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WINROCK
INTERNATIONAL
Putting Ideas to Work

New Perspectives for Women

ORPHANS HELPED TO START A NEW LIFE

Vocational training enables young institutionalized women to lead independent lives

In the spring of 2006, as a result of a presentation on the threat of human trafficking to students at a public boarding school for orphans, several instances of attempted trafficking recruitment were brought to the attention of staff of the USAID-funded New Perspectives for Women (NPW) project. The students of the school, which is located in a village in northern Moldova, explained how young men would come by the school just prior to graduation and promise the female students jobs abroad, with all the travel expenses paid, including passports and visas.

In response, NPW organized a joint visit to the students with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in order to investigate the claims further. In addition, NPW's Regional Support Center in Balti initiated an integrated program of trafficking awareness and economic empowerment assistance to the students, including trainings in finding employment here at home versus the myths and realities about working abroad, voluntary consultations with trained psychologists, and interactive discussions with the girls in the graduating class.



Photo: Tatiana Puga, Balti Regional Center

Dorina Verbovski (left) and Ina Balan (right) at work at the job they received as a result of USAID vocational training.

As a result of these interventions, the girls decided not to accept the potential traffickers' assistance in going abroad. But because graduates of Moldovan boarding schools lose their housing privileges, and orphans usually have nowhere to go and nobody to look after them, NPW utilized both its own resources and those of its partners to assist 12 of these students at this critical time. NPW provided three of the most vulnerable female graduates with vocational training, including a two-month tailoring course and three-month, paid internship with a local apparel manufacturer. The project covered the cost of housing for the girls during the training and secured donated food for them from a private charity, and the employer provided them with full-time employment upon completion of the internship. As one of the girls, Ina Balan, recently remarked, "At the boarding school all the decisions were made for me, but now I feel that my life depends on me and I can make decisions about my future."

Subsequently, five additional female and three male graduates were referred to the recently-opened USAID Youth Reintegration Center in Soroca, where they are presently provided with housing, meals, and employment.

Unfortunately, attempted trafficking efforts like those identified here are not uncommon. Traffickers know that many of these orphans have no home to return to upon graduation, and no money with which to support themselves until they are able to find work. Thus, traffickers prey on young people like these with false promises of well-paid jobs in glamorous foreign locations. Therefore, USAID will continue to work closely with boarding schools in order to ensure that orphans and other particularly vulnerable young women have information on, and access to, opportunities to protect and support themselves here in their native country.

Pull quote:

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