I have if I think I have not had fair treatment or I have a concern or issue about a Procurement exercise carried out by MFK?

Suppliers are entitled to be treated fairly. We are committed to making sure our Procurement processes are fair and that we treat suppliers equally as part of an open fair and transparent process. We encourage our suppliers to ask us for feedback on our processes.

MFK has established the rules and procedures set forth in Interim Bid Challenge System ("IBCS"), to govern the review of all challenged MFK procurement actions and decisions, and which will be incorporated in all solicitation documents distributed to Potential Bidders also the same is published in MFK website.

What rules and regulations should I be aware of?

There are regulations that the MFK has to follow when procuring goods, works, Consulting and Non consulting services. It is important that if you wish to contract with MFK you are fully aware of the rules and regulations which govern the way we operate. The principles, rules, and procedures set out Program Procurement Guidelines.

Where can I obtain copies of the Program Procurement Guidelines (PPG)?

Copies of the PPG can be obtained on the MFK website millenniumkosovo.org/work-with-us/procurement/procurement-guideline/