

USAID AND CHF OFFER BUSINESS START-UP HELP



The hairdressing salon is always full of clients. Book early if you want to be sure of a seat.



New job made it possible for Ljiljana to earn more. Improved quality of life for Ljiljana and her family.

LESKOVAC, SERBIA – Within the Economic Development pillar of the CRDA program, Ljiljana Mitic from Manojlovce received financial support for opening a hairdressing salon in Leskovac. Since then, her life, and the lives of her family members, has significantly changed for the better.

Ljiljana is aged 30 and married, with a daughter of 10. For three years, she worked for a private hairdresser in Leskovac but was not a registered employee and had a very low salary. When CHF was presenting its program of economic development in the community of Manojlovce near Leskovac, Ljiljana came to hear if there would be possibilities to start a business of her own. She was very well versed in the hairdressing craft; however, she missed professional and financial support to bring her idea to life.

In August 2003, CHF through its entrepreneurship Kick Start grant program awarded her \$500 intended for the purchase of equipment for the hairdressing salon. She borrowed the rest of funds she needed and opened the salon that is situated in a shopping center in downtown Leskovac. In only eight months, she managed to attract a large number of customers. "\$500, this much I got from CHF, was not sufficient to cover all cost related to opening the hairdressing salon. Nonetheless, I know very well that I would never dare launch something like

this myself, if there were no CHF people to support me. Not only did they offer financial support, but they also encouraged me to start a business of my own. In the beginning, I was very anxious, but now, I am more than satisfied", said Ljiljana.

Ljiljana works 12 hours a day, 6 days in a week and has an assistant (plans to employ one more assistant). This is her first independent job. In terms of income, she now makes almost ten times more money, compared with what she was receiving before. Ljiljana's shop is always full of clients, and to avoid crowds, interested clients have to book early to be sure of a seat. What is of extreme importance for Ljiljana and her family is that she is now officially employed, so that she makes regular monthly payments to the state for her social and health insurance.

In case the business would continue to grow, Ljiljana said she probably would employ more workers and enlarge the salon. Still, it is too early to talk about that, as she has other plans for her family. "My advice would be that everyone should try to develop his business, providing that he could do so. Since I have worked here, I bought a lot of household things, which I could not afford earlier. USAID and CHF through the CRDA program helped me to realize my plans. And for the first time, this year we are planning to go to the seaside, like a real family", said Ljiljana Mitic.