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MEDIA ADVISORY

SIX YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS FROM SOUTH SERBIA RECEIVE GRANTS TO LAUNCH BUSINESSES

VRANJE – Six young entrepreneurs from the South Serbian communities of Bujanovac, Presevo and Vranje will each receive grants for \$3,000 to buy equipment to launch businesses in agriculture, services, and crafts.

The awards ceremony will take a place at 11 a.m. Tuesday, September 6, 2011, at the Vranje Youth Office, Cara Dusana 12b/32. The \$18,000 in grants are being made by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Help, a German humanitarian non-governmental organization.

Michael Pillsbury, the Program Director of USAID's Preparedness, Planning and Economic Security (PPES) Program, and Timo Stegelmann, HELP's Regional Representative for the South East Europe, will speak at the event. The grants are part of USAID's and HELP's efforts to address joblessness in South Serbia, where unemployment rates are as high as 43 percent, nearly twice the national average of 22 percent.

Earlier this year, HELP and USAID's Economic Security Program signed a memorandum of understanding supporting a group of small businesses in Bujanovac, Presevo and Vranje. The joint effort – involving the municipalities, USAID, and HELP – is aimed at reducing youth unemployment and turning young people into a driving force for economic recovery in their communities.

As part of the project, USAID sponsored business-training seminars that were attended by 157 aspiring entrepreneurs from the three municipalities. Classes covered entrepreneurship, business plans, finance, management and marketing, including communications and public relations. Vocational training for 60 more people is ongoing.

USAID has been active in Serbia for a decade. Its PPES Program, launched in 2007, helps young people get jobs, start new businesses, and gain the skills and knowledge necessary for success in a market economy. These activities shape a more dynamic and informed workforce to improve economic stability and security in Serbia.

HELP has been working in Serbia since 1999, primarily on income generation and local economic development. To date, it has supported over 3,600 entrepreneurs and small businesses in Serbia.

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For additional information about USAID's programs in Serbia, visit <http://serbia.usaid.gov>.

For information on USAID's PPES Program, visit <http://www.scopes-serbia.org>.