



UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS' CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND NETWORKING APPROACHES

January - 2020





Since 2008, Pact, an international not-for-profit organisation with nearly 50 years of experience, has been promoting democracy and building the capacity of the civil society in Ukraine. Together with national and local partners, Pact promotes reforms, supports initiatives to improve civic engagement, helps strengthen the organisational capacities of civil society organisations, and develops sectoral and cross-sectoral networking and cooperation. Pact's work is based on the principles of partnership, continuous learning, quality assurance, and attention to context.

our story



Our goal: **Thriving, resilient communities** where those we serve are...



heard

People are aware of and express their needs and rights in a receptive system



capable

People have skills and resources and apply them in an enabling environment



vibrant

People are healthy and economically prosperous

These principles and multi-year experience served as the foundation for the assessment of the institutional capacities of Ukrainian women's rights organisations (WROs) conducted as part of the project Women of Ukraine: Heard, Capable, Resilient, funded by Global Affairs Canada. The goal of the project is increased enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, advancement of gender equality in Ukraine through improved management and sustainability of local WROs, enhanced performance of WRO programming and advocacy to advance gender equality, and increased effectiveness of national and sub-national women's rights platforms, networks, and alliances.

Pact conducted this assessment from July to December 2019 in partnership with the Democracy Development Centre and the Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health (ICF) as the first step of strengthening WROs' capacity.



METHODOLOGY

Study objectives

- Collect data for mapping and visualization of Ukrainian WROs'
- Study the specifics of and approaches to networking among the WROs
- Determine the overall institutional capacity levels of WROs in Ukraine
- Understand the challenges and needs of the target groups whose interests WROs represent and serve in order to formulate the goal and tasks for the project's grants competitions.

Within the project's framework, a WRO is defined as:

a legally registered in Ukraine non-political non-for-profit organization led by a woman whose organizational mission is to combat all forms of discrimination against women and ensure equal rights of women and men in all spheres of society

through:

- advancing the rights of women (representing different groups) as human rights;
- advocacy (from local to international policy);
- education and raising awareness;
- monitoring, enactment and implementation of legislative frameworks;
- providing services to women and girls.

Data collection methods

The project collected information for *capacity needs assessment* through the 11 inter-regional Focus Group Discussions attended by representatives of 90 WROs selected from the list of 244 that took part in the online survey. The focus group lists were compiled with account to the WROs' various characteristics, such as age, level of activity, scope, target group, and services for the target group.

The FGDs employed a guide that included questions on organisational strategy, financial management, human resources (HR) policy and methods, engagement with target groups, partnership building and interaction of organisations, needs for trainings, and new skills development

To study *networking approaches*, Pact used the online survey and conducted a desk review, expert interviews, and FGDs for validation.

To *visualize the areas of focus* and other characteristics of the WROs the project used the data collected through an online survey, then verified it through focus group discussions, developing *seven* maps as a result.

Assessment's limitations

- The list of 244 WROs is not exhaustive because the data source was an online survey that was filled only by those organizations that chose to do so.
- Not all WRO characteristics were equally represented at the FGDs due to limited transport connectivity between cities in different regions, low motivation to participate (only upon financial rewards), and inability to attend the FGDs due to lack of staff and time.
- WROs that agreed to participate in the FGDs are likely to be more motivated and interested in development and may have needs that are different from those of WROs that did not participate.



KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the assessment found that WROs' organisational capacities need the same effort and support as other civil society organisations. However, their technical capacities require a specific focus on feminist matters, which should be the target for donor programs. More specifically, the assessment identified the following key challenges in *WROs' capacities*.

- WROs are predominantly aware of practices of strategic planning and development of HR, financial, and other policies and of fundraising, communication, and target group engagement strategies. But, the level of development in those areas is uneven among the organisations, and there is a noticeable lack of understanding of how they impact the organisation's performance. WROs also demonstrated a lack of overall understanding of the value of capacity development activities.
- WRO staff lack the necessary skills and competencies to develop the capacity areas outlined above and do not have funding to engage external experts to support that work. At the same time, WROs lack the knowledge and information on how to mobilise resources for capacity development activities.
- Donor organisations are key to promoting organizational capacity development. On their demand, WROs develop policies and strategies and adopt monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices. However, those activities are often limited to project activities and are not systemic; the strategies and policies developed do not get reviewed and are not updated after the project closes.
- Ukrainian WROs lacks a platform to exchange experiences in institutional capacity building. The assessment FGDs conducted enabled many organisations to engage in discussions of practical matters of organisational development for the first time ever.

- Training needs for organisational capacity development identified by FGD participants correlate with weaknesses in their work, including lack of communication and fundraising strategies, weak financial management, and underdeveloped M&E (Figure 1). To strengthen technical capacities, FGD participants prioritized such areas as development of women’s leadership, improving skills in conducting advocacy campaigns to advance gender equality and women’s rights, programs to stop gender-based violence, and trainings on the “Women, peace and security” Agenda (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Capacity development needs of women’s organizations as outlined by FGD participants



Figure 2. The technical capacity needs of women’s organizations identified by the FGD participants



- In Ukraine, many networks operate based on both individual membership (for women’s movement leaders) and collective membership (for WROs). Networks are a powerful tool to influence and promote social change. Most are not formalized (have not been legally registered), but are effective in achieving their goals. They are created on an ad hoc basis for a specific short-term task or solution to a larger social problem. The networks face the same capacity challenges as individual organizations: dispersed focus in their activities, insufficient coordination and duplication of efforts, competition for funds and influence on target groups, and lack of longer-term strategies. Donors support the creation and operation of issue-based networks to achieve specific program objectives, but do not pay sufficient attention to the strategic development of the networks themselves.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS’ CAPACITIES

The donor community’s and national stakeholders’ response to these challenges and needs could be to increase attention to building WRO capacity in:

- Supporting existing in-country resources for capacity building of individual WROs and networks, for example by linking them to the Capacity Development Marketplace (<http://cd-platform.org/marketplejs>), creating additional resources, earmarking funding to strengthen the capacities of the implementing organisation in each supported project.
- Holding regular networking and joint events for WROs, with engagement of organisations that function at different levels, work on different issues, and target different women’s groups to facilitate the exchange of experience, peer-to-peer learning, the development of new partnerships, and organisational capacity building.

Organisational capacity areas that need focused attention from the donor community, stakeholders, and organisations themselves

Human resources:

- Promote the feminist principle of “self-care” in the workplace and a “life-work balance approach” within the framework of strengthening WROs’ HR policies. Introduce staff performance evaluations and burnout prevention measures.
- Help WROs develop internal policies according to international standards, such as on anti-discrimination, prevention and mitigation of sexual harassment, and other gender-related areas.
- Develop WRO staff technical skills by enhancing access to online learning resources and programs, including English language courses that will open staff access to international resources.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Improve understanding of results-based management by introducing appropriate M&E approaches into WROs' work and facilitating the creation of a staff position to be responsible for that area.

Inclusive and participatory approach:

- Train WROs on how to engage target groups in program and service planning in order to better meet their needs and represent their interests.

Resource mobilisation:

- Train WROs on methodologies and tools to mobilise resources to achieve their sustainability.

Communication:

- Support the development of WROs' communication strategies as a prerequisite for effective partnerships with the public and private sectors, as well as between WROs themselves. Build WRO storytelling skills so that they are able to communicate their successes and deliver messages about the positive changes they achieve.





This study is made possible by the support of the Government of Canada through *Women of Ukraine: Heard, Capable, Resilient* project implemented by Pact. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Canada and Pact.

49a Volodymyrska St., office 152, Kyiv, 01030, ukraine, т. +380 (44) 377-5464
pactukraine.org.ua

