



SUCCESS STORY

Project Gives Birth to Community Spirit

Working together, a community renovates a maternity ward



Inga Marusceac with her newborn daughter Tatiana at the renovated maternity ward in Telenesti, Moldova.

“We worked hard to prove that community spirit is natural, and that we are able to organize ourselves and our community to solve local challenges,” says Vera Bivol, who helped motivate others to renovate a maternity ward.

Telling Our Story
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For years, mothers in the city of Telenesti in central Moldova gave birth in an antiquated maternity ward. With no bathing facilities or in-room sinks and harsh fluorescent lighting, it was not a welcoming place to bring new life into the world. In fact, poor hygiene conditions and lack of funding had led officials to slate it for closure. In its prime, the ward had served over 6,000 patients each year, playing an important role in the community. So when it faced closure, Dr. Alexei Bivol and his wife, Vera, decided to do something.

With help from USAID, Alexei and Vera united fellow health care professionals, patients, citizens, businesses and local government to improve the maternity ward. They received an initial grant of \$18,000 from USAID and its partners, and activists mobilized to collect cash donations from residents and businesses, using the slogan, “You are a citizen of this community too.” Within six months 90 sinks, 11 toilets, three showers, and new corridor lighting were installed, and water supply and sewage system pipes were replaced. More than 250 former patients and their families contributed their time and expertise. Encountering

reluctance from the local electric company, technically savvy volunteers installed new lighting fixtures and wiring themselves. Additionally, the hospital’s medical staff launched an advocacy campaign to raise awareness of women’s reproductive health rights and provided seminars on hygiene. As a result, the ward stayed open. Moreover, new mothers can now shower, bathe their newborns, and go home with healthy babies and lifelong hygiene habits.

The spirit of community involvement lasted well beyond the project. Two new citizen initiative groups and two local organizations have formed in Telenesti, Peceste, and Rezina. The government has even increased its contribution to support the renovation of the hospital’s other sections to \$4,500. One citizen offering comments in the project scrapbook remarked, “We made it possible, and we should make sure it is lasting.” Alexei, who first challenged his fellow citizens to be active in their community notes, “It seems like this will go on. Citizens, businessmen, and even the authorities have gotten involved and donations, assistance, support, and new ideas keep coming in.”

Photo: USAID