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MOLDOVA

FIRST PERSON

Fashion Maven Takes On Milan

Expert advice guides ambitious designer to international market



Photo: Chemonics Int/ Marina Kaim

Georgeta Leahia displays some of the designs that helped catapult her from dreaming of fashion to running her own 40-person clothing company.

“USAID’s help in efficient workflow organization allowed us to fill our first significant order,” said Georgeta Leahia, a Moldovan designer and entrepreneur.

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Georgeta Leahia grew up wanting to be a clothing designer. By age 17, she had her first client. Encouraged by her early success, she left her native Moldova to attend the London College of Fashion. Returning home, she opened a small tailor shop, Georgeta Design, employing seven people and producing clothing for scores of local residents. By most standards, she was successful.

But Georgeta dreamed of accomplishing more – she wanted to grow her business.

The first step was to showcase her clothing line to a broader, international audience. Under a USAID project to improve the export competitiveness of the Moldovan apparel industry, Georgeta developed her first professional marketing materials, which she brought along with her collection to Milan’s Ready to Show Exhibition, one of the largest international clothing exhibitions. There, she established contacts with several foreign buyers, giving her the opportunity to expand her business outside of Moldova.

Though Georgeta always has been a talented designer, she lacked the production skills to adequately meet foreign buyers’ needs. With USAID assistance, an international expert provided her with supply chain technical assistance, enabling her to improve production flow and take on new business.

Thanks to Georgeta’s talent for design, the connections she made in Milan, and USAID assistance, Georgeta’s business is thriving. She still owns the tailor shop, but she has built a new, industrial-size enterprise called Actual Confectii, which employs 40 people and has the capacity to expand. She recently completed an order of 3,000 pieces in three styles for fashion giant Max Mara.

“The experience of working with Max Mara, in combination with the advanced production organization assistance provided by USAID, will pave the way to making my dream of becoming a full package designer come true,” says Georgeta, who is currently busy creating a new collection for the next trade show.