



SUCCESS STORY

A New Chance on Life

USAID supported Social Enterprise provides opportunities for disadvantaged youth



Photo: Counterpart International

Jivko Georgiev getting ready for a dive. This opportunity was only made possible by the efforts of Friends of the Sea of Varna, Bulgaria, a Social Enterprise supported by Counterpart International-Bulgaria and USAID.

USAID funded Counterpart International-Bulgaria is assisting 40 nonprofit organizations throughout Bulgaria become self-sufficient by providing them with business training support and access to low interest loans to begin and grow income generating activities.

Two years ago Jivko Georgiev was living in Varna dreaming of a better life. With only a high school diploma and living in poverty, Jivko was unable to become a sailor despite his incredible desire to do so. Jivko, abandoned by his parents, was raised by his grandmother and was limited in his educational opportunities. Not able to make ends meet as an errand boy, a chance encounter with Darina Ivonova from Friends of the Sea in Varna, Bulgaria changed his life.

Friends of the Sea is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping youth in disadvantaged situations, such as orphans, gain access to a better life through free professional trainings in scuba-diving and 20dwt vessels navigation. As a Social Enterprise, Friends of the Sea offers these classes to the public and with the revenues generated is able to fulfill its social mission.

Thus, with the assistance of Friends of the Sea, Jivko Georgiev was able to obtain two professional certificates and now works as a sailor on a yacht. His employer uses his skills to organize scuba diving for his clients. In Jivko's own words, "Now I am a self confident young man, who is familiar and comfortable with my occupation."

As a member of Counterpart International-Bulgaria's Social Enterprise program, Friends of the Sea participated in business training in order to enhance their capacity to expand and support their social activities. As a result, they were able to grow their revenues 100 percent from 2003 to 2004 and train over 30 youth during this time.

Counterpart International-Bulgaria, a USAID funded organization, assists 40 nonprofit organizations like Friends of Bulgaria throughout Bulgaria. These organizations in the Social Enterprise program are offered business training (accounting, marketing, strategic planning) and consultancy to develop their income generating activities and become self-sufficient. The Social Enterprise program was the first of its kind in Bulgaria and with the support of USAID is continuing to guide nonprofit organizations toward sustainability.