

### *Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women*

#### **Driving: the first sign of women empowerment**

'I came to the driving school on a whim. I want to prove to my husband that I can do very well at things he believes are strictly for men. I studied the driving regulations and I truly believe I can do it,' says Diana, a young mother from Chisinau, one hour before her final exam.

Natalia, another young woman who wants to obtain the driver's license says she enrolled because she loves driving. 'My boyfriend has a car. I asked him to teach me to drive. I saw that I can do it and I said to myself I must get the license. I love driving when it rains. I can't say why, maybe because it's more difficult to drive in bad weather. I studied really hard for the final exam and I think I can pass it the first time,' says Natalia proudly.

The number of women wanting to obtain a driver's license has increased in the past two years. Vladimir Garstea, deputy director at the Drivers Examination Center says the number of women attending the centre is twice as high as the number of men. 'Girls are better at studying. They are more conscientious; they know the regulations and basically have no difficulties at the theoretical examination. The practical examination is tougher for them. Learning to drive proves to be a bit of a challenge for them. However, once they master it, they become best drivers. Men are left behind in this department,' says Vladimir Garstea.

The number of women wanting to drive is the first sign of gender empowerment, believes Ecaterina Mardarovici, president of the '50/50 Women's Political Club.'

'Women have proved that they drive just as well as men do, or even better. We know that women are more careful and have less serious accidents. To be able to prove that women are just as capable as men are, they need to be well trained. They need arguments to persuade the patriarchal society that their word counts. If not, they will remain marginalized,' believes Ecaterina Mardarovici.

The president of the '50/50 Women's Political Club' says that in Moldova women are marginalized in nearly all areas. 'Even if they are just as educated, the women in Moldova are paid nearly 30% less. To prove that they can succeed, their effort must be three times bigger. That is why only a few attempt to conquer fields considered belonging to men. Only 10% of the women are in business. In Parliament, out of 101 deputies, only 15 are women. The fact that we have a woman president of the parliament and a woman minister does not change the issue. In politics, by tradition, women are responsible for the social sector. State problems are solved without their participation. Even more, they have no say in the decisions made by the government. To change the situation, women should be more assertive and not submissive.'

UNDP surveys reveal that the Moldova society is not ready at the moment to promote gender equality. Seventy-five percent of Moldova's citizens believe that men can become leaders more easily than women. Nearly 42% believe that there is no gender equality in Moldova. The Republic of Moldova is committed to ensure an active participation of 30% women to public life by 2015. Authorities committed themselves to these goals three years ago at the UN Summit in New York. Gender equality is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals promoted by the UN.

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