



March 12, 2008

Bi-weekly Newsletter

## >> Ambassador Beyrle Recognizes Top-Performing Roma Entrepreneurs of 2007



*U.S. Ambassador Beyrle and USAID Mission Director M. Fritz present the award to Lilia Dimitrova, Best Roma Entrepreneur for 2007.*

On February 26 in Pazardzhik, Ambassador Beyrle presented the Roma Entrepreneur 2007 Awards at a ceremony organized under the USAID Roma Micro-lending Global Development Alliance (GDA) project. The Roma Entrepreneurs 2007 Awards Ceremony recognized the winners in a nationwide competition among Roma micro-credit clients. The criteria for participation in the competition included having a registered business, a record of paid taxes and other state obligations confirmed by tax receipts, a good loan repayment history, significance of the business to the community, and the recommendation of the loan officers. The awards were granted to a businesswoman from Sofia who used the loans to expand her hairstyling studio, and to two businessmen from Razgrad and Pazardzhik, involved in cattle breeding/agriculture and trade respectively.

The objective of the \$1.1 million, 20-month USAID Roma Micro-lending project, implemented by the US NGO Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in partnership with the local micro-credit institutions Ustoi and Mikrofond, is to provide micro-lending opportunities in selected Roma disadvantaged communities, and to promote the image of the Roma entrepreneur. The

Roma Micro-lending GDA supplements the traditional micro-credit activities of the local organizations, and utilizes their existing network of branches to extend credit access to minorities with minimum administrative costs. The project is one of the last programs funded by USAID in Bulgaria, and over the past 17 months has provided micro-credits to 611 entrepreneurs with a little above one million USD granted in micro-loans to individual businesses and groups of entrepreneurs from disadvantaged ethnic minority communities. ❖

## >> USAID to help save Stara Zagora Forest

The Stara Zagora Community Foundation - a USAID legacy, raised over BGN 23,500 for its Let's Save the Forest initiative. USAID will match this amount. This joint initiative, launched in late 2007, will replant a 2,471-acre of forest devastated by last summer's wild fires, while at the same time commemorating USAID's graduation. World famous Bulgarian tennis player, Magdalena Maleeva, as patron of Bulgaria's environmental portal [www.gorichka.bg](http://www.gorichka.bg), participated in this initiative. Under a similar initiative, USAID will also assist the forest recovery near the town of Chepelare in the Rhodope Mountains by partnering with the local community foundation.

USAID launched the community foundation concept in Bulgaria in 2001. With our support, ten foundations work to promote community development by nurturing local philanthropy in support of community needs. ❖



*Former world Top 5 tennis player Magdalena Maleeva announces the donation of 3000 BGN by the environmental web-portal [www.gorichka.bg](http://www.gorichka.bg)*



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## >> Anti-trafficking Training for Social Workers

On 21 and 22 February, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and USAID organized training in combating trafficking in human beings for social workers from the region of Northern Bulgaria. The Training in Veliko Turnovo was opened by Mr. Gene Gibson, USAID Democracy Officer, Ms. Iliana Derilova, IOM Chief of Mission and Mr. Roumen Georgiev, Deputy Director of the National Investigative Service and Member of the National Anti-trafficking Commission. In his speech, Mr. Gibson emphasized the importance of working in the regions and the vital role of social workers in preventing trafficking and re-socializing trafficking victims. The municipality of Veliko Turnovo supported the initiative and proudly presented its crisis center for children who have been victims of trafficking in the village of Balvan. The crisis center owes its success to the support of the local institutions and the enthusiastic work of the representative of the local NGO "St. Ivan Rilski." ❖



*The young victims of trafficking are confident now that there is somebody to help them in the crisis center in the village of Balvan.*



## >> Registration Agency Meets with Journalists

On February 16, the Technical Assistance to the Registration Agency (TARA) Program of USAID organized a meeting between Bulgarian media and the representatives of the Registration Agency. The participants discussed the first months of the work of Bulgaria's new business registry, introduced with USAID support. The Registration Agency officials answered many questions on the difficulties businesses encounter with the operation of the new system and made an interactive demonstration of the on-line process for filing registration requests. The two main messages of the meeting were that the Business Registration Act needs to be amended in order to ease the process and that clients of the registry are encouraged to use the electronic filing option instead of queuing in front of the registry's offices. ❖



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## >> New USAID Posters Celebrate the U.S.-Bulgaria Partnership

USAID Bulgaria has produced a series of posters to commemorate the closing of the Mission and to create a visual reminder of the achievements and legacies of U.S. development assistance. Three thematic posters and eight program-specific posters were designed and printed by Remembrand, the advertising agency that produced a series of TV, radio, print and internet advertisements in the fall of 2007 to publicize the work of USAID in Bulgaria. The posters will be distributed to USAID partners and counterparts and at public events. ❖



### USAID says good-bye to three more valued colleagues

Last week we said good-bye to three indispensable colleagues and wished them luck and success in their future endeavors. Rayna Dimitrova (rdimitrova@kpmg.com) will move on to the challenging field of executive search with KPMG, Adela Delcheva (Adela7@gmail.com) will be working with SKE Group/U.S. Government Services and Svetozara Petkova (svetozarapetkova@gmail.com) will continue working in the field of rule of law as a consultant. Best of luck, ladies!

For more information on USAID and its programs, please visit our website at: <http://bulgaria.usaid.gov>.