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KAZAKHSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Shooting for Improved Confidence

Local NGOs are helping disabled people gain new skills and confidence



Photo: USAID

NGO leader Galina Boltovskaya is an accomplished marksperson who teaches sports to disabled people

“People with disabilities must resist the urge to feel badly for themselves; they must strive for success despite their disabilities. Through sports we can improve people’s self-confidence, help them overcome isolation, aid them in re-integrating into society, and help reduce domestic violence.”

- Galina Boltovskaya

Galina Boltovskaya is a confident woman in her mid-40s, who slings a rifle over her shoulder and a crutch under each arm. She isn’t a hunter, but rather an enthusiastic guide for a flashy sporting complex in Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan and an avid marksperson who excels in the 10 meter air rifle shooting event. She took up the sport after a tragic auto accident caused her to lose her left leg nearly 25 years ago, while she was driving to study in a technical institute. She won a bronze medal in the Kazakhstan Para-Olympic games in 2011, and in 2012 she took the gold in the Kazakhstan Republic championship for disabled people. She further dreams about representing Kazakhstan in a more prestigious international sporting competition for people with disabilities, such as the Special Olympics.

Galina is a member of ERLIK – a local NGO which takes part in Empowerment Now, USAID/Central Asia Republic’s flagship disability rights project. The activity is implemented by ARGO, one of the eight local organizations that receive direct funding from the USAID/CAR mission. Galina is ERLIK’s Sports Coordinator, which means that she runs sports and physical activity classes for the nearly 400 disabled members of ERLIK, who pay \$5 per month to receive wide ranging services. As one of the 600,000 people with disabilities in this post-Soviet country, Galina knows full well the double discrimination that female disabled people face in their quest to receive equal participation in Kazakhstani society. She is not letting that discrimination get in the way of her determination and success. She is part of a network of NGOs partnering with USAID to impact more than a quarter million people living with disabilities in Kazakhstan.

USAID’s Empowerment Now project has the dual objectives of strengthening nearly 20 NGOs via a series of organizational development courses and using public service announcement to change the public’s bias towards people with disabilities. “If I am able to instill the values from sports in other people with disabilities, I will teach them valuable life lessons,” she remarked as she loaded her rifle for her next shot. As she speaks, she cocks her rifle with a 4.5 mm pellet, pauses patiently, aims with precision, and hits the target.