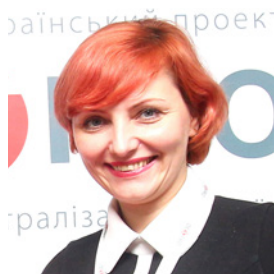


“UNSTOPPABLE”: WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN LOOK LIKE IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT?

WOMEN-LEADERS IN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE



“I was admitted into the DESPRO training “Women Leaders in Local Self-Government” through an essay competition. After all, I definitely have a lot to say in the context of gender. In my family, my mother was the breadwinner, and my father was engaged in social activities: he was a member of the local council. My mom used to come home late from work, and my dad used to cook food. And that was perfectly acceptable. It did not interfere with the harmonious relationship of my parents and their parenting. For example, I don't really know how to cook and I don't enjoy cooking, but I can make money and buy what I like.

So why should I waste my time doing things I don't enjoy?” – says Iryna Ungurian, a leading specialist of the department of organizational and informational work, processing of citizens' appeals, reporting, control and archival affairs of the staff of the Executive Committee Staff of the Novoselytsia Amalgamated Territorial Community (ATC), Chernivtsi Oblast. “I am happy to have had the opportunity to participate in the training “Women-Leaders in Local Self-Government”. Thanks to this training, I am motivated and I am self-developing. One can get addicted to this feeling – try it once, and you'll want to do it even more.”

In 2018, the DESPRO Project launched a programme to support women leaders in local self-government, in order to empower and unleash the potential of women in ATCs. During 2018-2019, three trainings were conducted for 76 women-representatives of Ukrainian ATCs: the participants mastered effective communication techniques, the basics of negotiation and time management, improved their teamwork skills, worked out various aspects of local government reform, basic principles of gender equality, community involvement and mobilization, as well as project management.

The invited experts and business trainers worked with the participants on a practical and interactive level, created a safe space for self-development and fruitful exchange of experiences about women's leadership in Ukraine. The trainings had a special focus on further implementation of changes at the local level.

“Upon my return from the training, I conducted a gender analysis of my community profile. Also, now I request information in the context of gender analysis from my colleagues, when writing projects in our ATC. This



Iryna Ungurian during the DESPRO training
“Women-Leaders in Local Self-Government”

has not been carried out before, we have not yet learned to use a gender approach in our activities. But I do realize how necessary it is.

Gender mainstreaming means not just adding a gender component to projects and programmes, but analysing and taking into account the different conditions and requirements for women and men. The gender approach is not to equate everyone, but rather to identify and take into account different needs.

The key value and the most important resource for any community is its people and especially its youth. A gender mainstreaming approach puts people at the centre of the policy-making process, provides better governance, because it allows taking into account the diverse needs of different group in the community – both men and women.

When I conduct a gender analysis, I begin to understand where the funds from the ATC budget should go. And, in turn, I explain to my colleagues that this analysis indicates the weaknesses and gaps in infrastructure design.

After participating in the DESPRO training, I was assigned additional responsibilities in the city council. So now I am responsible for gender issues in my community. After the training, I was told: "Well, since you like it, you have travelled, you have studied, so now continue it at home." We have recently started cooperating with the UN Women in Ukraine programme, and I am the official contact person for our local self-government body," continues Iryna.

Equal participation of women in decision-making processes plays an essential role in the process of implementing the reform of local self-government and decentralization in Ukraine. In this context, it is extremely important to strengthen the role of women in local self-government bodies, to actively involve them in economic development processes and to reduce gender inequality in access to economic resources and public goods.



Iryna Ungurian and colleagues at the 3rd Women Congress



Team of Novoselytsia ATC are the winners of regional competition "The Best Community in Bukovyna"

In order to promote the active participation of women and to incorporate a women's vision in the decentralization process, the DESPRO Project has created an effective network of women-leaders: heads of communities and potential public servants in local self-government. As of October 2020, over 1,000 members had joined the Facebook group for women leaders.

“After the training “Women Leaders in Local Self-Government”, I made friends and met like-minded people. It is very important to keep in touch with them, because I get support that I do not have at home. Therefore, the acquaintances made during the training are very valuable for me. We still communicate with the other female members; we often exchange online. I am always happy to see them in our virtual space, because this means that they have not stopped their professional activities,” – says Iryna.

In order to consolidate and further institutionalize the work aimed at supporting gender equality, the DESPRO Project has developed a Strategy for 2020–2021. The purpose of the document is to raise public awareness on gender-related issues, as well as to empower women in local self-government.

“This training had a profound and lasting effect on me. I realize that I have the opportunity to change something in my community,” – concludes Ms. Iryna Ungurian.

