

## Reconstruction of Zujince-Presevo Road



**Selajdin Mustafa with his brother and son in front of their soft drink factory**

ZUJINCE, SERBIA—Through the USAID-funded Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) program, CHF International is improving community infrastructure while strengthening civil society.

In 1993, when the former Yugoslavia was in the depths of war, Selajdin Mustafa decided to return with his family from Germany, where he had been working for several years, to Zujince, an Albanian village near Presevo in South Serbia. Despite the oppressive atmosphere under the Milosevic regime, Mustafa and his brother used capital they had raised in Germany to open a soft drink factory employing 15 people.

The enterprise was a success, and the family used profits to support community projects. In 1995 the village combined funds to contract repairs to the road through the village; the following year they renovated the local elementary school. Mustafa personally funded the construction of a bridge in the center of town, and in 1998 coordinated and contributed to a sewage system costing 135,000 USD.

The energy that Mustafa has put into the village led him to a leading role in local political life. In 2000 he began his third term as the community mayor. His efforts have been instrumental in bringing a sense of solidarity and hope to an area that saw further armed conflict in spring of 2001.

“We have built respect and friendship,” he told CHF staff when they asked him about the outcome of his efforts.

CHF’s programs in Serbia use tangible improvements to catalyze civic participation in Serbia. The CRDA program counts on the participation of community members on all levels, from needs assessment to quality inspection. When Mustafa and other residents of Zujince approached CHF in August of 2001, field staff was duly impressed at the level of organization and commitment shown by the community and agreed to enter into partnership with them.

Through the facilitation of CHF, the community held meetings and elected a community council ensuring the involvement of women and youth in the development process. This diversification of the base of responsibility has allowed the sense of improvement brought by the Mustafa family to grow.

In the fall of 2001, the Community Development Council worked with CHF to leverage funds for a project the village could not fund alone: the reconstruction of the 2.5 km road to Presevo. Contributions from CHF and the community were complemented by support from both municipal and state governments, as well as USAID OTI.

Improvements to this road will ease the distribution of juices and soft drinks produced in the Mustafa brothers’ factory, which now employs 45 people, and encourage further economic development projects in the village.