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MOLDOVA

FIRST PERSON

From Housemaid To Entrepreneur

Family's quality of life increases as woman fulfills goal to run a store



Photo: Comrat Support Center/ Svetlana Panaitova

Oxana Arabadji shows off a pair of the high-end shoes she sells at her store in Comrat.

"I am very happy that I am at home here with my children and family," said Oxana Arabadji, who was encouraged to open a shoe boutique after attending a entrepreneurship training for women.

When Oxana Arabadji and her husband separated, she needed to find work outside of the home. Having married at age 18, she had no work experience and couldn't find employment.

Desperate to support her children, she joined the estimated 40% of working-age Moldovans who work abroad. Leaving her children with her mother, she took a housekeeping position in Turkey. After two years, she saved enough money to return home.

Grateful to be reunited with her family, Oxana was determined to find work in Moldova. She had an idea to start her own business, but didn't know where to begin.

Then she heard about the USAID Regional Support Center (RSC) for women at risk that opened in the nearby town of Comrat. She seized the opportunity to participate in the center's free courses and attended a two-day training, "Am I an Entrepreneur?"

Together with the RSC staff, Oxana developed a business plan to import and sell footwear. She used her savings to buy a kiosk with a large glass display window and rented a space at the local market. She then took out \$5,000 in loans to purchase seasonal footwear. With her business underway, Oxana is successfully making her loan payments on schedule and receives continued support from RSC staff to solve management challenges.

Thanks to the USAID Regional Support Center, Oxana is now a self-sufficient businesswoman. She earns enough money to support her family, and anticipates that she will be able to increase her income significantly as she expands her customer base and pays off her loans. Moreover, she is reunited with her children, and her family's quality of life has greatly improved.