

“Decentralization Support in Ukraine” DESPRO
**Strategy of Consolidation and Institutionalization
of Gender Equality and Women Participation
in Decision Making Activities
for 2020-2021**

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Glossary

Gender – social sex that forms behavioural, cultural, psychological, visual and other socio-culturally determined differences between men and women.

Gender equality – policy of equal rights and opportunities for men and women as well as activity aimed at creating mechanisms of its implementation.

Gender based approach – feature of political, economic and any other culture, which means taking into consideration the interests of socio-gender groups of the society. The essence of the gender-based approach is the realization of the fact that social phenomena influence men and women differently and cause different reactions.

Gender stereotypes – the result of views (usually outdated) about the roles, opportunities and characteristics of men and women.

Gender-oriented budgeting – a budget that meets the real needs of the society taking into consideration specific needs of men, women, boys and girls.

Gender sensitive policy – system of legally based protectionist activities that allow women with various social experience and social capital get real chances to make a career, raise their social status.

Institutionalization – process of defining and fixing social norms, rules, statuses and roles, turning them into a system that is able to act in the direction of meeting a certain social need.

Consolidation – strengthening, unification and integration of something (people, groups, organizations, movements etc.)

Gender-specific statistics – quantitative statistic information on the differences and inequality between women and men.

Strategy – a general, not detailed plan that covers a long period of time, a way of achieving a difficult goal.

Introduction

An important vector of democratic development of Ukraine is the establishment of gender equality in the Ukrainian society, which presupposes equal participation of women and men in all fields of life as well as equal access to resources for both sexes. According to 2020 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, of 153 countries Ukraine occupies the 59th place, if you consider the overall progress in the fields of economic participation, education, healthcare and broadening the rights and opportunities in politics. ¹ At the same time, when we speak of political participation, of women in Parliament and of those occupying top positions in the Ministry, Ukraine shows lower results (out of 144 countries – 83rd, 88th and 82nd place respectively). ²

Equal participation of women and men in the decision making also plays a significant role in the process of reforming local self-government and decentralization in Ukraine. In this context, empowerment of women in local self-government, their active involvement in the economic development processes and bridging the gender gap in terms of access to economic resources and public goods are extremely important.

Ministry of Communities and Territories Development (MinRegion) is implementing the Gender Equality Strategy for 2019-2021 in order to take into consideration the gender equality principle in the course of forming and implementing state regional policy, which lies within the field of its authority, following a transversal gender based approach. ³

Gender equality support is the key component of the Swiss Cooperation Office Strategy for 2015-2018⁴ as well as of the work of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development on the whole. It covers such fields as gender equality and women's rights; human rights and gender

¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

² http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

³ MinRegion's Gender Equality Strategy for 2019-2021

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https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/de/documents/laender/DEZA_Cooperation_Strategy_Ukraine_2015-18_UK_WEB.pdf

equality in conflicts and situations of instability; access to resources, education and income; strengthening political participation of women.⁵

The Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralization Support in Ukraine Project DESPRO is funded by the Swiss Confederation through Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC) and is implemented by the Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development (Skat). Project mission is to optimize the management system and to promote effective local development in Ukraine, which, in turn, creates an impetus to democratic processes and to provide services at the community level.

In accordance with the vision of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, the issue of gender equality is transversal for the project, i.e. it is taken into consideration at all stages of its implementation. At the conceptual level the project has integrated the gender issue into the Project's documents and the system used for monitoring their activity. At the implementation level, the project set a 40% quota for participation of representatives of each sex in all the events, meetings and local working groups, as well as collects gender-specific data. Besides that, all the work on developing the potential of projects both at the national as well as local levels is aimed at facilitation of equal access of women and men while the awareness raising activities of the project include separate courses on basic gender equality as well as a special online course for local partners.

The important thing is that by improving the access to and quality of public services, primarily, water supply and waste water management, DESPRO facilitates gender equality and is beneficial to women who, especially in the rural areas, are traditionally overloaded with housework.

At the local level, DESPRO focuses on providing women with better access to decision making and creating better opportunities for development of leadership qualities among women in the communities.

In 2017, the Project conducted a study "Involvement of Women in the Process of Implementation of Decentralization Reforms", which aimed to

⁵ Gender in practice. A toolkit for SDC and its partners.
https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/gender/224801-equidad-genero-en-practica_EN.pdf

analyse female participation in decentralization processes as well as to assess the influence of local self-government reform on women participation in the political life at the local level. Over 70 local self-government representatives from different oblasts of Ukraine were surveyed within the framework of the study. The study determined gender asymmetry in terms of women representation in superior positions and decision making at the local level. Thus, during 2018-2019 DESPRO conducted face-to-face and online events on building women's capacity in local self-government, which aimed to support women participation in decision making.

In order to consolidate and further institutionalize the work of the "Decentralization Support in Ukraine" (DESPRO) Project in this field, DESPRO has developed this strategic document that is to be implemented in 2020-2021. The results of surveys conducted among local self-government representatives on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, that were held in 2019 using questionnaires and focus group discussions (95 respondents in total), form the foundation of the document.

General Context

The influence of the reform of local self-government and territorial organization of power implementation on gender policy and women's activity within the community is confirmed by the survey and study, conducted by the DESPRO Project, particularly, by the 2017 Report on "Involvement of Women in the Process of Implementation of Decentralization Reforms", the 2019 results of the focus group discussion and a survey conducted among local self-government representatives on ensuring equal rights and opportunities, etc.

In 2015 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine included the gender quota norm into electoral legislation, namely, the Law of Ukraine "On Local Elections" got the provision that "not less than 30% of the total number of

candidates to the local councils in the party lists in multi-member electoral constituencies should be representatives of one sex”. However, the average representation index decreased by 10% in 2018 in comparison with the 2015 elections. Thus, at the beginning of 2018, there were 103 women (15.4%) among 665 ATC heads; in 2015 this index was 18.8%. It could also be noted that female representation among heads of village and town ATCs is higher than that of city ATCs. In general, the percent of female candidates for councils and community heads tends to decrease and the more economically capable the ATC is, the more intense is the campaigning and the lower the percent of female candidates running for seats in councils and the post of the head is.⁶

The results of the survey conducted by DESPRO among local self-government representatives on ensuring equal rights and opportunities shows that the men-women correlation in local self-government bodies ranges from 60% to 90% women in the apparatus, however, from 60% to 100% of those occupying superior posts are men. The main reasons for gender asymmetry in local self-governing bodies, that were voiced by discussion participants, include: lack of experience in leadership and managerial activity; lack of time for public activity due to overload with housework; fear not to cope with the tasks; lack of skills needed for public debate, defending your interests; disillusionment as to the ability to change something. At the same time, women in the rural areas are still less protected from social misfortunes than their “sworn sisters” in the cities due to the lack of accessible healthcare, education, protection from violence and discrimination at the labour market etc.

The issues that ATCs currently face and their solution cannot be successful without the consideration of gender aspects. The level of importance of gender issues at the community level is defined by local self-government representatives as important and very important (20% and 20.5% respectively)⁷. In addition, 87% of the respondents would like to deepen their knowledge on the gender issue, and most of the respondents

⁶ <https://gurt.org.ua/news/informator/49843/>

⁷ See Annex 1

define their current knowledge level as intermediate (64.3%). As for the activities that might strengthen gender equality at the community level, the following were outlined:

- Informing
- Holding workshops, seminars, study tours, interactive learning
- Gathering gender statistics
- Development of a Provision on gender equality
- An LSG official on gender issues
- Gender-oriented budgeting
- Including the gender component in all the community programs
- Balancing the number of women in councils and among community leaders

The reform itself and the chance to change something in your community has considerably influenced the level of women involvement in the local processes. Thus, 27% of the respondents noted that the situation with gender equality observation has improved with the launch of the reform, and 41% of the respondents said that it has considerably improved.⁸ Male and female participants of various surveys noted that the reasons and motives for female activation at the level of local communities is the implementation of reforms and the decentralization process. Active women quickly became involved in the reform of the local self-government at the stage of deliberation of the essence of the decentralization process, the peculiarities of community amalgamation, development planning etc. Many women started perceiving the reform as a chance to solve not only community problems, but also ensure their personal growth, where they saw a possibility to develop their leadership potential, ability to resolve conflicts and find innovative solutions. It was not only women with good leadership skills who showed interest in participating in project drafting and implementation, but men also urged and supported them in this in every possible way. They understood that women have the potential and experience for introducing changes in the community.

⁸ See Annex 1, point 6

“We compared activity of women in 2014 and in 2015. Activity levels increased by almost 50%. Out of 17 deputies, 11 are women. Women were asked by the people to run for the Council as a woman can see problems better”⁹

Most of the survey participants realize that it is necessary to consolidate the institutions involved in training, development of female local self-government leaders as well as to have a single coordinator and organizer to ensure high quality lifelong learning. According to the results of the survey, local self-government association in general and the ATC Association in particular were defined as organizations, that could best provide training services to women who want to make a career in local self-government (63% of the respondents). As for the form of training, most votes were for face-to-face forms of education, including workshops, seminars, lectures and experience exchanges. Local self-government representatives would like to receive the following from the women in local self-government network:

“All the information on LSG governance with the emphasis on gender, best practices, success stories of women, changes in the legislation, information on opportunities for self-development”¹⁰

Legislative Base

The Document is based on the following normative legal acts aimed at reaching equality of women and men: Goal No.5 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals; Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine; Law of Ukraine “On Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women”; State Program “Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” until 2021; National Action Plan “Women, Peace, Security” until 2020; Gender Equality Strategy of the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine for 2019-2021 and others.

⁹ See Annex 2

¹⁰ See Annex 1

General Purpose and Strategic Goals

The general purpose of the Strategy is facilitation of gender equality and women empowerment in local self-government through consolidation of the gained experience and suggesting further steps in this field.

The following **strategic goals** were outlined to fulfil the purpose of the Strategy:

Goal 1. Empowerment of local self-government representatives and their associations to increase women representation in decision making at the local level.

Goal 2. Strengthening institutional capacity of communities in development of gender-sensitive services, designed for women and men.

Implementation period: 2020 – 2021.

The long-term effect of the Strategy is the increase of community gender sensitivity and ensuring equality of women and men at the local level.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of Strategy implementation are women and men that live in communities on the whole territory of Ukraine as well as the society in general:

- Residents of amalgamated communities

- Representatives of local self-government, state bodies of executive power and legislative power
- Local self-government associations

Local self-government representatives, particularly, in amalgamated territorial communities, are supposed to facilitate Strategy implementation at the local level.

Strategic goal 1

Empowerment of local self-government representatives and their associations to increase women representation in decision making at the local level

Equal participation of women in the decision making also plays a significant role in the implementation of the reform of local self-government and territorial organization of power in Ukraine. For women and men as equals and partners become the impetus of change in the course of decentralization. In order to broaden the opportunities for leadership potential development of women in amalgamated territorial communities, the DESPRO Project launched the support program for female local self-government leaders in 2018. Over the period of 2018-2019, three workshops, each consisting of 2 training sessions, for 76 women – ATC representatives have been conducted. Within the framework of the workshops, the participants had a chance to master effective communicative techniques, develop their team work skills, learn the basis of negotiation practices with the specific emphasis on introducing changes at the local level. Workshops were a great success, e.g. in April over 300 applications for participation in the workshop were received from female local self-government representatives from all the oblasts of Ukraine. In addition,

an average of 96.6% of the participants assessed the gained knowledge and practical skills as useful for their work in local self-government.¹¹

In 2019, the Project partnered with the ATC Association to conduct “Female Local Self-Government Leaders” workshops in order to institutionalize and upscale this activity among local self-government on the whole territory of Ukraine in the future.

In order to continue the work that has already been launched, the activities of the DESPRO Project related to the achievement of the stated strategic goal, will be aimed at training and re-training, experience exchange, sharing best practices in leadership, implementation of gender policy for local self-government representatives in Ukraine.

The **beneficiaries** of such activity are:

- female leaders that take part in decision-making;
- young women and those who are learning and wish to make progress in human resources management and in governing their communities;
- men, who wish to work in a team to increase the sustainability and efficiency of the decisions made in the interest of local communities;
- local self-government bodies, especially in ATCs;
- ATC Association

Key activities for implementation of Goal 1:

1. Conducting training sessions on the topics of gender and women participation in the decision making, leadership at the local level
2. Organizing and holding a session of webinars for female local self-government leaders, involving well-known experts and ATC heads for experience exchange
3. Organizing and holding a session of webinars for gender advisors, authorized representatives in ATCs

¹¹ Results of a survey conducted among participants of a “Female Local Self-Government Leaders” workshop, DESPRO, November 2019

4. Conducting a training of trainers for female leaders together with the ATC Association
5. Launching and supporting a mentorship program for young female leaders in the ATCs
6. Drafting and sharing cases of best practices of women heads, deputies, starostas, local self-government officials
7. Informational, expert support and methodological provision of gender policy, women's rights and female leadership on the ATC Association's Gender Equality Platform
8. Establishing exchange of experience and best practices in this field on DESPRO's "Community of Practice" portal
9. Cooperation with the "Equal Opportunities" Cross-Faction Union for mentorship and consultation support
10. Spreading the contacts of the existing gender organization with stating the fields of their activity
11. Spreading the information on training programs on the stated topic, that are conducted by other organizations

Expected results

Implementation of Goal 1 will facilitate further development of local self-government representatives' potential at the local level. Through participation in training sessions, workshops, webinars, young women that work in ATCs will gain new knowledge and skills needed for working in local self-government. Through experience exchanges, mentorship program with more experienced female local self-government representatives, a network of female leaders and horizontal links in it will be maintained and developed. The organization support of the ATC Association aims to consolidate and upscale these activities to cover all the ATCs that are members of the Association.

Strategic Goal 2

Strengthening institutional capacity of communities in development of gender-sensitive services, designed for women and men.

Innovative models of decentralized water supply, waste water and solid household waste management, maintaining and servicing that is specifically targeted for the community, were developed by DESPRO / Skat and have been implemented in the communities since 2007. Such activity focuses on implementation of local projects, which aim to provide high-quality public services to the households, which corresponds with gender relations – housework, which most often is done by women, becomes easier and takes much less time. Decrease of the number of health problems in the families also allows to lighten the workload for many women as looking after the sick family members is usually also women's duty. Moreover, the DESPRO approach, which is based on community initiatives, supports the involvement of a large number of women in project work, starting from decision making and ending with their actual implementation. At the same time, there is a need to understand gender aspects better and in a more differentiated way, in order to meet the needs of both men and women and facilitate gender equality at the local level.

In this context, activities of DESPRO will be aimed at awareness raising among male and female LSG representatives in gender approach application while creating public services at the level of local communities.

Beneficiaries of such activity are:

- women and men, boys and girls, including people with disabilities, senior citizens in the communities
- bodies of local self-government in Ukraine

Key activities for implementation of Goal 2:

1. Spreading the information on development and consideration of gender equality policies in the work of local self-government and representatives of partner communities
2. Participation in uploading the gender equality related content onto the www.decentralisation.gov.ua website
3. Further wide popularization of the online DESPRO course entitled “Gender Policy for Local Self-Government Development”
4. Experience exchanges and webinars on the peculiarities of gender-sensitive services’ provision for ATCs, with the consideration of various target groups
5. Experience exchange and webinars on document drafting (strategies, policies, programs, event calendars) with the consideration of the gender component as well as their monitoring and assessment.
6. Including a block on gender policy consideration, document drafting with the gender component consideration into other face-to-face and online teaching activities, conducted by the Project
7. Spreading the information about the Project’s practice of setting quotas in order to achieve equal participation of both sexes in the decision making processes at the local level
8. Spreading the information about the practice of including the non-discrimination, basic gender equality provisions into the agreements
9. Spreading practices of appointing LSG officials responsible for gender policy issues
10. Spreading the information on gender-specific statistics collection and analysis at the community level

Expected results

Implementation of Goal 2 will lead to the improved skills of drafting and implementing strategies and action plans with the consideration of gender-sensitive services in all the fields of social and economic life, will make it possible to take into consideration the interests of every social group of women and men, girls and boys in the local community. Team work of

women and men in the decision making at the local level will lead to effort consolidation in the launch of gender-sensitive services as well as to positive social changes at the community level.

Partners

The transversal topic of gender equality for the Project presupposes, firstly, orientation towards cooperation with all the subjects that work in the field of supporting the reform of local self-government and decentralization of power in Ukraine as well as integration of the issues of equal participation of women and men into all fields of activity. The Project pays considerable attention to the establishing partnership relations with all the organizations that work in the field of supporting local self-government in general, at the national, oblast and local levels as well as with those whose activity is somehow aimed at supporting gender equality.

Within the framework of DESPRO's gender related activity during 2017-2019, the Amalgamated Territorial Communities' Association has become its main partner. The Amalgamated Territorial Communities' Association is an all-Ukrainian union of local self-government, which was established for sharing best practices of modern and innovative community governance, as well as for protection of their legal rights and interests and unites 490 communities from all the regions of Ukraine. The purpose of its activity is to facilitate the establishment and development of amalgamated territorial communities as a basis for a new system of powerful and functional local self-government of Ukraine. In February 2019 a Platform "On Gender Equality Issues" was established in the Association, which was designed to assist communities in finding effective solutions with the consideration of the gender sensitive approach, particularly, to support local self-government bodies – partners of the Association in drafting gender-oriented budgets,

gender portraits, gathering gender-specific statistics, development of female leadership in ATCs.

During 2018-2019 DESPRO has had the experience of successful cooperation with ATC Association in holding training sessions for female local self-government representatives. Women from ATCs gained the necessary knowledge and improved their leadership skills needed for effective work in the superior positions in local self-government. The status of the Association and the existing positive cooperation experience allows us to consider the Association as an important partner in implementing the Strategy at the local level.

Other partners in Strategy implementation are:

- the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, particularly the “Equal Opportunities” Cross-Factional Union;
- Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine;
- expert community;
- mass media.

Communication

Comprehensive communication and information support aimed at raising the awareness about gender equality among local self-government representatives and at facilitating the shift of attitudes in this field will be one of the instruments of Strategy implementation. Communication will cover the vertical component, i.e. spreading the information and best practices in the field of gender equality by the Project and its partners, as well as a horizontal one – information and best practices exchange among the beneficiaries.

General Priority Activities for 2020-2021

Priority activities within the framework of implementation of this strategic document include:

- Holding meetings dedicated to women participation in decision making
- Organizing and conducting a series of webinars
- Holding a training of trainers, together with ATC Association, for female leaders
- Launching and supporting a mentorship program for young female leaders in ATCs
- Drafting and sharing cases of success stories of women in local self-government

Annexes

Annex 1. [Results of a survey conducted among local self-government representatives of amalgamated territorial communities on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women, 2019](#)

Annex 2. [Results of a focus group discussion among female local self-government leaders, 2019](#)