

Context and Problem Analysis Regarding Women's Economic Empowerment in Ukraine¹ by Dr. Olena Lazorenko²

Economic and democratic reforms in Ukraine are impossible without an active role and consideration of interests of the biggest part of Ukrainian population (54% are women in Ukraine). Businesses owned by women and those owned by men are not the same (Kepler and Shane, 2002; National Women's Business Council, 2009; World Bank, 2012). Women-owned businesses, tend to be smaller, are often less experienced, have less access to human, technological, financial and social capital. Furthermore, they tend to be in less-profitable sectors, such as retail sales and services and their women owners have more family and care responsibilities.

According to the European regional "Women's Economic Opportunity Index" survey conducted by Economist Intelligence Unit, Ukraine ranked 31rd (out of 34 countries). Therefore, high-motivated and entrepreneurial women are not too much involved in business activities in Ukraine. This fact does not only reports women discrimination, but also proves the lack of efficient strategy to use the economic potential. The "SME Policy Index, Eastern Partner Countries" Study (OECD, 2012), reports that women's entrepreneurship in Ukraine requires better policy, follow-up actions and more advocacies.

NGO "League of Professional Women" (LPW) proposes advocacy activities to promote women's economic empowerment in Ukraine and already elaborated recommendations presented during Ukrainian Parliament Hearing on Gender Issues (dated by 16 October 2013). LPW activities correspondent for following sustainable development goals (SDGs)³: **4 SDG**: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; **5 SDG**: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and **8 SDG**: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

In 2014, still acting as advocacy for change, LPW Initiative Group on Supporting Women Entrepreneurship (IG SWE) case included in analysis of Ukraine's context concern "Women and economy" produced by the Ministry of the Social Policy of Ukraine (UKRAINE NATIONAL REVIEW Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 2014- p.35). This case LPW President presented to UNECE in Geneva in November 2014.

Concerning past and on-going actions carried by international organisations and after a ten-years break, international donors took again in consideration women entrepreneurship issues and focus on development of female small and medium-sized businesses in Ukraine.

¹ This position pre-print paper prepared for occasion of the CSW-60, U.N. Commission on the Status of Women at New York, USA

² Dr. Olena Lazorenko is Senior Researcher, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine & Managing Partner at ICC Ltd. and President, League of Professional Women (Ukraine) www.lpw.org.ua contact her lpw.network@gmail.com

³ About all 17 SDGs see at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Currently, several projects are carried out in Ukraine:

- “Women in Business” (conducted by EBRD, 2014-2017) with consulting, business training, mentoring, business coaching and financial components for both consulting companies & SME.
- The Growth of Women’s Business and Leadership Program (USAID/FINREP-II in 2015) is focus on training and consulting components for female SME in four regions of Ukraine.

In order to develop new development pathways and thus insure sustainable development, creative economy entrepreneurs and academy entrepreneurship should be supported as a driver of change and growth in Ukraine. Furthermore, the integration of business support organizations (BSO) as implementing partners for advocacy activities, co-organizer partners of training activities for MSME is essential for a long term impact on women entrepreneurship. Their capacity building should be enhanced through training of trainers on absent tools in Ukraine such as executive coaching. Last but not least, Ukrainian stakeholders suffer from lack of gender related data and relevant analysis on women entrepreneurship and in this context any initiative to issue and disseminate such information would be particularly adequate.

Recommendations taken into account:

1. **The issue of «women economic empowerment» should be taken into account** when considering plans and concepts of development, it makes sense to develop a policy or strategy (assuming its funding) to expand economic opportunities for women, including policies to support of the female SMEs. Highly motivated and entrepreneurial work on women is not enough involved in business activities that are not only the fact that discriminate against women, but also very inefficient strategy from the perspective of the economic potential of Ukraine . On the base of the “SME Policy Index: Eastern Partner Countries” Study (OECD, 2012) women’s entrepreneurship in Ukraine requires better policy, follow-up actions, more advocacies and funding.

2. **Support the trilateral cooperation** (government - business – civil society) and **women`s business networks** and entrepreneurial community in progress of initiatives in the field of women's economic empowerment, especially those coming from the **local women`s non-governmental organization (NGO)** in Ukraine.

3. **Equal pay for equal work under ILO Convention on Equal Remuneration.** Unfortunately, in Ukraine gender pay gap is 22,4 % (2012) by 2014 Ukraine National Review Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

4. One of the accepted Ukraine’s obligations under the UN Millennium Declaration and **UN Sustainable Development Goal number 4**, which planned target "Providing **Lifelong Learning for all**". One of LPW goals is promotion principles and activities in Lifelong Learning, with focus on **non-formal and informal adult learning**, support including women in this type of learning. Ukraine needs **to develop a gender- sensitive support mechanism non-formal adult learning**. Several basic principles of the Law of Ukraine "On the professional development of employees" & "On Employment" correspondent for this issues, but the system of adults learning with all three forms (formal, non-formal and informal) don`t formed yet in Ukraine.

5. Important actions as information programs (campaigns) for women, focused on providing financial services, promotion in the country of the joint initiative of the UN Global Compact & UN Women on “**Women Empowerment Principles (WEP)** - Principles for empowering women - equality means business". Concern LPW activities on WEP in 2013-2015 you can see:

https://www.unglobalcompact.org/admin/organizations/16742/communication_on_progresses/184241 and LPW web http://lpw.org.ua/files//content/COE_LPWUkraine2015_Oct.pdf