



SUCCESS STORY

Media-Monitoring Wizards Form Company in Kosovo

“USAID changed our way of doing business,” says Arber Ibrahim, 33. “We give to clients the tools to make their lives easier,” he says.



Photo: USAID Young Entrepreneurs Program

Arbër Ibrahim, PrimeDB’s Director. Arbër and his partner, leveraged their experience working at Kosovo’s national broadcaster to launch the young country’s first comprehensive media-monitoring firm.

Arbër Ibrahim and Korab Zhuja have a finger on the pulse of Kosovo’s dynamic media market. In a little over a year’s time, the business partners (and cousins) have established Kosovo’s only comprehensive media monitoring company. Their firm, PrimeDB, offers a professional service sought by anyone with a need to know what the local Albanian-language media are saying about everyone and everything. PrimeDB’s 12 employees monitor Kosovo’s main television, radio, print and online news sources 24/7. The firm also digitizes every word, sound and image.

USAID, through its Young Entrepreneurs Program that started in September 2010 through September 2013, contributed to the firm’s growth with a 10,000 Euro grant that bought a 200 page-per-minute digital scanner and added to its 60-terabyte server capacity. The assistance also helped formalize what had been a virtual firm, by nudging the partners to lease formal office space.

PrimeDB’s massive and growing database includes more than 60,000 hours of video, two million web pages and one million newspaper pages—all of it searchable with a few clicks of a mouse through a proprietary system built by Zhuja, 27.

The firm’s growing client base includes local banks, advertising firms and cable providers. PrimeDB also sells to the very media outlets that it monitors. “We give them the tools to make their lives easier,” Ibrahim says. PrimeDB’s sophisticated database allows users to do more than just keep tabs on media mentions. Users also track their own advertising spending—as well as the TV ad buys made by others. Customizable reports classify what ads appear, as well as where, when and how frequently, along with the estimated cost to air. Other tools track the broadcast of copyrighted films, songs and other material and measure the balance between positive and negative coverage across the media. “We sell intelligence—nothing else,” says Ibrahim, who eyes expanding into neighboring Albania, Macedonia and, eventually, the rest of the former-Yugoslavia.

The two entrepreneurs have yet to draw salaries; they pour all of their profits into the firm.

USAID's Young Entrepreneurs Program is designed to assist Kosovo's new and emerging entrepreneurs, ages 18 – 35. The Young Entrepreneurs Program recognizes that young entrepreneurs need more than mere training—they need capital and real-time support during the critical early business start-up period. To achieve this, the program provides business start-up matching grants and financing options with practical business training and sustained, hands-on coaching services for fledgling enterprises.