



Welcome to Issue No. 21 of the newsletter published by our Project!

This issue is dedicated to Oleksandrivka community, Pokrovsky District, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, which although not an official partner of the Community Economic Development Project, has been intensively working with the Project consultants and experts, and has participated in its workshops and annual conferences. The experience of this community is very valuable and interesting for others. It demonstrates how a community can initiate small projects and then progress gradually creating a cooperative, civic organizations, and social enterprises.

How the CED Project Is Perceived in Oleksandrivka

For the first time the residents of Oleksandrivka village learned about the Community Economic Development Project in Ukraine at its first Lessons Learned Conference in Lviv Oblast in 2005. As O. V. Zakharchuk, Head of Oleksandrivka Village Council said, earlier they didn't have any information about the community economic development and its concept. Mr. Zakharchuk has been working for 17 years as head of Oleksandrivka Village Council (11 communities and 3840 residents on the territory of 13,000 hectares). Mr. Zakharchuk has intensive experience of work with the community and he understands that today, especially in villages, local authorities do not enhance the development of rural communities. Another challenge is that citizens of even small villages due to various reasons cannot mobilize their efforts in order to solve basic local issues and that makes the idea of community economic development enormously important.



O. V. Zakharchuk, Head of Oleksandrivka Village Council

Mr. Zakharchuk spent two days at the first Lessons Learned Conference. Having heard and seen what the concerned people from Canada and Ukraine have accomplished he got very excited and satisfied. He was happy for Canadians who openly, clearly and professionally shared their experience gained in their country and internationally, and satisfied with the fact that everything that had been understood before on the intuitive level has been working for decades on the basis of academic knowledge and legislation which are successfully introduced and operate in many countries of the world.

Participation in the CED Project Conference inspired the community of Oleksandrivka in their first community initiatives

From the very beginning the community economic development idea was not fully accepted in Oleksandrivka. It took several years to understand it, but, as some community leaders say, the results of the Conference really became a starting point. Some years after Oleksandrivka village organized a community gathering under the slogan "Say No to Apathy!" Certainly there were disappointments, tears, quarrels and reluctance to go on, but slowly solutions to some problems started to show up. First, the initiative group of B. Khmelnytsky Street led by T.O. Chebriak, a deputy, decided to renovate their street lights. The Village Council donated the lamps, the residents produced fastening, paid for the wire and installation of the fifth lead and switchboards.

The street lights have been in operation for one and a half years already. The citizens know it's their property and they have to protect it from any damage. They have spare lamps and if any gets out of order they replace them on their own, and do not rush to the Village Council to say there is a problem (as it used to be). This positive example helped the citizens of four neighboring villages in Oleksandrivka and three in Kolomyjtsi realize they have to do the same in their streets. But still there are some challenges, for instance with those initiative groups which were created on a formal basis or only on paper: there was no further motivation and no street lights, as some of the citizens regardless prior agreements, refused to cut tree branches which damaged the lines during foul weather.

Such initiative groups think they have completed their assignment and they no longer care what their neighbors do. But, as Head of Village Council says, it was a "growth disease" and lack of learning process and knowledge which is often neglected.

Today by means of joint efforts the community is solving the problem of road renovation and maintenance. It is a difficult task, as besides the funds for road renovation there should be road technical documentation in the first place. Citizens' gatherings usually take place outside, in the street where the roads are mostly damaged. It was there that an initiative group formed and later started to collect money from the citizens (10-15 UAHs). It ordered and paid for the road technical documentation at the Technical Inventory Bureau. Then the initiative group turned to the Village Council with a request to include the road into the village budget and submitted its technical documentation. The Village Council took this road into the communal property and further road renovations were legally done under its auspices. In such a way no inspector or auditor can question the right of the Village Council to renovate its roads or doubt that it uses the money improperly. Some people can say that this example (technical documentation preparation and including the road into the Village Council budget) shows the incompetence of the Village Council and an attempt to pump out money from the citizens' family budgets. We see this instance at a different angle. The amount of 10-15 or even 20-25 UAHs contributed into preparation of the technical documentation for the road which is used by community citizens and their families on a daily basis is no high a price. What matters here is people's understanding that it is their road which has a big value, and in order to avoid any further contributions from family budgets it is necessary to monitor the quality of its renovation and in future to prevent it from any damage. Such joint activities are very useful, because here we see peoples' ability to mobilize and choose informal community leaders who will inspire the citizens to solve other problems in future.

First Steps to Social Partnership

Oleksandrivka initiative groups which have certain positive experience on a micro level started to broaden their activities. For instance, Kolomyjtsi village initiative group prepared a project: "From Stadium Reconstruction - to Healthy Way of Living". Within the framework of Dnipropetrovschyna Community Development Fund it got 3,675 UAH from Stephen Báthory of Poland Fund to implement the project. The community and business contribution was UAH 4,000.

Another Oleksandrivka initiative group prepared another project: "From Untidy Arable Land Today - to parks tomorrow". With the support of "Renaissance" Foundation it is planned to recreate 1,2 hectares of garbage polluted arable land into a park zone on the bank of the Vovcha river. The project budget is more than 8,000 UAH.

Also the initiative group from this community developed a project: "Creation of Conditions for Youth Leisure Time". Today the representatives of the core group are partners in a United Nations Organization project: "Creation of Safe Environment for the Youth of Ukraine". Now the process of agreements and development of common vision is underway. The base for the Youth Center will be the Oleksandrivka Culture House, which already opened dancing and wind instruments music classes. The teachers are volunteers. Tetiana Vasylivna Buhay, director of the library, delivers drawing classes besides her main responsibilities. Following the requests of parents a new embroidery class has been opened recently. In the framework of this project from 18 to 30 of August,

"Oleksandrivka Dawn" Cooperative

2007, a team of volunteers who care about environmental issues was working near Kolomyjtsi village. In two weeks 18 young people removed garbage from 150 hectares of forest, cut down more than 2 hectares of weeds, and at the same time organized their trainings and rest. The young people demonstrated to their peers and adults how they love their land, not just in words but in practice. In this particular case the volunteers' successful achievements were the results of joint efforts and cooperation of all stakeholders.

The main economic activity on the territory of the community is agricultural production. One of the challenges today is how to get new effective owners and how to teach them new conditions of business in the unstable and unpredictable environment of the demand for their products, how to teach them methodology of marketing and management, business planning, and advanced production technologies. The "Oleksandrivka Dawn" cooperative was created with the aim to enhance the solution of such problems in the community. "What is way out of this uneasy situation for the community?" Yulia Mykolaivna Vasylevs'ka, head of the cooperative speaks:

"The establishment of the agricultural service cooperative was stipulated by the poor conditions in which our families lived with no perspectives to have adequate level of life in the village. The idea to unite the activities of milk producers in the village led to first results which increased the value of our products. But without external assistance the cooperative wouldn't have survived. Such help was provided by the International Charitable Foundation: "Heifer Project International". This Foundation supported our project on community social and economic development and granted us 20 heifers of Ukrainian Black-Speckled milk breed and 10 sows of Big White breed. The heifers and sows were given to the most poor but responsible families in the village during a general meeting of the cooperative. This created new jobs for the families in their own households and a new source of income which will improve their living conditions. In total the families will receive 40 heifers and 40 sows. Each family should hand a first newly born heifer to another family who needs it (it is called "To Hand over a Gift"). The next born heifers and milk remain the property of the owners. Due to the "gifts" and special trainings on basic livestock farming and advanced rural economy technologies, there will be no more need to continue to hand over the gifts to other families, and the young cattle will go to the cooperative. We also purchased veterinary medications and medical instruments together with the equipment for the artificial insemination depot, as this process needs only pedigree cattle. Now we are preparing to buy and hand over ten more cows to our citizens free of charge. Actually our cooperative is a community based organization, as getting profits for the founders or the Board is not its primary goal. It is not commercial, and the revenues will be distributed among its members. All have equal rights: the management and governance process are organized on the basis of "one person – one voice" principle. The assets of our enterprise cannot be used by the cooperative management, the membership is open for any person. The organization is transparent and accountable to the community. In order to make the work of the cooperative successful we need to learn more.



Yulia Mykolaivna Vasylevs'ka, head of the cooperative "Oleksandrivka Dawn", 2007



Cows received by the village of Oleksandrivka from the Heifer Project International, 2007

**Creation of
a Charitable
Organization:
"Oleksandrivka
Community
Development Fund"**

Recently O.V. Zakharchuk, Head of Village Council, has visited "Nadia" milk cooperative in Tomashpils'ky District, Vinnytska Oblast. It has more than 400 members and 9 milk depots with coolers. This cooperative is constantly growing and expanding its activities.

Today the community is working out a new project on community development in Hai and Vidradne villages. These communities live in poor social conditions. Because of unemployment, citizens have to leave their homes and look for better lives somewhere else. But the villages have rich resources, in particular, pastures which are not being used. The majority of the community residents are pensioners and senior people, who can hardly work. These communities plan to develop sheep breeding, but in order to have good results they need seed capital in order to purchase pedigree animals. After they have first gifts handed over they will be able to expand the total number of livestock. As the loans in Ukraine are rather high, community leaders consider the idea of establishment of a credit union on the basis of the cooperative.

I participated in a two day community development training conducted in Oleksandrivka and facilitated by Bill Pardy. I also met with Tony Berezowecki, Project Manager and Olena Goryeva. These meetings and new information about the Project partners in Lviv, Zakarpattya and Cherkasy Oblasts as well as constant support of the citizens and local authorities encourage to work harder", says Yulia Mykolaivna Vasylevs'ka.

You can learn more about the Community Economic Development Project in Oleksandrivka Village Council and in the local library. There you can find a selection of the CED Project bulletins and journals. After several publications in "Zoria" and "Visti Prydniprov'ia" Oblast newspapers we had a great number of requests from several districts of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts to tell more about the Project.

Community development needs civic organizations, and such an organization exists in Oleksandrivka. It is called: "Oleksandrivka Community Development Fund". Yulia Semenivna Oksamytna, Head of the Board, says that the idea to create the organization occurred after the meeting with Tony Berezowecki, Bill Pardy, Olena Goryeva and Svitlana Pchelina who visited Oleksandrivka and Novomoskivs'ky District. Lots of information was also presented in the "Community Economic Development" journal. The main goal of the organization is to enhance the social and economic stability in the community through charitable activities which represent community interests and the interests of special categories of citizens who need material, financial or other kinds of support.

As the Oleksandrivka community experience shows, community economic development is not an easy but a very significant process. These days, the greater part of citizens in towns and villages live waiting for changes to happen, although Ukrainian government does not care much about community development and the development of civic institutions. That's why it is very essential that communities become more mobilized and efficient on their own.

Oleksandrivka community leaders would like to thank the management and partners of the CED Project for their enormous support in the development of the community.

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You can find further information about activities, publications, and other materials of the Project on our web-site at www.ced.org.ua. This web-site contains links to other organizations working in the CED area, presents information about the Project's partners, describes activities of partner communities within the Project, provides materials for CED academic courses and seminars. There are a number of exciting photos - you are most welcome to visit our web-site!!!

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