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MOLDOVA

SUCCESS STORY

Spring Water, Straight from the Tap

Water is piped into a village's homes for the first time



Photo: USAID/Olha Myrtsalo

Irina Cojocararu draws water from the tap in her house instead of walking kilometers to fill buckets.

"It's been a great educational process for us," says Mayor Nadejda Darie. "People have finally understood that they could make changes with their own hands."

Telling Our Story

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Irina Cojocararu drinks a glass with crystal clear water from the tap in her house with pleasure and pride. Now she doesn't have to walk kilometers from her home in Zberoaia to fill buckets from small springs. Nor does she have to fall back on the yellowish well water her family uses for irrigation and watering cattle.

A small village of 2,000, Zberoaia is, like many of Moldova's rural communities, striving to cope with basic service problems inherited from the Soviet system, such as deteriorated roads, no central gas system and scarce potable water resources. More than 80 percent of Moldova's primary drinking water sources are highly polluted, and much of the surface water is contaminated with nitrates.

But unlike other communities, Zberoaia has a great natural advantage: underground springs of excellent quality located just five kilometers from the village. When Mayor Nadejda Darie initiated a USAID-supported project to pipe the spring water into town, some residents were skeptical, but 467 out of 630 households signed on to participate. Each household contributed 250 leis — about \$20 — for the distribution equipment and pledged five days of work to dig a 15-kilometer trench to bring the spring water to village houses. To ensure long-term sustainability, USAID helped to set up an automated billing system and furnished a maintenance shop with tools and spare parts needed to provide and high-quality consumer service and keep the system operational.

Zberoaia's mayor firmly believes that the water project would never have been fully successful if not for USAID's help. "It enlightened our minds; it taught our 'baby' to walk."

Broad-based cooperation between the local mayor and the community turned a dream of many years into reality. Now Irina and her fellow villagers can enjoy pure potable water equal or better in quality than most European countries. Through the project the villagers also learned that their ingenuity and initiative can actually make a difference.

"It's been a great educational process for us. People have finally understood that they could make changes with their own hands," said the mayor.