

**International Chernobyl Research and Information Network
(ICRIN)**

**Sub-regional publication
Success stories from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine**



This sub-regional publication is prepared in the framework of the United Nations project “International Chernobyl Research and Information Network” (ICRIN). The materials included in the publication were prepared by UNDP project teams in Belarus, the Russian Federation and in Ukraine and outline the achievements reached during the Project activities implementation.

BELARUS

To Look Upon the World with Wide Open Eyes: ICT Centers Opened in the Chernobyl-Affected Areas



Litvinavichy (the Karmiansky district, the Homiel Region) is one of the villages affected by the Chernobyl accident. According to the official data of the National Statistical Committee it is still the poorest region of Belarus although the region has been trying hard to recover and to develop. There are objective reasons for the situation. Up to this day almost all its residents (about 15 thousand people) live on contaminated lands (75% of them in the areas with resettlement right). Before the accident 27 thousand people lived here (4.5 of them were relocated within the first years after the Chernobyl catastrophe). Almost half (42%) of the

agricultural lands of this rural district are not currently used because of radionuclide contamination. About 1200 people live in Litvinavichy now. Young people are fleeing from Litvinavichy hoping to find a better place and better earnings though the Government is striving to bring them back.

Shortage of information is a persistent problem which is typical for the Kormiansky district as well as for other rural areas. All categories of households in Litvinavichy are experiencing information deficit because the only source of new knowledge are newspapers and a couple of state TV channels. The available statistics suggests that only 10% of households have personal computers at home and not all of them are connected to Internet.



Litvinavichy local school which is being attended by 170 children has an IT classroom, but during the lessons pupils can have access to computers only without connection to Internet network. They can use Internet on a paid basis only.

Therefore, the idea of an ICT center establishment in local museum was so much welcomed by local community. *“When I have learnt that it is expected to open the ICT center in our village, – noted Ala Balysh, the director of the museum, – I said that this is exactly what we need today”.*



A special room was arranged in the museum to accommodate the Center. It was equipped with five independent personal computers, photo-printer, multifunctional device (laser printer/scanner/copier), speakers, web-camera and headphones for comfortable use of Skype. Printed and electronic materials on the safer living in the Chernobyl-affected areas and on the own business initiation are available in the center. Among them are maps, books, electronic databases which contain gigabytes of useful and necessary information. The UNDP/ICRIN contribution

in the establishment of the center in Litvinavichy is about USD 8 thousand. The local input was not estimated.

No workstation in the Center stands empty today. It is very encouraging that not only children and young people are coming here for information, but also the older people who need to know which types of potato are better for cultivation, how to manure cabbage and how to mend a roof of a shed. In many cases information has played a very important role in life of the Litvinavichy dwellers and they are eager to share their stories.

Tatiana Mironenko has a big family. Her daughter Masha is 10 months old and has problems with feet. The girl needs orthopedic boots which are not available in the district. Tatiana learnt about opportunities offered by Internet and came to the Center with hope. She found the boots the girl needed but the price was over BYR 650,000 (almost 100% of her salary). Such price is hardly affordable for a villager. Tatiana was so discouraged and was going to leave but the staff of the Center proposed to visit a charitable website. It took about 10 minutes to find the necessary information at the "Goodness" website: generous people offered for free the orthopedic boots of their child. Now Masha is passing a course of treatment and her mother tells the neighbors about the miracle of high-tech.

Ala Koroedova – another woman - resident of the village came to the Centre to learn more about anemia (low level of hemoglobin) that was diagnosed for her son. According to the professional websites, the problem is often caused by poor nutrition. Ala made notes which products her son, Nikita, should eat every day. It turned out that her son does not like the products recommended by doctors such as liver and beet. To solve the problem she was recommended by Center staff to visit a cookery site and to try to find recipes of iron containing dishes which kids like. The mother left the Center with a long list of new dishes recipes containing necessary ingredients. Now her child is getting better.



These examples represent variety of successful stories of people living in Litvinavichy and neighboring villages. It appears that the residents of the affected regions do not necessarily need the forms of support that have been used before such as benefits and humanitarian aid. It is just necessary to help them to take control over their own lives. They should build up self-sufficiency and make efforts for development. Creation of enabling environment is the most important factor. Comprehensive information and access to free high-speed Internet are helping people to broaden their outlook and to feel themselves as full members of the world community which is so important for addressing hardships and for self-development.

In late October residents of towns and villages where ICT centers had been established for the first time learnt what the Skype-conference is. They've attended online the training carried out by the lead specialists on breast cancer whom they could hardly have approached before.

Highlight: 5 identical ICT centers have been established in the affected regions of Belarus.

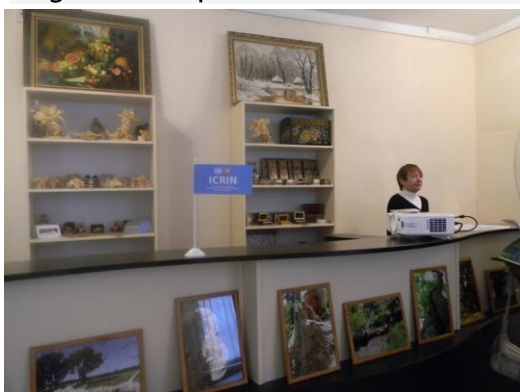
A Step towards Arts in the Rahačoŭ District

It is well known that the Rahačoŭ district (the Mahiliou Region of Belarus) is rich in talented people. Even in the past centuries it was called “Little Paris” because it was closely related to arts.

Today the situation is almost the same. In spite of many hardships experienced by the Rahačoŭ dwellers (the Chernobyl catastrophe, tight socio-economic status) they still devote themselves to the arts like before. Their attitude has helped preserve and revitalize such ancient handicrafts as straw braiding, fancywork, pottery, handmade dolls as well as traditional songs.



Many talented people who bring fame to their Motherland are the so called “resettlers” from the Chernobyl-affected areas. The others are still living on the contaminated territories, and the question is: “Whether they have the opportunity to devote themselves to “the beautiful?” In general their unique skills do not bring neither money nor fame. And, unfortunately, they have very limited opportunities to develop their creative skills and, as a result, they suffer from deep originative depression.



The Department of Culture of the Rahačoŭ District Executive Committee has immediately paid attention to the contest of local initiatives announced by the ICRIN project. *“We have realized that this is our chance, – says Irina Sedler, a specialist of the Department. – And therefore, we decided not to miss this opportunity”.* The idea of the initiative was in creation of the exhibition hall for the works of local painters and organization of various events intended to support and encourage creativity of the local population. To support this initiative the local authorities of the district have allocated BYR 119,527,118 (approximately, USD 39 125) and UNDP/ICRIN have contributed BYR 21,385,000 (USD 7 thousand).

Thereby the implementation of the initiative “Take a Step towards the Arts!” has started, and this is indeed an important step forward.

It turned out, that in Rahačoŭ and neighboring villages many gifted people do not have an opportunity not only to exhibit their works, but also to offer them for sale. In the meantime tourists from the neighboring countries visit this region quite frequently, and they are willing to buy local works of art. So, another idea appeared – to create an outlet in the exhibition hall where people could buy paintings and other handicrafts. The dual intention was to make the region more attractive for tourists and to create income generation opportunities for painters.



The exhibition hall opened within the Social forum held on September 27, 2011 in Rahačou operates successfully today. In addition to exhibits, the hall has a mobile screen and a projector/film reader. The premises are very convenient for public gatherings and events (e.g. presentations of new paintings).

"We feel as if we got the "second breath", – says Kate Levkova, a professional painter. – We are now convinced that we are needed by our today's friends and future generations. Realization of that is the best source of inspiration. After us our works won't fall into oblivion but will be preserved".

Employees of the exhibition hall say, that every day at least one interested person from the town or nearby villages come with new cooperation proposals. It means that the initial goal of the local initiative has been achieved.



RUSSIAN FEDERATION

«Revival of the vernacular arts and crafts in south-west districts of the Bryansk region»

Productions of the Bryansk region handcrafts' had been well known in the Central part of Russia since 17th century. Novozybkov city located in the south-west part of the region on the boarder of Ukraine and Belarus was one of the main centers of the folk-crafts. Up to the 70th of the XX century the handiworks of the local craftsmen was popular at the fairs of neighboring towns: Starodub, Klinty, Unecha, Zlynka, etc.

However the accident at the Chernobyl NPP and further economic decline were destructive for the entire crafts infrastructure. In the villages Siniy Kolodets and Vereschaki of Novozybkov district, which were well-known in the region by their arts and crafts the equipment and manufacturing technologies were almost lost. Children – residents of these villages do not have prospects as the workshops were destroyed, burning kilns were lost and the arts had faded. Young people are leaving these villages.



Currently the Bryansk region is experiencing range of socio-economic and cultural problems: lack of investments, unemployment, cutting of social programs.

In the described situation the future and prospects of disabled adolescents is a major concern. Unfortunately main part of the specialized educational institutions is being closed and low attention is being paid to efficient rehabilitation programs. All this prevents hard-hearing adolescents from active participation in every-day life of their community. The measures taken by the authorities and population of the Novozybkov are not adequate and sufficient. It is extremely important to help the heard-hearing young people to adapt to normal life in society and to feel themselves as an important and integral part of the community, to be recognized by peers.

Based on the above the Bryansk Regional NGO “Artists – for children” (BROO “Khudozhniki – detiam”) developed and implemented a project: **«Revival of the vernacular arts and crafts in south-west districts of the Bryansk region affected by the effects of the Chernobyl accident»**



The initiative of the NGO was highly appreciated and supported by Novozybkov city authorities and other organizations involved in socio-adaptation of the disabled people, which resulted in a more active involvement of the special needs children into workmanship and helped them to increase their social activity and gave the empowered to successful interacting with other members of the community. Local Authorities and the Novozybkov School of arts have contributed in the project about RUB 645,500 (about USD 20 636), partially it was an in-kind contribution. The contribution from UNDP/ICRIN to this project

implementation is equal to USD 5000.

The main aim of the project is to involve young people of the Novozybkov and neighboring areas to the socially important activities, to provide hard-hearing adolescents with access to good education and practices in handicrafts and to be more competitive on the labor-market. The main activities are focused on the recovery of the becoming extinct handicrafts of the Bryansk region and on the development and introduction of the program of occupational rehabilitation and socialization of hearing impaired adolescents.

Young people involved in the project implementation have shown vivid interest in new technologies and arts learning and have reached significant results in souvenirs' production. For example, boys from the "wood engraving workroom" created a park of fairy tales characters for children. The wooden sculptures are currently installed in the city park and in the main street of the city. Other part of students was occupied with recovery of the technology of the stuffed dolls and souvenirs made from reed mace. Currently some part of creatures is exhibited in the Novozybkov art school and in the cultural facilities of the neighboring settlements.



"The effect of our initiative and of the activities performed in the course of the project implementation was really amazing. We didn't expect that such a big number of children and adolescents will support the initiative and express their interest to be taught in various arts and crafts, such as painting on wooden surfaces, woodcarving, production of rag-dolls, etc. We've got a support from the deaf-and-dumb asylum of Novozybkov. Many young people got support and understood, that they are not alone with their problems and always can expect support from other members of our community" – said the Director of the NGO "Artists – for children", Andrey Taloverko.



"In the course of the project implementation we decided to expand the range of activities and approaches to the project information dissemination. We agreed that more attention to be paid to the promotion of the souvenirs on the local market by provision of booklets, promotional materials to our potential customers", mentioned the project manager.

Highlight: For more news and photos on the project activities and achievements please visit the web-site of the NGO "Artists – for children": www.art4kids.su.

“Master of information – master of situation”

Information support of the residents of the radiation contaminated areas of the Bryansk region – the most affected territories of the Russian Federation at the local level is mainly comes down to dissemination of the statistical summary reports on the radiation situation in the region. The number of scientifically proven and trustworthy articles in the local news papers and magazines is limited and insufficient. Local media rarely publish informational materials on the radioecological and radiation hygiene issues. In addition to this the issue of the healthier living



on the affected territories is often neglected. Based

on the assessment of informational needs conducted by the students of the Bryansk State University (BGU – from Russian abbreviation) the project on the information provision to the school-children and adolescents of the south-west districts of the Bryansk region was initiated. It is important to mention that more than 150 graduation students are passing their pre-graduation practice in the secondary schools of the Bryansk region and have a real chance to carry

out the outreach and awareness-raising work.

In the course of the project implementation various study guides such as booklets, brochures, summary sheets, manual and information stands were produced. Several round tables were conducted for teachers of the Bryansk schools located in the south-west districts of the region. Wide range of extracurricular materials and activities were developed with focus on the youth of 14-16 years old, as well some activities were aimed to involve the parents of schoolchildren. This age group was focused as it is the most information percipient, and this age adolescents are forming ideas about life values and building a hierarchy of priorities.

The Project is aimed to conduct series of educational activities to schoolchildren and their parents and to issue printing products (teacher’s edition, booklets, memos, brochures, etc.) and disseminate them to population.

The project budget consists of three main inputs by: (1) the Bryansk State University (RUB 140,000 or USD 4.5 thousand); (2) Different educational institutions of Novozybkov and neighboring districts: RUB 85,000 or USD 2.7 thousand) and (3) UNDP/ICRIN – USD 5 thousand).

Benefits from the project implementation

The following target groups are benefiting from the project implementation:

- ✓ Pupils from Municipal educational institutions and students of vocational technical schools are getting informational support and consultations on the radiation culture and on the basics of healthy lifestyles;
- ✓ Students of Higher educational institutions will improve their radiation awareness and will gain the skills in development of educative activities



related to healthy lifestyles promotion among the residents of Chernobyl affected regions of Bryansk region. Successful execution of the above tasks will be useful for professional competency development and competitiveness on the educational services market;

- ✓ School teachers and professors will be provided with finalized methodology and programs related to healthy lifestyles promotion;
- ✓ Population of the Chernobyl-affected territories of Bryansk region will have better access to information adapted for their understanding by the ICRIN Project experts and consultants and approved by ICRIN Scientific Board for dissemination¹.

“Development of the lectures course and program of extra-curricular activities aimed to promote the healthy lifestyles practices and radiation and hygiene knowledge among school children and their parents – residents of the Chernobyl-affected areas of Bryansk region - was carried out through the number of collective and individual initiatives and was implemented by students of the Bryansk state university. The program introduction was successful and was positively accepted by population of different districts of the south-west part of the Bryansk region, which is hardly affected by the effects of the Chernobyl accident. Such initiatives as this project are very important for awareness raising and information dissemination”, stated the Head of the Novozybkov city Education department, Gomenok Svetlana, during the round table on the results of the project implementation.



As a result of the project implementation the workshops, lectures and round tables were held in more than 20 secondary schools, vocational professional institutions of the south-west districts of Bryansk regions by 120 trained volunteers, more than 800 participants attended the events. The Project was valued by the authorities of the Bryansk region and some training sessions were recommended for inclusion to the school curricula. Project will be extended for next school year and

involve those areas which were not yet covered.

¹ The information package initially prepared for media representatives and translated to non-scientific language is used as a basis for preparation of training modules and further distribution by the project team and volunteers.

UKRAINE

«And Every Finish Is a Start, in Essence...»

In Ukraine, just as in the majority of post-Soviet countries, a negative downward trend in terms of public health exists. An increasingly smaller numbers of people exercise regularly, and more and more develop bad habits such as alcohol abuse, smoking and drug addiction. As a result, since 1990, the average life expectancy dropped to 62 years.

The people living on the territories affected by the Chernobyl disaster regard the issue of young people's health with a special attention, because any disease is associated with the negative impact of radioactive contamination. Specialists define young people as the most important group for promotion of a healthy way of life, because it is usually at a young age that people form habits determining their attitude towards health in the coming years.



The Ivankiv District is a unique one in Ukraine. It is the largest, since it encompasses the Chernobyl exclusion zone. Nevertheless, the problems that the District faces are not unique. Health issues among the thirty thousand local residents are extremely acute, especially among young people. The "Centre for Community Development" public organisation, active since 2000, is well aware of the causes of diseases and methods for their prevention among young people; their expertise enabled them to develop a project that would attract as many young people as possible to regular sport activities.

The following objectives were defined by the project:

1. Safeguarding young people from deviant activities by inculcating the best of national and cultural traditions of modern dance.
2. Preparation of a dance classroom for a dance club classes.
3. Promotion of the Ukrainian culture among the population of the District, Oblast, Ukraine and abroad.
4. Promotion of volunteerism in rural areas.



The project envisaged creation of dance clubs in 8 villages in Ivankiv District. The project partners were schools in Rozvazhychi, Fenevychi, Obukhovychi, Musiuky, Prybirsk, Shpyli, Zaprudky, Sukachi, as well as volunteers from the "L-style" model choreographic ensemble, located in Ivankiv. Within the framework of the project 18 volunteers from the choreographic club, aged 13 to 18 came to the villages for 8 months and conducted folk and modern dance classes with young people. At the same time, a dance hall was created in

Ivankiv, where, at the end of the project, all eight newly established centres participated in "Revive, My Polissya", a contest for the best dance group in Ivankiv District villages.

The «Komentar» magazine, №6 (February 2011): «On Saturday the Musiyky school was unusually crowded. About thirty children took off their winter boots, wearing only socks, do their warm-up exercises in the school hall. To the sounds of music, both sixteen-year-old boys and ten-year-old girls bend down to touch the floor with their hands. Some of those arrived for the class from other villages, and for the majority of them, it is the first time they have ever encountered the art of dancing. Lilya is ready to stay at school after classes on week days. Andriy, 13, is prepared for more intensive exercises as well. - *When I come home, I keep repeating all movements,* - Andriy shared his secret of success. Three volunteer girls who came from Ivankiv to teach dancing are younger than some of their students».

In order to take part in the contest, a community was expected to secure co-financing in the amount of at least 50% of the grant amount, either independently or with the help of partners. The Community Development Centre addressed a number of governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The issue of co-financing was also discussed at the level of Ivankiv District Council. Bodies of state power and local self-government, Departments of Education and Culture under the District State Administration, local businesses and community were involved in the project implementation. Each of the partners issued guarantee letters, confirming their readiness to provide funding in case of grant assistance from the UN ICRIN project. In particular, Ivankiv District Council has provided premises that the dance group leased. Students' parents took part in construction work and helped young people with costumes for performances. Sponsors helped with building materials. The ICRIN project funds were used to cover the young dancers' costs for travelling from Ivankiv to villages where they conducted classes; also, the fund helped to purchase mirrors for the dance hall, construction materials and dance shoes. Overall, the ICRIN project contributed UAH 45,000 (USD 5.6 thousand), and other partners added another UAH 55,000.

Halyna Babych, Chairperson of the Ivankiv District "Community Development Centre" public organization, says: *"In order to fulfil all scheduled tasks (and there are a lot of them!) - from the beginning of reconstruction of part of premises granted for those purposes by Ivankiv District Council, to holding of the "Revive, My Polissya" contest among dance groups from rural schools and to the artistic report of the "L-Style" dance club – it took eight months of hard work by representatives of the NGO "CDC" public organisation, headed by Lyudmyla Moiseenko, together with students' parents"*.

As an outcome of the project implementation, 250 persons aged 5 to 16, became regular participants at dancing clubs. The project made it possible to create rather large dance groups in each of the eight villages and to restore the dancing hall to hold district contests.

The "Muslin diversity" Presents the Polissya Weaving Culture

A Weaving Center Opened in the Village of Krupove

The Polissya culture encompasses the northern regions of Volyn, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Rivne, Sumy and Chernihiv Oblasts. Unfortunately, it is those areas that have suffered from the Chernobyl accident contamination; following the mandatory resettlement of their residents, a part of the Polissya traditional culture was lost, and the territories were branded with a scaring name – "Chernobyl".

However, Polissya is one of the most archaic regions in Ukraine, still preserving its inimitable style. Every visitor is impressed with the variety of local dialects, cuisine and specifics of local crafts.

In the village of Krupove in Rivne Oblast, with about 800 residents, a unique weaving tradition has developed since the early 19th century. Despite the fact that a part of the weaving tradition was lost to the turbulent events in the 20th century, in the 70s of the last century, local weavers managed to recover the secret of the Polissya muslin – a very fine linen fabric – known only to craftswomen in Krupove.



Photo: Ulyana, a weaver from Krupove

O. Kosmina, Ph. D. in History, notes: *"Among the other regions of Ukraine, the Polissya costumes stand out by a dominance of the white-and-red tow-colored array, the absence of purchased fabrics and woven and printed decoration of clothes. The white-and-red color array in the Polissya costume emphasizes its archaism and symbolizes a combination of two principles: the spiritual and divine (white), and the animalistic and earthly (red)."*

Nina Rabchevska, Honored Master of Folk Arts of Ukraine, when she heard about the "Developed Territories, Healthy People" contest, immediately turned to a Rivne-based public organization "Association of Regional Development of the Rivne Region", who helped to prepare a grant application. The Association established in 2007 with support of the United Nations Development Programme, helped community organizations to implement more than 30 projects.

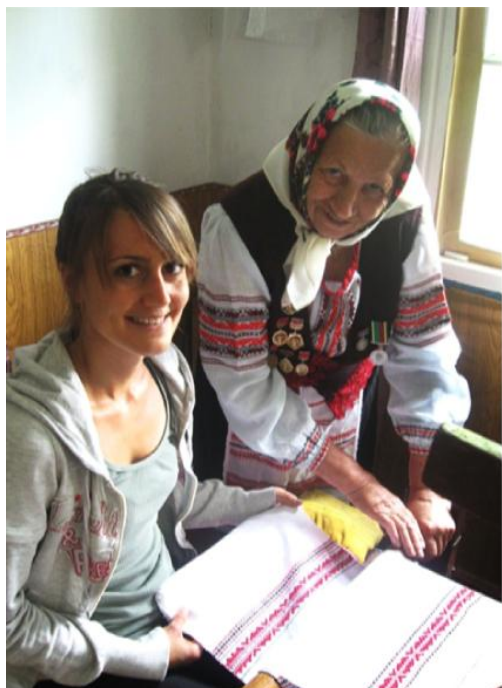


The community, in cooperation with the Agency and the District and Oblast State Administrations, local entrepreneurs and weavers, developed a construction design for the weaving centre in the village of Krupove, in order to promote the Polissya culture and develop tourism in the Polissya area. After a detailed review, the project was supported and as soon as in 9 months, on August 23, 2011, the "Muslin Diversity" weaving training and culture centre was opened. The Project budget included the contributions from Village and District budgets (USD 8,450) and UNDP CO and ICRIN Project (USD 3,125 and USD 6,873 respectively).

"Our centre will be a place where the Ukrainian tradition will be taught. Our linens are not simply a fabric. They are the light of a day. This is the sun that rises despite all the evil things that happen in the world. We are ready to share our knowledge with others and invite all to Krupove!", says Nina Rachevska, the community leader.

To create the centre in the tumble-down community centre, which even lacked windows and heating, three rooms were allocated: the demonstration hall of the museum, the educational centre and the cloak room. Funds provided by the UN ICRIN project made it possible to install windows, shutters, and to purchase the necessary building materials; the community carried out all the repair works. *"Young and old, all helped us – they plastered, painted and laid the floors; we did not even expect that so many people would join in the creation of the centre!"*, says Volodymyr Filits from the Rivne Area Regional Development Agency. The idea of the project also came home to the District and Oblast Administrations, which provided funds to install a heating system in the museum and salary of the museum coordinator, supported production of promotion materials.

Such attention to a community project is not surprising, however. In Krupove, dozens of artists are involved in weaving, including the Honoured Masters of Folk Art of Ukraine [Ulyana Kot](#)



and Nina Rachevska, as well as famous weavers N. Demyanets and O. Prydyuk. The craftswomen received their "stavy" – their weaving machines – from their mothers and grandmothers, and now pass the weaving skills to their own children and grandchildren, as well as to all those interested, both in Ukraine and abroad. In the ancient times, every girl was supposed to weave such a thin muslin costume for herself and for her groom.

At present, works from Krupove are displayed at exhibitions organized in Ukraine. Modern products by the Krupove weavers are kept in private collections of citizens of Belarus, Russia, Poland, Germany, Italy, the UK, the USA, Australia, the Czech Republic, and Canada. That is the reason why visitors come here from everywhere – and not to see the "Chernobyl mutant monsters", but to adopt the talented artists' unique experience, and purchase the beautiful works for their homes. The "Muslin Diversity" Weaving Center is waiting for all those wishing to be initiated into the centuries-old traditions!