



# INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

## Budget Developed Using PPB, Information Supplied by Newspaper *Ogni*

***The Municipal Budget Reform in Ukraine Project makes it possible to effectively use limited budget resources for the direct benefit of citizens.***



"Now that all citizens of Alchevsk have the newspaper *Ogni*, they are familiar with their hometown's socio-political life", Olena Yunko says confidently.

These days, information is equivalent to gold, but its value is especially dependent on how it can influence the life of a certain community. Since Ukraine's independence, the socio-political newspaper *Ogni* has been published in Alchevsk, Luhansk Oblast. This particular newspaper focuses on the life and needs of the local community and how the issues of economic development and social security are managed. Until recently, however, large families, disabled people and retirees, target audiences for the newspaper, could not afford to spend some of their scarce family budget money on a subscription to the newspaper because the cost was too high. As a result, many of them had to spend additional time and effort searching for information which had been already made public or request this information at the city hall.

"For instance, we need to know what benefits were granted to certain categories of mothers, when large families have to go through re-registration process, and when to submit documents in order to receive subsidies, etc.", said Mother Olena Yunko. Olena has six children, but in addition to her family duties she also heads the Council of Mothers of Large Families which is why she is interested in making sure the group is well-informed. The newspaper *Ogni*, according to Ms. Yunko, is and has always been a valuable source of information in regard to social security legislation. However, sadly enough, she heard the following from mothers of large families and other socially vulnerable people: "We do not subscribe to newspapers because our family budget cannot afford it". "Hence, in spite of the fact that the information needed by these particular people is published on a regular basis, many of them do not have access to it," Olena points out.

Due to Olena and other civic activists, the city government took this problem seriously and immediately reacted to it. Currently, within the framework of the Performance Program Budgeting (PPB) method implemented in the city with support of the Municipal Budget Reform Project (MBR), funding is allocated for specific programs of social significance. Thus, the city government allocated UAH 85,822 for subscriptions to *Ogni* under the budget program titled, "2008 – 2010 Social Protection Program" developed with assistance of MBR consultants.

"This was an expedient and an important step, and we were well-prepared to take it," says Iryna Popova, the Director of the Labor and Social Protection Department for the City of Alchevsk. First of all, according to Ms. Popova, the City of Alchevsk Labor and Social Protection Department together with the City Women's Organization, Health Care Department, Department of Children's Issues, Alchevsk Division of the Pension Fund of Ukraine and the City Council of Veterans put together a list of people who are now eligible for free subscription to the newspaper *Ogni*. This category of people includes disable persons of the first and second groups, large and low-income families, families having disabled children or orphans, and veterans of labor and the Great Patriotic War.

"As a result of the implementation of the program developed under PPB, people didn't just receive a free subscription to this important source of information about their hometown, but they also received free newspaper delivery to their homes," Ms. Popova said. She also emphasizes that for the mothers of large families and other people who cannot afford subscriptions, "It is a wonderful opportunity for them to be aware of and be included in the life of the community and to always have a source of news in the area of social protection".

Now, due to the cooperation between the Alchevsk city management and the MBR Project, all community members will be able to participate in the main social events in the city of Alchevsk. Actually, there is a joke in Alchevsk now: subscription provided under PPB and information supplied by *Ogni*!