



FIRST PERSON

A Telecenter Saves a Young Life

Local telecenters connect small villages with service providers



Photo: George Guran, AED

Gabriela Ciobanu and her new daughter Silvia visited the village telecenter that saved Silvia's life.

In many Romanian villages, not a single family has a fixed or mobile telephone, and the Internet is something seen only as part of a TV show. To address this issue, USAID has launched a technology initiative that establishes communication and resource centers in four isolated villages, serving more than 12,000 people. The telecenters offer residents low-fee services such as faxing, photocopying, word processing, email, Internet access and business development.

The telecenter in the village of Iana also saved the life of Silvia Ciobanu, who was born prematurely in the middle of a winter storm. She weighed less than 4 pounds, and her mother was unable to feed her. The blizzard made it impossible for the family to reach a hospital. Luckily, the telecenter was able to contact the nearest hospital and obtain the information necessary to help the mother and her child.

“We called the hospital and asked them how we could help,” said Constantin Codreanu, the mayor of Iana village. “The parents wanted to try to feed her cow’s milk, which isn’t healthy for a newborn. The proper recipe, the proper procedure was explained to us by the hospital over the phone.”