



**USAID**  
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**UKRAINE**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Trafficking Victim Rebuilds Life at Home

**A trafficking victim finds help and support through USAID**



Photo: IOM

Lena's troubles began when working in a bar in Vinnytsya like this one.

***Today, Lena is married, and she and her husband are expecting their first child. Lena works as an accountant in a small company and earns a comfortable salary.***

Telling Our Story  
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Life can change dramatically and in unexpected ways — just ask Lena from Vinnytsia. In 2004, Lena was working as a bartender when she was persuaded to accept a new job abroad. She would never have guessed that she was being sold into forced prostitution in the Czech Republic.

Lena's story is a common one among trafficking victims. Although she had completed a technical degree after high school, she held a variety of jobs in retailing, food markets, and in restaurants and bars. She had even worked for a short time waiting tables in Germany and had returned home without any problems.

One day at a bar where Lena worked, the owner accused her of stealing \$150. He threatened to have her killed if she did not hand over the money. He then suggested she take a job abroad to earn the money and recommended an employment firm in Kyiv. Scared and intimidated, Lena decided this was the fastest way to resolve her problem.

The employment firm was eager to help and set everything up. Upon arriving at her workplace in Prague, Lena learned from another captive woman that she would not only wait tables, but that she would also be forced to provide sexual services. Lena realized that her old boss and the so-called employment agency had sold her to a trafficking ring. Several months later, the Prague bar owner panicked when he heard rumors of a police raid and freed Lena. She returned to Ukraine, but her old boss began threatening her again. When a friend told her about a USAID-funded group, Progressive Women, dedicated to helping trafficking victims, she knew the nightmare was over.

Trafficking victims usually need care and support to recover broken lives and reintegrate into society. As part of its efforts to combat human trafficking in Ukraine, USAID supports reintegration assistance to victims of trafficking, including medical and psychological support, as well as vocational training. Through its local partner, USAID helped Lena put an end to the bar owner's threats and reintegrate into society after surviving the horrors of sexual slavery. Lena received medical and psychological care, as well as training in accounting. Today, Lena is successfully employed, married, and expecting a baby.