



June 20, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> New Training Centers For People With Disabilities

The Social Inclusion Network for People with Disabilities opened Training centers for people with disabilities in Sofia, Plevn, and Stara Zagora. The network is operated by "Health for everyone" Association and funded by USAID through the Foundation for Local Government Reform.

The training centers will help NGOs working with people with disabilities to achieve financial and organizational sustainability through social entrepreneurship. Specific training topics will include developing business ideas, business planning, financial sustainability, and advocacy skills.

Nearly 1000 people with disabilities will receive training and technical assistance in the field of social entrepreneurship, facilitating their integration into society and increasing their access to the labor market. Another training center will open in Varna soon. ❖



USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz, Mayor of Plevn Nayden Zelenogorski and Regional Governor of Plevn Tzvetko Tzvetkov inaugurate the training center in Plevn.

>> USAID Celebrates Eight Years of Partnership with the National Institute of Justice



NIJ Deputy Director Stoil Pashkunov admires the framed photos given to the NIJ by the USAID JSI to decorate the Institute's buildings.

Two weeks of thunderstorms couldn't stop the National Institute of Justice from being honored under blue skies, as leaders of the Bulgarian judiciary joined the celebration. Surrounded by memorable images of years of work to create more competent, professional, and skilled magistrates and court clerks, USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative Director Ken Stuart hosted addresses by Ambassador Beyrle, NIJ Director Pencho Penev, and Supreme Court of Cassation Chair Ivan Grigorov. The four reflected on the achievements resulting from the eight year bilateral relationship.

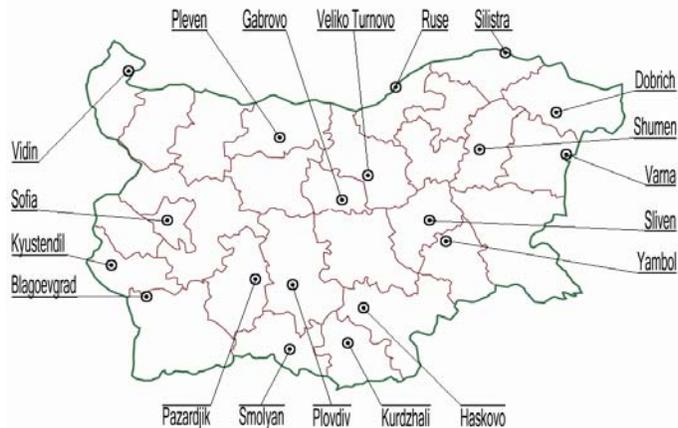
The NIJ has produced impressive numbers during its growth from a small NGO housed in an office attic space, to a national institute with two buildings and 48 staff. The NIJ has trained more than 10,000 participants over the years, including those attending, newly established, local trainings offered in 19 cities and towns across the country in 2007.

In his address, Ambassador Beyrle joined Director Penev in emphasizing the sheer number of NIJ accomplishments, and pressed for more: "As NIJ graduates become full magistrates, their professional education in critical areas of law must not slow down."



As a parting gift to the Institute, the USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative donated 49 large framed color photographs depicting memorable moments from over the years.

In the end, the reception also marked a beginning. The NIJ staff toasted one another and their American and Bulgarian counterparts from the JSI, and talk turned from past successes to future work ahead. As Justice Grigorov concluded in his address: "I think we cannot doubt that this cooperation will continue to be as successful even after the USAID mission is no longer active in Bulgaria." ❖



Local trainings of magistrates and court clerks supported by the NIJ: 21 courts in 19 towns and cities across Bulgaria.

>> Village of Balvan Focuses on Young Trafficking Victims

On June 5, the St. Ivan Rilski Charity Association in the village of Balvan officially launched its small grant project called "Open your eyes - you can get help!" This event gathered the mayors of four villages in the municipality of Veliko Turnovo and representatives of Veliko Turnovo municipality. The project will focus on several community centers for at-risk groups in the villages and will strengthen the capacity of the Crisis Center for young victims of trafficking in the village of Balvan, in cooperation with the Regional Governor's office. An information campaign will also be carried out in villages in the municipality of Veliko Turnovo. ❖



The people of Balvan express their support for the new project.

USAID and IOM Award Anti-Trafficking Grants

With USAID funding, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) awarded a second round of small grants for combating trafficking in human beings in Bulgaria. Grants will support local initiatives against trafficking in human beings, including prevention, trainings for minority groups, opportunities for professional training, and improvement of the social-economic environment.

- ✓ "Face to Face Bulgaria"
- ✓ Firebird and Light Association, Vratsa
- ✓ Non-profit Society "Sungurlare Information Business Centre"
- ✓ St. Ivan Rilski Association, Balvan
- ✓ Association for Youth Initiatives and Tolerance: Just Friends, Topolovgrad
- ✓ Community Center ELIT, Sofia
- ✓ National Oncological Medical Center, Sofia
- ✓ Chamber of Investigators of Bulgaria

Municipalities:

- ✓ Municipality of Pazardjik
- ✓ Municipality of Shumen
- ✓ Municipality of Svilengrad



>> *Football Fans Celebrate in Chepalare*

The town of Chepalare in Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains celebrated the opening of a new artificial-grass soccer field on June 15, the culmination of several years of effort and a true example of a public-private partnership. The total cost of the soccer field facility was 350,000 BGN (\$240,000), two-thirds of which was raised by the Community Fund of Chepalare. The USAID Community Fund and Social Enterprise Program contributed \$35,000 toward the project.

The municipality assisted with construction of a fence, changing rooms, and bleacher seating, which will be finished in the next few months. The Chepalare Community Fund coordinated the project and leveraged USAID resources to raise additional funds from the municipality and from local businesses, such as the Rhodope Home Hotel, located behind the new field. Following speeches by the Chepalare mayor and other officials, the field was officially inaugurated with an exhibition game played by members of the Chepalare Football Club. ❖



Future soccer stars test the new field with enthusiasm.

>> *President and Mrs. Bush Visit Bulgaria*

The first visit of President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush to Bulgaria included several USAID activities. The President participated in a roundtable with students from the USAID-funded American University in Bulgaria. The First Lady's program included a discussion on HIV/AIDS prevention at the Ministry of Health and a meeting with Roma clients of the USAID-supported microfinance institution USTOI. The President discussed with President Parvanov and Prime-Minister Stanishev the creation of the America for Bulgaria Foundation, which is expected to be capitalized with approximately \$200 million in proceeds from the USAID-funded Bulgarian American Enterprise Fund. ❖



President and Mrs. Bush with the children of the American staff on the Embassy patio.