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### **USAID'S SUPPORT FOR TEXTILE PRODUCERS HELPS WIN \$240,000 GRANT FOR EXPANSION INTO RUSSIAN MARKET**

**BELGRADE (August 15)** – Eight months of intensive USAID support for Sandzak's Association of Textile Producers (ASSTEX) paid dividends when the cluster received a \$240,000 grant to establish a permanent distribution center and showroom for its goods in Moscow.

The grant, secured through the Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SIEPA), gives ASSTEX permanent access to Russia's 142 million consumers who can enjoy customs-free imported Serbian textiles.

The grant resulted from negotiations initiated in November 2010 at a Novi Pazar roundtable organized by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The forum, exploring the future of Serbia's textile industry, was attended by U.S. Ambassador Mary Burce Warlick and Serbian Minister of Economy and Regional Development Mladjan Dinkic, who has since left office.

The award is one in a series of business successes for ASSTEX. The trade association recently opened a similar distribution center in Poland in cooperation with local wholesaler Prelic and it achieved notable results at major European textile trade fairs in Dusseldorf, Germany, Poznan, Poland, and Tirana, Albania, where it is negotiating to open its third distribution center.

USAID and ASSTEX are working together to revitalize the textile industry for Sandzak and Serbia. Since 2008, USAID support has helped Serbian textile companies generate more than \$11 million in sales and enter new markets regionally as well as in Germany, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Turkey, and the Czech Republic.

USAID is currently supporting ASSTEX's discussions with the Ministry of Environment Protection to secure funds for environmentally friendly wastewater management systems at ASSTEX's production sites.

USAID's Preparedness, Planning and Economic Security Program additionally provides training in management, marketing and sales for 137 small- and medium-sized companies. USAID also helps these companies update marketing and branding materials and earn quality certificates required for entry to key international markets in order to expand sales.

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