

Regional Network promotes Gender Equality on Local Level

Entry prepared for the GIZ Gender Competition 2016

1. Efforts to promote Gender equality

GIZ is a longstanding partner of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS) and supports the network in achieving its strategic objectives. Since 2010, GIZ provides institutional support to NALAS to address the major challenges of decentralization and good governance, including the question of enhanced inclusion of women and youth in local government affairs on a regional basis throughout South East Europe (SEE).

NALAS was created in 2001 under the auspices of the Stability Pact for SEE and the Council of Europe. It brings together 16 Local Government Associations (LGAs) from 12 countries¹ of SEE and represents approximately 9.000 local governments (LGs) directly elected by more than 80 million citizen in the region. After positioning itself as a Knowledge Centre for its members during 2009-2012, the Strategic Plan 2013-2017 gives continuity in terms of promoting NALAS as a market leader for knowledge management and scaling up good local government practises.

The commitment to engage for an enhanced inclusion of young people and women in local government affairs in SEE was clearly underlined by approving the NALAS Gender and Youth Strategy 2013-2017. This gender based operational guideline comprises 4 measures and results: i) Replication and scaling up of successful Gender and Youth Projects at LGA and LG level ii) Be Ambassador of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life iii) Promotion of Participation of Young People and Women at Local Elections and iv) Youth and Gender Mainstreaming at NALAS".

It is here, in particular, that common efforts with GIZ are realized to ensure gender mainstreaming in NALAS' policies and structures as well as to promote gender sensitive issues throughout the network in SEE, including cooperation with other third parties from the international and European sector sharing the same strategic goals.

Diversity is a value of highest priority in NALAS and laid down explicitly in the declaration of basic principles and values governing the network and binding all member institutions and their respective personnel in their daily tasks. In line with these values and principles NALAS carried out a survey on gender balance in SEE. Data collected by the NALAS' Knowledge Management Assistants² in 2011 revealed a gender imbalance in the structure of elected local government officials in SEE. Namely, only 8.74% of the mayors in SEE were female and 91.26% were male.

In 2012 NALAS completed a Survey on the activities of NALAS members in "*Gender and Youth Participation in Local Government*". Based on all available information and reports, the data collected triggered off NALAS' decision and determination to emphasis the operational work on inclusion and gender equality on a strategic level.

All organizational units of NALAS are united in the common effort with GIZ and other international donors (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - SDC, UN Women) and European organizations representing Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) to commit themselves to the enhanced inclusion of young people and women in local government affairs in SEE.

1 NALAS Full Member countries are: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. Associate Members are LGAs of countries outside SEE, international and EU organizations and entities active on the local level: Austria, Ukraine, Council of European Municipalities and Regions- CEMR, European Foundation for Sustainable Development of the Regions – FEDRE, Energy Cities.

2 Knowledge Management Assistants are appointed by each member association and ought to form the backbone of the NALAS Knowledge Management System

These organizational units are: i) The General Assembly - supreme body of NALAS in which each full member is represented by two elected representatives ii) The Committee of Liaison Officers - all 16 full members are represented by one officer iii) The Secretariat - responsible for overall coordination and implementation of the activities of the Network iv) The Task Forces - made up of regional experts representing member associations in specific topics³ and v) Focal Points on Gender and Youth in each NALAS member association⁴ and vi) Knowledge Centre – generates, capitalizes and disseminates knowledge of great value for the authorities in SEE, and stimulates exchange of information and experiences among its members.

The primary target group for NALAS are the LGAs throughout SEE and the secondary target group are their members (LGs). Talking about gender, the impact to be sought is on raising-awareness, promotion of knowledge, capacity development and stimulation of gender-related actions within LGAs, which is supposed to result in improved gender-sensitive governance that fosters a more dignified environment on the local level.

What are the results achieved?

As of 2013, the achieved results can be distinguished on three intervention levels:

Level 1 – Policy and Strategic Management: NALAS develops policy documents that are gender sensitive and by doing so ensures binding commitment for the promotion of gender equality throughout the network in SEE. i) Strategy on Youth and Gender developed and approved by the General Assembly as binding commitment for all member LGAs ii) Strategy on Youth and Gender operationalized with detailed work plan for member LGAs iii) NALAS was recognized as Ambassador of the European Charter of Equality of Women and Men in Local Life by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions -CEMR iv) The aspect of gender mainstreaming is incorporated within the guidelines of the Task Forces in order to assure that the knowledge products are supposed to be gender sensitive, whenever possible.

Level 2 – Structures and Procedures: NALAS promotes and introduces a gender sensitive approach in its organizational structures, at all policy, management and operational levels. i) Gender balance achieved within Executive Bureau, Secretariat, Task Forces and Committee of Liaison Officers; ii) Almost all LGAs have implemented projects where gender equality was targeted; iii) Network of Gender and Youth Focal Points established in NALAS⁵; iv) Programme Officers in NALAS mainstream gender equity in the work of the Task Forces, i.e. a link is established between the Network of Gender and Youth Focal Points and Task Force members and v) The newly developed Result Based Monitoring system of NALAS contains gender sensitive indicators.

Level 3 – Knowledge Products and Services: NALAS counts with gender-sensitive knowledge products and services.

i) Gender issue is fully incorporated in the knowledge management system that is acknowledged as a unique hub and mechanism for effective and efficient knowledge generation and dissemination for local governments in SEE ii) Setup of Gender and Youth section on the NALAS Knowledge Tree iii) Focus on Gender and Youth during 2nd NEXPO International Municipal Fair⁶ iv) Gender-sensitive corporate communication used on all



- 3 There are 5 Task Forces: Waste and Water Management, Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Tourism, Urban Planning and Fiscal Decentralization. They fulfil the function of “professional mini-networks” and identify, priorities and address their specific topics.
- 4 Focal Points comprise personnel from the member LGAs. Their tasks consist in actively promoting gender mainstreaming and ensuring exchange of information and experiences within the Association and among their members.
- 5 Each member association appointed experienced personnel as a Focal Point for Gender and Youth issues, so every time when it comes to the implementation of gender activities in NALAS, the work is mainly performed by the responsible programme officers in the Secretariat and the Network of Focal Points, supported by the Knowledge and Communications Manager.
- 6 NEXPO is the largest and most important municipal event in SEE. It brings together LGs, LGAs, development agencies, civil society and businesses from SEE and beyond.

knowledge management system instruments v) Fiscal Decentralization Report for SEE⁷ as of 2014 contains gender sensitive indicators vi) Report on Existing Literature on Gender and Youth distributed to all NALAS members vii) Process on collection, documentation and dissemination of Gender and Youth success stories in SEE finalized. As a result, the Local Governments in SEE received a user-friendly knowledge product on good practises on Gender and Youth to inspire replication at local government level⁸. viii) *GENiYOUTH* Municipal Initiatives Awards for inclusion of women and youth in local government affairs in South East Europe designed and implemented⁹

What are the expected results?

Expectations on specific impacts are diverse due to fact that NALAS is a network of 16 LGAs from countries with different status regarding EU perspectives, capacities and resources. Some of the countries are EU members, others are candidates or potential candidates and all face the challenge in strengthening local democracy within an environment of renewed centralist tendencies.

Short term: i) Declaration on Youth and Gender Mainstreaming to be adopted by General Assembly 2016 as a policy instrument to acknowledge institutional commitment, or change of NALAS statute to incorporate gender mainstreaming as legally binding commitment of all its members ii) All Task Forces have incorporated gender issues in the development of their products and services iii) Focal Points on Gender and Youth within the LGAs are strengthened and systematic information and knowledge transfer has been assured iv) E-learning course offered by NALAS' E-Academy on gender equality at local level further enhances awareness raising among LGs for Gender Equality.

Medium term: i) LGs launched Gender strategies and local development policies are gender streamlined ii) NALAS' Focal Points on Gender and Youth have been recognized as promoters and supporters to LGs when it comes to Gender related issues, supporting local governments to promote and practice gender equality iii) Gender mainstreaming is completely integrated in the work of the Task Forces.

Long term: i) NALAS Knowledge Centre includes a coordination platform on Gender equity in local government issues in SEE and contributes to the enhancement of local governance and a more dignified environment ii) LGAs and LGs have incorporated gender approach in their corporate culture iii) Gender mainstreaming has become an integral part of local development policy in SEE.

2. Gender as quality feature of our work

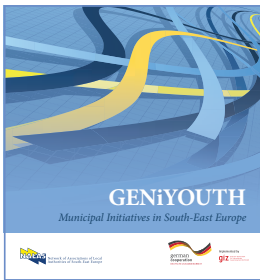
Although NALAS had a high interest to work in the area of gender equality, the network had low knowledge and overall capacity in this area and no human resources assigned to work on this issue. There were times when gender was perceived as a topic away from the main mandate of NALAS and not as a priority. However, NALAS, sensitized by GIZ on the importance of the Gender topic, took the initiative to collect data on gender balance in SEE. Once the data were analysed, they revealed an extreme gender imbalance in the structure of elected government officials throughout SEE. As a consequence, the partner network decided to follow-up with a survey in 2012. This survey brought about a turn-around in respect to the perception of gender equity as a major concern to be dealt with at the local government level. The awareness-raising effect that was triggered-off had indeed repercussions on the elaboration process of the institutional strategy for 2013-2017. The Gender issue was recognized as a priority cross-cutting issue along all measures. In April 2013, the General Assembly as the supreme organ of the Network approved the NALAS Gender and Youth Strategy 2013-2017 as a binding guideline for all 16 national LGAs.

At the *GENiYOUTH* Award Ceremony organized during the NALAS's Annual General Assembly in 2015

7 It is the only Report on Fiscal Decentralization for SEE.

8 The publication "*GENiYOUTH* Municipal Initiatives in SEE" was disseminated to all LGs in SEE and published on all LGAs websites including NALAS. More on: http://www.nalas.eu/News/GeniYouth_Publication

9 Since 2014, the *GENiYOUTH* award promotes awareness-raising and sensitivity on the core essentials of gender mainstreaming at local level throughout SEE. The award ceremony in 2015 was organized within the General Assembly of NALAS. More on: http://www.nalas.eu/News/GENiYOUTH_Awards_winners



in Plovdiv, Bulgaria officially recognized GIZ as a long-standing partner for institutional strengthening and especially in its role to promote gender equality. During this ceremony NALAS recognized and awarded the five best initiatives for inclusion of women and youth in local government affairs in South East Europe. Special and explicit acknowledgement to GIZ was also given for the support of the user-friendly knowledge product on Gender and Youth for best Municipal Practices entitled "GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives in SEE".

3. Gender and Result Based Monitoring (RBM)

With the drafting of the NALAS Strategy Plan (2013-2017) and especially with the adoption of the Gender and Youth Strategy for the same period, gender indicators were introduced at all levels of intervention. All activities regarding Gender and Youth are duly documented and described in the Annual Reports. The newly developed Result Based Monitoring system of NALAS contains gender sensitive indicators.

As far as the monitoring of the GIZ project "Institutional Strengthening of NALAS" is concerned, there is a gender sensitive indicator on the outcome level (objective). Although promotion of gender equality is not the preeminent objective of the project, the team advocated gender mainstreaming in all institutional development matters and supported NALAS in all efforts to strategically promote and foster gender equality at the local level. Here, mainstreaming gender equality among the Task Forces and their products (resulting in actions like the introduction of gender indicators in fiscal decentralization), strengthening the ties between Focal Points of Gender and Youth and Task Force members as well as the development of specific gender-related knowledge products and services like the "GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives in SEE" are striking examples. Furthermore, a systematic collection of results was enhanced with the new RBM system.

4. Cooperation

The project "Institutional Strengthening of NALAS", has introduced the topic of Gender equality as a relevant mainstreaming topic for participatory and sustainable development at local level. The topic was integrated in the partner's Strategy 2013-2017 and recognized as a priority issue. GIZ supports the awareness-raising and competence building process through NALAS. This joint partnership is meant to enhance the inclusion of young people and women in local government affairs in SEE within all 16 member LGAs.

During 2014 UN Women joined this partnership sharing the common goal of fostering participatory sustainable human development at the local level. UN Women and NALAS joined their efforts in implementing the project "Promoting Gender Responsive Policies in SEE and the Republic of Moldova". There is also regular coordination among GIZ, UN Women and the Swiss development Cooperation - SDC in order to synchronize the programme interventions and ensure a proper support to NALAS. GIZ continues to support NALAS in all strategic and institutional development matters, by providing technical expertise upon request.

The three key success factors as it comes to cooperation are: i) Committed team work ii) Shared purpose and convictions and last but not least iii) The right moment to initiate strategic partnerships.

This entry is developed and submitted by the Project Team "Institutional Strengthening of NALAS", GIZ Skopje, Macedonia
Michael Samec, Project Manager (michael.samec@giz.de)
Svetlana Zdravkovska, Programme Advisor (svetlana.zdravkovska@giz.de)
Marija Joksimovska, Project Officer (marija.joksimovska@giz.de)

as a result of joint efforts with
Joachim Roth, CIM Integrated Expert and the implementing partner NALAS