

PROMOTING ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGING

Annual Report 2020

I. Introduction

Starting from 2017, The Public Association "CASMED" has been committed to promoting the concept of active and healthy aging in Moldova. During the years 2017 - 2019, with the support of CASMED, 12 Community Groups of Seniors were established and developed.

A significant development took place on December 19, 2020, when these groups initiated the formation of the National Network of Active Seniors from Moldova (RNSAM).

[National Network of Active Seniors from Moldova](#) set out to achieve three major objectives:

- Improving the quality of life through initiatives to support the well-being and comfort of older people.
- Increased social inclusion by creating stronger connections between seniors and their community.
- Expanding and strengthening the network, to bring more seniors into this joint effort.

II. Development of Initiative Groups

Between January and December 2020, 7 new Initiative Groups (GI) were established in different localities, such as Horești, Risipeni, Fălești city (Fălești district), and Parcovă commune (Parcovă village and Fantana Alba village), Fetești and Burlănești (Edineț district). These new GIs consisted of a total of 43 members, of which 2 men (4.65%) and 41 women (95.35%). Group sizes range from 5 to 12 members, with an average of 5-12 members per group. The largest group was formed in Risipeni, with 12 members, and the smallest in Parcovă, with 5 members.

Most members of these GIs are 55 years of age or older, and the average age of GI members is 52. The average age was lower in Parcovă (45 years) and higher in Fălești (62 years). In terms of occupational profile, 20.9% of members were employed, mainly in the field of education and culture, while 79.1% were retired, students, mothers on maternity leave and unemployed.

The initiation of these new groups has been accompanied by challenges, especially due to the pandemic. Many briefings have been postponed and rescheduled due to restrictions and infection fears. However, a significant number of people were invited to the information sessions, and for some, this was a long-awaited opportunity.

As part of the capacity building program, members of the new GIs acquired knowledge and skills on various topics that will later be applied in group or community activities. According to the assessment, they developed knowledge and skills in the following areas: "The concept of an elderly-friendly community" - 100%; "Group processes and team building activities" - 65%; "Elaboration of the action plan" - 51%; "Involvement in the decision-making process at the local level" - 28%.

Experiences and practices presented by more experienced GI members helped build confidence and allay the fears of newer group members. These activities also provided an opportunity for participants to get to know each other better and develop skills in managing emotions, especially in the context of the pandemic. The participants left with enthusiasm, confidence and a lot of valuable information that they will apply in practice.

In the first year of activity, the new GIs were able to strengthen their group relationships, develop early action plans, establish contacts with local public authorities and other community actors, and work on increasing group membership. For example, the GI from Burlănești managed to mobilize several citizens from the community and convince the local authorities to support an action to clean an old spring in the area.

These efforts demonstrate that despite the challenges, the new wave of Initiative Groups is on the right track to becoming an active and engaged force in promoting active and healthy aging in their communities.

III. Results and impact

Within the established action plans, the Initiative Groups (IGs) carried out a series of activities aimed at supporting the elderly community and contributing to improving their quality of life.

1. Assessment of the situation of the elderly

A notable effort has focused on assessing the predisposition of the elderly to health problems and the risks of social isolation. The team of GCS network members conducted extensive research, interviewing 1,011 respondents from 14 different localities.

AO CASMED developed a research methodology, training GCS operators. The members of the groups were trained to apply the questionnaire, interact with the respondents and analyze the data obtained. The evaluation results were shared with the local authorities, and the final report is to be published on the casmед.md web page.

2. Participation in the decision-making process

The initiative groups submitted more than 52 initiatives to the local councils, of which 43 were resolved. These initiatives aimed at improving local infrastructure, providing medical support and expensive interventions, creating facilities for the elderly, etc.

3. Fundraising and financial support

GIs were involved in fundraising activities to support the needs of the group. Such actions were organized in the localities of Cajba, Măgurele and Horodiște, which had a significant impact. For example, an amount of 4,600 lei was donated for the treatment of an adult and a child, as well as for the purchase of protective equipment for the medical staff of the Cajba Health Center.

4. Participation in the local decision-making process

The members of the Initiative Groups were active in the meetings of the local councils, bringing to public attention the problems specific to the elderly. More than 52 initiatives were submitted, of which 43

have been resolved. These initiatives included aspects such as facilitating spaces for group meetings, building public toilets, financial support for expensive medical treatments and medical interventions, improving public infrastructure, etc. The level of involvement of the groups in the decision-making process increased significantly, recording an average of 24.59% per group.

5. Socialization activities and emotional support

GIs organized 10 social and leisure activities with the aim of combating loneliness and promoting positive interactions between community members. These activities also included inter-community events, such as the contest "From Grandparents' Dowry Chest" and the event "March 1", which gathered a number of 115 participants, including children and GI volunteers. These initiatives have had a significant impact on the well-being of the elderly, giving them the opportunity to develop organizational skills and enjoy moments full of joy and good mood.

6. Support at Home

GI members have demonstrated a special commitment to vulnerable elderly people in the community. Thus, they made no less than 4,485 home visits to support 449 elderly people with reduced mobility, depression or who have gone through the loss of a loved one. These visits had a significant impact on the quality of life of the beneficiaries, providing them with emotional support, help in procuring food, personal care and accompanying them to church.

7. Recognition of effort

The Initiative Groups have demonstrated that they are important and credible local actors, being consulted by the authorities in the processes of implementing projects and solving community problems. Several group leaders have been recognized nationally, being awarded for their contribution to promoting active living and healthy ageing.



IV. Increasing impact through the Seniors Network

The network serves as a platform for seniors to voice their issues and needs to decision makers. This approach facilitates a valuable exchange of experiences in promoting healthy aging and active community involvement.

Mrs. Galina Spataru, coordinator of the GI "Vișorenii", from the village of Vișoara, Edineț r. and the president of the RNSAM, emphasizes: "Consolidating the joint efforts of the GS within a network brings new opportunities for the elderly to make their problems and needs heard by decision-makers, as well as facilitate the exchange of good experiences in promoting healthy aging and involvement in community life. The network opens perspectives for the elderly in Moldova who want to be useful and add value to their lives and the community they belong to. We invite other seniors' initiative groups to join the initiative."

At the end of 2020, RNSAM had 13 member groups, with a total of 266 people involved. Of these, 81.58% were women and 18.42% were men. Also, two Initiative Groups from the localities of Cuizăuca and Cobilea submitted applications for membership to RNSAM.

V. Conclusions and Perspectives

Despite the challenges and uncertainty of 2020, the Initiative Groups of Seniors and the National Network of Active Seniors from Moldova have consolidated their positive impact on the lives of the elderly.

The collective approach, the innovations in adapting to new situations and the perseverance of the members have shown that aging can be active and healthy even in difficult times.