



## Starting a Successful Career as a Businesswoman

Guncha Nurmuamedova is a highly motivated 31-year-old woman from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Faced with the desire to start her own business, she lacked the skills needed to realize her ambition.

Guncha formerly worked as a teacher at the Turkemen Polytechnic Institute. But was drawn to the private sector and wanted to explore the possibility of opening her own business. She heard about the Enterprise Development Project (EDP) courses sponsored by USAID from Sofia Shaihullina, EDP's Business Trainer, and invested her own money to enroll in two EDP courses - Preparing a Business Plan, and Legal Environment for Small Businesses.

Guncha learned vital skills for starting a successful venture in Turkmenistan, such as company legal requirements, methodologies for strategic planning, effective marketing strategies, managing business finances, and the fundamentals of accounting. Looking back, she acknowledges that the courses "played a crucial role in my future career as a businesswoman." The project not only helped make Guncha's vision a reality, but gave her the business knowledge to ensure that her venture has been a resounding success.



Photo: Enterprise Development Project/Staff

Guncha Nurmuamedova (right) opened her own business and ventured into three diversified business opportunities after attending a USAID course.

The USAID's EDP project operates in Turkmenistan and throughout Central Asia by working with small and medium-sized businesses to build long term capacity. In Turkmenistan, the project offers a range of short courses on business, designed to give entrepreneurs the knowledge and skills required to succeed in private enterprise.

Initially, Guncha focused her studies on opening a factory to extract melon seed oil. The course gave her the necessary analytic tools to conclude, "the melon seed oil operations were neither profitable nor sustainable." Undeterred by this set back, she then pursued another business idea - a construction goods retailer in Mary City, supplying local trade and consumers with a broad range of construction goods.

In early 2002, she received her legal registration and opened the store with start-up capital of \$200. After slow trading initially, her business model started to attract an increasing number of customers. She also benefited from the seasonal rises in demand for construction products, giving her up to 50% increase in revenue during such periods. In just her first year of trading, the business net worth increased by a staggering 1500%.

***"USAID's course on 'Preparing a Business Plan' played a crucial role in my future career as a businesswoman."***

***- Guncha Nurmuamedova***

In addition to her becoming a construction retailer, Guncha saw opportunities for foreign trade in the handicrafts sector. Working in association with other craftswomen in Ashgabat, she identified a niche market in England and began producing "Turkmen toy camels." In 2003, her sales were very strong with a revenue stream from the toy camel product exceeding \$5,000 per year.