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## NEWSLETTER 1

**The first edition of the A2S Newsletter aims to present the project, its implementation approach and the progress made so far by the beneficiaries.**

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The newsletter was issued within the project "Access to Success: Partnership for Sustainable Community Development" (2017-2019) The project implemented with the financial support of the European Union under the "Support to Confidence-Building Measures" Program and the Polish Foreign Ministry in the framework of the Polish Aid program. The project aims to develop local communities on both banks of the Nistru River, by applying the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) model.

The implementing partners of the project are: Polish Solidarity Fund in Moldova, EcoContact, Mostenitorii and Eco-Spectr.

The contents of the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Union or the Polish Foreign Ministry.

March 2018, for more information on the project please visit our website: [a2s.vox.md](http://a2s.vox.md).

*Implementing partners:*



## 2 “Access to Success” – a project of self-sustainable community development that brings closer both banks of the Nistru River

The project “Access to Success – partnerships for self-sustainable community development” (2017-2019) was launched in March 2017. The project aims to bring together communities from both banks of the Nistru River and develop sustainable partnerships between them for local community development.

The project is funded by the European Union Confidence Building Measures Programme (80%) and co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland in the framework of the Polish Aid Programme (20%). The total budget of the project is 779,775.00 EUR. The Project consortium is led by the Polish Solidarity Fund with EcoContact (Chisinau), Mostenitorii (Balti) and Ecospectr (Bender) as project partners.

- **Phase 1:** Selection of community initiatives from both banks of the Nistru River.
- **Phase 2: *Trainings based on the ABCD approach*** – the beneficiaries develop their capacities in community economic development, community resources and needs assessment and partnership development.
- **Phase 3: *Learning from European experience and expertise*** – the beneficiaries get an opportunity to see how ABCD community development model works in practice and get valuable expertise in local development fields: environment, community development, social and health care, culture and education. Selected communities will benefit from trainings, study visits, expert support.
- **Phase 4: *Small grants program*** – the best cross-river partnership projects will be awarded with a total budget of up to 25,800 EUR.
- **Phase 5: *15 community development projects will be implemented*** – the beneficiaries exchange their experience obtained from implementing projects in different fields and set the path for further self-sustainable community development.

The project includes several phases designed to better prepare the beneficiaries for self-sustainable local project management, as well as to lay the foundation for sustainable cross-river partnerships between the participants.

Overall, the project contributes to strengthening local project management skills, creating more opportunities for interaction, building cross-river partnerships and empowering local communities for self-sustainable development.

In total, 42 communities from both banks of the Nistru River were selected and the first launching event took place on November 29.

During the project, 42 NGOs and local initiative groups compete in developing inter-sectoral partnerships to access co-financing for local development projects.



*One of the project pillars is the confidence-building element, which brings closer communities from both banks of Nistru.*

PHOTO CREDIT: Polish Solidarity Fund Moldova



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## ABCD – Asset-Based Community Development

(Interview done with one of the trainers of the project Mr. Zbigniew Mieruński)

### 1. What is the ABCD approach?

The ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) model developed by: Mike Green, Henry Moore, John O'Brien<sup>1</sup>, Jody Kretzmann, John L. McKnight<sup>2</sup> in the 1990s based on a thirty-year experience of practitioners working with local communities in the United States and some European countries, was chosen as the main method of working with the local communities within the "Access to Success" project. Similar activities have been undertaken since the early 1990s, including in Poland.

ABCD is an effective method that focuses on discovering and mobilizing resources already existing in the community. In the ABCD method, people are encouraged to notice that their community is a half-full glass of resources, and not a half-empty one because of needs, deficits and problems. The advantages of the community are the means that become valuable when accumulated and used in a proper way. The ABCD approach provides residents with tools to identify and mobilize what they possess to build a stronger community. John McKnight, whose research, along with Jody Kretzmann's, defined the ABCD method, once said: "ABCD is an organizational system that seeks to organize and make sense of the disorder in community life." Based on the resources of a community, we focus on the discovery and responsible use of what can be useful in the community.

### 2. Why was the ABCD approach chosen for this project?

The ABCD model provides a positive approach to changing and developing local communities. Many years of experience of local communities that have implemented this approach show that these communities are growing faster and are easier facing the problems that arise in their area.

<sup>1</sup> Mike Green, Henry Moore i John O'Brien, Rozwój społeczności w oparciu o zasoby Model ABCD w praktyce, przeł. Alicja Unterschuetz, Wydawca: Centrum Wspierania Aktywności Lokalnej CAL, Warszawa 2013

*Every community can be proud of a unique combination of resources, on the basis of which it can build its future*  
(J. P. Kretzmann)

This approach is innovative in Moldova, but it also seems to be appropriate for many local communities. Many communities have tangible and intangible resources that are waiting to be discovered and can become a driving force for local development. Using the ABCD approach makes this possible.

### 3. How does this contribute to community development?

Focusing on things from within means that it is better to start with what we find within the community – people living in it are the most important co-authors of a well-functioning community. The work on community development begins with creating a Resource Map. It is important to note that the resource map focuses on assessing the existing state of things. This determines what resources exist in the community and which of them can help solve problems and achieve goals. In the ABCD model, we emphasize changing the perspective of perceiving the local community, so that residents and key stakeholders saw the resources and capacity they had instead of problems and deficits.

Effective development of a resource-based community is based on three principles: working with resources, focusing on assets from within, and establishing partnerships. It is the capacity to create a network of cooperation, mutual relations and broad partnerships for development. It is the synergy of human, material

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Kretzmann, J. L. McKnight, Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, ACTA Publications, Chicago, 1993.



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and cultural capacity that creates new opportunities for change<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4. What are the advantages of this approach compared to other approaches?

Based on the research carried out by Kretzmann and McKnight<sup>4</sup>, we can define two working approaches to developing local communities, especially those burdened with the costs of economic and political change.

The first approach is to focus on the needs of the community, its deficits and problems (the needs-based approach), which, as a result, devastates the communities where it is applied. It is expensive and rarely yields the expected results, absorbing human and financial resources.

The second approach is resource-based (active), and according to the research, in most cases yields positive results. The resources identified (people, groups and organizations, institutions, the local economy, material resources) and discovered talents, passion, skills and treasures in institutions and the material base allow building partnerships that create and implement community development plans.

#### 5. How do communities benefit from implementing projects based on the ABCD approach?

In the ABCD model, we use the so-called "Appreciation Approach," which implies "extracting" resources and talents from people and the community. We are working on engaging people in what is important to them. We engage all residents as an important resource – everyone in the community is important and can join in building a better life.

We create partnerships and networks of both interpersonal and institutional connections. Partnerships are the driving force for building a trust-based community. There is a change from weak links to stronger ties between people who become closer. It builds the necessary social

capital for the development of each community. There is a change in the community "management" called "management by retirement". Public institutions offer residents space for initiatives and actions.



PHOTO CREDIT: Polish Solidarity Fund in Moldova

#### 6. Some examples (success stories) of projects implemented under the ABCD approach

In Poland, the ABCD model, as well as the "appreciative survey", is used effectively, among others, to develop the concept of asset-based community development, including creation of thematic villages and eco-museums. Residents of (mostly small) communities wanting to focus their socio-economic development on attracting tourists create ideas for tourist products and services together with the use of human, cultural and natural resources. Often, in this way, tourist attractions are created in places away from popular tourist routes. Local institutions, individual organizations and individuals are engaged, encouraged to cooperate, try out their own ideas and make dreams come true. Each member of the community can take part in the development of a community plan and can find a place in its implementation. It is not just the defined resources, but also creation of social connections and continuing education of the whole community.

<sup>3</sup> Tamże: Grenn M., Moore H. O'Brien J. Warszawa 2013

<sup>4</sup> A. Mathieu, G. Cunningham, From clients to citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a strategy for

community-driven development, „Development in Practice”, 2003, vol. 13, nr 5).



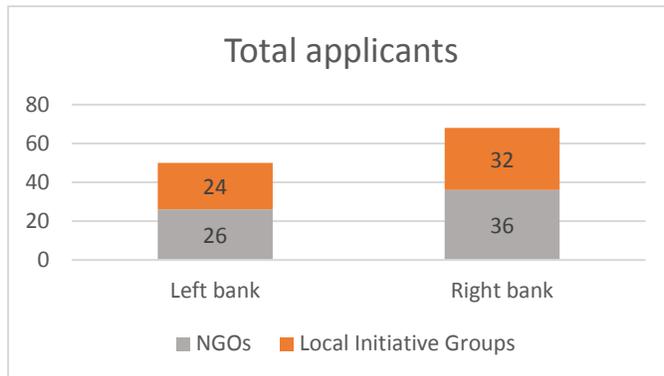
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## Communities' selection process within the Project "Access to Success: Partnerships for building sustainable communities"

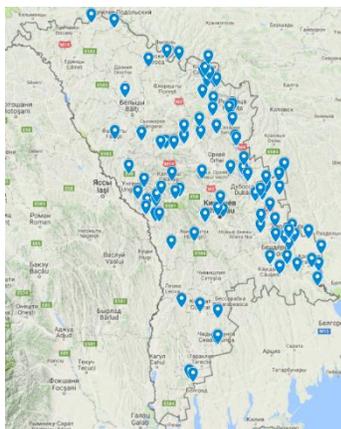
On September 6, 2017, project consortia have launched the selection process for communities to participate in the Project "Access to Success: Partnerships for building sustainable communities". The call was open for interested NGOs and local initiative groups from the both banks of Nistru river willing to make changes in their home communities. The priorities that the participants could address were: culture, sports, environment, economic development, tourism, and social affairs. The main criteria for the selection of beneficiaries were motivation and possibility to make a change. Each applicant submitted an application form where they have described their home community, the problems it faces, the vision on how these problems could be solved, and the presentation of the key persons that will take part in the follow up activities. The members of the project consortia, from their side, did everything possible to widely disseminate the information about the call, placing it on web-sites, social media accounts, and making presentations in the key areas that have been identified as the least developed from the both sides of Nistru river.



By the deadline, that was on October 18, 118 application forms were submitted, with only 2,5% not eligible. The evaluation was done in two rounds.

The **first round** consisted in checking the compliance of the applicants to the formal evaluation criteria. During the **second round** of evaluation, each organization was evaluated according to the criteria stipulated in the "Procedures of application": compliance with the program priorities, motivation, experience of work in community, partnerships on community level, partnerships established with the other bank. Additional points were given to rural communities and to the social- and economically vulnerable

regions. The organizations with the higher scoring, i.e. 66 organizations, entered the final round of evaluation. Each community was visited by a team of experts, who discussed with the community representatives about their intention to access the project. The main objective was to complement the information submitted in the application form in order to assign an accurate scoring for each applicant. Teams composed from consortia members (see infographic) visited ALL 66 communities.



The geographic location of the total number of applicants

Each evaluation round has been approved by the Action Board, where the representatives of donor community are present. As a result of the whole selection process, out of 118 submitted applications, 42 communities were selected, 21 from each bank of the river Nistru.



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### Results of resource mapping and community survey exercises

*“If we want change, we should become the messengers of this change. If we want new results, we have to embrace new approaches and new thinking.” – Bender*

After the first training cycle, 42 “messengers of change” undertook a deep and comprehensive analysis of the

communities’ resources and capacity. The goal of the exercise was to identify the varied community resources and link them with people’s needs and expectations. During the exercise, the participants applied different survey methods (door-to-door survey, face-to-face interview, telephone survey, social media survey, focus groups, etc.) to acknowledge communities’ development priorities.

The process of developing the community resource map was highly participatory and involved a wide variety of local residents: youth, local authorities,

*“The exercise helped us promote the project and get community’s feedback; the community became more united in our endeavor to make our life better.” – Krasnogorka*

MPs, social sphere professionals (doctors, teachers, social assistants), local business people. Inclusiveness is a key to community development ownership. During the whole process, the beneficiaries were assisted by local facilitators. 42 communities were familiarized with the Asset-Based Community Development method – developing communities with their own resources, thus, the knowledge and information gathered during the first training cycle was passed on to other community activists.

*“We have learned that in order to bring change, we should not start from problems and necessities, but from the available resources that will lead us to making our dreams come true” – Pelinia*

Mapping of available resources was a process that allowed the beneficiaries to achieve better community mobilization in pursuing their communities’ dreams. 548 people joined the local initiative groups (65% of which women) and 304 local organizations have been identified as partners.

## STATISTICS



**144 MEETINGS TO ESTABLISH PRIORITIES**



**6731 PEOPLE SURVEYED**



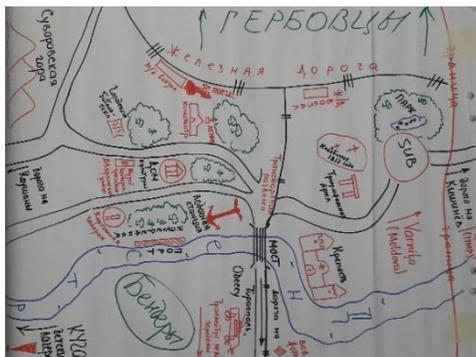
**304 ORGANIZATIONS IDENTIFIED AS PARTNERS**



**108 IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY PRIORITIES**



**65% WOMEN AND 35% MEN INVOLVED**



Community resource mapping – the best way to match needs with capacity

PHOTO CREDIT: (left) Polish Solidarity Fund in Moldova (right) “ProTurism Nistru”



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*Cross-river partnerships is key to community development on both banks of Nistru*

PHOTO CREDIT: "Generatia Pro"

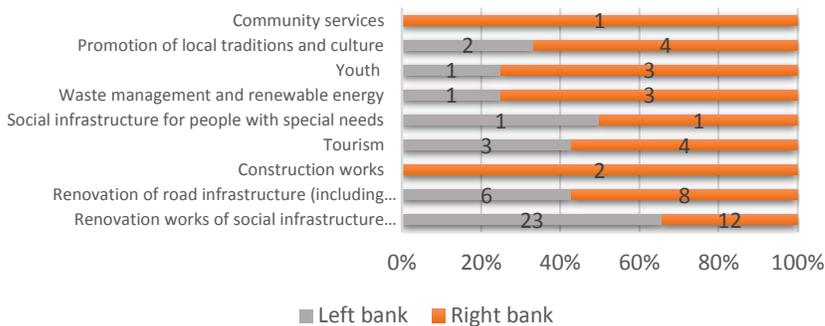
*"The process of identifying local resources was revealing – we identified resources that we had missed at the initial stage. We realized that developing tourism in our village will be insufficient, we need to establish partnerships with more communities from both banks of Nistru and create a combined tourist region that will attract more tourists." – Rascov*

*"We have joined the project because we want to improve our communication with the left bank population" – Barboieni*

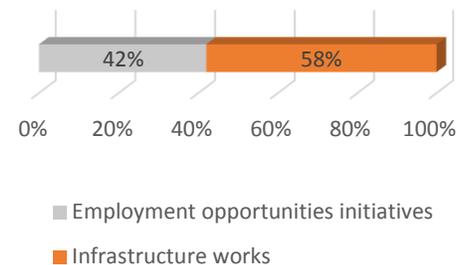
*"We have found out that we share the same problems with the right bank communities" – Butor*

36 communities have already identified a cross-river partner. Both banks share the same problems, needs and expectations (see diagram below). Apart from and beyond exchange of experience, the partnerships contribute to enhancing confidence building measures and bringing closer both banks. Moreover, several communities mention that the cross-river partnerships will go beyond the project and will expand to other areas.

### Left bank vs. Right bank identified priorities



### Project priorities (Identified after the 1st cycle of trainings)



The vast majority of project priorities identified through resource mapping and community survey create local employment opportunities (see diagram above). Thus, the project added-value also relies on preventing local emigration and stimulating local residents to plan their community development.

In the next stage of the project, the beneficiaries will proceed to formalization of cross-river partnerships and implementation of "communities' dreams".

*"The only available and unlimited resource is people." – Krasnoe*

*"Community development highly relies on local employment opportunities. We cannot afford losing more people; we have to invest not only in infrastructure, but also in sustainable employment opportunities." – Cocieri*



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