

POLLUTED FLOOD WATERS PUT TO BED



*Small river- Great Danger:
Mrmorica before river bed settlement*

BABUSNICA, SRBIJA – The beginning of spring did not bring joy to the residents of Babusnica: it brought floods. The nearby Mrmorica riverbed overflowed annually, carrying and depositing putrid garbage and human waste into the center of the town. The waters that remained behind would form stagnant pools that in the summertime attracted mosquitoes and bred infectious diseases. Zoran Spasic, president of the Executive Council of Babusnica Municipality, tells us, "Last year the floods destroyed the cement my friend had prepared in order to build his house." Stories like this are common around Babusnica.

Babusnica is a small town with approximately 5,000 inhabitants, located in southeastern Serbia. The town is distant from big city centers and unemployment is high. Babusnica is situated in a valley between the mountains. All spring runoff from these mountains flows quickly and suddenly into the valley in two shallow riverbeds, the Mrmorica and the Luznica, regularly causing floods. These flash floods inflict huge material damage and occasionally cut off access to other towns and cities.

In partnership with CHF and the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) program, funded by USAID, the residents of Babusnica have taken action to prevent future flooding from the Mrmorica



Thanks to this project 250 to 300 houses this year were not flooded

riverbed. The Community Development Council (CDC) selected this environmental protection project for the benefit of their community. Sewage pipes that once fed into the river were closed and waste was diverted to a new sewage system near the river. A fence was added along the riverbed, and the Mrmorica Bridge was widened to allow pedestrians to cross safely. Due to the river regulation activities implemented, Mrmorica flooding will no longer pose a health or environmental hazard.

Zoran Spasic, president of Executive Council of Babusnica Municipality said that implementing this project was "a great move because it saved this part of the city from constant floods". He notes, "On January 8th of this year, the melting snow caused flood waters to flow, but it did not reach the center of Babusnica thanks to the recent riverbed regulation that CHF CRDA Serbia helped us to complete last year."

The successfully implemented Mrmorica riverbed regulation project has inspired the CDC and municipal leaders to address the regulation of the Luznica river as quickly as possible. "I cannot describe the joy in the town when on January 8th, the Mrmorica riverbed held the floodwaters coming from the surrounding mountains", says Spasic. "Congratulations to USAID and CHF! Everybody knows here what they have done for us and our town."