

Community Investment Program (CIP-2) - program for Women Entrepreneurs

According to the work plan for implementation of Community Investment Program-2 (CIP-2) within the Sub-grant agreement with CARE International in Caucasus (Project financed by BP), Association of Business Consulting Organizations of Georgia "ABCO-Georgia", in regard to Women Entrepreneurs (WEs), carried out the following works:

- In May of 2007, Announcement for Women Entrepreneurs, together with Business Idea outline and budget form for preparation of Proposals in Georgian and Russian, was developed;
- In June of 2007, the meetings with CARE Mobilizers in Marneuli and Akhaltsikhe were held. During these meetings, Announcement for Women Entrepreneurs, Business Idea outline and budget form were discussed;
- During the July of 2007, applications from Women Entrepreneurs were received, reviewed, evaluated and short listed; Total of 53 applications from the total number of 82 applicants were received, particularly:
 - 36 applications from 48 applicants in the WEST (Akhaltsikhe Region);
 - 17 applications from 34 applicants in the EAST (Kvemo Kartli Region);
- 50 trainees - Women Entrepreneurs were selected;

In July of 2007, after reviewing and evaluation of applications in accordance to grade scale (with maximum points - 100) which was elaborated and introduced to the WEs, 50 trainees - Women Entrepreneurs were selected.

For the purpose of achieving the best training results, the selected 50 WEs were divided into 3 groups, each including the following numbers of the selected and invited participants:

- Group I WEST – 15 participants;
 - Group II WEST – 17 participants;
 - Group III EAST – 18 participants.
- Training materials for Women Entrepreneurs were revised and finalized;
 - Trainings were scheduled as follows:
 - Group I WEST in Akhaltsikhe – 23 – 27 July;
 - Group II WEST in Akhaltsikhe – 30 July – 3 August;
 - Group III EAST in Rustavi – 20 – 24 August.

and Trainees were notified about these dates.

- 3 trainings to WEs were delivered according to the schedule on the following topics:
 - a) Basic management, finance, and business planning;
 - b) Loans and credits;
 - c) Marketing

The trainees were served with coffee-breaks and lunch. In the East part they also received money for transportation.

On the last day of the training, trainees passed through testing, the results of which also made the basis for decision regarding the selection of the grantees.

- WEs Business Plans Development;

In the WEST, there were developed and presented 16 business plans from 22 potential grantees. After consideration of the presented projects / business plans, there were selected 10 projects / business plans from 14 potential grantees.

In the EAST, there were developed and presented 6 business plans from 12 potential grantees. After reviewing of the presented projects / business plans, there were selected 4 projects / business plans, from 8 potential grantees.

As most of the presented projects required additional improvements, it was recommended to the selected potential 14 businesses (of 22 WEs) to update their developed projects / business plans, based on our and CARE's comments;

- Selection of best WEs;

In September of 2007, after the second round of reviewing of the updated projects / business plans, 13 Business Plans from 21 WEs were selected and recommended to CARE to provide the Grants.

- Provision of Grants by CARE;

Based on ABCO Georgia's recommendations during the period November – December of 2007, CARE provided Grants.

In total, 13 businesses of 21 WEs have been granted, from which

- 4 businesses of 8 WEs in the EAST;
- 9 businesses of 13 WEs in the WEST;

- Provision of follow-up consultancy;

Started from December of 2007 ABCO Georgia has been providing follow-up consultancy to grantees and has been monitoring their activities.

At the initial stage there were prepared the “working” financial statements for each project, to make easier for WEs to record their actual expenses and track the cash flow. At the same time ABCO-Georgia supervised proper spending of the grant received and collection of necessary receipts for the payments made.

In January of 2008 ABCO Georgia conducted 1st interim monitoring of WEs.

In February of 2008, together with CARE appropriate staff, Women Entrepreneurs' activity assessment form was reviewed and adopted. Based on this form, at the end of February, the 2nd monitoring was conducted.

After conducting of the 2nd monitoring and based on experience received, it was decided to develop different, standardized uniform for recording of actual Incomes, Expenses and calculation of Profit, which is much easier for WEs to fill out and for CARE and ABCO to monitor WEs real activities.

These forms were introduced and explained to each WE. Currently, all WEs are using these forms and complete them at the end of each month.

The 3rd monitoring of WEs was conducted at the end of April of 2008.

It is also to be mentioned, that between the conducted monitorings, consultants of ABCO visited WEs at a regular basis and provided them with assistance and consultancy they needed to properly manage their businesses.

It is very important to mention, that all the granted businesses, which were start-ups, after 4 months have become fully operational, are growing and creating additional work places, i.e. they are successful as of today. It is also noteworthy that all the grantees are more than happy about having given such an opportunity (knowledge and starting capital) to start their own businesses.

All the above indicates that from our part, selection of grantees was made correctly and all the efforts in transferring the necessary knowledge and skills (through trainings and on the job consultancy) to the project participants were definitely results-oriented and thus the interim goal has been achieved.