



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**KOSOVO**

# FIRST PERSON

## Listening to a Baby's Heartbeat

### Kosovo healthcare workers improve pre- and post-natal care



Photo: USAID/Dina Cernobregu

***“As a mother, listening to your baby’s heartbeats in the initial weeks of your pregnancy is same as listening to the first cry of your newborn baby. And as doctor by listening I can monitor the development and heart condition of the baby not born yet.”***

***—Dr. Tole Frrenaj***

While expecting her third child, Dr. Tole Frrenaj was for the first time able to hear her baby’s heartbeat. Now, using a fetal Doppler instrument donated by USAID, Tole can monitor her and other women’s babies hearts in their early stages of development.

As part of its efforts to improve Kosovo’s healthcare system, USAID is helping health workers obtain equipment, information and training in prenatal care.

Previously, Tole had only used a fetal Doppler instrument during her university training. Now, in addition to giving her patients routine pregnancy examinations, she can also listen to the fetal heartbeat, monitor any changes during the baby’s development and recommend treatment based on the equipment’s findings — all during the very early stages of her patients’ pregnancies.

“As a mother,” says Tole, “listening to your baby’s heartbeats in the initial weeks of your pregnancy is same as listening to the first cry of your newborn baby. And as doctor by listening I can monitor the development and heart condition of the baby not born yet.”

Kosovo has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe at 35 deaths per 1,000 live births — a rate two to three times higher than in the neighboring countries. Despite a significant rise in the percentage of attended births over the past decade, infant mortality rates have not dropped. In some areas of Kosovo, almost half of the infant deaths occur before the baby reaches 27 days old. Careful monitoring, nutrition and prenatal care will help reduce those numbers.