

**SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT FOR IDPs AND REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN SERBIA**



*Ms. Emilia Puma, State Department, SEED Program Officer responsible for Serbia and Montenegro with the a IDP greenhouse beneficiary in Vranjska Banja*



*237 IDP families were provided with sustainable support for growing early fruits and vegetables in the six municipalities of southern Serbia*

Internally Displaced Persons from Kosovo will have the opportunity to supply Serbian McDonalds' restaurants with fresh lettuce and earn money for their basic needs. This initiative has been made possible through the USAID and CHF CRDA program by which 100m<sup>2</sup> of nylon greenhouse, drop by drop watering systems, adequate tools, plants and fertilizers have been provided to each family.

Zorica Kujundzic and her son Dejan, greenhouse beneficiaries, are IDPs from Kosovo. Their house in Kosovo was burned to the ground, the machines they owned stolen and they arrived in Serbia with no possessions. They now live in Vranjska Banja and have only received humanitarian support from the government of Serbia and International aid agencies.

In the municipalities of the Pcinja district, there are many refugees and IDPs from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. After arriving in Serbia many IDPs were placed in Collective Centers, living in miserable conditions, with extremely limited possibilities to find jobs to support their families. It is also commonly felt that it is still not safe to return to their homes in Kosovo.

Americans through USAID and CHF and in cooperation with local NGO Life Aid provided greenhouses for early and late vegetables. Last year 165 families received greenhouses and this year a further 62 families in the 6 municipalities of Pcinja County have benefited. Through this project USAID and CHF have enabled sustainable support for refugee and IDP families to help them address some of their long-term problems.

The families have received adequate training in how to use greenhouses and how to cultivate soil/land. All families were additionally provided with the free use of land for the greenhouses and market space to sell the products produced. The quality of life for Zorica and Dejan Kujundzic, as well as the lives of 237 IDP and refugee families has significantly improved. Greenhouses they received from USAID and CHF have enabled them to start a new life. "For everything that we have now we are thankful to the Coordination Body and Nebojsa Covic, the people of the USA, US NGO CHF and local NGO Life Aid. They provided us with Green Houses that create income for us", reflected Zorica Kujundzic.

From October to December 2004 IDP families will supply 6000 kilograms of lettuce to *Salat Center*, the Belgrade company who supply Serbian McDonalds' restaurants with fresh vegetables. There is also the possibility that McDonalds will be interested in buying carrots from the southern Serbia greenhouses as well.

This project will increase agricultural production and sales in every community where it is situated. The IDPs and refugees are encouraged to think in a new way, developing their own strengths, and to rely on development programs not only on the humanitarian relief packages that cannot in themselves meet their needs. Zorica has invited us to be the first to try quality lettuce from Southern Serbia in McDonalds restaurants very soon.