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Putting Ideas to Work

New Perspectives for Women

The *New Perspectives for Women* project is implemented in the Republic of Moldova by Winrock International with financial support provided by the U.S. Government through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The program strives to create new opportunities for women ages 16-25 through a complex network of economic empowerment and crisis intervention programming and assistance services implemented through Regional Support Centers serving rural clients across Moldova.

EMBRACING MOLDOVAN CUSTOMS

Young Entrepreneur Launches Traditional Costume Business

Balti — Life in a single-mother household can be a challenge anywhere, but it can be especially daunting in a country like Moldova, which is undergoing a long and difficult economic transition that has rendered government unable to provide even the most basic social safety net. This reality is all too familiar for Balti resident Margarita Cucosh, who has been struggling to raise her two children on the approximately \$60 monthly salary she earns as a handicraft teacher. Last year, ongoing financial difficulties led Margarita's daughter Stela, a 19-year-old student, to consider going abroad in search of work in order to better meet the family's needs. Before making such an important decision, however, Stela decided to visit the Balti Regional Support Center (RSC), which she had learned about through an announcement posted in her vocational technical school. During the visit, Stela learned about the potential risks of employment abroad, participated in an "Am I an Entrepreneur?" training, and received free individual consultations from the Center's psychologist.



Photo: Veaceslav Balan, Information Coordinator / New Perspectives for Women
Stela presents the business plan she developed during the NPW training course

"What impressed me most about the people at RSC was their willingness to take the time to answer all my questions. They were very patient and made sure I understood what I needed to know [about starting a business]."

The initial support and information she received prompted Stela to reconsider the possible options for improving her family's economic situation. She decided to stay in Moldova and work towards opening her own small business, and enrolled in the RSC's long-term entrepreneurship course, which provided her with practical knowledge and skills related to starting and managing micro- and small businesses. With support from the trainer, she drafted a business plan for a sewing enterprise that would make traditional Moldovan costumes. By the end of the course, Stela had completed her business plan and began the process to register her new business as a limited liability company. Next, Stela borrowed a small amount of money from an acquaintance to buy three sewing machines and basic furniture for the enterprise. Another acquaintance provided space for the business at no cost, allowing Stela to keep start-

up costs low. Shortly after opening her business, Stela received approximately \$800 worth of orders for her products. She hired three apprentices - all from the NPW target group - to meet this demand.

Stela is currently working on creating samples of her work that will help her to better market her products to prospective buyers. The RSC in Balti continues to provide support to Stela in growing and strengthening her new business. Through the Center, Stela has established contacts within the Handicrafts Union of Moldova, through which she expects to receive future product orders. The Union has also offered to assist with additional equipment if the future volume of orders for Stela's products will require her to expand existing operations. In reference to her experience at the Balti RSC, Stela says, "What impressed me most about the people at RSC was their willingness to take the time to answer all my questions. They were very patient and made sure I understood what I needed to know [about starting a business]."