

Mission Summary “Rural Women for Rural Development”

May 17 – 26, 2010

The mission was dedicated to the following activities:

- Meeting with three districts in order to accelerate the work in interest groups and
- investigate concrete activities
- Organising the Project Advisory Meeting
- Preparing the first progress report
- Project administration

The material development of Selchanka is progressing, business cards and door signs have been delivered and the website is already showing two regions (Ivanova and Slavgorod). The districts started to obtain their internet connection and most important of all, the districts are gradually becoming active in organising activities, although not all at the same level.

The meeting with the three districts showed again how different the regions are both in development and mentality.

Ivanova is relatively developed compared to other regions. In Ivanova there are 13 ‘agrorodocs’ (agrarian towns with newly built houses) and all possible services are available for the citizens. The chairwoman is very active and together with other members they already organised many events (cycling tours, excursions, contests, social services for vulnerable people, etc.). Information is available on the Selchanka website and the cooperation with the authorities is excellent. Plans for commercial activities are still immature but some ideas can be interesting.

Lepel district shows a total different image. According to their chairwoman all their members all the time ask “what can I get out of it?” In other words, ‘why should I participate in Selchanka when I will not get anything out of it for myself?’ “Why should I organise social activities when I do not personally benefit from it?” We understood that this is going to be a big problem in Lepel and the district may not be able to continue in the project if we are not able to change their consumer mentality.

Stolbtsy district has been inactive due to a traffic accident from the chairwoman and a resisting local authority regarding the registration of the branch office. However, they informed us that they are very motivated to carry on now the chairwoman is available again. Moreover, with the support of the national Belarusian Women Union vice chairwoman we can convince the local representative to become supportive. According to the local Selchanka chairwoman the other local authorities are very supportive and the 21 members are very eager and ready to work.

The overall picture now is that three regions are running ahead of the others: Slavgorod, Ivanova and Rossony¹. Shuchin is running up and Lepel and Stolbtsy are lacking behind in development and mentality. Until now we do not have any signals that one of the regions is going to drop out, but we certainly do not exclude it.

The PAC meeting was successful; however two important ministries didn’t participate: Labour and Health. Important agreement was made to ask the Ministry of Health for support on hygiene and license issues. The ministry of Economy will be asked to develop a mechanism for us providing revolving funds to the commercial activities the six rural districts want to organise Furthermore, we will develop a kind of paper which will give an overview of all available subsidies and funds for supporting entrepreneurial activities in rural areas. These funds do exist but ordinary people have no idea of their existence.

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