

**PROJECT: Cooperative Agreement No. 121-A-00-99-00705-00
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, UKRAINE**

Implementer: Winrock International

Final Report covering February 12, 1999 – July 31, 2004

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WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

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The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) project came to a close July 30, 2004 after more than five years in operation.

I. BACKGROUND

Winrock has worked with women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the former Soviet Union since 1992 as a founding member of the NIS-US Women's Consortium, a coalition of more than 300 women's organizations. Winrock International and the Consortium cooperated with women's NGOs in Ukraine to strengthen their institutional capacity, leadership skills, and regional and international networking abilities. Additionally, small business training was offered to increase women's entrepreneurship skills. In February 1999, Winrock International was awarded support from USAID/Kyiv for a three-year, \$2.1 million initiative, the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) project. The Consortium, its Ukrainian member organizations, the US Peace Corps and the International Renaissance Foundation were key partners of the WEE project and worked together to:

- 1) increase women's economic opportunities;
- 2) engage women in the national policy debate on the transition to a democratic, market-based economy.

The project received additional funding for a two-year extension in April 2002. In April 2004, Winrock received a three month-extension using obligated funds in order to follow up on opportunities that arose and to maximize project impact.

II. PROJECT GOAL

The goal for the WEE project was:

To enable women to be more active participants in Ukrainian economic life and to advocate in a coordinated fashion for the transition to a market-based economy.

The project has addressed the needs of Ukrainian women for entrepreneurship training, self-employment, and access to financing. WEE has also strengthened women's organizations that work for policy change at the local and national levels in order to increase women's economic opportunities. Women's Business Support Centers (WBSCs) conducted courses for women in entrepreneurship, with partner credit unions providing access to credit in Chernihiv, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Mykolayiv, and Simferopol. Across Ukraine, women have benefited from three-day trainings in basic entrepreneurial skills known as Empowerment Training. In addition, in a program co-sponsored by the International Renaissance Foundation, grants were made to Ukrainian NGOs to conduct activities contributing to project goals. As a follow-on to the activities of one grantee, an assessment and training activity was conducted by Aid to Artisans in the Carpathian region. Through the Civic Initiatives program, entrepreneurs and NGOs have gained valuable experience advocating for their interests before political and economic decision-making bodies. East-East study tours have enabled female entrepreneurs, business educators and advocacy groups in Ukraine and Poland to share lessons learned. Finally, in Belarus, a community development project ended in February 2002, and in spring 2004, an economic empowerment anti-trafficking initiative was completed.

Highlights over the life of project include:

- 1,086 women trained through the WEE project have started or expanded businesses;
- Of these 1,086 businesses, 696 were opened or expanded by WBSC graduates; 235 by participants of Empowerment Trainings; and 155 by beneficiaries of programs conducted by WEE grantees;
- WEE trainees have created 2,445 jobs, 1,633 of them filled by women;
- 1,171 WEE trainees have found employment;
- A total of 2,274 women have graduated from long-term trainings at the 6 WBSCs;
- 1,753 women have participated in three-day Empowerment Trainings across Ukraine.

III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Over the life of the project, the Strategic Objectives to which WEE contributed changed more than once, the final SOs being:

- *Accelerated Growth of SMEs and Agriculture (SO2)*
- *Improved Social Conditions and Health Status (SO5)*

An Indicator Chart quantifying contributions to these SOs is attached (*Attachment 1*).

IV. PERFORMANCE

- A. Enhanced Management of SMEs and Agriculture (IR 2.2),
1. SMEs receiving business development support (IR 2.2.1);*
- B. Conditions for targeted vulnerable groups are improved ((IR 5.2),
1. Vulnerable women locate employment (IR 5.2.2)*

(performance indicator measured by: a] number of graduates that start a new business or expand an existing one, inc. by age; b] number of jobs created by graduates; c] number of women hired by graduates; d] number of women who locate employment, inc. by age; e] number of long-term and short-term training courses provided; f] number of women trained; g] number of professional trainers graduating from TOTs; h] number of walk-in clients at WBSCs; and i] new business associations created)

The WEE project conducted two kinds of business trainings: an intensive long-term business skills course offered at the Women’s Business Support Centers; and three-day short-term Empowerment Training seminars on “How To Start Your Own Business” conducted both at the WBSCs and by trainers who travel across Ukraine.

WOMEN’S BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTERS

At the heart of the WEE project has been the establishment of six Women’s Business Support Centers. To create the WBSC network, Winrock cooperated with existing NGOs chosen on a competitive basis. Criteria which included: demonstrated history offering services to women; demonstrated experience managing donor funds; training experience; good working relationships with local government. In addition, Winrock sought areas where unemployment was particularly high; where similar projects were not operating; and where potential partner credit unions were operating. (The Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kharkiv WBSCs began operating in Year 1; The Chernihiv and Mykolayiv WBSCs became active early in 2000; The Simferopol WBSC joined the project in 2002.)

The range of services they offer and their impact in their communities exceeds the expectations held at the beginning of the project. The centers have become well known in their regions as serious providers of business services, as organizations that help women find alternatives to work abroad, and as leaders in policy development in their regions. As a result of the project, a strong network of organizations working on promotion of women’s economic empowerment has been created across Ukraine. In addition, through participation in the project, the WBSCs themselves have grown professionally – they increased their training portfolio (competence in a wider range of training topics and approaches), refined initiatives such as consulting and mentoring, and developed partnerships with local authorities, including oblast administrations and employment centers.

The main tool of the WBSCs in empowering women to become entrepreneurs is the long-term business training. In addition, the WBSCs offer legal consultations; short-term trainings; have job placement services; arrange mentorships and internships; and developed follow-on activities for graduates, including clubs and other networking opportunities. Peace Corps Volunteers made substantial contributions at all centers, for example, as trainers, in participant selection, in pursuing other funding sources, and in teaching business English.

The **long-term training course** offered at the WBSCs was designed to strengthen women's entrepreneurial skills and their ability to access credit through an intensive 250-hour business education course conducted over two to three months at the WBSCs. The total number of graduates to date is 2,274. On the basis of business plans, graduates were eligible to apply for small loans from the Credit Union Program through partner credit unions in the corresponding oblasts. The WBSCs have served 16,396 clients since they opened their doors in the summer of 1999, which demonstrates the impact of WEE in expanding access to business information.

WBSCs conducted **short-term trainings** as a means of reaching women who were for various reasons unable to take advantage of the long-term course. This three-day introductory entrepreneurship training was initially developed for a national team that conducted trainings in areas out of reach of the WBSCs (see Empowerment Training Program), but was successfully added to the programs of the WBSCs as well. Two TOTs (training of trainers) were conducted for the instructors and staffs of the WBSCs in provision of this training. The flexibility and relative low cost of the short-term training (and the improved skills and knowledge of the trainers) contributes to the sustainability of the WBSCs. Also, the WBSCs point out that women who have taken the short-term course are better prepared for the long-term course. The short-term courses are also a practical means of conducting outreach in rural areas and small towns since women from these areas rarely can manage to attend long-term courses organized in the oblast centers. While the WBSCs offered a range of short-term courses, depending on the strengths of local trainers (including marketing, personnel management, and bookkeeping), WEE kept statistics only for the three-day training developed by Winrock.

Training of Trainers for WBSCs trainers and instructors increased the professional skills and introduced new training methodologies and techniques of delivering the training on entrepreneurship to WBSC trainers. These TOTs also reinforced the interactive training methodology that has been so effective with the target audience of first-time women entrepreneurs, incorporating self-esteem, leadership and gender issues. They also benefited from a WEE project trainers manual that was reissued toward the end of the project, reflecting experience in the first three years of the project. The handbook *I Am a Successful Woman*, originally developed through the USAID funded Trafficking Prevention Project, was updated and adapted for use by the WBSCs with the aim of strengthening the confidence of women to take the first steps toward improving their lives. Its appeal is due to the care taken to present seemingly complicated business topics in a friendly manner, providing an alternative to commercially available manuals that intimidate the beginning entrepreneur or job searcher. The book includes information on current Ukrainian legislation; the role of business associations; credit unions; gender discrimination and sexual harassment; and other resources. The updated version also contains new success stories of clients from the Women's Business Support Centers.

WBSC coordination meetings were held approximately twice a year, sometimes in conjunction with the Trafficking Prevention Project (TPP). These meetings were opportunities to share successful strategies and brainstorm solutions to problems, to reinforce the goals of the project, and to discuss strategies for sustainability.

In the final quarter of the project, Winrock conducted a comprehensive survey of the WBSCs to identify lessons learned in providing first-time women entrepreneurs with the tools to start businesses and areas to be addressed in future donor interventions.

WBSC Survey – Lessons Learned

While the WBSCs enumerated their accomplishments, they note that the challenges are many in an economic climate that is not stable and with a government increasingly willing to cooperate but offering mostly information and in-kind support. The target group for the services of the WBSCs is a specific one – these are women, who while motivated, lack funds, self confidence, training, and experience. A main lesson learned is that the **interactive training method and atmosphere of the WBSCs**, where participants develop relationships that last beyond the course, are key elements of the success of the program. The WBSCs have found that preconceptions about the difficulty or even impossibility of starting a business are a major obstacle and that training methods that develop self-confidence are critical in overcoming these preconceptions. Also important are the other programs the WBSCs offer beyond the courses, such as mentoring, consultations, alumni clubs and internships, ensuring that graduates are supported beyond the last day of the course and benefit from a network of businesswomen.

Suggestions for the future based on WBSC experience include: adding short-term specialized evening courses for graduates who have started businesses and need further skills in areas such as staff management; expanding training opportunities in rural areas and small towns where there are few employment opportunities (while self-employment may be the only option in these areas, there are currently no training programs); expanding the role of successful graduates as examples and mentors to beginners and providing motivation for involvement in the center in the form of networking opportunities, special lectures, etc.; and strengthening the system of consultations in various fields, particularly legal, since the instability of the SME legal base and lack of information about these laws and regulations are major deterrents to starting a business.

1. Is the length of the long-term course optimal?

While all the WBSCs agreed that the all elements of the course are essential, there was also agreement that other formats could be tried that would allow for more flexibility. For example, Donetsk suggested reducing the number of hours from 250 to 200 and conducting the course over 1.5 months rather than 2 months since many applicants find it difficult (or even impossible) to commit to a course longer than 1.5 months, whether due to family, work or business constraints. **Additional topics could be addressed later in short-term courses for those who have started businesses and already have practical experience and concrete questions.**

2. Should other topics be added to the long-term course?

All WBSCs agreed that in dealing with the first-time entrepreneur, addressing confidence building and self-esteem is important. The WBSCs already do this, but they suggest a further emphasis on these this topics.

The WBSCs agreed that graduates need opportunities for advanced study, particularly after they have started businesses and are managing staff. Among topics proposed by the WBSCs are: team work, team building, staff management, time management, sales techniques, advanced accounting, communications, strategic planning, and advertising techniques. **These courses can be co-financed by participants, which would support the sustainability of the centers.** See question 11, below.

Other areas, such as legal issues, might be better addressed by increasing access of graduates to legal consultations.

3. What are the four or five most common obstacles women have in starting a business, from your own observation and from discussions with graduates?

Family situation: - this included births, illnesses; lack of family support (all WBSCs)

Financial:

- *Lack of start-up funds (all WBSCs)
- *fear of using property as collateral, or lack of collateral (3)
- *high interest rates (2)
- *small amounts lenders lend to first-time business people (2)

Other:

- *Changing unstable legal framework for business (3)
- *Found work instead (3)
- *Lack of a business partner (1)
- *Found registration process too daunting (1)
- *Realized that they don't have the character to pursue business/lack of business idea (2)
- *Pension reform that drives even existing business into the shadows (1)

4. What strategies should be pursued for reaching women from small towns and villages? What are the obstacles to be overcome?

The WBSCs all strongly agree that expansion of training opportunities in regions outside of oblast centers should be a priority and that special programs need to be developed to address the lack of jobs and high level of unemployment, slow economic development, and absence of infrastructure and services outside of oblast centers. Assisting women in creating workplaces for themselves is a logical extension of WBSC activity since residents of towns where factories have shut down or where kolhosps have collapsed are forced to look for work in other cities, regions and countries, which contributes to trafficking. And yet donor projects have not focused enough on expanding opportunities for those outside of oblast centers in the basics of establishing a business.

Obstacles to providing training to women from small towns and villages:

- distance to the WBSCs
- poor transportation system
- cost
- length of courses (time away from family, household responsibilities)

The WBSCs, in describing their experiences in providing training and services outside the oblast centers, explain that those women from the regions who are selected to take the long-term course often are unable to participate due to lack of funds for travelling, or inability to leave family for long periods of time, for example. The Donetsk WBSC points out that while 364 women from outside the oblast center were selected to take the long-term course, only 92 were able to actually participate because the bus or train schedules didn't allow them to come to class every day; the expense both for transportation and living in Donetsk; and the time to it would take to travel, together with other responsibilities, leaving no time to prepare for classes.

The Donetsk WBSC proposes **organizing courses outside the oblast centers that would last two–three weeks**, supplemented by consultations and preparation of business-plans. During WEE, Donetsk worked in 10 towns of the oblast (Selydove, Torez, Krasnoarmiysk, Makiyivka, Slovyansk, Kramatorsk, Debaltsevo, Telmanovo, Komsomolsk, Hornyak) and found it was effective to develop a two- to three-month plan: preparation, 1-2 months; training and consultations, a month; presentation of business plans, monitoring. Of 250 participants, 123 (49,2%) women started or diversified businesses, creating 227 new jobs. Nine women received loans totaling more than 45000 hryvnias, and 27 women found jobs.

The Mykolayiv WBSC suggests **creating centers in the regions**, where representatives there would be responsible for advertisement of services, gathering groups, and consulting.

The Chernihiv WBSC has experience working with women outside the oblast center (14 percent of long-term graduates), an accomplishment given the oblast's large territory and low population density. The high level of unemployment in rural regions of Chernihiv oblast, especially in Horodny region (4,5 thousand unemployed in a population of 8 thousand residents of working age), was the stimulus for organization of a long-term business course by the Oblast and Horodny Town Employment Centers, together with the ChWBSC. According to the ChWBSC, the business course conducted in Horodny and research in their oblast demonstrate that women from the regions need such courses perhaps more than women from oblast centers because of the lack of jobs and absence of informational support for entrepreneurs in the regions.

Trainers from the regions could be prepared as well, who could train in the regions alongside WBSC trainers. As the Mykolayiv WBSC points out, increasing training outside of oblast centers will promote the development of a healthy business environment in Ukraine, including the creation of women's business associations.

Ivano-Frankivsk suggests that the WBSCs conduct **thematic short-term trainings in regions**. These trainings are important and **need to address gender, since in rural areas, women are**

often perceived as housewives only. The Mykolayiv WBSC points out that *each region of the oblast has its own profile* and infrastructure: Ochakiv – a resort area, Pervomaysk –military people, Novy Bug – agriculture, etc. Thus, programs could be structured to meet the specific needs and interests of residents.

Kharkiv provides another model. In 2003, the city government funded creation of four business centers outside of the oblast center, created on the model of the WBSC. They give practical and consultative assistance to entrepreneurs. The Kharkiv City Women’s Fund (KCWF), which manages the WBSC, developed the proposal within the Complex Program of Business Support in Kharkiv for 2003 – 2004 and pushed for its approval by the Kharkiv City Council.

5. *Should distance learning options be developed?*

All WBSCs agreed that *the infrastructure does not yet exist to make distance learning practical.* The people who need it can’t afford it, and there simply are not the Internet cafes and clubs in small towns. There was, however, more interest in Ivano-Frankivsk than in other regions.

The Mykolayiv WBSC made the interesting point that distant learning is not appropriate for the target group of first-time women entrepreneurs because a main factor in achieving success with this group is changing ways of thinking and increasing self-esteem, neither of which is possible through distance learning. According to the WBSC, “The effectiveness of the training at the WBSCs can be explained, first of all, by the interactive form of learning. All the training participants interact with each other, exchange information and experience, analyze situations, and look together for ways of solving problems. The training participants enrich themselves with collective experience.”

The Simferopol WBSC described a further benefit of women meeting face to face and studying together: the opportunity to network. In fact, nine of their graduates are in business partnership with other graduates.

6. *Women and family businesses, working with families.*

The WBSCs had varying positions on whether their work would be enhanced by working with husbands and families. As the ChWBSC wrote, after a long interval connected with maternal leave or loss of job, for example, a woman starting a business sometimes leads to misunderstanding among family members and even to serious conflicts. The DWBSC mentions that their consultants have in the past met with husbands who protested their wives’ involvement in business, and that these interventions have helped. The Kharkiv WBSC identified insufficient support from families as a major problem facing women starting businesses. Mykolayiv stated categorically that lack of family support is not a serious problem.

Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Simferopol mentioned the growth of family businesses as an area the WBSCs should take into consideration. This topic requires further research and analysis, but additional evening sessions could be added for family partners, including husbands, brothers, and grown children. This topic is even more relevant when dealing with small towns and villages, where a very high percentage of business is family business.

7. Need for specialized trainings to complement the course (computer literacy, etc).

All of the WBSCs have offered some kind of computer courses for their students. Mykolayiv mentioned as a measure of success that 40 percent of graduates wrote their business plans on computers (which students had access to after class). The Simferopol WBSC described its experience organizing computer courses for its first groups and finding that there were participants who already have these skills, for whom this discipline turned out to be unnecessary, so they suggest offering computer training as an optional module. Given that the WBSCs do not have enough computers themselves to offer these classes, cooperation with other organizations or for-profit computer centers is necessary. Simferopol, for example, held computer classes at the State Employment Center (15 computers).

The DWBSC offered an innovative module on catering for those twelve percent of women graduates whose businesses related to sale and presentation of food (cafes, bistros, bars, for example) as well as women who realized their business ideas were not feasible.

8. Promoting the program, attracting students.

All WBSCs were successful in promoting their centers in a number of ways, including:

- ✓ press-conferences for journalists of the city and region;
- ✓ individual meetings and work with individual journalists;
- ✓ advertisements in newspapers and on television and radio;
- ✓ leaflets (for example, in Ivano-Frankivsk, at the business registration site; in Mykolayiv, in public transport);
- ✓ meeting with the unemployed at Employment Centers;
- ✓ organizing public hearings, workshops;
- ✓ conferences (both organization and distribution at conferences organized by others)

Chernihiv suggested in future projects that advertising be done on big-boards as a way to significantly increase the number of clients and applicants.

9. Setting fees.

As the DWBSC pointed out, participants value the course more if they pay something for it. At the same time, very few could afford to pay for the course if WBSCs charged what it really cost.

The larger cities (Donetsk and Kharkiv) have found that a charge of approximately 100 hryvnias is affordable for most women. It is also enough of an investment that they do not drop out of the course. The DWBSC found that 150 hryvnias was too much to charge.

The Ivano-Frankivsk, Mykolayiv and Chernihiv centers found that 40-50 hryvnias was reasonable in their cities. Ivano-Frankivsk also noted that for those who already have businesses, 100-150 is possible. Mykolayiv suggested a sliding scale, with lower fees for students and the unemployed.

10. Staffing of WBSCs and training needs for staffs.

The WBSCs point out that the effectiveness of the long-term course depends on an approach that combines interactive trainings; lectures; workshops with mentors and successful entrepreneurs; consultations with lawyers; meetings with relevant authorities and representatives of banks and other institutions offering credit; and opportunities for students to interact and support one another. All WBSCs mentioned the importance of using interactive methods and in continued training of trainers in this methodology.

All of the WBSCs stress that they hire trainers with practical business experience in addition to theoretical or academic training. The KWBCSC mentioned the benefit of having trainers who have participated in trainings abroad. Trainers themselves mention the need for additional training in areas including “team building in small groups,” “managing organizational changes,” “Ukrainian aspects of staff management,” and “conducting trainings on legislative grounds of business.” The WBSCs have actively **involved government officials** and **regulators** as guest lecturers or at roundtables to ensure that students have opportunities to clarify practical questions of great importance to them. These meetings with officials are extremely important as they “demystify” the work of government regulators so that graduates are less intimidated by them.

The Mykolayiv WBSC stated, “Advancement trainings (TOTs) area very important for our trainers. These meetings that bring together trainers from all the Women’s Business Support Centers of Ukraine provide opportunities to exchange experience, learn new information and master new approaches.” The MWBSC suggests **annual one-week TOTs**, and also more opportunities for trainers to attend conferences, workshops, and meetings with representatives of different state structures that assist to development of entrepreneurship in Ukraine. The MWBSC pointed out that trainers need **skills in working with adult learners**, as opposed to students, and that future trainings of trainers ought to address this area.

The Simferopol WBSC regularly conducts **meetings of trainers** where they discuss the progress of each group and analyze comments of participants toward further improvement of the program.

11. Involvement of lawyers at the WBSCs.

We asked the Centers their opinions on the involvement of lawyers at the centers since this was an innovation during the WEE project extension. **All agreed that legal services are essential to the program** and that legal aspects of starting a business, including registration, licensing, patenting, and information on criminal responsibility for violations of the law, are integral components of the course. In addition to legal topics covered in the courses, access to legal consultations was deemed essential by all WBSCs. These services are important to graduates as well as students. Mykolayiv noted that the most confusing and vexing questions raised by students and graduates required consultations of a lawyer.

12. What kind of follow-on training should be offered for graduates?

All WBSCs note that those graduates who have started businesses often turn to the centers with requests for **advanced training**, in areas such as changes in legislation and taxation, staff management, market research, and sales techniques. Each WBSC has some experience in offering short-term additional courses, but short-term training options need to be further developed. These could be offered at market- or near-market rates, supporting the sustainability of the Centers. In Kharkiv, the Peace Corps volunteer conducted classes in business English. These courses should be offered in the evening since they are aimed at women who have businesses and lead busy lives.

In addition, opportunities to receive **consultations** on a range of topics (marketing, sales, legal, etc.) could be expanded and formalized, so that graduates would know that, for example, on Tuesdays from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, they can drop by the WBSC and receive consultations in a given area. **Special lectures** by relevant authorities or business leaders are also necessary.

13. Should separate courses be organized for students with business experience?

The WBSCs described both the advantages and disadvantages of organizing separate courses for students of different experience levels, but overall, there was more support for maintaining the mixed groups. The Donetsk WBSC points out that students who have entrepreneurial experience nevertheless need the systematic training in business basics that the course provides, and that “second, both beginners and those who have businesses need the opportunity to exchange ideas and experience and look at themselves and their activity from another point of view.” Of course, the women with business experience make a great contribution to the program – they not only serve as inspirations, but their practical questions and examples are extremely useful to others.

The Ivano-Frankivsk WBSC points out that students who took a short-term course before being selected for the long-term course were better prepared and had an easier time absorbing the material offered in the long-term course.

The Women’s Union of Ukraine, the NGO that runs the Chernihiv WBSC, cooperated with the Kyiv Agency on Development of Small and Medium Business in Ukraine, within the “National program on development of small entrepreneurship in Ukraine in 2003” to conduct a one-week course for graduates-entrepreneurs on the following topics: “Financial management,” “Management of small and medium enterprises,” “Legal basics of entrepreneur activity,” and “Staff management.” The Simferopol WBSC makes the point that through the module learning system, beginners have a full course, while active entrepreneurs can define their own module program, attending only the sections that are necessary for them.

14. What methods of involving graduates in the work of the WBSC have you found most useful?

All WBSCs involve graduates who have started businesses in the work of the WBSCs, particularly as examples of successful women for those who are taking the course. Participation of graduates also allows students to ask questions about concrete details of starting a business. According to the Mykolayiv WBSC, “From the moment of **signing a contract**, our graduates are committed to helping the WBSC, providing necessary data, and taking part in events of the

Center.” The MWBSC makes the important point that in turn, **graduates have much to gain by ongoing involvement in the WBSC**: “Graduates have access to the data base and library of the Center, use of services on employment, and the opportunity to take part in additional seminars.”

All WBSCs agree on the importance of creating opportunities for course participants to communicate with entrepreneurs, particularly in those active in spheres relevant to the business of the participant. Kharkiv, for example, has **mentors** in the following spheres: medicine, restaurant business, beauty shops, hotel business, furniture business, transport services, mini-bakery, shops, and stationery.

As the Mykolayiv WBSC points out, it was possible to develop an active mentor program only in the past two years when graduates achieved enough stability in their businesses and were able to take the time to assist at the WBSCs. Of the Chernihiv WBSC’s twelve most active mentors, five of them are course graduates. Chernihiv mentions that its monitoring shows that many graduates even after finishing the course turn to mentors for advice and consultations.

Donetsk describes the creation in 2000 of an **Alumni Club**, bringing together graduates at the Center the first Monday of each month at 4 PM, where they discuss problems, ways to solve them, and organize special events. The staff of the Center always takes part, and sometimes the WBSC organizes seminars, meetings with representatives of banks, fiscal agencies, etc. Donetsk has also been very successful in placing graduates as subjects of TV programs on Donetsk oblast state TV-and radio. They are also invited to take part in workshops, press-clubs, conferences and seminars. In 2003 the Center organized an exhibit “Methods of Developing Entrepreneurship in the Donetsk Region,” where graduates had the opportunity to describe their businesses and talk about their problems and successes. The proceedings were covered in city and oblast mass media and the graduates became “media-heroes.” Similarly, the Chernihiv WBSC described the creation by graduates of the City League (Club) of Business and Professional Women. Graduates constantly take part in the work of the WBSC, including providing internships to students.

The WBSCs agree that **internship programs** should be further expanded. Useful would be technical assistance in this area so that the WBSCs could benefit from systems and procedures developed in countries with significant experience organizing internships and mentorships. The internships now last three weeks or less, and while providing a taste of employment, are not long enough to give real work experience in a business. However, students cannot afford to take on unpaid internships of greater length, a factor to be taken into consideration in future programming. Perhaps paid internships of two-months' length could be implemented.

The WBSCs suggest that the **East-East study tour component should be continued**, as these programs, by creating opportunities for successful graduates to participate in exchanges to other countries, for example to Poland, promote business contacts, provide valuable models, and help women take their businesses to the next level.

Worth noting is that at some WBSCs (Kharkiv, Simferopol), graduates actually have become trainers and consultants.

15. Describe lessons learned in monitoring graduates.

While all WBSCs recognize the importance of monitoring, they mention it has taken an increasing amount of time as more women have graduated and that additional resources for monitoring would improve their efforts. All WBSCs use a combination of:

- Telephone calls
- Visits to business
- Organization of workshops and seminars
- Information sharing
- Questionnaires

In Donetsk, staff have developed a schedule, according to which every month they phone or write letters to graduates, or visit their enterprises to find out about the state of their businesses. Several times the monitoring was carried out by members of the Alumni Club. Also, every three or four months, the WBSC conducts **workshops or focus-groups with graduates** in three categories: those who have started their own businesses; those who found employment; and those who haven't started a business and haven't found job. The WBSC explains that these meetings help the staff constantly improve the program.

The Ivano-Frankivsk WBSC makes the point that technical assistance in developing a database would be helpful in monitoring graduates. The Kharkiv WBSC explains that in addition to calls to graduates, graduates themselves are motivated to keep in contact with the Center, informing staff about starting or diversification of their businesses, and providing materials about their activity and about events (fairs, exhibitions, competitions, etc). The WBSC also organizes meetings of trainers and graduates of the Center, where they discuss problems and hopes, analyze failures, and trainers provide consultations for graduates.

In the experience of the ChWBSC, telephoning is the most effective means of monitoring, but also increasingly time consuming, as there are now 416 graduates, and the Center's coordinator and office manager find it impractical to call all graduates more often than every six to eight months. In addition, many Chernihiv graduates have moved, 37 of them to Kyiv. The WBSC has found extremely effective their Forums of graduates (December 2002, January, February and May 2003) where the WBSC has the opportunity to ask graduates about their achievements and problems, development of their businesses and reasons why they haven't started businesses.

16. What do you believe the role of the WBSCs should be in assisting women in finding employment?

All of the WBSCs agreed that expanding services in the area of finding employment would be a positive and natural development in the work of the WBSCs. According to the Donetsk WBSC, "For the WBSCs to provide a complete range of services to women seeking work, each WBSC should have on staff a specialist on employment. Her/his responsibilities would include the following: conducting interviews and consultations on employment, and organization of special trainings that would include information on how to look for a job, sources of information about vacancies, writing CVs, interviewing with employers, self-presentation, etc. The WBSC should also offer specialized courses in professional skills, because most women lack modern skills,

without which they can't be competitive in labor market.” The MWBSC suggests adding trainings in areas such as the job search and writing a CV, since a significant number of graduates find employment as a result of study. The Chernihiv and Simferopol WBSCs suggest that for women who are looking for a job it is necessary to conduct separate special trainings “How to find a job,” which would cover resume writing and interviewing skills.

The WBSCs over time have become known as logical places for employers to post vacancies when looking for employees trained in skills necessary in a market economy. The IFWBSC suggests establishing more **professional relations with recruiting agencies** and employment centers. The DWBSC mentions that the NGO on which it is based, the League of Business and Professional Women, has created a volunteer recruiting agency, and that every week private recruiting agencies of the city send information on vacancies to the center.

As the IFWBSC mentions, graduates also turn to the WBSC to fill vacancies. (In Kharkiv, one of the goals of its yearly Forum is for graduates to advertise vacancies in their businesses, and the Alumni Association network is another way this information is shared.) The WBSCs also mention that for those women who did not start businesses, the skills and credentials they obtained through the course were critical in finding employment. The Simferopol WBSC gave the example of Halyna Romanyuk, a metallurgist engineer who had been working as a guard. “The course at our Center changed her professional life, and she now she works at a prestigious organization at a position appropriate to her education,” The SWBSC writes.

Chernihiv points out that its cooperation with the state Employment Center assists graduates in finding employment. (They add that 52 graduates found jobs; among them, 24 women were hired by women entrepreneurs who studied in the same group.) There were cases when entrepreneurs sent women to the WBSC to study before hiring them. The ChWBSC adds that its monitoring of graduates indicates that most of them found employment but that unfortunately, much of it is in the shadow economy.

17. Describe the profile of the women taking the long-term course, and whether we should narrow the focus.

The WBSCs were in agreement that women with some life and work experience and higher education are most likely to start businesses after taking the course. All agreed that women in the regions, while interested in the courses, are prevented by distance and lack of funds.

Donetsk: The average age of the women who come to Women's Business Support Center is **34** years, but ranges from 18 to 60 years old.

Ivano-Frankivsk: Women from the oblast center, age 28 to 40 years. “There is a constant growth of interest from women in regional centers, but finances prevent them (and us) from being able to organize training for them.”

Kharkiv: From 18 to 55 years.

Mykolayiv: 30-40 years.

Chernihiv: Under 20 – 1,2%; 20–40 years – 74,8%; 40–50 years – 19,2%
Over 50 years – 4,8%

18. What is the average length of time for a woman to start a business after graduating from the course?

The WBSCs responded that within half a year, most that will start a business have done so, while some do so after a year. Simferopol offered the following statistics:

Within three months: 17%

Within six months: 32%

Within the first year: 28%

Within 1.5 years: 15%

More than 1.5 years: 8%

19. Which categories of women have been shown to have the most business potential?

The WBSCs agree that women who start the course with a business idea are more likely to go on to start a business.

Donetsk: It is impossible to single out any category; everything depends on desire for self-actualization and level of motivation. Equally successful were women of different age groups.

Ivano-Frankivsk: Women who are purposeful, who strive for independence; women who are supported by their families. Women who have starting capital. Youth with higher education and enthusiasm. Women who are facing the choice whether to go abroad in search of a job or start own business at home.

Kharkiv: Women under 40 with higher education have the most potential.

Mykolayiv: Women who have work experience in business. Family business.

Chernihiv: Women aged 30 – 40 with higher education, residents of Chernihiv. They have experience, more financial opportunities and better access to financial sources; besides, infrastructure of business support is better developed in oblast center than in regions. But everything depends on personality and desire to learn. Besides, in the regions, self-employment is an issue of survival for a woman, her children and family.

Simferopol: We think that more attention should be paid to families and couples. As for types of business, the specific character of our region suggests a focus on agriculture, rural tourism, folk crafts, and souvenirs production.

20. Did you work with youth/students in the project? What were the lessons?

All of the WBSCs have some experience providing training to students, with varying conclusions. For example, Donetsk found that students were more interested in issues of employment than in creating businesses. The five students who took the long-term course found employment afterwards, but they could have found jobs without taking it. Ivano-Frankivsk notes that a considerable number of graduates are young, and that the activity of the WBSC was the incentive for creation of a youth business-school, already in its second year (not part of WEE). The Kharkiv WBSC found that youth is ready and has great desire and potential to run a business. Some of their young graduates received awards from the city mayor and oblast governor for significant contribution in development of small and medium business in the Kharkiv region. The Chernihiv WBSC focused the long-term course of May-June 2003 on

students, and while the students were very active and stimulated by their studies, The ChWBSC makes the point that real results will only be known in two to three years. The ChWBSC writes, “Annually in Chernihiv and Chernihiv oblast a great number of young girls graduate from higher educational institutions. Unfortunately, they are not competitive in the labor market as they don’t have work experience. Besides, they are potentially “undesirable employees,” as they are at the age of creating a family, having children. Self-employment through entrepreneurship is one way to address this problem.”

21. What spheres of business are most dominant among those created by graduates?

Donetsk: Graduates started their own businesses in spheres including:

- ✓ **51% - services** –training centers, dance instruction, printing services, hairdressers, cafes, psychological services, advertising agencies, teaching foreign languages, tourist companies, interior design, computer clubs, tailor shops, legal services, building and constructing, consulting services, etc.
- ✓ **43% - in trade** – shops, trade outlets selling food, clothes, cosmetics, perfumes, etc.
- ✓ **6% - in production** – production of ventilation systems, joiners’ shops, sewing fur clothes, knitted wear, Ukrainian souvenir production, computer programs, etc.

Ivano-Frankivsk: The dominant sphere is trade, then service, and the occasional enterprise connected with production.

Kharkiv: Altogether 141 enterprises were created in the following spheres:

Trade: 61

Production: 25 (the lowest index because lenders provide insufficient funds for production)

Services: 55

Mykolayiv: Trade – 60%; services – 30%; production – 10%

Chernihiv:

57% trade (food and industry products, medications, etc).

41,3% services (hairdressers, tailors, photocopying, transportation, events organizing, translations, etc).

1,7% - production (ergonomic device for computer equipment, embroidery and souvenirs, agriculture).

Simferopol: Dominant spheres of activity are: tourism, folk crafts, production of souvenir products, services.

22. Are there factors specific to your region that affect what businesses women start?

Donetsk, Mykolayiv and Kharkiv do not believe that their regions have particular needs, and see industry, agriculture, services and trade as having potential for development. Kharkiv points out that women’s business is most often small business. The Donetsk WBSC mentioned that especially necessary are socially-oriented types of business – private kindergartens, schools, nurse and governess services, care of old and sick people, and also tourism, especially rural.

Ivano-Frankivsk mentioned trade and services and **suggested introduction of thematic seminars and trainings particularly in the spheres of trade and services.**

Since **Chernihiv** oblast is mostly an agricultural and tourist region, development of entrepreneurship in the spheres of agriculture, tourism and related services such as restaurants and cafes has potential. **Simferopol**, which also sites agriculture and tourism as areas with the most potential, also sees production of souvenirs and folk crafts as important.

23. Your conclusions about the credit program... Other comments about credit.

The Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Simferopol WBSCs expressed the most satisfaction about their experience cooperating with partner credit unions. The Chernihiv WBSC cooperated closely with the Chernihivska credit union, including organization of a special class on basics of crediting led by the executive director of the credit union. A total of 238 graduates of the Center are members of the credit union. Graduates received 197 loans totaling 756 thousand hryvnias. The Kharkiv WBSC states that the loan program worked well for graduates and that they successfully engaged representatives of the credit unions in trainings on financial and business planning and that these representatives gave valuable feedback on business plans. In fact, the credit union referred clients to the WBSC to take the course. Graduates received 124 loans from the “Women’s Mutual Assistant” credit union: 90 percent of loans were received by graduates of long-term study, 9 percent, by short-term students.

In Donetsk, graduates received 22 loans totaling 96380 hryvnias. (They also took loans at five banks and another credit union, in Employment Centers and from informal sources. In banks they received 11 loans for a total sum 153 850 hryvnias, at another credit union they received 7 loans equal to 17410 hryvnias, through Employment Centers, 3 graduates received financing for the sum of 9216 hryvnias, and 9 graduates turned to informal sources and received loans for 13450 USD and 153820 hryvnias.)

The Mykolyaiv WBSC asserts that it is understandable that 80 percent of its graduates start businesses without turning to credit institutions, either relying on their own resources or turning to friends and family for low interest rates. In Ivano-Frankivsk, 42 graduates of the WBSC received loans in affiliated credit unions, a third of them received loans twice. Getting loans in the affiliated union can be explained by the fact that graduates have certain advantage in getting loans—namely, lower interest rates, speed of credit services and support of the WBSC.

All Centers invite representatives of banks and other lenders to acquaint participants with their activity and conditions for receiving credit.

***24. How do you see the relation between the project and the problem of trafficking in women?
Did you work with Trafficking Prevention Centers?***

The WBSCs agree that women who start their own businesses and create working places for themselves, their family members and others are extremely unlikely to become victims of violence or trafficking.

The Ivano-Frankivsk WBSC asserts that the work of the Center directly contributes to trafficking prevention: Faced with the choice whether to go abroad in search of jobs, women find it is possible to stay with their families and learn from the WBSC how to start their own businesses. The WBSC is a member of a coordinative council on prevention of trafficking in women, and conducts educational programs on this issue. The nearest TPP center is in Lviv, and the WBSC gives out the address to graduates.

The Donetsk WBSC is in the unique position of sharing premises with a Women for Women Center, created through the Trafficking Prevention Program funded by USAID. Women who came to the WBSC but were not chosen for the long-term course through selection training could be referred to the services of the TPP center to benefit from, for example, employment counseling, courses in self-esteem, or other appropriate interventions. Conversely, WBSC students take advantage of psychological and other services, such as professional skills courses, offered through the TPP. Thirty percent of women, after using services of the Women for Women Center, returned to the WBSC with high motivation to take the long-term course. “Thus, women not chosen for the long-term course are not sent away and are not left alone with their problems, but stay within the organization and work with specialists,” the DWBSC explained.

In Kharkiv, there is no Women for Women Center, but the WBSC actively cooperates with the “Nadiya” (Hope) crisis center and shelter for women who suffered domestic violence. The Mykolayiv WBSC has cooperated with the Women for Women Center in Kherson.

Participants and graduates of the Chernihiv WBSC take part in trainings, workshops, and educational seminars devoted to issues of trafficking prevention. The ChWBSC asserts that the organization of training for young women in their fourth or fifth year of higher education can become a powerful preventive measure for trafficking in women. Chernihiv argues that training by the WBSCs successfully undermines long held and sometimes unconscious stereotypes and could powerfully combat factors contributing to trafficking: the absence of life experience, impossibility of employment, absence of information, and “myths” existing in society that it is easy to earn big money abroad. “Graduates of the Center see real possibilities for becoming entrepreneurs and starting businesses. They believe in their potential and would hardly go abroad in search of a job and better fortune,” they wrote. The ChWBSC for the third year participated in the “16 days against gender violence” campaign, in which all the Women for Women Centers take part, and this experience showed them possibilities for further development, they write.

The Simferopol WBSC also asserts that it “creates an economic and psychological basis that helps prevent trafficking in women, underscored by the disciplines “Women’s Leadership” and “economic aspects of gender issues.” The Center participates in a working group on gender empowerment in Crimea, together with the Coordinative body of the Council of Ministers of Crimea on gender issues, women’s NGOs, UNDP, and Committee on Family and Youth. The SWBSC mentions plans to conduct regional meetings on promotion of gender initiatives through development of social partnerships, and sites as the inspiration Winrock International’s TOT on civic initiatives, the film “The Power of Feminine Gender,” the BIZPRO seminar “Women’s Business Associations,” and also the WEE Civic Initiatives Forum on business development in southern regions of Ukraine with support of Winrock International and the International

Renaissance Foundation. Simferopol also mentions providing consultations to the Zhytomyr Women for Women's Center on organizational capacity.

25. What is the relationship between the activity of the WBSC and the creation of women's business associations?

The Mykolayiv WBSC explains that business associations have been created by WBSC graduates in regional centers. Women from the regions turn to the Mykolayiv League of Business Women with requests for assistance in creating branches, business associations and women's organizations.

In Donetsk, the WBSC did not particularly try to stimulate development of business associations by participants and graduates. However the very example of the DWBSC and its founding organization, the League of Business and Professional Women, which gave participants a chance to improve their lives and protects their interests, encouraged some of them to creation business associations and women's organizations in their towns and villages. Five women created such organizations. Simultaneously, during the course they not only learned how to start a business, but also paid attention to the work of the League and turned to the staff lawyer for help in registering non-governmental organizations. In their words: "During the course, I came to understand that non-governmental organizations can be a legal protection for me and women like me. That's why I decided to establish one," and "For me the League was an example of what I would like to have in my town – an organization that would give assistance to women. Consultations with president of the League who is director of the Center encouraged me." The DWBSC states that establishment and management of NGOs is a subject worthy of a separate special course.

The Ivano-Frankivsk WBSC explains that at meetings with graduates of the Center, the necessity of uniting women and engaging them in social activity aimed at protecting their rights and interests is always stressed. The most active graduates and entrepreneurs create women's business associations and involve women of the oblast and country in them. A vivid example is WBSC graduate Lidia Yarych, who became a successful entrepreneur, created a business association, and together with authorities assisted in opening a business center in Kosiv.

Kharkiv mentions associations created by graduates through the work of the WBSC: the Association of WBSC Alumni, and the Association of Masters of Folk Arts and rural tourism. "All the business associations were created by graduates of the Center who understand that for development of the individual it is not enough to be a successful entrepreneur, but also to involve others actively," the KWBSA writes. The KWBSA and the NGO that runs it demonstrated to everyone the impact that an NGO representing women's business interests can have. Through its efforts to get approval for establishment of four women's business support centers, it changed the approach of the City Council to social assistance, from one that looked only to provide material help to disabled people, Chernobyl victims, families with many children, pensioners, etc, to an approach that encompasses support for organizations active in the sphere of development of small business, as the unemployed are also a vulnerable group of the population. The approval of the program was also a stimulus for the city to conduct the first gender analysis of a city budget in the last four years.

The Simferopol WBSC mentions that on the initiative of the Coordinating Board of Women's Civic Organizations of Crimea and Peace Corps Volunteer Keisei Bernhard, it provided assistance in producing by-laws and defining the mandate of the Women's Business Center "Skifia" in Kerch.

In Chernihiv, WBSC graduates initiated the creation of the Chernihiv City League (Club) in 2000. Its activity is directed at women entrepreneurs, heads of enterprises, and activists in Chernihiv city and oblast. There are 154 women members, most of them graduates of the Women's Business Support Center, and among them, members of Chernihiv City and Oblast Councils. Since September 2001, the League has been the host of the free informational telephone Hotline for entrepreneurs supported through BIZPRO. The League conducts workshops, public hearings, and seminar-trainings on entrepreneur issues, and takes an active part in exhibits and fairs. It also publishes a bulletin. "This kind of work with business women is important as it creates opportunities for them to receive consultations, take part in trainings, and exchange experience, all of which promotes the creation of a sound women's business environment in the oblast," the ChWBSC writes.

The Donetsk WBSC points out that women at the center cannot help but note the benefit to themselves and society of an active organization representing and defending the interests of a given group. This awareness has an impact on society as a whole. As the Donetsk WBSC states, it is not enough to teach women how to run a business, it is also important to give them skills in defending their rights. All of the WBSCs and the NGOs that manage them have organized and involved business associations in public hearings on issues of importance to women entrepreneurs.

The WBSCs propose that future programs include trainings on techniques in protecting rights of entrepreneurs, including basic information on how to conduct public hearings, meet with officials at various levels, and create coalitions.

26. Do you see a role for the WBSC in promoting a positive image of the female entrepreneur?

All of the WBSCs agreed that promoting a positive image of the female entrepreneur is part of the WBSC mandate and all have actively worked with mass media and been active in various regional exhibitions and competitions. Ivano-Frankivsk states that it is important to support women entrepreneurs by portraying them positively and assuring the public that a woman can be both a success in business and a loving wife and mother. Donetsk suggests that not only does the positive portrayal of graduates and the work of the WBSCs encourage other women to try business but also demonstrates to the public the role NGOs can play in a thriving civil society. The Mykolayiv WBSC mentions not only the publication of success stories in city media but also a "Woman of the Year" program under development. Chernihiv describes the regional newspaper "Yaroslavna" published together with a graduate and the newspaper founded by another graduate called "Business+." Kharkiv mentions that every year it submits candidates for awards from the city mayor, oblast governor and State Committee on Entrepreneurship. Donetsk has been particularly skillful at developing relationships with journalists and editors, with dozens

of articles and programs about graduates featured in newspapers, magazines, and on television and radio.

27. *Are there innovations implemented by your WBSC that might be replicated by the other centers? Other ideas for the future?*

The Donetsk WBSC mentions introduction of focus-groups and workshops with graduates; system of monitoring, which, besides focus-groups, includes correspondence with graduates, meeting with them, visiting their enterprises; conducting additional seminars for graduates on critical issues, publishing brochures on taxation, others; the work of the Alumni Club; the TV programs “Women for Women” and “How are things, entrepreneur?”; organization of additional consultations of the accountant and lawyer; cooperation with credit institutions (banks, credit unions); conducting additional trainings “Women’s Leadership”, “Equal Opportunities”, “Confident Behavior”, “Art of Successful Sales”; conducting large events (forums, exhibits, conferences); participation in developing the Regional and City Program of Business Development (since 1999).

Donetsk stresses that its graduates, trainers and specialists agree that organizing and participating in events such as forums and conferences provides important opportunities to “look at the results of their work from different sides. During such events one can see not only successes, but also imperfections, potentials and new ways for further activity. These events give more confidence to all involved in the process. Thus, after one forum-exhibition participants said: ‘You raised us to a level we hadn’t even dreamed of,’ and ‘You gave us so more than we though possible to get in an entire life.’”

Ivano-Frankivsk points out the success of organizing meetings of a psychologist with WBSC graduates who weren’t able to start businesses. Work with a psychologist gave a fresh stimulus for starting a business and realization of personal abilities. Ivano-Frankivsk is proud that through the project, the WBSC has the most prepared and professional team of trainers and consultants in the region, and that cooperation with representatives of oblast and region authorities was established. According to the IFWBSC, demand for its services by women and their families is growing, as is the need for advanced trainings for women who have already established businesses.

The Kharkiv WBSC mentions their success in getting city support for opening new regional centers; trainings of trainers; and publishing materials for economic education; as well as honors and awards its graduates have received at the city, oblast and national levels. Kharkiv mentions the value of internship, study tour or training opportunities for participants in the USA, or Poland, for example.

Mykolayiv created an information board of successful graduates, with pictures of the graduates and their enterprises, addresses, telephones. Mykolayiv recommends formalizing a network of graduates of the WBSCs and their enterprises.

Simferopol mentioned its use of the module study format and its close cooperation with the “Profi” credit union. Simferopol describes a unique seminar on doll-producing (15.09 –

26.09.2003), which was led by Peace Corps volunteer Erika Surovek, with project support. The course covered history of doll-making, creative thinking, anatomy and proportions of dolls, producing dolls out of papier-mâché, painting, making accessories, and also a very useful block on marketing. The WEE civic initiatives forum “Development of business in Southern parts of Ukraine” was important for the Simferopol WBSC, bringing together more than 50 people, including representatives of NGOs, private business, and state authorities of republican and local levels, including Mykolayiv and Kherson regions. Graduates exhibited products (paintings, tapestry, souvenir from wood, clay, plants, collages), relationships with government officials were developed, and respect for non-governmental organizations increased.

The Chernihiv WBSC answered that it considers particularly successful its cooperation with the Oblast Employment Center and Horodny Regional Employment Center in organizing a long-term business-course for 23 unemployed women of Horodny region. Women realized that they can start a business, creating workplaces not only for themselves, but also for their family members. Also, the ChWBSC considers innovative its work with student youth – young female students in their fourth year at higher educational institutions of the city, who will soon face the problem of employment.

The Chernihiv WBSC points out that the project does much more than provide women with skills in starting a business. Its many graduates go out into the world with a desire to increase their role in society, an understanding of gender issues and democracy, introduction into market relationships, and a belief in their ability to make their way under new market conditions. “The project allowed us to unite modern women who find they have the strength, abilities, and talents not only to survive, but also to live full lives and take up social activity.” Chernihiv stresses that the project allowed them to develop their NGO as an independent, sustainable structure, renew and rejuvenate staff, and provide them ongoing opportunities to learn, and create cooperation with state authorities, trade unions, and other non-governmental organizations. “Today the Chernihiv regional organization of the Women’s Union of Ukraine is a mass, influential and respected organization that has an active social position, with influence on solving a great number of problems in the region.”

EMPOWERMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

The Empowerment Training program was designed to complement the intensive entrepreneurial courses offered through the WBSCs. Three-day trainings targeted unemployed, underemployed and rural women, combining job as well as entrepreneurship skills with legal literacy and women’s leadership. These highly interactive seminars, approximately 25 hours in total, take participants from analysis of the fear of risk-taking to hands-on application of a business-planning framework using case studies. Initially, these trainings were conducted by members of a traveling training team, in towns and cities other than those where the WBSCs are located. Later, as described above, representatives of the WBSCs were trained in this methodology as well, adding to the marketable services and outreach potential of the centers.

The unique curriculum was developed through a series of three TOT seminars, a study trip to Poland for trainers, and the results of a baseline survey. Polish business consultant Barbara

Shlefarska conducted the first TOT, in the lecture format, with the help of ACDI/VOCA. The participants were a mix of trainers already experienced in interactive methodologies (developed during the NIS-US Women's Consortium Women's Leadership Program, 1995-1997) and women entrepreneurs. Active participants of the first TOT, together with the Program Coordinator, developed a new training—the three-day interactive training “How to Start a Business,” in response to the needs of the target audience.

The training is flexible – individual modules can be added, omitted or adapted, depending on the needs of participants. Each training session addresses issues that are relevant to the majority of participants, regardless of the group: lack of self-esteem and confidence, lack of legal knowledge, and lack of basic skills for starting a business.

Objectives of training:

- Raising self-awareness and ability to analyze self
- Raising motivation for self-employment
- Providing basic information on entrepreneurship
- Providing skills for competitiveness in the labor market
- Developing responsibility for one's own actions through an understanding of rights and responsibilities
- Practicing confident behavior: communication skills, assertiveness, self-respect

The interactive training methodology is key to the effectiveness of the training, creating an environment that encourages participants to learn new skills and also to analyze their own behavior, review past actions, and change their perceptions. Interactive methodologies allow trainers to achieve impressive results in a relatively short space of time because such learning methods engage not only people's rational brains, but also their emotions and creativity—in general, the whole potential of the individual. The method depends on the trainer drawing on the experience of participants. Most of the learning takes place in the process of practice, reflection and analysis of one's actions, and participants also benefit from hearing the experience of others. To encourage sharing of experience, the training uses a variety of techniques, including “ice-breakers,” brainstorming, discussions in circle, work in small groups, discussion of case studies, and movement exercises. Handouts allow students to continue learning independently after the training. WEE also distributed materials published by other projects.

Initially, a national team of 38 trainers was prepared, and later, 17 trainers from the Women's Business Support Centers. Trainers bring knowledge enriched through practice conducting trainings in across Ukraine and abroad, through studying during qualification improvement courses and participation in other programs. The training team was further enhanced through cooperation with different projects, analysis of feedback from participants, trainings of trainers, and self-improvement of trainers.

The Kyiv office has extensive experience in developing and facilitating trainings, developing methodology, analyzing results, and cooperating with teams of the WBSCs. It worked throughout the WEE project to deepen and improve methods and skills of trainers and teachers, both of Empowerment training and the long-term courses at the WBSCs. Because interactive

technologies are such an effective method for addressing new topics, WEE organized two trainings for instructors at the WBSCs in the use of interactive methodologies.

Over the course of WEE, the Empowerment Training Program conducted 95 training sessions for 1,769 participants. Trainings were organized across Ukraine in response to requests, with preference given to small towns and villages where it is more difficult to find a job or support from donor organizations or the government in organizing a business. The program particularly focused on regions further from the WBSCs because in many cases WBSCs conducted trainings under our methodology in their regions, often using funds from other donors, including Soros and the Canadian Gender Fund. Among organizations that requested training were government institutions (Employment Centers of different levels, Centers of Social Services for Youth, city and village councils, educational institutions, etc.), non-profit organizations, business centers and business incubators, associations of entrepreneurs, various NGOs, entrepreneurs and church representatives.

To track training results, the Kyiv office conducted follow-up surveys at three-month intervals. The results demonstrate that participants changed their attitudes by becoming more positive, constructive and pro-active, taking concrete steps to make changes in their lives – necessary qualities for success in a market economy. Many found jobs, and some started their own businesses, continued education, changed professions, or found additional sources of income. Within three months of taking the short-term training, 235 women started businesses, creating 437 job places, 353 of which were for women. As shown by our experience, in the first three months after the training, only those people who were already thinking about starting a business register one. Those people whose initial motivation to start a business came from the training need more time to act. Below are samples of the results of monitoring at an interval longer than three months after training:

A training in Pustomyty of Lviv region was held in March of 2003. A survey conducted three months later showed that two people registered as entrepreneurs. A second monitoring which took place in May 2004 showed that another four people who participated in the training had started businesses and another woman had enlarged her business—in addition to rural green tourism, she started selling pastry and is preparing documents for registering a joint venture. Her house served as location for a training on green tourism for Pustomyty district with participation of the Regional State Administration. An initiative group that formed at the training became a mediator between the community (owners of houses) and government, and they are working to establish a water supply system to private houses in Pustomyty. Also, the community organized an information-educational center on rural green tourism in Pustomyty with the support of the Department of Economy of Lviv Regional State Administration.

A training in Slavsko, Lviv oblast, was held in January 2003. After three months, two women were involved in business, one providing green tourism services and another opened a veterinary pharmacy. By summer 2004, one couple who had a private café had bought a house and a lake in a neighboring village and are now providing green tourism services. They have nine hired staff, including six women. In addition, four other participants are successfully providing services in rural green tourism. Another participant found a job in a bank. Her daughter started up tour-guide services for which they are now re-equipping their house. They

also plan to provide services in rural green tourism. And another participant has organized production of diet food.

A training in Chudnov, Zhytomyr oblast, was held in November 2002. Monitoring three months later showed that two people registered as entrepreneurs. May 2004 monitoring showed: One participant started a firm for inter-city transport services. He bought two mini-buses and plans to buy a third one, using a loan. He created six job places. Another participant opened a sauna in Chudnov. Her future plans are to open a laundry service in the same building. One woman started a baking business and two young women opened stands at a local market. In addition, four participants found jobs, three of them in private business.

From December 1999 through May 2004, the Empowerment Training Program conducted 21 trainings in rural areas of 14 regions of Ukraine for 520 participants who are residents of rural areas. Results include establishment of:

- 4 outlets of rural green tourism and information center of rural green tourism
- 3 milk cooperatives
- a pig farm
- a private fish farm
- NGOs
- Five credit unions
- 47 people registered as private entrepreneurs providing services (sauna, hairdressing salons, shops, veterinary pharmacy, green pharmacy, etc.)
- Registered 11 farms

Increase in number of enterprises increases number of workplaces, including for seasonal work.

Lessons learned in providing training for rural women:

1. Rural environment:

- Successful implementation of changes often depends on willingness of local government to cooperate
- Weak citizen activity
- Stereotypical (often negative) attitudes towards property owners and women
- Lack of sources of information

2. Rural audience:

- Low self-esteem
- Often these are people who have known each other for a long time and have certain relationships
- Low educational level
- High workloads (in addition to productive work, housework and chores with household property)
- Lack of household and farming equipment which could ease the workload
- Traditional patriarchal relationships in the family
- Gender stereotypes in the family and society
- Lack of time for participation in events
- Lack of initiative and still strong dependence on the government

- Lack of regional plans and research for development. People try to do everything, plan diverse spectrum of activities and as a result are not successful.

3. Training considerations in working with rural audience:

- More attention to raising self esteem and social awareness of participants
- More time for ice-breakers to overcome existing barriers in relationships
- Language of the training must be simple and accessible to all participants, attention should be paid to explanation of terminology
- Need to support information provided to trainees with practical examples
- Have more breaks
- Have the training run more days but work fewer hours a day to allow for their chores

4. Organizational aspects of training:

- The most successful in terms of forming the group and organizational support were those initiated by people from local governments
- Difficulties with transportation, accommodation and meals for trainers and participants

Other Lessons Learned/Possible Next Steps:

1. Strengthen the gender aspect: gender sensitivity for trainers, accenting attention to gender approaches.
2. Each participant and community is unique and we have to take this into account while developing programs in a given community.
3. Focus efforts on priority regions.
4. Encourage initiation of training by local government authorities (experience has shown that such trainings are usually well-organized).
5. Strengthen preparation of trainers:
 - * Develop concept of training school.
 - * Prepare trainers from rural areas.
 - * Consider gender balance in training teams (equal number of men and women).
 - * Lectures of specialists (gender analysis, psychological aspects of training work, etc.).
 - * Involve trainers from all regions.
 - * Balance training teams: trainer practitioner and trainer theorist.
6. When working with organizers of trainings in the regions, require involvement in monitoring as we did so successfully in the last few months of the project.
7. Stimulate co-financing from local communities as an instrument of raising motivation and value of work.
8. Regularly hold trainings for qualification improvement both on our own and involving specialists from other programs.
9. TOTs should aim at methodology and experience exchange.
10. Facilitate training in several stages with the same group with the following aims:
 - 1st stage: Motivational trainings aimed at fostering “awakening” of target group for self-identification, understanding own rights, development of communication skills, orientation on basic values (democracy, freedom, nonviolence, tolerance, etc.).
 - 2nd stage: Practical trainings to promote skills for protection of one’s own rights and defending interests in decision-making (civic initiatives) and basic business concepts.

- 3rd stage: Practical training on techniques of using received information and new skills for effective management of business and employment.
- 11. Development of specific thematic trainings on the following topics for specific audiences, such as strategic planning for women’s business associations and community organizations; and personnel management for women entrepreneurs.
- 12. Organize network of information-consultation telephone “Hotline” services and individual consultations for training participants
- 13. Require more unified groups at rural training with similar or sector-specific needs (beginners, acting farmers, etc.)
- 14. Conduct training for families (small business is usually family business)
- 15. At training, concentrate on those business ideas which have priority for the region
- 16. Work more closely with business incubators
- 17. Establish a collective Council of Trainers
- 18. Through trainers’ experience, we have identified the following potential target groups: Women not gainfully employed for a long period of time; rural women and rural families; rural communities; demobilized military service people; women entrepreneurs (improvement of existing business); women who have experience in illegal shadow businesses; families and women with experience in unsuccessful businesses; and professional categories such as farmers, green tourism, and salespeople.

The training program developed an effective mobile training team, own training school and own philosophy, which affects training approaches in other projects. During the Project two handbooks and a folder of handout materials were developed. In 2003 trainers of our program established an All-Ukrainian Association of Trainers, and most of our trainers became members. The Association started its training school based on materials from Winrock’s USAID funded projects. Our trainers work in consulting companies and have assignments from other technical assistance projects.

Below are success stories of four different women from different Ukrainian cities that illustrate our work.

Tetyana Aginina, Phoros, Crimea.

The history of my business is quite lengthy. We lived and worked in Sevastopol. We decided to make some investments into business, so we rented a dilapidated house in Phoros, renovated it, hired staff. We thought that we were done, but it wasn’t profitable. Then I decided to get personally involved in this work. I went to Phoros often. We finally made profits, but having immersed myself into work, I lost contact with my family. I saw my husband very rarely, we stopped understanding each other. That is why we made a decision to move to Phoros. This was the next step in our life. I had a chance to pay more attention to my husband and son. Also, the more I communicated with my staff, the closer they were to me. Now I think of them as family. And they take care of me.

We put our souls into our work. It’s important for us that clients not only rent rooms in our hotel, but come back to visit us. What I learned at the training has helped us to realize our dreams. We show our guests multi-dimensional Crimea, including historically interesting places and special people who can demonstrate the variety of traditions of Crimea. After the training, I

realized that a union of entrepreneurs will make all of us more successful, even if we have similar businesses. There is enough in this world for everyone. We need to teach people. And the first training that Winrock's trainers conducted in our hotel was a first step.

Now we are planning to increase our capacity. In the very near future we are planning to build a conference hall where we can hold seminars. Having united business, community work, and family, I feel truly happy. One shouldn't focus only on work, it's necessary to create a special environment. I know what I'm able to do, but some things are only possible through joint effort. Now I'm ready to initiate a union, to move to a new stage of development.

Iryna Kharchenko, Kyiv region.

I took my first steps in business in 1991, when I became one of the first women involved in production—baking bread and pastry. This business was successful but our local government couldn't accept my success then. There were endless inspections, a law suit, unfair fines, and conditions which simply didn't allow me to continue my business. This led to a crash of confidence to such an extent that I stopped my work. Of course life went on, I tried to work, get involved in community activity, but I couldn't find myself. Disappointment, dissatisfaction and despair were my constant feelings. The question "How to live?" remained, with no answer. Problems piled up in my relationships with my husband and children, and my ill mother.

And then I was invited to participate in a Women's Rights Training. I went without hesitation. This meeting gave me a chance to look at my situation from a different angle, to see positive things in what had happened, and I started to change my attitude towards myself and others. Of course, this didn't happen in one day. I noticed that life started helping me. The law suit was over; fines of three years ago, returned; my husband and children were open to listening to me and understanding me. And then came the opportunity to take the training "How to Start One's Own Business." A lot of useful information, and my experience was interesting to other participants, which was unexpected. I came to understand my mistakes, and I wanted to get into organizing and developing a business for the special atmosphere that it creates. I love it for the feeling of creativity, freedom of choice, self-sufficiency, victory (even in small things) and financial independence. Today I have a profitable business—a store of household appliances, I have organized a credit union, and am grateful to my fate, for my joy in life.

Valentyna O., Lubny, Poltava region

All of my life is connected to medicine. I started as a doctor and made a career as head of a clinic. My last place of work was emergency service. In the several years of my work there, our emergency service received the highest accreditation category. It happened so that I'm more of an administrator now, but I live in a small town and people know me as a practitioner as well. Often I get requests for help, consultation and diagnostics. They want qualified medical advice. All hospitals and polyclinics have such old equipment that it can hardly be called equipment any longer. If a person needs some sort of diagnostics, s/he needs to go to Kyiv, which is a long way away and hard even on a healthy person, not to mention a sick one.

I want to work at a high level, with modern equipment, to provide qualified help and consultations. My son is studying at the Medical Academy. And in general I want to live better, freer, be financially independent, want to go somewhere look at how people live and possibly

learn a new language. As far as I can remember I always had many interests. I actively went to qualification improvement courses, conferences, doctors symposiums. But life has slowed down, especially in small towns. I thought about what I could do to fulfill my dreams.

And then I accidentally found out that my friend went to some “training on starting a business.” I only knew that she went to Sumy for it, nothing more. I decided that I needed to go as well. I went to Sumy and started looking for her in the hotels, and I found her, and I was able to sign up for the training. I studied intensely for three days, not wanting to miss anything. And all my dreams formed into a line. I then knew what my next steps should be.

Now my private clinic is no longer a dream. Modern equipment is waiting for the renovations to be completed, where we will have large, well-lit rooms. I’m moving forward slowly. Now I have a new idea about a children’s shelter. Everything’s so complicated. But I don’t regret anything. I’m meeting new people, most often interesting and kind ones. Some help financially, some give moral support and some just come and work on the renovations. Often I get help from NGOs and I’m grateful for it. I understand that my road is long and not as straight as I would like it to be. Sometimes I want to leave everything because I can’t take it anymore. But then I can’t leave it because I’ve already done so much. This is a life I have chosen.

Iryna Dreshel, Zhytomyr

1999 was a difficult year for our family. Neither my husband nor I had a regular job. Our children were growing up and we needed money. We wanted a normal life. Once having given a consultation I received half a ton of vegetable oil for payment. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want to sell it myself. “I never worked on the market and I never will”—this thought never left my head.

A week later we put up a booth at a food market. We bought equipment. I worked there for three months and had the chance to observe what was going on at the market, how products were reaching the market and observe the flow of goods. We decided to work with collective farms. We started to bring spare parts for agricultural equipment to villages. In exchange we got agricultural produce which we then tried to sell in the city. We started thinking about large wholesale trading and opening a shop. I’m glad we didn’t have the money for it then—business had to bring pleasure in addition to profit. This became a necessity.

I started attending psychological training. I wanted to change myself and improve my quality of life. Then I attended the training “How to organize one’s own business” and was shocked that although I had my own business, I had never really analyzed it. The training wasn’t over and I had started to analyze my situation. I made two important discoveries: cash flow (if you don’t do this sort of analysis you don’t feel like an owner of your own business); and business-planning. Now it scares me to look at people who operate without a plan and market research. I also realized that I’m not satisfied with our business because I see it doesn’t have potential for much more growth. I also realized that there are people who are just using me and started to be selective in my contacts. At the same training I met my future business partner.

Relationships in my family have changed. My husband and I became partners in work. We have a common goal. The only thing that worried me was mother’s illness. We treated her with

traditional medicine, and she started to feel better but there was no stability. My new acquaintance from training suggested biologically active food supplements. The effect was astonishing—mother quickly recovered and returned to normal life. Our friends and neighbors noticed and started to ask for advice. This is how my new business started.

Now we have a registered trademark “Green Pharmacy” and five outlets in the city. In the near future we will open consultation points near schools, where qualified doctors will give individual consultations and conduct trainings on healthy lifestyles. We work together with the scientific laboratory of the Crimean Academy of Sciences. We started to develop a network of “Green Pharmacies” in other towns of Ukraine. Our representatives already work in Donetsk and Vinnytsia. We’re planning a visit to Russia to Saratov. We’ve sent the first supply of our goods to Germany.

I have a feeling of stability and pleasure from life. Now I’m calm and am in charge of the situation and see a wide field of opportunities. There are sometimes difficult situations, we have inspections, but this doesn’t destabilize me. My main goal is to be happy and my family and I go forward with confidence.

A typical questionnaire response: “I’m very grateful to you, because you take care of women who are in despair, crisis, depression. The training gave me confidence, optimism, and I learned many new useful things for myself. My first steps in business were quite confident, thanks to the training, and today I know well what I want and I have a precise action plan which I follow. I’m grateful to you for the handout materials that show how to plan a business, describe possible mistakes, and increase knowledge. I continue my studies and do it with pleasure. Thank you and keep up the good work!” We often read such words in questionnaires, which is very gratifying for WEE staff and trainers, demonstrating that our work is useful and important.

A powerfully designed three-day course can change deeply held attitudes. Participants come out of these trainings with a greater understanding of and less fear of the market economy. Thus these trainings, which can be conducted all over the country at a relatively low cost, greatly contribute to public support for economic reform. Their success should be evaluated not only in terms of number of enterprises created and jobs found but in terms of changes in attitudes toward private enterprise.

The impact of these three-day trainings could be intensified by conducting them as part of a series working with a given group, to provide ongoing support both to individuals and communities.

GRANTS PROGRAM

The aim of the Grants Program was to extend business support services to the broadest range of women, and at the same time strengthen local sustainable capacity. Grant projects were implemented primarily in those regions of Ukraine where the Women’s Business Support Centers do not operate (in particular, Lviv, Khmelnytsky, Sumy, Rivne, Simferopol, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Vinnytsia, and Kirovohrad).

The first round of grants (selected December 7, 1999) was targeted at:

- Support of non-governmental organizations, mainly women's, implementing job skills programs, including trainings on women's leadership.
- Support of business centers (associations) to facilitate establishment and development of small private businesses for women.

The second round of grants (selected July 7, 2000) was targeted at:

- Conducting regional trainings on how to run business and providing consultations on legal, business, and management issues.
- Social partnership with governmental and non-governmental institutions aimed at improving the legal base on participation of women in small and medium businesses.

Under these grant programs Winrock International and the NIS-US Women's Consortium funded 13 projects for a total of \$100,000 (implemented in 13 oblasts of Ukraine); the International Renaissance Foundation supported 20 projects (\$125,994). (A report detailing the Grants Program from 1999 through 2001 was included in the Fourteenth WEE Quarterly Progress Report, April 1 – June 30, 2002.)

In the WEE project extension, in round three, 7.5 projects were awarded for a total of \$75,000, with the International Renaissance Foundation contributing another \$50,000 to support 4.5 projects (55 proposals were submitted). Grantees conducted projects in the spheres of economic development, particularly training, and in provision of informational and legal consultations for women entrepreneurs. More specifically, the projects:

- Facilitated educational economic programs and multi-level business training courses, in particular re-qualification;
- Provided consultative, informational and legal services for women entrepreneurs;
- United efforts for promoting interests of women entrepreneurs;
- Introduced specific mechanisms for cooperation with governmental structures, in particular with employment centers;
- Developed partnerships with other NGOs on regional or national levels.

Work with grantees started with a seminar on grant administration and financial management of projects, establishing contacts between grantees and Winrock International and contract signing. The Grants Program introduced new methods of grant program management in accordance with US standards, and templates and forms were developed. WEE staff worked closely with grantees, and conducted at least one monitoring visit to each grantee and attended their various events and seminars to assess effectiveness and provide constructive feedback.

Projects also included public discussions, seminars, conferences, and roundtables on issues of business development for women. Social workers, government employees, law enforcement, personnel of employment centers, representatives of tax and customs control services, regional media, other NGOs and students-volunteers were involved in projects.

Grantees were involved in other activities of Winrock's programs, including the Civic Initiatives program, Empowerment Training Program, and an East-East study tour. During project implementation, grantees also made use of information materials prepared by specialists of Winrock International. This complex assistance (according to the feedback of grantees) was very valuable and strengthened both projects' implementation and organizations' capacity. As a result of project implementation, WEE grantees raised their professional level, started working on implementation of national and inter-regional programs, and established a positive image among other NGOs and government, which contributed to the grantees being included into the following **coalitions, coordinating groups and other forums for influencing policy**:

- (1-3-WEE) NGO "Fund for Agrarian Entrepreneurship and Cooperation" (I-Frankivsk)—into Coordination Group on Development of cluster models of regional development of Ivano-Frankivsk RSA.
- (2-3-WEE) NGO "Association of Women in Business" (Khmelnysky) – into Coalition of NGOs of Khmelnytsky Region "For Transparent Society," Coordination Council on Development of Small Enterprises of the City State Administration.
- (4-3-WEE) Regional NGO "Association for protection and fostering development of entrepreneurship" (Rivne)—into Coordination Council on Development of Enterprises of Regional State Administration; Coordination Council on Development of Entrepreneurship of City State Administration; Public Council attached to State Tax Inspection of Rivne; Advisory structure of civil society attached to Ministry of Economy.
- (7-3-WEE) Western-Ukrainian Center "Women's Perspectives" (Lviv) – into Coordination Council on Development of Entrepreneurship of Regional State Administration; Partnership for Increasing Employment of Lviv region (attached to Lviv Employment Center); Advisory structure of civil society attached to Ministry of Economy.
- (8-3-WEE) –Union for Promoting Development of Rural Green Tourism in Crimea (Simferopol)—Coordination Council on Development of Entrepreneurship of Crimea; Associations of local self-governance of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Success Stories

After the NGO "Association of Women in Business" in Khmelnytsky conducted 78 training sessions for the project, trainees established the following organizations: Dunayev Association of Women in Business; Union of entrepreneurs of Shepetivka; Women's Club in Netishin; Women's NGO in Letychiv; and NGO "Women's Mission" in Kamenets-Podilsky. A summary of the yearly competition of Khmelnytsk region for the best woman entrepreneur "Business-Lady" for 2003 showed that the number of women entrepreneurs significantly increased in towns where the project was implemented. (In 2001 all nominees were from the regional center; in 2003, 3 out of 4 nominations were for women entrepreneurs out of district centers (Dunajivtsi, Shepetivka, Netishin).

Implementation of two projects initiated development and support of crafts in Crimea and Western Ukraine: The project "Dissemination of market training among women artisans who work in lizhnyk (traditional woolen blanket) production" by the NGO "Fund for Agro Business

and Cooperation” (I-Frankivsk); and "National crafts of Crimea—integration in business,” Union of Assisting Development of Rural Green Tourism in Crimea (Simferopol). Trainings for artisans was a very successful initiative. Information materials “Entrepreneurship for Artisans: How to Reach Success?” and “Rural Tourism and Artisans” received good reviews from specialists and folk crafts producers and are very popular in other regions among partners. Round tables and public hearings on problems and opportunities of development of folk crafts involved participants from state institutions, employment centers, NGOs, media and entrepreneurs. After these events, project participants became more active and the public became more supportive towards professionals involved in crafts production.

In the last quarter of the project, the U.S. based non-profit organization **Aid to Artisans** conducted an assessment and training activity for artisans in the Carpathians, building on the success of grant recipient Fund for Agro Business and Cooperation. Major portions of the Aid to Artisans Export Manual were translated into Ukrainian and distributed as part of this activity. In brief, the Aid to Artisans assessment concluded that the skills and crafts of the Ukrainian artisans are at as high a level as anywhere that Aid to Artisans has worked, but that numerous obstacles hinder the further development of the sector, including:

- Artisans, though substantially or fully supporting themselves and their families with the sale of their crafts, as a group do not see themselves as business people;
- Artisans do not have adequate record-keeping systems in place;
- Lack of access to common communication systems including telephone, fax or email;
- Artisans work on a cash only basis, and bank accounts are uncommon;
- Artisans often do not have resources to purchase raw materials for expanded production;
- Artisans are accustomed to working alone, within their own households and not as part of a wider, connected production unit;
- Artisans do not have English language skills.

Recommendations

The Aid to Artisan’s report noted that the components of capacity building training, product design work and marketing should be considered essential and inter-related elements of any future assistance. Developing the capacity to properly respond to and manage orders, design product to sell to specific markets, and develop market access to reach the customer is critical to the success of artisan businesses. Below is a brief summary from the report.

1. *Craft business training*: Provide continued training and mentoring by consultants who have practical experience in basic business practices: bookkeeping, correspondence, production and sales records, costing and pricing, quality control, marketing, packaging, and customer service. Through training, entrepreneurs often emerge who are able to take the lead in organizing production and applying the information and expertise they have gained.
2. *Product design assistance*: International and domestic designers should be used to stimulate the creativity of the artisans to develop new product ideas. Producers currently lack the full product lines that are necessary for successful marketing.
3. *Marketing*: Develop a marketing program initially targeting opportunities in the local market, particularly tourist markets with a focus on museum shops, followed by test marketing in export

markets. Create awareness among consumers and artisans of the value of Ukrainian crafts, using such things as an association logo on hang tags and in product marketing materials.

4. *Craft support organizations*: Foster local and regional artisan associations to serve as on-going sponsors for training, marketing opportunities, and information resource. Artisan associations often naturally form when artisans are brought together repeatedly over time for workshops, seminar and fairs, and establish trust and see benefits from cooperation.

Potential Markets: For the immediate future, Aid to Artisans suggested local opportunities where product standardization is less an issue and one-of-a-kind items are more easily marketed.

Green Tourism. An organized association of artisans could develop as a dedicated and focused link to the expanding tourism of their region.

Museum Gift Shops. Through a cooperative link with museums, artisans could gain market exposure and sales opportunities, which links to tourism. For every 100,000 visitors who spend an additional \$10 on a craft item, the domestic craft market increases by \$1 million.

Fashion Industry. A link could be established between the crafts and fashion industries (for example, beaded and embroidered work has become a fashion statement in the western markets). The production of components for the fashion industry is ideal: By producing only a beaded cuff or an embroidered collar, with the designer providing materials, the artisans do not have to be experts at high quality finishing, or to know trends of the fashion market.

German Market. Product transport costs to Germany are relatively inexpensive and delivery time minimal. Furthermore, Germany is home to the largest trade fair in the gift and home accessories industry called Ambiente, held each year in Frankfurt.

Results of the activity include: Participants gained sorely needed skills in approaching their craft from a business perspective; participants are pursuing creation of an association representing their interests; leaders have emerged; the assessment report itself is a valuable program development tool for Winrock and other organizations working in the region; and informational materials have been distributed widely. Based on recommendations from the assessment, a two-day training (June 21-22) in basic business practices was conducted for 16 of the artisans who have proven themselves most active, connections with artisans across Ukraine have been strengthened, and their ability to promote their interests, improved.

These NGOs continue working, carrying out the following projects: the Union for Promoting Development of Rural Green Tourism in Crimea (Simferopol) has a project “Establishment of Regional Center of Folk Crafts, as a model of entrepreneurship development in the village,” (supported by the All-Ukrainian competition for programs of developing local self-governance of the Parliament of Ukraine); and the Fund for Agro Business and Cooperation is conducting “Crafts of Hutsulshchyna: development through regulatory policy” (Program UCAN, Institute of Sustainable Development–USAID); and in the inter-sectoral state program “Rural Woman” on the regional level in forming clusters in the lizhnyk production sector.

- Informational materials and experience developed by project grantees allow them to continue with their informational and consultation work beyond the end of the project, as well as to continue educational programs aimed at increasing economic opportunities for women (**5 out of 8 grantees secured funding for continuation of their work**).

Lessons Learned:

Projects aimed at specific target groups (sectoral projects), have a higher rate of effectiveness. Such projects, focused on issues of importance to specific groups, have concrete results both for participants and for the sector in general. In projects for women entrepreneurs, targeted training programs were highly popular: “Basic computer skills,” “Work and Internet,” “How to protect your business,” “Business and controlling authorities,” “Rights, responsibilities and mechanisms for rights protection,” “Techniques of effective sales,” “Looking for a job,” “Carpeting: knowledge, quality, profit.” Among unemployed women, training aimed at raising self-esteem and general basic knowledge on entrepreneurship was more popular: “Women’s Leadership,” “Communication Skills,” “Organization of entrepreneurship,” “Business planning,” “Foundations of Entrepreneurship,” “Starting own business.”

NGOs who have their own economic programs can adapt them to various sectors of entrepreneurship. Example: the Regional NGO “Association of protection and fostering development of entrepreneurship” (Rivne) received a contract from Rivne Regional Employment Center for development and implementation of educational programs for unemployed people who would like to get involved in rural green tourism.

Suggestion for the future: to support joint complex or sectoral projects of NGOs in different regions of Ukraine aiming to support small- and medium-sized enterprises for women in rural areas (for example: economic educational programs in the area of rural tourism in combination with development of local tourist resources; artisans; educational programs for revival of old and development of modern folk crafts), as well as implementing projects of public hearings on relevant issues of economic development, according to a specific project (small and medium enterprises, farming, agricultural processing, green tourism, etc.) with compulsory development of project mechanisms to activate women’s participation in business with involvement of three sectors (state, NGO and private).

Services of 8 projects were used by 6, 710 people, including:

- **Trained and raised qualification of trainers – 140 persons**, who teach foundations of business for women and disseminate best practice training methodologies (these trainers conducted 72 training sessions for 1,246 people).
- **Conducted 79 trainings for 1,769 women entrepreneurs** in the regions as part of grant projects, to support small and medium-size businesses.
- **Conducted 8 trainings for 105 unemployed women** in the regions as part of grant projects.
- **Provided 3,450 consultations** on business management (economic, legal).
- **Found work** after participating in training – **39 women**

Grantees leveraged additional resources for the project as in-kind contributions: volunteer work of project implementers and trainers; rent of office space or event venues; utilities cost; rent of office equipment; furniture, communication equipment; internet; methodological assistance; transportation and per diems; meals and lodging for participants of training programs

and seminars. Funds leveraged from other sources for the grant program totalled \$110,761.17, including: cooperation with partner organizations and in-kind contributions as well as micro-crediting – \$60,761.17; and funds leveraged through cooperation with the International “Renaissance” Foundation – \$50,000 - (5 projects).

Activities of grant projects were highlighted in mass media. There were 114 newspaper publications and 13 radio programs featuring grantees.

EAST-EAST STUDY TOURS TO POLAND

East-East study tours enabled female entrepreneurs and business educators to experience first-hand the transition to a market economy that has taken place in Poland and to share lessons learned with their Polish counterparts. Through these study tours, participants had the opportunity to witness the many elements that contribute to a working market economy, including professional associations, supportive government structures and programs, and active lending institutions. As important, Ukrainian participants established contacts with women entrepreneurs and NGOs in Poland that have led to ongoing cooperation.

Ten study tours were organized over the life of the project, primarily in northern and central Poland (Warsaw, Gdansk, Gdynia, Sopot, Krakow). **One hundred and fifty women from different regions of Ukraine took part in the study tours** (Ivano-Frankivsk, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Rivne, Simferopol, Phoros, Poltava, Kyiv, Mykolayiv, Donetsk, Khmelnytskyi, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv). The implementation of this program with the cooperation of international organizations, government institutions, state organizations and NGOs fostered increased entrepreneurial activity between Ukraine and Poland, and allowed women to learn more about legislation and administrative norms of Poland as well as about how to win and manage projects. Seminars organized about issues of the Polish and Ukrainian economies and experience exchange (on issues of agro-tourism, for example) allowed women to acquire new professional knowledge in various fields. Today, ongoing correspondence and information exchange continues between study tour participants and Polish colleagues, and proposals for joint study tours and projects are being prepared.

Polish partners

Organizations were chosen according to the following criteria: Openness of partners to cooperation, connections with local and regional businesses, organizations and relevant government offices in Poland, and qualified accounting personnel and guide for Ukrainian participants. Study tours to Poland were organized by Regina Suyetska, director of “Adept” in Krakow and Mazhena Mazhevska, of IAPES in Poland (International Association of Personnel in Employment Security). Close cooperation with donor organizations increased the effectiveness of the Project. (For example, participants of the study tours were able to meet the director of the Warsaw office of PAUCI (Polish-American-Ukrainian Cooperation Initiative)).

Cooperating Polish businesses and organizations included: Krakow Regional Development Agency, Krakow Regional Branch of Polish Association of Business Women, Jesiolowscy Economic Consulting Agency, Foundation for Local Development (town of Gorlice)), Mutual

Loan Society, Economic Development Fund in Gdynia, Company of Joint Shareholders in c. Dzhegosh, Association of Trading Companies in c. Kartuzy, private dress-making and design atelier “Ariton,” Agency for Support of Women’s entrepreneurship, Credit Union “SOK” in town of Kartuzy, B&B “Matushka,” “Litvorovka,” hotel “Bona,” beer factory “Amber,” gardening complex, leather and small goods firm “Batytska,” Fund of Entrepreneurs, Company “Professional Consulting,” company of plumbing equipment “San Art,” Business Support Center, company of group trading “EGA,” “Renault” store, International Women’s NGO Soroptymizm International, Krakow Association of trainers and management consultants (MATRIK), Krakow Center for single mothers and victims of domestic violence, children’s sanatorium for treating respiratory problems in Velychka, one of the oldest Polish hospices, private bakery, Institute of Cosmetology of Irena Eris, several private gardens specializing on green tourism, private hotel and restaurant “Hubertus,” private school of hotel business, Foundation for the Economic promotion of Krakow Region; and Micro lending institution “Inicjatywa Mikro.”

Participants of the tours were primarily:

- Women who have started their own businesses, are successfully managing them, and are active in Women’s Business Support Centers;
- Representatives of NGOs, particularly those who implemented business development programs for women or were active in the Civic Initiatives Program;
- Staff members of Women’s Business Support Centers and credit unions;
- Trainers trained by WEE who are active in the training program, including grantees.

Program activities included:

- Development of tour objectives for women working in the WEE program;
- Development of questionnaires for participants of tours;
- Finding partner organizations in Poland for planning of tours.

Study tour agendas usually included:

- Office meetings with representatives of organizations (in all tours)
- Roundtables for meeting several NGOs/businesses at once (Krakow and Warsaw tours)
- Visiting businesses – looking at actual workplaces (all study tours)

In the first three years of WEE, the “East-East” study tour program was administered by the sub-contractor ACDI/VOCA. In the project’s extension, Winrock assumed responsibility for the study tour component. Winrock was able to take advantage of established contacts and assigned a coordinator for this Project activity, responsible for tour content, composition and number of participants, variety of approaches in selecting participants, etc. Winrock made it a priority to involve participants from the regions, small towns and villages of Ukraine.

In the project extension, building on lessons learned in the first two years of the project, Winrock instituted short surveys for participants of future tours where they had to write a statement of purpose and describe how they anticipated applying the experience from the study tour to their future work. Winrock formed three thematic study tour groups organized around project components: a study tour devoted to trainers; another focused on grantees; and another focusing on participants of the civic initiatives program. Project coordinators recommended

active participants of their programs for participation in study tours. The schedule of every tour was formed on the basis of requests of the participants that were sent to partner organizations in Poland to assist them in proposing site visits and meetings.

Lessons Learned:

We have learned that it is more effective to involve into study tours those women who are going to Poland with specific ideas about cooperation with Polish partners. Thus, WEE organized a competition for ideas for joint projects with Polish NGOs/businesses. The competition was announced among partners and participants of the Project (through WEE Centers, credit unions, grantees, participants and co-organizers of ‘Citizen Initiatives’ program, etc.). As a result it was possible to form a group with similar interests and specific ideas regarding meetings with Polish organizations. Also experience showed that preparation of tours should start with collection and exchange of detailed information about participants from both the Polish and Ukrainian sides.

- Organize target groups for participation in targeted tours (similar business, one field, etc.).
- Visit credit unions and other business structures (educational) which foster small business development.
- During trips organize meetings for discussing intentions for implementation of joint projects between Ukrainian and Polish sides for preparation of joint proposals/projects.
- Develop specific study tour programs for businesses and NGOs that assist in business development.
- Provide Polish organizations with more information about Ukrainian participants.
- Encourage Polish and Ukrainian media to cover study tours, including publicizing success stories in media.
- Organize topic-specific seminars for the groups.
- Organize tours not as one-time, single events but as series of visits for the same rigorously selected group, allowing participants to develop more thorough plans and strategies.

Program success stories

Yulia Tereschuk from Lviv was invited to cooperate with the Polish company Financial Marketing Group after participating in a study tour to Poland. First Yulia underwent a training program and now is a trainer of their program herself. She is running training and seminars successfully and is included in their top twenty most successful program trainers. Yulia regularly goes to Poland for seminars and roundtables.

After her participation in a study tour conducted to Gdansk in March 2004, *Evgenia Tyshlek*, head of the credit union *Dobrobut* in *Donetsk*, was asked to organize a seminar “Optimal management of credit unions” for the PAUCI program. The first phase took place 19-21 May 2004, and the second phase took place June 17-24 on optimal administration of credit unions for 45 representatives of credit unions from the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. A joint project is planned for 2005. In September 2004, 6 participants will travel to Poland for internships at credit unions in Warsaw.

Ludmilla Zakrevska, NGO Poltava Business Incubator, was able to make important contacts during a Polish study tour in December 2002. She met with the leaders of the Agency for Professional Development of Women of Gdansk, and discussions of issues surrounding women in business became the topic of a successful joint project “Successful Women’s Business” supported by Freedom House, PAUCI and USAID in 2003. The project trained 25 women entrepreneurs in marketing and management. Eleven of these women were chosen on a competitive basis through their marketing plans to visit entrepreneurs in Gdansk, Gdynia, Sopot, and Warsaw, through which they found business partners that have led to the use of new methods in their businesses. In addition, participants created an Association of Women in Business, which significantly increased their effectiveness in promoting their interests. Due to their success in the PAUCI project, the organization has been recognized as a serious successful “player,” capable of carrying out social programs, and the city of Poltava awarded them a tender to conduct business training.

Natalia Horodetska, Union for Promotion of Green Tourism in Crimea, Simferopol. In 2002, during a study tour to Krakow, Natalia Horodetska became acquainted with the activity of Polish organizations that prepare people for the hotel and tourist industry. They agreed to work together, and the result was the joint project, together with the Association for Support of Integration with the European Union, “The influence of individual tourism on the development of the hotel business,” funded by PAUCI. During the first stage of the project, in Crimea, 90 people involved in rural green tourism were trained from 11 raions of Crimea. In the second stage, 18 of them visited Poland, where they participated in training seminars on small business, advertising, and were acquainted with the work of chambers of commerce and government structures in supporting rural tourism. Currently, regional representatives conduct consultations on green tourism in 7 raions of Crimea, which has resulted in improved quality of services for tourists. The organization is preparing a plan for a “Hospitality School” and a training program for Employment Centers in this field.

Ludmilla Mykhailiuno, Union for Development of Green Tourism, Lviv. In July 2003, while visiting organizations involved in green tourism in the Krakow region, Ludmilla made contact with the organization *Tovaryshenia Bashta*, in the Subcarpathian region. Together, they submitted a proposal that was accepted by Department for International Development of the United Kingdom: “Development of Ukrainian-Polish Cooperation in the Sphere of Green Tourism” that is successfully being realized in Lviv oblast.

Tetiana Lytvynova, Coordinator Training Program, Winrock International. During a study tour in 2000, Tetiana developed contacts with the Krakow Association of Trainers and Consulting on Management. Through this contact, she was able to involve this organization in the WEE training program. It conducted a training of trainers on identifying training needs (2001) and a second on Planning Training (2002). Informational materials they provided have been integrated and raised the level of the Ukrainian training program.

Elina Dumych, entrepreneur, Jovkva, Lviv Oblast. Before her trip to Poland, Elina had a business selling non-perishable items. During a meeting in Gdansk in 2002 with business woman Justyna Kal’eta, who has a business growing flowers and

teaching gardening, Elina and Justyna agreed to work together, and Elina has expanded her business and successfully sells flowers from Gdansk.

Tetiana Kolesnyk, business woman, Donetsk

Tetiana also found partners among the organizations she met with during a study tour. In her case, she made agreements with a private firm that makes leather accessories and opened a specialized store selling leather items in Donetsk.

CIVIC INITIATIVES PROGRAM

(Also contributes to IR2.1, Legal and regulatory environment strengthened)

The Civic Initiatives on Economic Issues looked for ways to promote the interests of business women by establishing cooperation and social partnerships between government and community through joint activities. Through WEE, public hearings, trainings and roundtables have been conducted in 28 large, medium and small towns and cities across Ukraine to promote dialogue between entrepreneurs, business associations and government officials. The ability of businesswomen and NGOs to articulate and advocate for their interests with political and economic decision-making bodies is a crucial element in the development of a democratic society and in the successful growth of small and medium business. WEE public hearings have “primed” relevant government agencies to be receptive to well-crafted, consensus-based community input, and have provide community members with a structured opportunity to articulate their priorities collectively before their government representatives. Also, last year, WEE introduced a training program in how to hold effective public hearings in response to a need that became apparent through conducting public hearings in the earlier years of the project.

An analysis of the impact of the Civic Initiatives program was conducted in early 2004, and is attached. The report includes descriptions of the range of geography, participants, topics, media coverage, and results, both at the local, regional and national levels.

Number of forums in different cities of Ukraine	40
Total number of participants	2,051
Total number of distributed bulletins	4,338
Number of advocacy training facilitated	13

◆ Number of publications prepared and distributed during the program

One thousand copies of the handbook “Public Hearings as a Tool for Development of Small and Medium Business” were printed and distributed. This handbook was distributed through Winrock’s networks of NGOs that have participated in the Grants Program, the training program of the Civic Initiatives Program, as well as through the WBSCs. The handbook explains how to conduct a hearing (why they are effective, choosing an issue, target audience, doing research and preparing materials, necessary resources); choosing participants and working with them (supporters, opponents, government officials, business, NGOs, media, and how to invite and maintain contact with them); organizing the event (the hall, equipment, choosing a date and time, the agenda, the press release, preparing the main speakers, registering participants, introductions); the event (moderating the event, explaining rules and procedures, developing

proposals and passing resolutions, establishing a working group for follow up; informing all involved of results, writing a report, submitting proposals to appropriate officials, etc.).

Bulletins were published approximately three times a year (quarterly, with a break after New Year). There were between 400-500 copies published quarterly. They were sent to project partners and disseminated at seminars, public hearings, and at WBSCs. Bulletins included reports of events and new legal information as well as analysis of selected topics.

◆ **Methods used for promoting the interests of business women:**

1. **Education:** Conducting training for trainers. Development and facilitation of a two-day training course. Development and publication of handbook “Public Hearings as an Element of Lobbying for Development of Small and Medium Enterprise.” NGO leaders, active entrepreneurs, and representatives of government institutions were invited to participate in these trainings as preparation for advocacy forums.
2. **Public events:** All those working with the WEE Grants, Training and credit union programs were invited. In addition to large public events, we conducted meetings, consultations, planning hearings, an important part of the civic initiatives process.
3. An important component in the process of training and organizing events is the ability to draft and present documents (analytical memos, press releases, memorandums, letters, resolutions), follow up on their progress and ratification in offices of government structures and then disseminate this information among the general public.

◆ **How methods were adapted during the project duration taking into account acquired experience**

In the beginning of the project we planned only public hearings, roundtables and quarterly bulletins. During project implementation we held consultations and meetings with different organizations to discover the best mechanisms in achieving results for the WEE project and analyzed these events. All participants voiced an opinion that it is difficult to hold public hearings without first preparing the organizers themselves, other participants and the government. Therefore we made changes in the work of the program. The stress was made on organizing the events well and thorough preparation of documents: we started training for regional NGOs, published the handbook and bulletins that included legal information and analysis of situations on various topics. The program didn't focus only on public hearings, because they are only a part of the process, starting with roundtables, working meetings and consultations.

Main lessons learned from program implementation

On the regional and national levels:

Based on experience organizing public hearings in 1999-2002., we can say that society was not used to asking the government questions, discussing decision making and making well thought-out proposals. Analyzing separate events in the regions, each region is different and much depends on the relationship of NGOs with government in a particular region, how active the

general public is, and how willing the government is to cooperate. In the beginning of project implementation, one main issue was the fact that there were certain topics, for discussion of which the public wasn't invited – small and medium business, farming – but there were topics which the government gladly discussed—i.e. social issues. After numerous public hearings and other events organized by our project and other donors, the situation has improved and government has become more open to input from the public. Attached is a letter from the head of the national Employment Center system, after a roundtable on effective mechanisms for NGO cooperation with Employment Offices, stating his readiness to cooperate and commenting on the high level of professionalism of the WBSCs.

Other lessons from project implementation:

- It is necessary to be in regular contact with government representatives to ensure their participation in the hearings. Sometimes they promise to be there but never show up, although they promise up until the last minute.
- It is necessary to confirm time and date of events, as sometimes the government changes the date 2-3 days before the event.
- Often participants promise to be active during discussion, but during discussion itself retreat into the role of silent observers.
- Results of events sometimes are long-term effects that happen a year or two later.
- Seminars must be conducted not simply by experience trainers, but by trainers who personally have organized public hearings or participated in the advocacy process.

Main achievements of the program:

Organizing Forums of Coordinated Action influenced the governments' attitude towards a wide variety of problems of private entrepreneurs, established a positive context for further development of the legislative base and procedures which ensure development of business on national and regional levels. The most remarkable results of the influence of the public on formation of government policy on the national and regional levels are:

1. Communities became more active and began to understand that they can participate in solving problems of the region, became more confident in their own abilities.
2. NGOs started to unite for organizing joint events and solving joint problems. Before the program, during the initial stage of third sector development each organization was trying to act on its own.
3. NGOs started to organize public hearings on particular themes, where before discussing a topic, they research and analyze it and prepare arguments for presentation and debate.
4. In some regions, after public hearings, NGOs were included into regional state inter-departmental councils for decision-making (Kharkiv and Ivano-Frankivsk).
5. Government now not only attends the hearings during the start, but often stays until the end of event and discusses issues with the rest of participants.
6. Government began to study issues for discussion before public hearings, while previously they did not. Now they understand that their reputation is at stake.
7. Local governments turn to NGOs for their expertise and analysis (Truskavets, Dnipropetrovsk, Kosiv).
8. Issues of national importance are put up for discussion first and then ratified, while previously the government made the decisions first and then informed the public. Public

hearings for discussing draft legislation and new codes (Draft law on credit unions, new tax and land code).

9. Deputy commissions add suggestions recorded at the hearings to the drafts of legislation they are presenting (draft law on credit unions, new tax and land codes).
10. Deputies study issues for discussion and report to the Parliament about the situation.
11. NGOs embraced the role of moderator between representatives of business and government. Previously business was on its own and state—on its own.

Importance of trainings, which were held as part of the program, lies in providing NGO and business leaders with opportunities to develop skills in:

- defining priorities in organizations' work;
- organizing public events;
- establishing cooperation with government organizations;
- promoting and defending their interests.

Many NGO leaders and active business leaders participated in training and seminars and organized events for the program. They are continuing to work with other donors on participation in the process of citizen initiatives. They work on facilitation of seminars or get involved in events aimed at protecting community interests, organized by others.

◆ **Recommendations:**

- Work with rural communities, participation of different social groups and youth in the process of protecting interests, more work with regions, regional and district towns.
- Providing legal consultations, representing interests in courts and establishing precedents.
- Concentrating on one topic, working with this topic from beginning until end (research, analysis, consultations, meetings, public hearings, etc.).
- Working with the media (creating special programs, columns, etc.).

◆ **Other results:**

On the national level:

- Ratification by the Verkhovna Rada of laws “About state support to the small enterprises” (? 2063-? date 19.10.2000); “About National Program of Fostering Development of Small Enterprises in Ukraine” (? 2157-? date 21.12.2000). In the Law of Ukraine “About State Support to Small Enterprises” it was noted for the first time “legal foundations for state support of small enterprises regardless of forms of ownership to ensure the quickest exit from the state of economic crisis and creating conditions for market economy in Ukraine,” which means that the role of small enterprises was finally recognized as the primary driver of market reforms.
- Issuing of a Decree of the President of Ukraine “About implementing a single state regulatory policy in the area of entrepreneurship” of 22.01.2000 ? 89/2000, which aims to achieve optimal regulation of entrepreneurial activity by the state, and removal of legal, economic and administrative obstacles for entrepreneurial activity.

On the regional level:

- Developed and presented to the Session of Supreme Council of Crimea a draft law of Ukraine “About making changes to Law of Ukraine Regarding Folk Art Production.”

- Developed and implemented a registration procedure for subjects of entrepreneurial activity according to the principle “One stop shop” in Ivano-Frankivsk, Kolomyia, and Kalush, Rozhnitivsky, Galytskyi, Rogatyn districts.
- Developed a project of development of entrepreneurship in the Western Region of Ukraine.

C. Increased access to credit (IR2.3)

CREDIT UNION PROGRAM

A total of 966 loans totalling \$957,309 were made to women entrepreneurs.

The Credit Union Program was launched with the aim of improving access to credit for women entrepreneurs by providing loans through credit unions. It was run by ACDI/VOCA in the first three years of the project. Each WBSC was matched with a credit union in the same city. The program began as a loan fund earmarked for WBSC graduates with viable plans and the skills for starting a business or expanding an existing one. Working through local credit unions, this program assisted women entrepreneurs who may not otherwise qualify for bank loans or credit from donor programs to obtain start-up capital for business development, thus providing access to capital to a neglected business niche. The program was also designed to support the viability of participating credit unions.

The philosophy of the program has been to instill in participants the importance of responsible borrowing and credit management. Successful participants built a credit history, making them more attractive clients to credit unions as well as banks. A first time borrower was eligible for a loan of up to \$750; after successful repayment, that amount could be increased to \$1,500. After two successful repayments, it could be increased again to \$2,000. The program accepted applications not only from WBSC graduates but also from graduates of WBSC short-term trainings and WEE empowerment trainings. Six credit unions, from Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Mykolayiv and Simferopol, received a total of \$110,000 in capital.

	Credit Union	Number of WBSC graduates that took loans	Number of WBSC graduates of long-term that took loans	Number of WBSC graduates of short-term that took loans	Average period repayment (month)	Number of graduates were refused
Iv.Frankyvsk	Stanyslavs'ka	40	22	18	12	3
Donetsk	Dobrobut	89	38	51	12	14
Simferopil	Profy	30	19		4.8	2
Mykolaiv	Zlagoda	52	32	20	12	0
Chernygyv	Chernygyvska					
Kharkiv	Zhzynocha vzaymodyia	107	80	27	8	65

lessons learned from program implementation:

- ◆ institute more accountability on the part of credit unions, including contractual agreements and discussion of all steps of the work from the very beginning – this may mean stipulating a concrete minimum number of loans to program graduates within a certain period
- ◆ consider pegging interest rate to national credit union average
- ◆ require a percent of matching funds from the credit unions
- ◆ provide financial assistance to credit unions proportionately, based on the amount in loans they have made to program graduates
- ◆ based on success of training held for women both by centers and credit unions, make this a requirement as it builds cooperation between the two
- ◆ appearance of new topics in training sessions (tax recording, tax book, step-by-step assistance to women, who received credits by supporting and giving consultations to their businesses
- ◆ cooperation may not be established if leaders are not interested in it
- ◆ Study tours to Poland brought priceless experience of work with clients,
- ◆ connection between regions and experience of working with credit unions, experience of working not only with credit unions but other organizations
- ◆ inter-connection between regions and experience of cooperation between credit unions.
- ◆ centers and credit unions need to be dependent on each other, signing agreements and following them is compulsory
- ◆ holding training, roundtables for credit unions for improving their operations
- ◆ importance of exchange of experience with other credit unions in Ukraine and abroad
- ◆ lawyer-consultant must be included in the staff of the credit union

	Credit Union	loans overdue more than 30 days	loans outstanding at end of fiscal year	Portfolio at risk	amount of loans written off during the past year	Loan loss rate
Iv.Frankyvs'k	Stanyslavs'ka	43	5405	0.008	0	0
Donetsk	Dobrobut	32	50.73	0.631	0	0
Simferopol	Profy	19	1445	0.013	0	0
Mykolayiv	Zlagoda					
Chernihiv	Chernygyvs'ka					
Kharkiv	Zhzhynocha vzaymodyia	0	751.4	0	0	0
				0.163		

main achievements of the program;

- organization of thorough training sessions

- components “Women’s Leadership and Gender Sensitivity” were included, which are important for development of women’s business in stereotypical society.
- work with women beginners, help given to them in developing business plans and further support (no other programs or funds are dealing with this).
- credit unions stand as guarantors for women who want to apply for larger amounts of credit at other financial institutions.
- special methodology has been created for testing of ideas and business plans (how effective is a business idea, is assistance needed, computer program “testing business projects”).
- credit unions’ invitation to enter organizations and to take part in public hearings with the purpose of protecting their own interests.
- improvement of image of credit unions.
- Financial support through WEE, which gave credit unions the opportunity to expand lending and also to enlarge membership.
- Many graduates of business centers became members of credit unions. They become mentors for businesses that just started, give free consultations, establishing networks to help support each other’s businesses.

Success stories

Crimea – The Yahirsky family started a business of making special clothes and underwear. The wife thanks to a friend’s initiative started attending courses at the WBSC. After this she and her husband started a family business. The family took loans from the credit union four times, became active members of the credit union and now give consultations to beginning businesses as mentors and consultants at the credit union.

Donetsk – Initially, Ludmyla Bilous, together with two colleagues, wanted to open a café, but after consultations and analysis she decided to open a store. After the first store, she opened another, selling household appliances and products. She received loans three times (first for 4,300, second for 80,000, and the last one was 10,000 UAH).

Kharkiv – Svitlana Chayka is a member of the credit union “Vzayemodopomoha,” (Mutual Assistance) and has her own business selling office supplies. She organizes training and gives consultations to beginning business women. She received credit four times (4,000; 8,500; 150,000; 9,200). She became assistant to the deputy of Kharkiv Regional Administration. Today she is proud to be helping women who own businesses to protect their own rights.

Kharkiv – Kateryna Lubarska took part in seminars at the WBSC and turned to the credit union for a loan. She started out working by herself and opened a furniture store. Later, her husband joined her, and now they own a chain of furniture stores.

BELARUS

A community development project was completed in Belarus in February 2002 in cooperation with subcontractor ACDI/VOCA aimed at encouraging the establishment of women's initiative groups; providing a training program for the groups established; and supporting the active

involvement of the participants in local community activities through access of the initiative groups to small grants program. Establishment of the Women's NGO Network; Technical Training on core business skills necessary for management of NGOs and private businesses, strategic planning, project development, leadership, legal literacy, human rights, information technologies (basics of internet and e-mail usage), etc.; Micro Community Action Programs; Advocacy Initiatives.

Over the life of the project, the following results were achieved:

- Belarusian Women's Network was established and is now comprised of 98 women's organizations;
- 1,157 training workshops conducted;
- 1,301 women trained on women's leadership, NGO management and advocacy, etc.;
- 255 women trained on business skills;
- 550 women were trained under the Micro Community Action Projects phase;
- 120 women trained on Internet & E-mail usage;
- 37 rural localities were engaged in the project.

Micro Community Action Projects - Following the training, the newly emerging women groups were encouraged to test their knowledge by becoming involved in community development activities. WEE offered grants of \$250 each for micro projects to influence improvements in the quality of life in rural areas. The women developed an understanding that they are able to effect changes even with limited resources.

- 27 micro grants were disbursed and implemented (approximately \$ 250 each for the total amount of \$ 7 090 USD);
- 25 initiative groups emerged as a result of training workshops combined with community development projects implementation and around 550 women were trained as part of this phase of the project;
- 7 initiative groups were registered as NGOs as a result of the WEE training and involvement in Micro Community Action Project;
- 65 trainings were completed for women in 18 rural towns.

(ACDI/VOCA's report was included as an attachment to the WEE project's fourteenth quarterly report.)

In fall 2003, an economic **empowerment anti-trafficking initiative** was launched (see attached report). The project aimed to improve anti-trafficking efforts in Belarus through the economic empowerment of Belarusian women between the ages of 18-25 through basic job skills training programs. A competition was held to choose the Belarusian training organizations and of thirteen applications from seven cities, eight organizations were chosen. Following a Training of Trainers and site visit to Ukrainian WEE and TPP centers, each organization (approximately two trainers per organization) trained from 18-25 young women. They contracted with local sites for computer training (minimum of four days) per group and trainees received training in use of basic office equipment (i.e., fax, photocopying machine, office phone systems, etc.). In the first set of intensive trainings, there were 154 graduates for whom 200-hour internships were arranged in business and NGOs. A second round of intensive trainings was held. There were 79 graduates of the second round of trainings (funds allowed for 10 women per training) and a shortened internship program of 50 to 74 hours.

228 of the participants completed a questionnaire, the results of which indicated:

- None of the participants had experience as a full-time employee prior to the program, and only 12.7 percent had part-time work experience;
- The percentage of participants who have found full-time work after the program is 28.5; another 4.4 percent have found part-time or summer employment;
- 45 percent of participants were not aware of the problem of trafficking before participation in the program, and 25 percent were only somewhat aware;
- 41 percent of participants either had experience or expressed some desire to work abroad before participation in the program;
- In answer to the question, “Has your attitude toward trafficking changed after participation in the program?” 73 percent of participants answered yes or somewhat.
- Seventy-eight percent reported that their self-esteem had improved through participation in the program (172 participants answered “yes” and 3 answered “somewhat”).
- 214 participants were 30 years of age or younger; 14 participants were between 30 and 40 years of age.

V. ATTACHMENTS

1. WEE Indicator Chart
2. WEE Grantees
3. ACDI/VOCA Final Report
4. Analysis of Civic Initiatives Program (English/Ukrainian)
5. Employment Center Letter
6. Belarus Trafficking Prevention Report