

U-LEAD with Europe Programme – GG1 project

Context

Ukraine - Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme (U-LEAD with Europe) is a multi-donor action of the EU and its member states, which is one of the main actors in supporting the decentralisation reform in Ukraine. This reform aims at strengthening local self-government in order to make government more responsive to the needs of citizens, promote quality local service delivery and ultimately enhance democracy and political participation. It has a large and complex structure with 3 operational units and around 160 staff members operating in all 24 regions of Ukraine.

U-LEAD with Europe's political partner, the Ministry of the Development of Communities and Territories (MinRegion), has subsequently initiated a process of mainstreaming gender into all its policies and legislation and has drawn up a road map and a strategy on gender equality for expanding women's participation in political decision-making at sub-national level and raising gender responsiveness of local self-governments. However, despite changes made at the legislative and institutional levels, achieving gender parity especially in government and public authorities still requires attention.

Gender as a quality feature of U-LEAD's work

Gender equality is particularly streamlined in the Programme's *Top Initiative 2 "Implementing the "leave no one behind" principle, gender equality, combatting climate change and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ukraine"* (TI2), being currently the major direction of this initiative. Although gender activities are not the main focus of the Programme, gender plays an important supportive role in its structure. Gender equality and women's empowerment are important elements to achieve U-LEAD's objectives. The Programme provides various opportunities to promote gender equality and gender transformation in the areas of female political leadership, female political participation, transforming gender stereotypes, improving municipal services and promoting local economic development for women and men.

Since 2018 the Programme Gender Task Force being represented in every regional office has been working in the Programme helping to promote the abovementioned tasks both internally and externally. Quickly reacting on changing environment, the emphasis of activities was shifting to the areas requiring bigger contribution staying in the framework of gender mainstreaming. Among other, two specific intervention areas were defined:

- Development and support of She-LEADs female leadership network
- Awareness raising and communications promoting gender equality externally as well as within the Programme

Direction one is **aimed at strengthening women's participation at the local level municipal decision-making**. The activities are based on the assumptions on the main problems which cover people's belief in gender stereotypes, people's attitude which is not gender sensitive enough and lack confidence of female workers of local self-government to promote themselves in leadership positions. All these problems may cause the lack of representation of females in leadership positions at the local self-government. Also, according to the recent local elections, the number of female heads of municipalities is only about 17%. To influence these problems and empower women to take more active part in municipal decision-making processes, the actions of awareness-raising for men and women in local self-government, provision of relevant soft and hard skills for female workers in local self-government and organisation of networking events for exchange



Figure 1. Logotype of She-LEADs network

experiences and successful practices of female leadership are beneficial. After the activities addressed directly on women, they are expected to be able to share their issues and experiences among each other as a result of networking events and become more confident in their skills and abilities to apply for leadership positions after participation in soft and hard skills trainings.

Direction two is focused on **gender equality awareness measures on national as well as local levels** through supporting NGOs promoting values of gender equality and communication campaigns in social media. Special emphasis is also put to increase the gender sensitivity of activities within the Programme itself and include the implementation of gender component in the activities where it is not yet integrated and its support where this was already done. As a result, it is expected that different groups of men and women will take gender issues more seriously, believe less in gender stereotypes.

Results and achievements

Strengthening gender equality and the “leave no one behind” principle are the most prominent areas of Programme’s work. One of the priorities of the last couple of years was to continue support local female leaders in mainstreaming gender equality in their municipalities. Results of the small-scale survey among the members of She-LEADs network has showed capacity building within the network were beneficial for the participants and have even resulted into several good practices:

“Training on public speeches was very useful: the situation with the organisation of ritual services on our territory was difficult, but thanks to the skills acquired during the training the issue was resolved. Knowledge was also needed during the sessions and the preparation of the annual report of the village head” – member of the network, Zaporizhzhya region

“As a result of discussion on the needs and problems we created a centre of social services in the municipality. Would be good to conduct trainings of this level to the women in municipalities” – member of the network, Lviv region

The Programme has continued its operations even in the time of COVID-19 pandemic, switching them to online mode. To provide support to the local women in the time of the pandemic, in May-June 2020 the Programme has organised a series of 8 online trainings on female leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, where approx. 160 female participants from the local level took part. As a closing event, the Programme has held the National Online Forum *“Female Leadership during the COVID-19 Outbreak: New Challenges and Opportunities for Municipality Development”*.

In addition, to support local female leaders in preparation to the local elections, which were taking part in October 2020, an online forum *“Women go to politics! Female participation in local elections and challenges related to that”* was organised, covering the issues women face in the election process. After the local elections many municipal leaders and local self-government officials changed and were assigned to the new tasks. With this a need on providing support to newly elected leaders became one of the priorities of the Programme in terms of promoting municipalities to be more gender-sensitive, considering the newly acquired functions and responsibilities.

To achieve this in a comprehensive manner, in June 2021 the Programme has launched a one-year local subsidy with Association of Female Lawyers of Ukraine “Jurjem”. The main activities include, among others, strengthening local level female

leaders' knowledge of legislation touching on gender-related aspects, peculiarities of communication on gender-sensitive topics and knowledge of women's rights in municipalities. Under the activity, a three-module training course has been developed and is currently being delivered to approx. 200 local female heads of municipalities, local deputies and female activists. The activity also foresees elements of networking with female lawyers, members of the "JurFem" all-Ukrainian network, and female representatives of local self-government, thus promoting coalitions and providing support to each other. Based on this training, an online course will be developed and placed on the online e-learning platform U-LEARN. Besides this, a manual on integration of gender sensitive approaches to the different processes in municipality is planned to be prepared in the coming months, which will be distributed among all female leaders taking part in the Programme activities. This activity is expected to be finalised until June 2022.

At the same time, the process of re-launch of She-LEADs female leadership network was initiated, involving the Programme's regional structure. This is being done to identify the most active and interested female leaders in the regions and develop the network for further cooperation and development. The aim of this re-launch is to bring attention from the separate events organised for representatives from municipalities to the more complex approach, which is being developed by the Programme.

U-LEAD has also put some efforts to visual representation of the gender initiative and She-LEADs network. Thus, a logotype of the network and a series of digital illustrations dedicated to the topic of gender equality and combating gender stereotypes were created and used for social media.



Figure 3. Sample of illustrations created on combating gender stereotypes

In addition, two Programme employees take part in the Gender Task Force GIZ Ukraine and are responsible for a joint creation of the Gender Onboarding video, which highlights the main principles of gender mainstreaming for all the newcomers in GIZ Ukraine. The video is currently at the final stage of production and will be released in the nearest future.

Gender in monitoring and reporting

U-LEAD includes the gender component in its activities, both within the Programme indicators' structure and the cross-cutting issue in the Top Initiative. The Programme has eleven Programme progress indicators, gender related data are considered for five of them. These indicators are officially being measured in frames of the Programme results framework. Two out of these five have gender mentioned in the name of the indicator on the specific objective and a result level, covering learning municipalities how to prepare gender-sensitive project proposals as well as dialogue events, organised with consideration of the gender relevant aspects. For three others sex-disaggregated data is collected on women and men participation in the capacity development measures conducted by the Programme, which are officially

measured by the Programme staff or the hired research company. Furthermore, all gender-related activities are documented and reported under a special chapter in Programme's reports to donors.

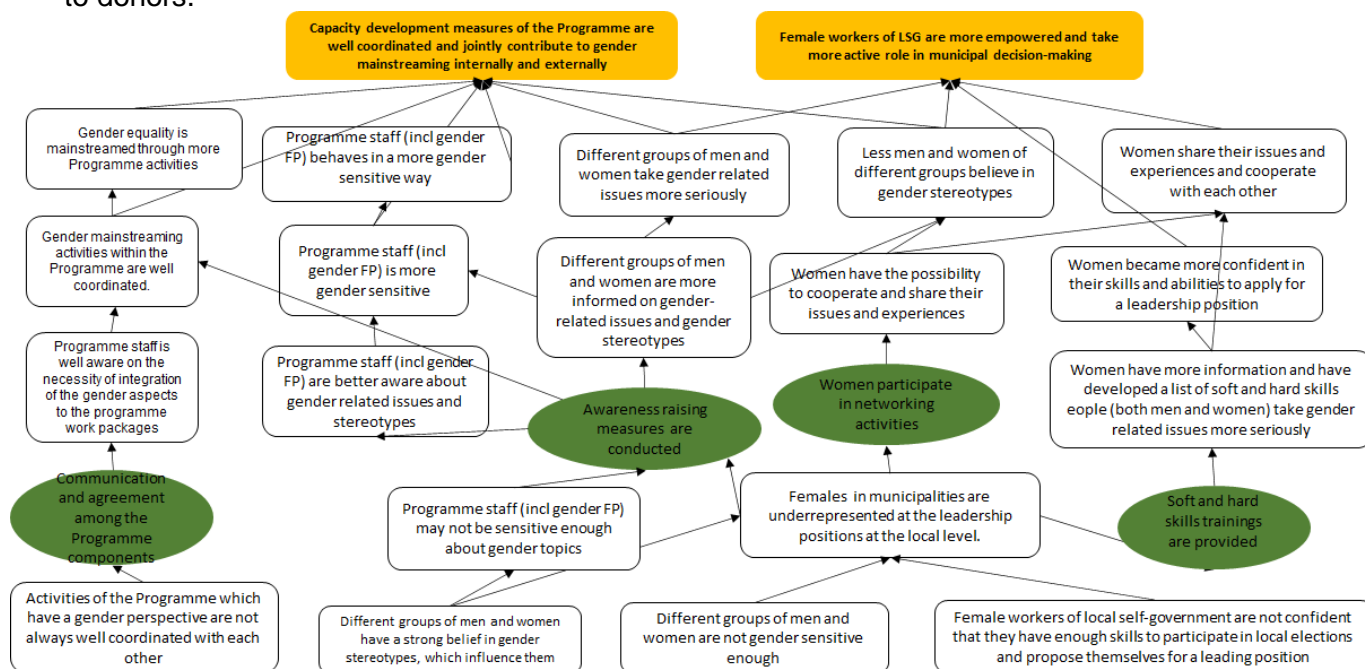


Figure 4. Theory of Change developed for gender activities

In addition, to keep track of the results defined, the Gender Task Force has constructed a Theory of Change and informal additional indicators of results achievement to be more concrete in measuring what to achieve with its activities.

Cooperation

Cooperation is the core of implementation of U-LEAD gender activities. Internal cooperation, involving participants from different Programme units, aims at bringing diverse views and perspectives to the topic, promoting further implementation of the Programme activities. The Programme has succeeded in building up a strong team of dedicated colleagues ready to promote gender equality inside and outside the Programme. During a couple of last years, the Programme has built trustful relationship with several partner organisations which help to highlight the topic of gender equality in Ukraine. For instance, U-LEAD has been one of the most significant partners of the Ukrainian Women's Congress NGO, which organizes one of the biggest events dedicated to gender equality in Ukraine, U-LEAD has not only provided financial support for organisation of the annual III, IV and Vth Women's Congresses, but also contributed content wise to the panels dedicated to the gender equality in the context of decentralisation and local female leadership.

Although the Programme has faced several challenges in the implementation of its gender activities, such as COVID-19 pandemic, major changes in the team, not always efficient coordination and time distribution to gender activities, it has been constantly updating its approaches and is highly motivated, including substantial support at the management level.