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EMPOWERING WOMEN, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND REFUGEES IN MOLDOVA

PROJECT IMPLEMENTED BY WOMEN'S LAW CENTRE WITH THE FINANCIAL
SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND (UNDEF).



Angelina Zaporozjan-Pîrgari,
Executive Director and Founder of the
Women's Law Centre

Real change leading to gender equality starts with each and every one of us, through conscious choices and daily actions that build respect, resilience, inclusion, and balance in our communities.

Within the project “Empowering Women, Local Communities, and Refugees in Moldova” we aim at contributing to strengthening equal participation of women and men in order to enhance gender equality at local level through important initiatives for local communities.

We are grateful to our partners in the regions, to the women, men, community leaders and active young people, who have proven through their involvement that they are genuine drivers of change. During the two years, they participated actively in the project

activities to transform their communities, where inequalities are most visible, bringing balance and vision for an inclusive and prosperous society through innovative models tailored to the local context.

The time we are living in, shows we need more collaboration and mutual respect between genders, generations and cultural identities. Education, men's involvement in family life, support for women affected by violence and the development of specialised services are all steps towards more balanced relationships and healthier communities.

The results of this project are clear proof that change is possible if we work together, with perseverance, confidence and courage.

OUT LOUD ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: LUDMILA AFTENI, CONSTANTIN LUNGU

Education for gender equality starts at home, develops in school and comes to life in the community.

In Causeni, our starting point was the reality that in families, at school and in the community, there is little and rare discussion about what gender equality means. Parents admit they don't know how to respond to the challenges. Teachers want to support students but don't always have the tools. Young people ask many questions but have few spaces where they feel listened too.

This Project was about balance between telling and listening, between theory and real life. In our activities, we brought to the forefront information and experiences that transformed the way community members perceive gender equality. We created contexts in which people felt safe to ask questions, express their opinion and sometimes change their outlook.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

- | | |
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|  Themed workshops for parents and educators |  Raising awareness in the local media |
|  Interactive sessions on equity, identity and gender stereotypes for young people |  Workshop for managers of educational institutions on good practices in integration of gender education in schools |

RESULTS

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|--|--|
| 80 parents and educators trained in gender equality | 30 staff members of educational facilities trained |
| 89 young people involved in awareness-raising workshops | 2000 community members informed about gender equality |
| 13 young mothers supported to assert themselves | |

We focused on transformation and succeeded to prove that gender equality is not just a theoretical concept, but a reality that comes to life when the whole community understands and lives it. Parents have learned to communicate with their children more gently. Teachers

have found creative ways to introduce this subject into their classes. Young people, the bravest ones, discovered that it is natural to ask questions and speak openly about subjects of one's interest.

VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

„This activity helped us realise that failure to act timely could lag gender education. It is still not too late to start educating our boys and girls to understand how beautiful it is that we are different and complement each other.”

Ion, father

„This is a project that emphasized how important it is to be aware of the diversity and uniqueness of the human being.”

Denisa, a student in the 11th grade



„This was an experience that changed my perspective”, Daniel, a student in the 11th grade

For Daniel, participation in this project was a revelation. He hadn't expected some discussions about gender and stereotypes to make him question his own beliefs. *„I understood what the differences and similarities between genders are, and how much stereotypes can influence our life. This experience has helped me consider things from different perspectives. As a result, I've become more empathic and mindful of how we talk to each other about who we are and who we could become.”*

For him, this dialogue was the beginning of a shift in perspective, and when young people look beyond clichés, the community as a whole stands to benefit.

CIMIŞ AND LIA

– EQUALITY THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: ANASTASIA RUSU, ANDREI RAILEANU

Equality is about responsible and committed equal participation that will contribute to harmony in the family and the community.

In 2024, in the Cimislia district, traditional ideas about the roles of women and men were still deeply rooted in the community. Women's participation in public life was low, and discussions about gender equality often provoked misunderstandings or reluctance.

The project started from the clear goal to create a favourable environment for promoting gender equality and social, educational and economic inclusion of women and young people in the Cimislia district, as well as from the need to communicate openly about what gender equality really means.

Our aim was to speak about what equality means in reality, in a way that everyone could understand - it is not about confrontation or competition but rather about shared responsibility and equitable participation. But, above all, we wanted to listen. Therefore, we conducted a learning exercise where women, young people, authorities and NGOs took their first steps towards the community where every voice counts. We succeeded in establishing connections between generations, between authorities and citizens, between civic initiative and institutional support.

ACTIVITIES THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Online campaign with the influencer Doina Danielean, reaching over 1500 people, opened the discussion about stereotypes in the language of the young people
- Personal development course for 20 women – the starting point of the community “I want. I can. I succeed”
- Summer camp for 20 young people from 3 communities – sessions about leadership, equality, courage
- Workshops with LPAs and CSOs – resulted in 4 partnership agreements and a Plan to Ensure Gender Equality
- “Youth for =lity” video festival – an exercise of honesty and courage
- 2025–2026 Youth Plan, developed with the involvement of young people, the District Council and the Youth Centre – sets out clear directions for civic education and the involvement of youth in the community

LESSONS LEARNED

Gender equality will not appear overnight and cannot be imposed by force. It is built step by step, with patience. As an implementation team, we have learned that we have to listen to people's fears, albeit they stem from old bias, and to respond gently. Young people have proved they can be a real engine for change if we give them confidence and allow them to express themselves. And women in our villages, so humble and strong, have a huge potential that gets revealed when they are supported.

IMPACT STORY

“The fall of 2024 changed my perceptions and habits. Why? Due to the fact that I became a member of the **“I want. I can. I succeed”** community, where we accomplish great things together. We met in a workshop and joined our ideas and visions to create safe spaces where every woman in Cimislia is encouraged to believe in herself and to follow her path with confidence. Together we decided we will no longer be just viewers, but will support each other to grow and make our voices heard.”

Irina Coropceanu, a member of the “I want. I can. I succeed” community



GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ART AND ACTION PLANS

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: ANASTASIA FUNICA, ALEXANDRU CARAMAN

It is not enough to speak about gender equality, it is important to take action, to debunk the myths and contribute to change right where we are.

To tackle the subject of gender equality in Criuleni, we used arts in an initiative that united teenagers, teachers, women, local activists and young artists. Driven by the desire to break down deep-rooted stereotypes in society, within the activities conducted in the Project, we spoke out loud about things that often remain unspoken.

We wanted to find out what the community in Criuleni knows about gender equality and how they actually perceive it. By questioning citizens in 5 localities of the district, we found out that many of the myths about gender equality are passed down from generation to generation and are impregnated in our culture. Understanding that it is easier to educate than to change mindsets, we decided to work with school students and organised a forum theatre tour in all 5 localities targeted by the project. Students from the

Hrusova Gymnasium staged real-life situations and invited the audience to reflect. This was an excellent exercise of imagination where everyone had the chance to rewrite the ending. To reinforce the knowledge gained from the performances, the students were challenged to participate in a contest of essays in which they described gender equality as they understand it.

Gender inequality is a factor that directly influences gender-based violence. Out of a desire to live in informed communities, we have organized a series of information and awareness sessions dedicated to members of local communities, specialists, teachers, and active young people, in order to bring to the forefront not only the harsh realities of violence, but also the solutions needed for prevention and intervention.

OBJECTIVES REACHED

- Increased awareness of gender stereotypes among young people
- Social and entrepreneurial skills developed for 15 women in rural area
- High school students and teachers involved in participative education-through-art actions

- Action Plan developed to promote gender equality in Criuleni district

- Opinion poll on gender myths
- Forum theatre plays staged in high schools

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Contest of essays about stereotypes and equality
- Information sessions about domestic and gender-based violence
- Coverage of the topic by local media
- Local Action Plan for gender equity developed

RESULTS

350+ questionnaires

5 plays staged

200+ students trained
to become gender
equality ambassadors

45 women informed
about domestic
violence

Due to the sessions dedicated to personal and economic development, women participating in the project activities gained confidence that they can be strong and became more aware of their own potential, courageous in making decisions and determined to build a future where their role matters.



VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

“„Equality between women and men must become a foremost objective for the Republic of Moldova. It is not just about equal rights on paper, it is also about equitably shared responsibilities in family and professional life. This is the only way to raise living standards and build communities where all citizens matter.

Women have the same capabilities as men and it is important for them to be involved in all areas. We can no longer tolerate the idea that a woman's place is only in the kitchen, in silence, putting up with violence or disrespect, because a financially independent woman is a woman who is self-confident, able to support her family, make decisions, and inspire. I strongly believe that when we support women, we support the whole community.”

Victoria Cazac, Secretary, Onitcani Mayor's Office, Criuleni district



GENDER EQUALITY –EQUAL CHANCES FOR A MORE HARMONIOUS LIFE

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: PAVEL GOIMAN, ALA GUTU

Gender equality is about more than just balance – it is about the belief that every woman can build the future for herself and her community.

Many women dream of turning their passions into business to benefit them and their communities. However, gender stereotypes, lack of institutional support and limited resources prevent them from taking the first step towards change. Our project started from the desire to create an enabling environment where gender equality is not just a theoretical subject, but a reality that is accessible, supported and encouraged. It was designed as a springboard for women who want more independence, more confidence and more involvement. Through training, mentoring and practical exercises, women discovered not only what they can do, but also how they can do it step by step, at their own pace.

ACTIVITIES THAT SET THINGS IN MOTION

- Development of the Local Strategy for Gender Equality in Tirnova village - a participatory exercise involving citizens
- Information sessions for the students of "A. Mateevici" Theoretical High School - gender equality made simple for children
- SMM workshops for women
- Mentoring – finalizing and testing business plans
- Entrepreneurship course for young women

RESULTS

4

income-generating initiatives launched

16

business plans developed by the participating women

86

trained students became gender equality ambassadors

A local Strategy on Gender Activities for 5 years

Dozens of women have found the courage to launch income-generating activities

IMPACT STORY

„I dream of a speech therapy office for the children in Donduseni”, Mariana Popa, beneficiary.

Mariana is a speech therapist at a kindergarten in the town. Participation in the economic empowerment program offered her the framework to turn her dream into a real action plan: establishing her own practice where she would provide essential services to children with special needs living in the town and the neighbouring villages. Her initiative could significantly reduce the need for parents to travel to Balti for therapy and could become a concrete example of social entrepreneurship with a sustainable impact on the community.

“In the trainings I learned how to turn a need into a viable plan. I identified local solutions, including the possibility to rent a space, and I am ready to launch my service as a sole trader. Now I know exactly what to do.”

The project has demonstrated that gender equality is not just about laws or theory. It is about real opportunities, about the courage to try and about communities supporting their members. It takes people to build the road towards an equitable society and we met people who not only have been dreaming of change but have the courage to make it happen.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although along the way we encountered obstacles that prevented us from carrying out the activities as planned, the constant support of the team at the Women's Law Centre, the team spirit and openness of the people in the community helped us reshuffle. We rethought our steps, adjusted the content and we succeeded. This was the moment we understood the value of flexibility in a project, not just as a strategy, but also as an attitude.

- Sometimes the biggest obstacle is lack of belief that “it can be done”
- Women in rural areas have good ideas, they just need support
- Entrepreneurial education, combined with mentoring, can activate local potential



PARTNERSHIP FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: ADRIAN SMOLEAC, OXANA INDRICEAN

Start from the realities of your community and engage as many local stakeholders as possible. Even a small team can generate significant change if it has a clear vision.

Equal opportunities and respect for diversity are often treated as theoretical topics with too little connection to everyday life. In Floresti, we have proven that these values can become reality if we consider the needs of the community and involve key people in the process. Police officers, students, teachers, community leaders, and citizens have come together in a common effort to build an equitable environment, where everyone is seen, heard, and treated with dignity.

It all started from the understanding that, in many institutions, particularly in law enforcement, men are not sufficiently involved in discussions about gender equality and prevention of discrimination. As a result, prejudices remain unspoken but persistent. In addition, the lack of

training initiatives limits the potential for change. Our intention was to create a platform for constructive dialogue between the law enforcement bodies and the community and a training program was the perfect solution. Twenty female and male police officers were trained to become promoters of gender equality. They became local trainers, organised direct activities in the community and helped develop a local action plan to promote equality.

The project was about closeness and confidence that behind the uniform there is a human who can listen, support, and learn alongside others. This was the beginning of a partnership culture, where equality is not a slogan but a daily practice.

RESULTS IN FIGURES

20 police officers became local trainers

90 students involved in face-to-face sessions

30 participants in the public café "Be the Promoter of equal opportunities"

5 community activities carried out

150 citizens informed

50 participants in the community consultation round table

VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

"We understood that our role is not confined to law enforcement only. As police officers, we have the responsibility to be close to people, to listen and intervene with empathy. Now, beyond the facts I see real people, contexts, and needs."

Ana Medvetchi, senior officer of the Community Interaction Service, Public Security Division of the Floresti Police Inspectorate, a local trainer.

"For me, this project was a revelation. I learned how to communicate differently with people, being more open. Speaking about discrimination, it is important that we, the police, are the first to set an example, because change starts with each of us."

Radomir Magu, Deputy-Head of the Public Security Division, Commissioner.

For those involved, the project was not just a sequence of activities, but a process of approaching and mutual learning. It has built bridges between people and institutions, paving the way for an empathetic, sincere and natural relationship between police officers and the community. This was the beginning of a culture of respect, where people are seen beyond uniforms and differences no longer separate but bring people together.



EMPOWERING WOMEN, LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES IN GLODENI DISTRICT

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: ION CRUDU, CORINA POLINIUC

We started small, but managed to build a working model that can be replicated and adapted wherever support and solidarity are needed.

In Glodeni district, as in many other places in the country, domestic violence is a reality half-heartedly talked about. Many women face difficult situations and the lack of support or information leads them to believe they have to cope on their own.

The idea of the project originated from the desire to change this reality through closeness, listening, and simple but efficient solutions. In Glodeni, Ciuciulea, Iabloana, Cuhnesti and Hijdieni, capacity-building workshops were organised on "Multidisciplinary intervention in cases of domestic violence. Theoretical and practical aspects" for doctors, social workers, police officers and teachers – those who are

on the frontline when a person needs help. Strengthening their knowledge has become an important pillar of the project.

The project team also visited villages, talked to people and created contexts where hidden subjects could finally be talked about. The villages Fundurii Vechi, Limbenii Noi, Cajba, Dusmani and Ustia hosted information and awareness-raising sessions on domestic and gender-based violence. People were responsive and discussions sometimes turned into moments of deep sincerity and solidarity.

Apart from the events organised, the project has also enabled the collaboration between institutions. It has opened doors and laid the foundation for a local support network that will remain functional after this initiative is over and, above all it that has provided women with the information they need to take the first step towards a life free from violence. This network has become a platform for intervention and support, where each institution knows what to do, who to cooperate with and how to act in the best interest of the victim.

ACTIVITIES THAT CONSOLIDATED THE COMMUNITY

- Flashmob – raising awareness through dance, with the support of children from the Glodeni Creation Centre
- 5 workshops with specialists from multidisciplinary teams
- 5 information sessions in rural communities
- Reflection roundtable – planning for the future

IMPACT IN FIGURES

100+

direct beneficiaries, including victims, refugees, volunteers, and social workers

80+

specialists trained

10

collaboration partnerships concluded between the implementation team and the LPA

LESSONS LEARNED

- Change starts with listening and adaptation. We understood that effective solutions come as a result of understanding the realities of the community and offering answers tailored to people's needs.
- Collaboration and trust make the difference. The coordinated involvement of public institutions, civil society organisations, and local stakeholders ensures functional dynamics and strengthens the interventions on the ground.

IMPACT STORY

**„I no longer live in fear. Now I know where to go for help”,
Elena*, beneficiary.**

During the session organised in the village Cajba, Elena listened in silence. She remained withdrawn but interested in the topic. It wasn't until the second session that she dared to ask a question “about a friend”. This was the moment that changed her life.

After the information session she spoke to a specialist. She was guided to the available services, and that moment was the beginning of a real change in her life. She was able to break free from her abusive relationship, received emotional and informational support, and today she is one of the people who supports other women in the community. “*They listened without judging me. That moment I knew I was not alone.*”

*The name was changed to protect the beneficiary's identity.



VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY



„To prevent cases of violence and to provide real support to women, we need as many information activities as possible. A contemporary, well-informed woman, knows what her rights in the society are. And this means a better life, a more balanced family and children raised in a healthy environment.”

Stela Onutu, Mayor of the Glodeni town

EQUALITY THROUGH INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: ION DIGORI, MARGARITA TONU

Progress on gender equality in our community depends on continued education and awareness-raising. Changing mindsets will take time, but with small steps and everyone's active involvement, we will succeed in creating a community where every voice is heard, every dream has a chance to take shape, and opportunities are no longer limited by gender but rather determined by potential, respect, and dignity.

How to change a mindset? One should start with education, in school, at home, in the community. We aimed at promoting equal partnership in the family and encouraging men's involvement in domestic life, as well as supporting women to start social entrepreneurship activities to reduce gender stereotypes and increase community cohesion. Through the project implementation, we have proved that

working with young people, teachers and women active in the community makes change possible even where stereotypes seem hard to shake.

Carried out in two districts, Ialoveni and Orhei, the project united gymnasiums, youth centres, art schools, libraries, volunteers and authorities.

ACTIVITIES THAT MATTERED

Training courses for teachers and staff of youth centres

Interactive trainings for secondary school students in Viscauti and Carbuna

Media awareness and promotion campaign

Practical activity with volunteers at the Youth-Friendly Health Centre in Orhei

Drawing contest – "Parents' role in the family" - through the eyes of children

IMPACT IN FIGURES

300+

people directly involved in the activities

29

teachers trained in gender equality

45

children took part in the drawing contest

20

women trained in social entrepreneurship

3900+

people informed

Experience has shown that, although stereotypes are deep-rooted, they can be eliminated through education, positive role models and honest dialogue. The impact of our activities has just started to grow. In the gymnasiums of Carbuna and Viscauti, open discussion have started about what family partnerships mean, about involving men in raising children or about what a career without gender labels could look like. Female teachers have become examples of courage and perseverance, managing to transform their lessons into safe spaces for dialogue. Visual campaigns have created a strong reverberation, or if the community starts speaking about equality, it is a sign that change has taken root.



IMPACT STORY

„Education is the most powerful tool for change.”

For Ms. Aliona, a teacher at the Carbuna gymnasium, education is not just a job, it is a journey in which she tries to change mindsets in the classroom, the school and the community, day after day. She grew up in a family where roles were clearly divided, with men “leading” and women “taking care of the house”, and she knows how early gender beliefs are developed.

After participating in the program, she started with simple but courageous lessons about “genderless jobs”, family balance, and the courage to choose something different. She invited women entrepreneurs to speak to students, organised debates, and challenged children to think beyond labels.

The result? Students have become more responsive and more courageous to speak up. Boys say they dream of being engaged fathers, “not just bringing money home”. Ms. Aliona smiles when she recounts: *“That moment I knew we were not talking in vain. It is easier to educate this in children than in adult men, and I wholeheartedly believe in the younger generation. They understand that partnership is about choice, not obligation.”*

WEAVING SUCCESS – INNOVATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM: MIHAIL GANDRABURA, ALEXANDRINA URSU

Equality is about equal, responsible, and committed participation that will contribute to harmony within the family and the community.

Orhei

In Orhei, too many girls have been forced to give up on their dreams before they could speak about them. Poverty, lack of support and domestic violence have kept them away from education, stability, and confidence that they can succeed. The project has come as a concrete and courageous response to this reality, from the desire to give girls more than just a diploma, but rather an own direction and voice.

The intervention started with the modernisation of the education process at the Orhei Vocational School, with a focus on the Tailoring specialisation. A fully equipped laboratory was set up, the curriculum was updated with new modules relevant to the labour market, and both teachers and female students participated in trainings on social entrepreneurship and project management. The focus was on hands-on learning, encouraging creativity and building skills that could be leveraged after the project ends.

ACTIVITIES THAT HAVE BUILT TRUST

- Curriculum modernised to meet the current needs on the job market
- Trainings in social entrepreneurship and project management
- New methodological support for teachers
- Information campaign for school girls, including in the Roma community

INSPIRING RESULTS

120

120 teachers, female students and girls in the community directly involved

18→52

Increase from 18 to 52 female students enrolled in the course in just one year

- A modern and fully functional tailoring laboratory

LESSONS LEARNED

Gender equality is about all of us - boys learning to be empathetic, teachers bringing gender equality topics into the classroom, parents wanting to be role models for their children. Young people need to be listened to without judgement. Lessons about gender equality are not taught with chalk on the blackboard, they are felt in the way we look, listen and talk to each other.

IMPACT STORY

„I found my place, but most importantly I found my courage.”
Valentina*, a student at the Orhei Vocational School.

Originally, she chose to enrol with the Vocational School because of necessity – there she had dormitory and food, and this meant a huge help for her family. But what she found there was much more than just material support. She discovered a new world where what you can do, learn and how you can become independent matters. She walked into a modern tailoring lab for the first time, she learned to sew, to create, to mend, and for the first time began to believe that, with the right tools, she could make a future for herself.

* The name was changed to protect the identity of the beneficiary.



STRONG MEN IN SUPPORT OF EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

PROJECT TEAM: VICTOR SPINEI, ELENA BOTSUL

Being equal does not mean competing but complementing each other for a life in harmony.

For a long time, the idea of gender equality was misunderstood in Soroca. Being associated with the decline of the male role or confused with controversial topics, this subject was often avoided. Men, especially fathers and future fathers, do not have spaces to discuss sincerely about their role in the family, child education and balance in a couple. Lack of initiatives to involve them actively in these topics contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes and absence of a culture of partnership in the family. At the same time, the education facilities in the district do not provide young people with any training on these essential topics.

Inspired by the “School of Fathers” program, the project came to fill this gap through a friendly and practical

approach, adapted to the local reality. From the very beginning, we set out to contribute to changing perceptions about gender equality by providing men in the town with a dedicated space for training, reflection and involvement in family life and parenting. The establishment of a training centre for men within the “Taurus” Martial Arts Club, provided participant with a space where fathers, coaches, and community leaders learned how they can be present in a different way in the lives of their children and families, and could explore the role of father, parental responsibilities, family planning and empathetic communication. The changes observed in fathers’ behaviour, the interest of mothers and the openness of local authorities confirm the need to educate men and women in the spirit of family partnership.

ACTIVITIES THAT BROUGHT DIALOGUE TO LIFE



The Men’s Training Centre renovated and furnished



Interactive sessions with fathers conducted



The “Fathers’ School” program was adapted to the local specificities, with the involvement of specialists in the fields of education, psychology and medicine



Father-child activities through play



Public events involving Local Public Authorities and community stakeholders organised

IMPACT IN FIGURES

71

people directly involved in the project

7

children involved in hands-on activities

40

fathers and mothers reconsidered their views about gender equality

10/6

10 local actors and 6 coaches became promoters of the message about family partnership



VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY

„The activities were friendly and had a positive emotional impact. We found out new information, techniques to find solutions for different family situations related to the upbringing of children” - a participating father.



LESSONS LEARNED

Men get involved when they are provided with a safe space where they are treated with respect and genuinely encouraged. A simple list of daily activities with the child can completely transform a family routine, and family partnership does not diminish masculinity, but rather assigns new meaning to it.

An example of involvement and integration is Elena Botsul herself, a member of the project team who came to Moldova as a refugee from Ukraine. In a short time, Elena not only became a member of the Soroca community, but also became one of the active voices in promoting gender equality and parent education. Her life experience, bravery and willingness to get involved turned into a genuine source of empathy and trust. Elena's story proved that solidarity and collaboration can transcend any borders and build lasting bridges between people.

SUSTAINABILITY

The training centre within the “Taurus” Club was not just a place for a couple of meetings, it is a space of the community. Here fathers, coaches, young people and specialists will be able to continue the discussions they have started, learn from each other and grow together. It is a place where men can find themselves and learn how to be more present in their children's lives. What we have started here does not end with this project, on the contrary, it has taken root, and the Soroca model can be replicated in any other part of the country, where there is a desire for change.

MAKE AN INFORMED CAREER CHOICE!

PROJECT TEAM: DUMITRU COZLOVSCHI, CRISTINA MELNYK

Choosing your path in life should not be determined by what others say about you, but rather by who you know you are. When girls are supported to dream, explore, and choose, they reclaim their freedom to be themselves, without limits and fear.

Stefan Voda

In Palanca, like in other locations in the country, girls grow up with the idea that some jobs are “not for them”, that dreaming too big is risky or that one’s professional future is actually about what others expect of them. The lack of female role models in different fields, social pressure and lack of access to counselling make them question their own choices.

The project “Make an Informed Career Choice!” was designed to change this reality. For six months, the initiative has been a support to over 400 young people, mainly young women, who have been encouraged to know themselves better, to dare to dream and to confidently choose the career path that suits them. From workshops on self-discovery and inspirational talks, up to visits to public institutions and local businesses, each activity provided a setting where girls were able to understand that success

is not about luck, but rather about choices made with the brain and the heart.

The project did not confine itself just to the girls in the village, it also reached out to the refugee girls, providing them not only with information, but also with the feeling that they are seen, they belong to the community and that, no matter where they come from, they can dream, learn and succeed. The involvement of Cristina Melnyk in the project team is a vivid and sincere proof thereof. A refugee from Ukraine who settled in Palanca a couple of years ago, Cristina has become not only a model of successful integration, but also a source of inspiration for the girls in the community. Her courage to start afresh and her active involvement have brought additional significance to the project. Cristina has shown by her own example that roots are not measured in years, but in deeds.

ACTIVITIES THAT CHANGED PERSPECTIVES

- 22 educational and interactive activities in Palanca and outside the village
- Motivational visits to institutions and businesses, including the Border Police
- Workshops with parents and teachers on supporting career choices
- Practical CV writing activities, mock interviews, self-evaluation
- Community campaigns for information and promoting reading
- Bringing personal development books to the school library collection

IMPACT IN FIGURES

- 40** young women ready to take the first steps towards their desired career
- 30** parents empowered to support their children’s career choices
- 7** locations visited during vocational tours
- 493** people involved
- 20** teachers have become promoters of career guidance.

LESSONS LEARNED

Young women need guidance, but they also need freedom to explore. It is not enough to talk to them about careers, we need to help them understand what suits them, encourage them to dream and give them the tools to build their own path. Vocational education, if empathetic and applied, becomes a support at crucial moments.

IMPACT STORY

„I realised I can combine what I like with a real job.“

Adriana, a student from Palanca, passionate about sports.

Participation in the carrier guidance tour was a turning point for her. The visit to the East Regional Directorate of the Border Police showed her that she could combine movement, responsibility and the desire to help in one job – that of a border guard. *“It was for the first time I felt that something really suited me.”*

In the practical workshops she learned how to write her CV, how to present herself during a job interview and how to define her goals. Now she is determined to follow this path and is convinced that her dream is achievable.

“This project gave me the courage to say: Yes, I can!”





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