

## Empowered Partnership for Sustainable Development

Project funded by the Government of Sweden  
represented by Swedish Development Agency (SIDA)  
and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Ukraine

# FINAL REPORT

10 December 2018 – 31 May 2022



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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>COVID-19</b>	SARS-COV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2)
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GOU</b>	Government of Ukraine
<b>EPSD</b>	Empowered Partnership for Sustainable Development
<b>LA</b>	Local authority
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>OSA</b>	Oblast State Administration
<b>RDA</b>	Regional Development Agency
<b>SALAR</b>	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
<b>TA</b>	Technical assistance
<b>TC</b>	Territorial community
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WG</b>	Working Group

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Project's overall goal was to contribute to a more efficient decentralized public administration in Ukraine, capable to interact and cooperate in a transparent manner with the business sector, civil society, and local communities in order to promote sustainable development, as well as implement gender-equitable recovery measures in response to COVID-19 crisis, ensuring the protection of rights of the most vulnerable and continuity of the provision of public services. Its more specific purpose was to pilot at the sub-national and local levels the formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships and empower them to address the most commonly faced development challenges for the local communities, including those emerging as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing armed conflict. The project was implemented over the period from 10 December 2018 to 31 May 2022. Its total budget was SEK 10,000,000.

The project facilitated cooperation between public administrations and multiple stakeholders, reaching beyond administrative boundaries to define and address common sustainable development challenges faced by Ukrainian territorial communities both before the pandemic and in the times of COVID-19. In its final stage of implementation, after the escalation of the protracted armed conflict which became a full-fledged war in February 2022, the project through its local partners provided support to the war-affected population, including IDPs, by creating new income-generating opportunities.

The project's implementation context changed quite dramatically over time. The project started in late 2018 when the ongoing armed conflict with Russian Federation, which started back in 2014, was in its relatively stagnant phase. Over the period of implementation, the project was impacted by fundamental internal and horribly terrific external factors, which could not be ignored. The political situation in the country was perturbed by the presidential election in 2019 and local elections in 2020, which became an important milestone of the

administrative decentralization reform, and this has completely changed the internal political landscape in the country. However, even these fundamental changes were overshadowed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the invasion of the Russian Federation of Ukraine in late February 2022.

Despite the challenges, the project has significantly overachieved its initial targets by employing adaptive strategies and implementation modalities. The project's key achievements can be summarized as follows:

- The challenge-driven partnership approach to local development was promoted and successfully applied for community engagement, economic development, education, age- and gender-responsive urban planning and design, waste management, energy efficiency, employment, and sustainable mobility. In total, more than **160 cross-sectoral partnerships** were initiated across Ukraine and developed their project ideas.
- **16 pilot initiatives** were supported by the project and successfully implemented in 16 regions of Ukraine (namely, in Cherkaska, Chernivetska, Dnipropetrovska, Ivano-Frankivska, Khmelnytska, Khersonska, Lvivska, Mykolaivska, Odeska, Poltavska, Rivnenska, Ternopil'ska, Vinnytska, Volynska, Zakarpatska, and Zhytomyrska oblasts). As result, over **60,000 women and men** (51% women) directly benefitted from improved access to economic opportunities and new jobs, improved public infrastructure and access to services, and a green and clean environment in their communities. The number of women and men who indirectly benefit from the implemented local initiatives has exceeded **1.3 million people** (53% women) by the end of the project.
- A range of **unique solutions** for sustainable local development was successfully tested and recommended for further replication. They vary from Snails Farming Cooperatives as a way to the

creation of new income opportunities for the rural population to the Zero Waste Model in Action, which helps improve the organic waste management by small and medium-sized businesses (e.g. cafes, hotels, and restaurants) in tourism-oriented cities; from Moms in Business which promotes entrepreneurship among women with children to Inter-municipal Revolving Fund as an affordable financial lever for improving energy efficiency in the housing sector, as well as many others.

- More than **200 partners**, including local authorities, NGOs, businesses, academia, and others, were engaged in the implementation of the pilot initiatives. Among them, over 70 regional and local authorities gained experience in the co-creation and joint implementation of sustainable development solutions. Remarkably, by the end of the project, 85 percent of the partnership members representing the private sector, civil society, and academia positively assessed the involved local administrations as implementing partners. The overall budget of the supported pilot initiatives amounted to USD 1,041,526, of which 49% were provided by the project in the form of grants, and the remaining 51% were mobilized by the partners from various sources, including local budgets.
- In total, more than **700 representatives of local authorities** (55% of whom women) improved their skills and competencies in planning gender-oriented responses to the challenges of the multi-factor crisis and gender-oriented processes of post-crisis community recovery, as well as participated in the planning of gender-oriented responses to the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis to ensure sustainable post-crisis recovery.
- To ensure a **continuous exchange of experience and lessons learned**, along with knowledge sharing among the local development practitioners a [group on Facebook](#) was created and moderated. As of date, it includes over 1,300 permanent members.
- At the final stage of implementation, after the escalation of the armed conflict which became a full-fledged war in February 2022, the project supported the war-affected population by improving their access to online education and creating opportunities for sustaining livelihoods.

The experience accumulated by the end of the Project is summarized in recommendations for local authorities, including step-by-step guidance on establishing cross-sectoral partnerships for sustainable development, recommendations for the development and implementation of crisis response actions using sustainable solutions, as well as recommendations for further replication of already tested models, and guidelines on co-funding of joint initiatives within the initiated challenge-driven partnerships.

It was specifically emphasized in the Final Evaluation Report (see Annex 17) that the Project has potential for replication and scaling up across Ukraine. The following lessons learned have been generated based on the evaluation findings:

1. The inclusion of civil society organizations in the cross-sectoral partnerships provides strong added value and allows to draw on the network of expertise that CSOs contain through their members and experience of engaging with the respective governance domains.
2. The UNDP's involvement in public sector reforms brings increased credibility.
3. Generally, the representatives of local authorities valued the enhanced interaction between themselves and CSOs.
4. The holistic approach, the evident changes in the level of awareness among key stakeholders about specific topics, and the great sense of appreciation expressed by the public agencies, all indicate that the Project has been able to adequately address the needs of beneficiary public institutions, enabling them to better delivery their services.
5. The project has been able to create solid foundations upon which to strengthen public administration systems, to identify "champions", and to support their capacity building. However, the steps so far taken (as considered by the interviewees) should be continued to achieve a long-lasting impact.
6. The supported pilot initiatives often become a catalyst for larger-scale change or serve as a solid

foundation for further capacity-building actions in public institutions.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the project implementation but also created opportunities. Changing the delivery process to online enabled the supported challenge-driven partnerships to save precious funds and implement new activities thus achieving a greater impact with a more diversified target group.

8. Establishing trust between the members of the multi-sectoral partnerships took time and, in some cases, caused challenges in managing the initiatives. However, once trust was formed, the process went smoothly.

9. The promoted symbiotic approach to local development is a relevant framework to support sustainability processes. Its basic feature, namely its inter-sectoral and participative/inclusive planning approach, is in line with current mainstream thinking promoted by UNDP, but the reality on the ground is slightly different. Therefore, it was adjusted to the local context, without diminishing its main features.

10. The partnerships, which include, among others, private sector representatives, have a higher level of sustainability and replicability. In cases where the private sector was a co-financer in the challenge-driven partnership, the integration of an “efficient” way of doing business is fostered and it increased the scalability and replicability of the results.

11. Due to the established experience exchange mechanism and ongoing communication, the supported initiatives and partnerships have cross-fertilized each other, which can be further employed and taken to a higher level in the follow-up action.

12. Striking the balance between implementation of challenge-driven partnerships and working on the

policy level through the development of recommendations and guidelines was challenging and required the application of an iterative approach in order to integrate the lessons learned at different stages of project implementation.

13. The extent and the breadth of the project impact were higher on smaller size TCs compared to larger ones. At the same time, models and development solutions successfully piloted in the larger communities/municipalities have high replication potential and are relevant for both small and large communities. The models and solutions implemented are equally applicable, replicable, and relevant for scaling up for different types of local communities from both urban and rural, as well as mixed coalitions involving several communities.

*In general, the Project results were evaluated as highly satisfactory.*

The new elements recommended for the follow-up action include, but are not limited to:

Continue fostering the inclusion of private sector companies in developing solutions for local challenges and promote their co-financing in the local initiatives.

Further capacity building of local authorities in application of holistic, comprehensive and systemic approach to local developments essential particularly for fostering inclusive rural development.

Create the Community of Practice among the challenge-driven partnership stakeholders to foster knowledge and experience sharing inter and intra sectors.

Foster the inclusion of vulnerable groups in project activities and consider supporting specific inclusion-related solutions on the local level.





# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1. Implementation context

In 2015, Ukraine, like the other UN Member States, joined the global process of sustainable development. To adapt the SDGs to the Ukrainian context, a national strategic framework for Ukraine was elaborated articulating intermediate and national targets for 2030. Priorities were high lightened in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and other United Nations (UN) human rights instruments.

The action above was supported by subsequent legislative acts to accelerate socio-economic transformation along with inclusive sustainable growth. The Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine until 2030”, signed in September 2019, made SDGs the guidelines for strategic development documents at the national, regional, and local levels ensuring a balanced economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development of Ukraine. The demand for balanced development facilitating sectoral reforms in the areas of education, health services, administrative services, agriculture, and energy efficiency was clearly defined.

In this regard, a self-assessment undertaken by Ukraine in 2020 as part of its SDG Voluntary National Review and presented in a report at the UN HLPF, noted that “[...] matters of proper management, fair and transparent authorities, and public participation in decision-making and accountability mechanisms should be taken into consideration when planning and implementing tasks and achieving goals (p. 112) [...]”. This sentiment likewise echoes the opportunities available to the private and public sectors to work together in leveraging new partnerships and financing solutions for the realization of the SDGs. Furthermore, it echoes the opportunities available to the major four partnership pillars - CSOs, business, government, and academia- to work together in ensuring sustainable development.

In line with this ambition, reforms are underway in policy areas aimed to stabilize the national economy and improve the population's living conditions. It is decentralization reform that serves to bring increased fiscal and executive mandates to regional and local administrations. During the fall of 2020, local elections were held for city parliaments, district councils, and rural townships, as well as for the offices of mayors and other city and municipal positions. For the first time, votes were cast within newly formed amalgamated territories and communities, significantly altering the political landscape and the makeup of the local public authorities. Evidently, these elections were primarily a vote on the quality of local governance in the regions. They demonstrated resounding confidence in the local population in the municipal and local authorities. The decentralization reform has clearly benefited Ukrainians by empowering local authorities and communities. Fiscal decentralization has channeled the increased budgetary resources to the local authorities and territorial communities. It has become evident that both a need for, and added value from, more ambitious and creative interventions to encourage, and promote, private sector and community-based investments. Such efforts are a catalyst for the further mobilization of private financial resources and capital for inclusive and territorial sustainable development purposes, and also highlight the necessity of establishing strategic development frameworks that are aligned with the SDGs and that effectively bridge macroeconomic gaps between local and regional development plans and processes.

The reform amalgamated 490 rayons into 136 rayons, with reduced functions and budgets saved, and formed 1,469 territorial communities by uniting villages, settlements, and cities.

Safeguarding of Ukraine's social-economic and environmental development, and putting it on a sustainable path, remain a key governmental priority. In particular, the implementation of public administration and anti-corruption reforms continue to be primary considerations for Ukraine as it strives toward the genuine adoption of the EU's values of transparency, inclusiveness, pluralism, and non-discrimination. The process of Ukraine's approximation with the EU has remained central to the country's policy over the period of project implementation. Based on Association Agreement (including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)) with the EU, the Ukrainian government signed in 2014, further steps are taken to comply with EU regulations and international agreements, to ensure transparent and efficient work of public administration, to enforce civil society influence on social development.

Despite the advancements with regard to the institutionalization of sustainable development and Sustainable Development Goals, the lack of political will to ensure sustainable development in a holistic manner still exists. While increased decentralized responsibilities and mandates were transferred to sub-national levels, the insufficient institutional capacity of local authorities and municipalities remains a cross-cutting barrier that dilutes results and mars the sustained delivery of overarching development plans. It restricts local authorities to plan and implement inclusive, gender-responsive and SDGs-aligned development plans and policies, as well as assess and devise evidence-based responses to the COVID-19 socio-economic impact. More efforts to be taken to improve skills of public servants at the local level in sustainable development and recovery planning, formation, and implementation of gender-equitable crisis response measures while acting in partnership with private and public sector.

The decentralization reform necessitates an increased focus on the engagement of citizens in decision-making processes at the local level to ensure that marginalized and underserved communities are “not left behind”. Joint efforts to be taken to ensure constant open dialogue of stakeholders including public feedback on the efficiency of government policies and government actions. Through continuous practical support, it is important to reinforce not only the commitment of public, business, and civil society to identify critical local development issues and their potential solutions needs, but also their skills and knowledge to manage respective partnership actions. The promotion of area-based development initiatives is constrained by the limited experience in establishing cross-sectoral partnerships, employing innovative development solutions, and co-financing modalities. Considering the key role of local and sub-national authorities in area-based interventions, the normative framework of partnerships formation and management needs further elaboration and institutionalization based on the accumulated experience of challenge-driven partnerships as a results-based modality.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the context for development at global, national, and local levels. Health, humanitarian and development crises threatened to leave deep social, economic, and political scars for years to come, bringing more fragility, poverty, and conflict constraint. The pandemic weakens democratic institutions enabling states to restrict the movement of people, curtail basic freedoms, and exclude marginalized populations from recovery efforts.

World battle with the COVID-19 pandemic made sustainable development gain new impetus. Communities consolidate organizational, financial, and human resources to make the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) less challenging than before.

As the country entered its fifth wave of COVID-19, the security situation in Ukraine deteriorated rapidly following the launch of a Russian Federation military offensive on 24 February 2022. The invasion caused unprecedented internal and external displacement, devastating destruction of infrastructure, drastic economic disruption, and shortage of agriculture and food supplies. As of beginning of May 2022, 6.9 million refugees have fled Ukraine (IOM data), making this the fastest growing refugee crisis since World War II, and a further 8 million have been displaced within Ukraine. The reconstruction of infrastructures in war-torn localities and ensuring that the latter are safe (de-mined) for internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning home will take time. This suggests that a large number of IDPs will likely stay in the hosting communities even after the war is over, so hosting communities will need to cope with their longer-term accommodation and further social integration<sup>1</sup>. In their new localities, IDPs need to have uninterrupted access to public (housing, social, health, and education, as well as security) and administrative services to cope with the impacts of the war on their lives. Local authorities and local service providers of hosting communities have difficulties in handling additional support requests emerging from the influx of IDPs on their territories. They need support in adapting the planning and delivery of the provision of their public services to the sharply increasing demand.

The economic impact of the war is dire. Some 30 percent of jobs in Ukraine - or 4.8 million - have been lost since the beginning of the war<sup>2</sup>. According to a survey<sup>3</sup> conducted between 11 and 14 March 2022, among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) representatives in Ukraine, 42 percent of all small businesses had stopped operating and 31 percent had suspended their operations with plans for resumption in the future. Yet, according to Unlimited Ukraine, Ukrainian micro and medium-sized businesses, as well as the business sector

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<sup>1</sup> Rating Group: 15th national survey: Ukraine during the war. Employment and income (July 23-24, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), May 2022

<sup>3</sup> Survey by Unlimited Ukraine, supported by European Business Association - <https://eba.com.ua/en/finansovi-rezervy-chverti-predstavnykiv-malogo-biznesu-vzhe-vycherpani/> - 14/03/2022

as a whole, demonstrate an unprecedented example of sustainability. In general, there is a tendency among small entrepreneurs to take action to revive activities.

## 1.2. Project objectives and key deliverables

The Project promoted sustainable development and supported decentralization reform at the local level with two interrelated objectives. The first objective was to develop a more efficient public administration capable to interact transparently with civil society, local communities, the business sector, and academia. This provides the foundation for the successful implementation of the decentralization reform and regional policy reforms on the local level. The purpose is to support local authorities in fulfilling their role in the institutional, financial and operational context under ongoing reforms, as well as to foster improvements in service provision and living conditions in the territorial communities.

The second objective was to mobilize effective partnerships able to define and address common sustainable development challenges in local communities, including challenges related to the impact of COVID-19, through scalable initiatives implementation. Area-based activities of the project were executed by cross-sectoral challenge-driven partnerships. These engaged multiple stakeholders on the local level, - territorial communities, village/city councils, rayon authorities, regional authorities, academia, associations of local self-governments, private sector those willing and committed for joint action and decision making, sharing organizational, intellectual, financial resources.

The project's efforts were focused on the implementation of the local initiatives that address the priority areas, namely: local economic development, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, waste management, education, urban design, and gender-responsive planning.

The key intended outcome of the project is to pilot an area-based partnership-driven approach to sustainable local development in Ukraine and present its strong potential for replication and institutionalization.

The Project objectives are to develop and test mechanisms for joint problem-solving, resource pooling, and implementation, as well as strengthen the organizational capacities of the partnership members to cooperate effectively on selected common sustainable development challenges, ensuring the protection of rights of the most vulnerable and continuity of the provision of the public services. In particular, the project is aimed to facilitate cooperation between the public administrations and multiple stakeholders, reaching over administrative geographical boundaries.

Initially, it was planned to support the formation of no less than 15 challenge-driven partnerships, eight out of them for addressing the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and men from diverse groups (elderly, with disabilities, rural, unemployed). The Project targeted was to reach 50,000 women and men in target municipalities and local communities benefiting from the implemented local initiatives. Eventually, the project supported 16 challenge-driven partnerships including seven sustainable development pilot initiatives in 2019-2020 and nine pilot initiatives implemented over 2020-2022 aimed to address the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and all quantitative and qualitative targets were achieved or overachieved (see *Annex 1. Project Results Framework*).





## RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE PROJECT

The implementation of the Project took place predominantly in a favorable environment, given the socio-economic and political processes in the country. Also, Ukraine experienced acute internal and external security, political, and economic challenges during the past six years. Despite the above, the country proceeds with reforms safeguarding social, economic, and environmental development as key governmental priorities.

The Project's activities contributed to a more efficient public administration capable of interacting and working, in a transparent manner, with the business sector, civil society, and local communities. It promoted sustainable development and implemented gender-equitable recovery measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis, protecting the rights of the most vulnerable and ensuring continuity in the provision of state services.

The Project piloted at the regional/local level the formation of 16 multi-stakeholder partnerships to address common development challenges facing local communities, including challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenge-driven partnerships above included stakeholders from local government (88%), the private sector (38%), and academia (19%).

The project facilitated cooperation between public administrations and multiple stakeholders, reaching beyond administrative boundaries to define and address sustainable development challenges that were common in local communities, including challenges related to the impact of COVID-19.

The Project intervention flowed into three key outputs:

**Output 1:** Functional challenge-driven partnerships in place.

**Output 2:** Sustainable local development initiatives implemented by challenge-driven partnerships.

**Output 3:** Local communities benefit from the social and economic improvements, realized through successfully piloted multi-stakeholder initiatives in response to COVID-19.

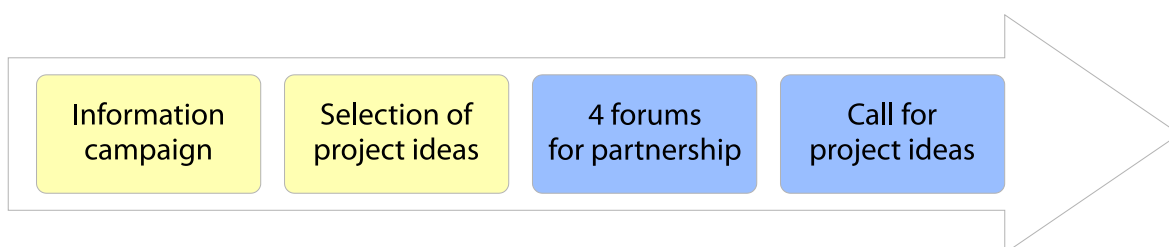
Overall, the project was able to meet its intended outcomes and outputs and the table below summarizes the achievements per indicator as of the end of the implementation period. The results achieved under each of these intended outputs are presented in this section.



## 2.1. Functional challenge-driven partnerships put in place

The Project's implementation strategy was based on the concepts that: 1) small initiatives can have great impact; and 2) local communities are real change-makers at oblast and local levels, thus, investment and technical assistance support are needed, recognized, seen, and can be measured. The modern world requires innovative solutions, new ways of partnering, and engagement of various stakeholders, hence, the Project's ambition to promote innovative approaches to sustainable and inclusive local development was very timely.

*Figure 1. Project's steps taken to mobilize partnerships for local sustainable development*



### 2.1.1. Challenge-driven partnerships formed

UNDP Ukraine launched the Project in 2018 with a nationwide call for applications to present potential project ideas. The action was widely announced through media and social networks, partner organizations, and oblast state authorities. It resulted in mobilizing of regional and local partnerships which engaged local governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector those ready to address sustainable development challenges and find replicable solutions to common problems faced by local communities.

Overall, 306 project ideas were submitted for review from all 24 oblasts of Ukraine, including the government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, see distribution by programme area on the chart below:

Figure 2. Distribution of project ideas by programme area



In close cooperation with the Project partners, the applicants' ideas were reviewed and analyzed as per criteria predefined, namely: there had to be an established partnership, capability of co-financing and the idea has to address a common problem in one of the four priority areas above. The political will of applicants to commit to forming these challenge-driven partnerships and adopting internationally recognized sustainable local development approaches became the determining factor for their selection for Project's support. With the help of experts, and following the Project's requirements, five project ideas were selected from each oblast of Ukraine out of 306 applications received.

To support and reinforce the formation of partnerships, and to raise awareness of regional and local stakeholders on best practices of sustainable local development approaches, "Effective partnerships for the sustainable development of territories" forums were conducted in Lviv, Dnipro, Vinnytsia, and Poltava.

The invited participants were able to present their partnership projects and received feedback and advice from experts on their projects' technical merits, as well as their compliance with competition requirements and objectives.

These awareness-raising events resulted in the setting up and activation of "sustainable development platforms", which operate in two directions. On the horizontal line, they bring together partnership' members at the community level (community members, local entrepreneurs, and officials of local self-government bodies). On the vertical line, they allow for expanded dialogue with a wider array of actors at the local and regional level (including officials from the Oblast State Administration, Oblast Council, academia, scientific institutions, and branch associations, among others). The platforms assured institutional setting-up and formalization of partnerships, enabling dialogue and consultations

between stakeholders (which was subsequently established to be a principal best practice element of the project).

Figure 3. Nadvira team presents identified mobility challenges within their community







### 2.1.2. Local sustainable development challenges and their solutions identified; pilot projects designed

To build capacity and provide technical advisory support to the project design process, wide consultations were carried out with partnership representatives through sustainable local development platforms. A pool of qualified experts provided consultations to help participants to dive into local sustainable development challenges by viewing details, prioritizing tasks, and analyzing risks. With expert support project ideas became adjusted. In addition, the range of partners was expanded and modified. A total of 71 partnership projects representing 23 oblasts of Ukraine were reviewed during the second stage of the selection process.

First monitoring visits were conducted by the Project team to the communities – winners of the project selection process. Meetings occurred both with project applicants and their partners. Project activities, goals, objectives, expected results, and risks were discussed during those meetings. The Project team supported project applicants and their partners to finalize project implementation plans; develop the partnership structure and plan the processes including financing aspects in terms of state budget funds, business, and NGOs.

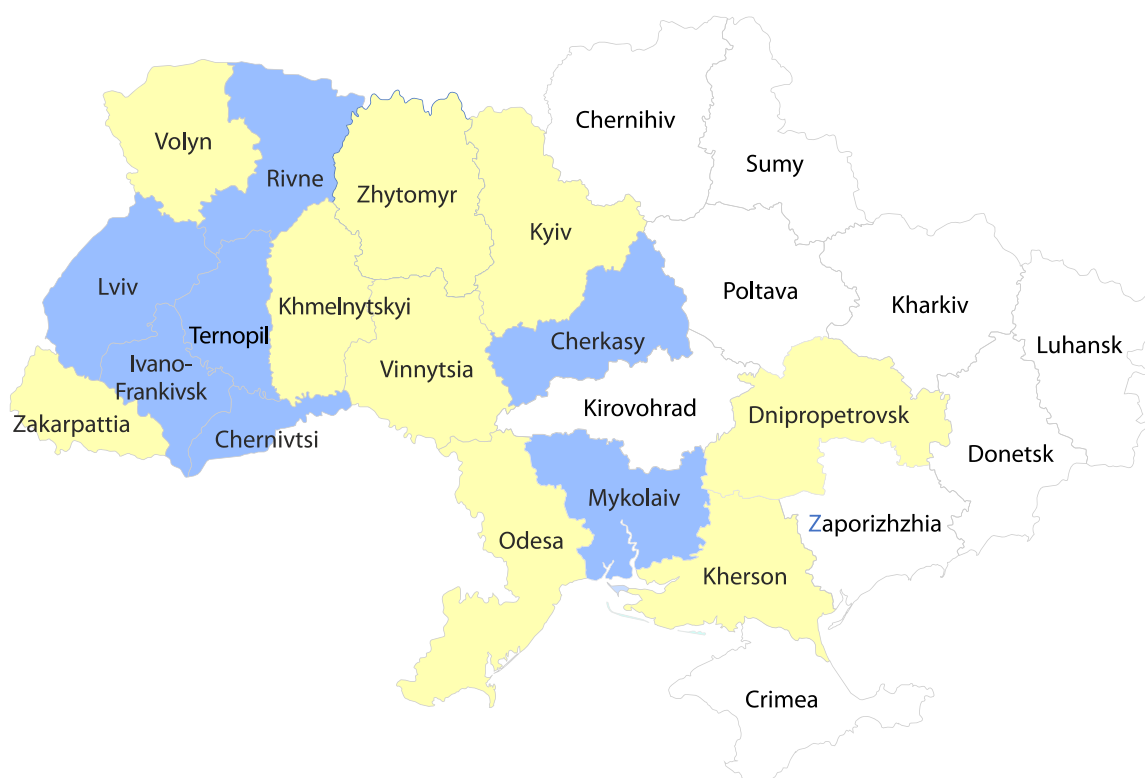
A competitive review process was completed with seven initiatives selected for piloting. These addressed challenges those commonly faced by the territorial communities across Ukraine in four priority areas, - *local economic development, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, and waste management*.

The National Steering Committee approved the following seven partnership projects for financing:

- "Sustainable Mobility - Transport Infrastructure Modernization of the Town of Nadvirna" (Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, cross-border);
- "Family Dairy Farms - People's Well-Being and Sustainable Rural Development" (Rivne Oblast, interregional);
- "The Way of the Snail. Partnership Model Based on the Example of Family-Snail Farm Development" (Ternopil Oblast, interregional);
- "Revolving Fund: Partnership for Energy Efficiency in Multi-Apartment Buildings in Mykolaiv and Odesa oblasts" (Mykolaiv Oblast, interregional);
- "Zero Waste" Model in Action" (Lviv Oblast, interregional);
- "Launch of Public Workshops in Three Communities of Cherkasy region" (Cherkasy Oblast, regional);
- "Establishment of a Transport and Tourist Hub on the Territory of Mamaivtsi Amalgamated Territorial Community (ATC)" (Chernivtsi Oblast, interregional).

At the same time, activities of selected projects were extended to the territory of 16 oblasts of Ukraine through establishing effective partnerships, exchange visits, training sessions, seminars, conferences, forums, and other public events in cooperation with local authorities, cooperatives, Homeowners Associations (HOAs), businesses, non-governmental organizations, media, and local communities.

Figure 4. Regions where seven partnership projects were implemented from 2018 to 2020



The total budget of the initiatives approved for financing amounted to USD 704,819 with 37% of grant share and 63% of partners' co-financing. On November 4, 2019, seven Low-Value Grant Agreements with a total value of USD 258,215 were issued giving the green light to project implementation.





## 2.2. Sustainable local development initiatives designed and implemented by challenge-driven partnerships

The actions planned under the Project Output 2 were completed fully with a minor delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions that the Government of Ukrainian imposed in March 2020, in response to the pandemic had a negative impact on the project implementation process.

Consequently, the Project team and grantees were pushed to review implementation plans and re-align their operations. Alternative operation modalities were explored, adjusted, and applied by both sides to implement the actions. Needless to mention that partnerships that had been declared under implemented projects required adjustment by counterparts through re-framing and enlarging. Its organizational structure and functional keys were revised to mitigate the risks. The Project team ensured day-to-day support to the processes above.

### 2.2.1. Local sustainable development pilot projects realized

The Project's grantees implemented their initiatives, galvanizing their partnerships with local authorities, businesses, and academia. The major implementation challenge faced by the grantees is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The quarantine imposed by the Ukrainian government in response to the pandemic has restricted the operations of several initiatives, and several other activities were delayed. As a result, the implementation period of the initiatives was prolonged to eight months instead of the initially planned six months (which may be considered a minor deviation given the circumstances).

Over the whole period of implementation, the Project team provided continuous advisory support to the implementing partners and monitored the progress of supported initiatives. The close interaction between the Project and supported partnerships allowed for early identification of potential issues as well as timely implementation of risk mitigation corrective measures.

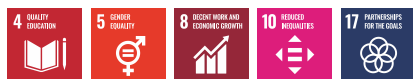
In addition to continuous monitoring over the implementation period, a post-implementation assessment of the achieved results and tested models was conducted by the Project, which has confirmed that all seven initiatives have achieved their targets and generated a sustainable flow of benefits for the targeted population.

More importantly, however, all seven initiatives generated sustainable development solutions or replicable models, which can be easily adopted and applied in other local communities facing similar development problems.

The findings of the assessment were summarized in an analytical report and described in detail in the next section. It was based on the information collected through communication with the project partners, and direct and indirect beneficiaries. Partnership cooperation mechanisms (models) were identified and described with a set of comments on their (models) possible use in other communities. The report analyses the partnership/stakeholder management, including its communication aspect, general assessment of the partnership results by the stakeholders, including assessment of the “quality” (skills and competence) of local administrations as partners, and sustainability of deliverables and challenges incurred by the project partners.

More than 54,000 people (51.3 percent women), including 18,040 middle-aged people (18-59 years), 9,782 elderly people (aged 60+), 380 IDPs, and 403 persons with disabilities, directly benefited from the implemented local initiatives. The number of indirect beneficiaries in both rural and urban areas that have been covered by the piloted initiatives exceeded 1,200,000 people (53.9 percent women), including 157,966 middle-aged people, 43,778 elderly people, 2,522 IDPs, and 5,499 persons with disabilities. The pilot initiatives’ implementation process was widely communicated by the grantees, their partnerships, and stakeholders. For the purpose above, the grantees developed detailed communication strategies and plans with the support of the Project team. Implementation action was closely monitored by the Project team, grantees, and their partnership, as well as stakeholders’ representatives.

While more detailed information on qualitative and quantitative indicators and specificities of the applied local development solutions can be found in *Annex 3. Key indicators of the local initiatives supported in 2019-2020*, below we bring some prominent examples of positive changes in the local communities triggered by the joint actions of the supported challenge-driven partnerships, focusing on their long-lasting outcomes.



## Launching of public workshops in three communities in Cherkasy Oblast

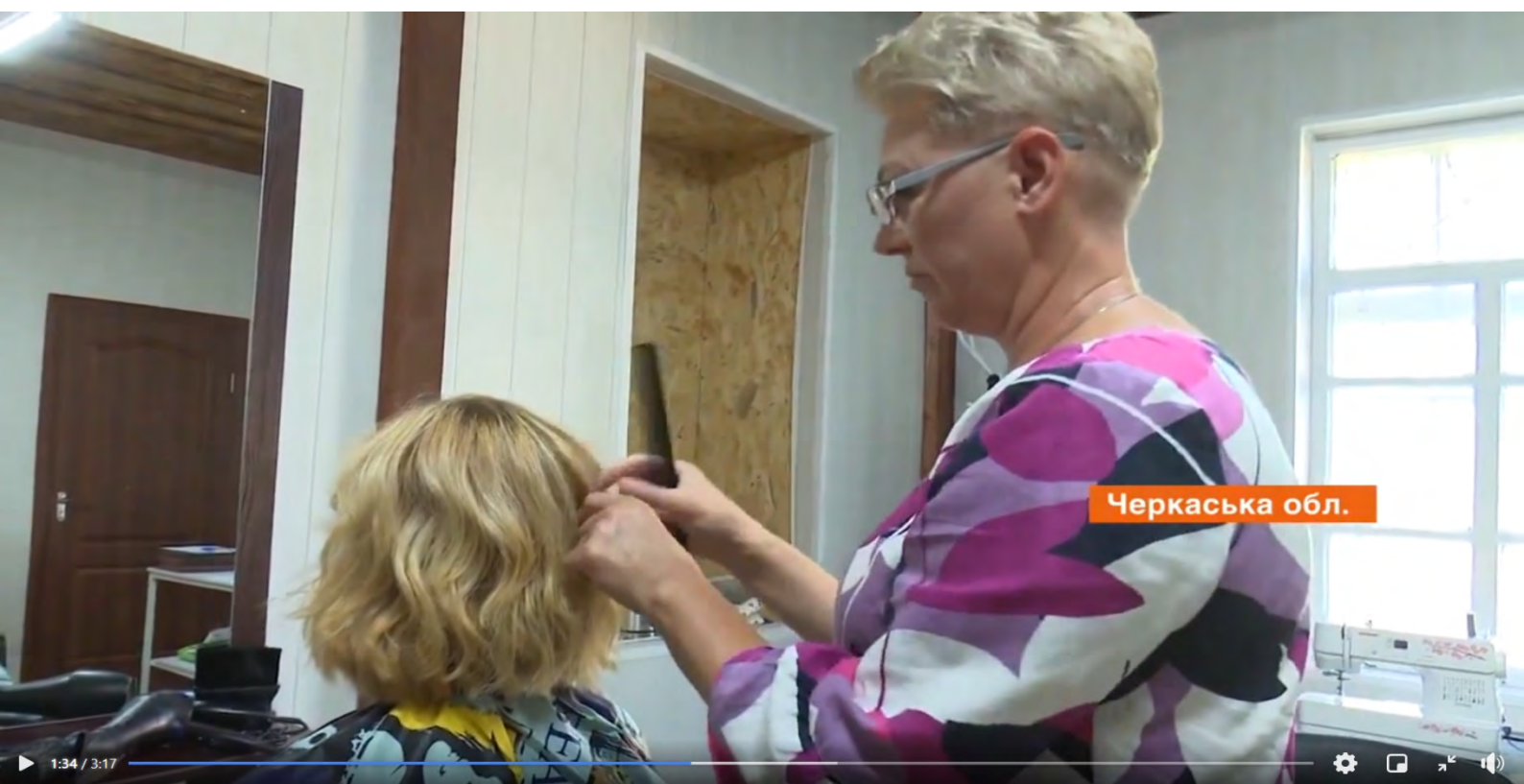
*This initiative was implemented from November 2019 through May 2020 by the Cherkasy Agency of Regional Development NGO, in partnership with Yerkivska Village Council, Medvedkivska Village Council, Stepanetska Village Council, the Development Fund of the Stepanetska Territorial Community NGO, and the Charitable Fund MHP-HROMADI NGO.*

Due to this initiative local professionals, such as hairdressers, dressmakers, metal workers, and woodworkers, now have well-equipped working spaces. For this purpose, old premises provided by the local authorities were renovated and turned into public workshops. Local people are now benefitting from better access to services and are saving money - as the services are provided locally. The public workshop spaces are equipped with modern facilities and meet safety working requirements.

After renovation and equipping, each public workshop has a defined working schedule as well as a list of services that are provided, in particular:

- in Medvedivska 14 new services are provided;
- in Stepanetska 14 new services are provided;
- in Yerkivska 11 new services are provided.

Figures 5-7. Workshops in Cherkasy Oblast









As a result of the implementation of this initiative, quality services at reasonable prices have been made available to people in the Yerkivska, Medvedkivska, and Stepanetska territorial communities in Cherkasy Oblast.

Given that newly opened workshops provided new job opportunities for local women and men, the local authorities together with community members plan to expand the range of provided services. The local authorities have also signed cooperation agreements with vocational schools on teaching handicraft design and production in public workshops to young people living in villages.

Moreover, the stakeholders started looking in the same direction and seeking additional opportunities to introduce development solutions that bring long-lasting benefits to the community members, improving their access to quality services. This is particularly important, as the access to services in urbanized settlements and rural communities defines to a large extent the living standards of the population and their quality of life. At the same time, the local service providers form an important segment of the local economy, which is a source of revenue for local budgets, and a driver of the sustainable growth of local communities.

*Figure 8. Head of Medvedivska territorial community participates in the interview with national TV channel*





## Revolving Fund: partnership to improve energy efficiency in multi-apartment buildings of HOAs

*The Agency for Economic Development NGO implemented this initiative from November 2019 through May 2020 in partnership with the SPROMOZHNI HROMADY Association of Local Government Bodies, the PRYMORIA Association of HOAs, and several business partners.*

The reforms in the housing sector have been implemented in Ukraine over the last decades. However, there is still a huge number of multi-apartment houses, which are deteriorating without proper maintenance. These buildings are mostly old, *energy inefficient* buildings – reflecting the fact that almost 80 percent of Ukraine's housing stock is in a "retired" condition and consumes high levels of energy, which is detrimental to the national economy and the global climate alike. While the housing market is thriving and affordable housing is increasingly scarce, there is also a general lack of leadership when it comes to the practical implementation of housing and communal reform.

More and more Ukrainians are themselves assuming responsibility for creating comfortable, safe, and environmentally sound living conditions not only in their apartments, but also in the building in which they are situated. As a prominent example of this trend, homeowners together with local authorities and a wide range of partners (including businesses and local NGOs), joined forces in Mykolaiv and Odesa oblasts on a challenge-driven initiative to implement energy-efficient measures in housing properties. Thus, the *Revolving Fund for Support of Energy Saving Measures* was founded by a consortium of regional stakeholders.

Addressing a common root problem with Ukraine's crumbling buildings, the revolving fund serves as an instrument for homeowners to collectively access the financing they need to carry out energy-saving renovations. The revolving fund has been received positively and is trusted due to its simplified application procedure and regional governance structure, which extends support to clients throughout the process - from application to project implementation.

The Revolving Fund was launched in six communities in Mykolaiv and Odesa oblasts and enabled the allocation of financing to 29 energy-saving projects implemented by House Owners Associations (HOAs).



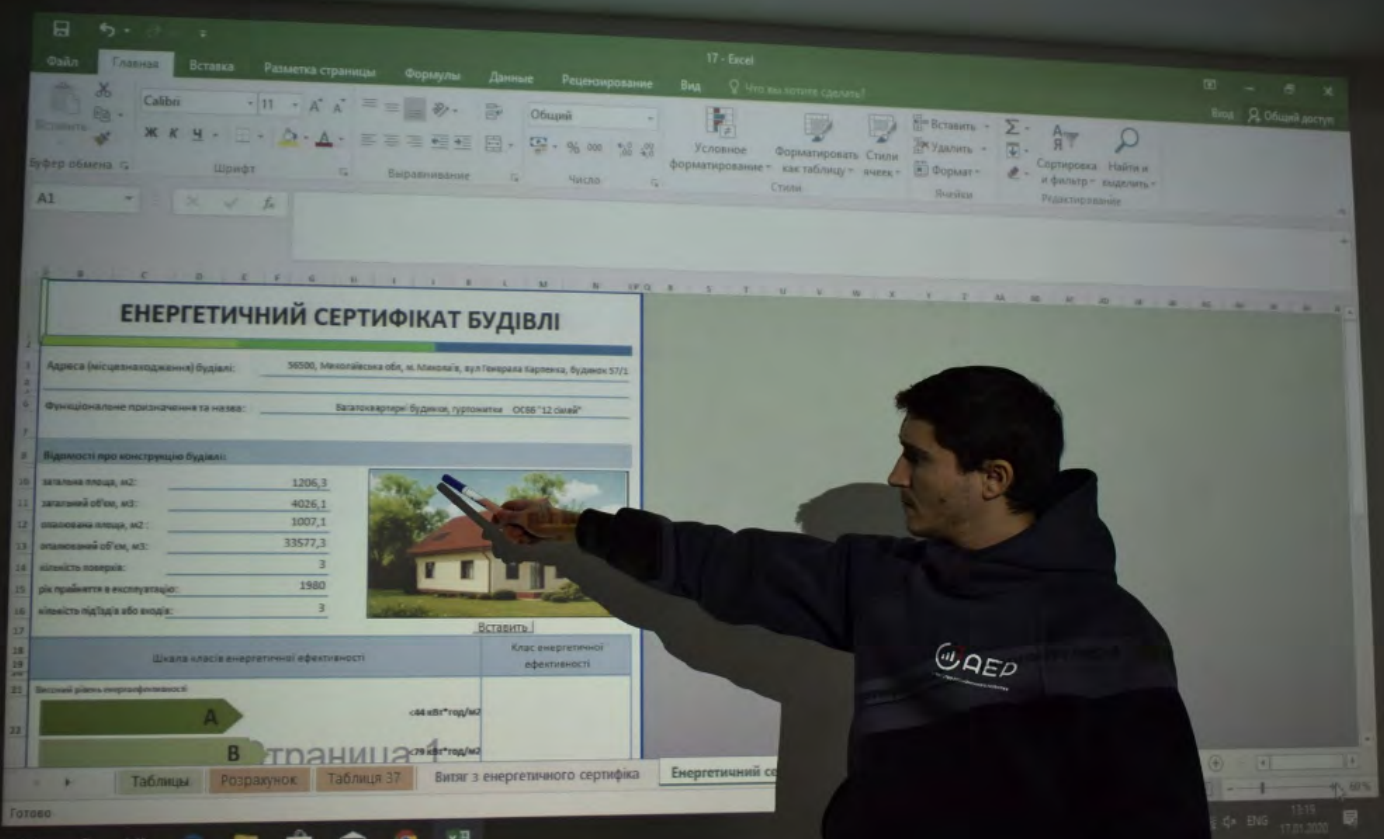
*Figure 9. Visit to the one of the multi-apartment buildings as part of the Revolving Fund initiative in Mykolaiv Oblast*



Ensuring the energy-efficiency certification of multi-apartment buildings has been incorporated as a central element of the initiative. Based on new state standards for the thermal modernization of buildings, a useful [software tool](#) was developed to assist in the energy certification of the building. Training on energy certification was conducted for the HOAs representatives. More than 31,000 participants have attended the learning sessions. It resulted in 10 energy certification actions completed using a new digital tool. The action contributed to a more efficient implementation of energy-saving measures in multi-apartment buildings. The estimated yearly environmental effect of the project actions completed in 29 HOAs represents energy consumption savings of 630,000 kWh, the equivalent of 74,000 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Through the project, more than 11,500 people (building residents) received direct benefits due to savings on household expenses. The local administrations were provided with a sophisticated financing instrument to support communities' energy-saving projects, which entails savings to the city budget by avoiding one-time funding for individual interventions. As a financial instrument, the Revolving Fund has significant importance for city revitalization and, importantly, as a measure to reduce the load on the energy network and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, [Recommendations on establishing and operating a Revolving Fund for support of HOAs' energy-saving actions](#) were developed as part of the project. The document provides a detailed review of the revolving fund operation as a financial instrument to support and upgrade the HOAs' housing properties.

Figure 10. Presentation of the energy efficiency certificate during workshop on Revolving Fund in Voznesensk, Mykolaiv Oblast







## Family dairy farms - People's well-being and sustainable rural development

*The “Love Ukraine” Rivne regional charity foundation implemented this initiative from November 2019 through May 2020, in partnership with Limited Liability Company UKRMILKINVEST and Private Agricultural Enterprise UKRAINA.*

In Rivne and Khmelnytsky's oblasts, a challenge-driven partnership approach was employed to establish family dairy farms to boost private entrepreneurship in rural areas. Two demonstration family dairy farms (20 -30 cows each) were established and officially registered as business entities. The seed funding provided through the Project was used to procure cattle and necessary equipment, as well as to set up the premises.

*Figure 11. Mark, farmer's son, helps his father in dairy farm, Dubno, Rivne Oblast*



Additionally, two training centers were supported. More than 60 families received training in the technical and practical aspects of setting up and running a dairy business. Through the training centers, the family dairy farms regularly receive advisory support on technological matters. Sustainability is assured by mentoring and consulting on herd management, dairy cattle housing systems, and milking routines, among other important issues. Business planning is another element of the consultancy support provided.

The economic sustainability and self-sufficiency of the family dairy farm economic model are assured, as the farms' business activities follow a full cycle from production to marketing. Usually, animal feed supply or health coverage, as well as product sales, are the responsibility of the farmer. However, the family dairy farmers are members of a cooperative that is provided with milk trading services (e.g. milk reception and testing, local sales support, the delivery of milk to processing facilities, etc.) and input services (veterinary, breeding, supply of cattle feed, fodder development, etc.).

The piloted business model has proved to be economically effective, and it also fits into a broader picture of water and land use, biodiversity, and animal welfare, contributing to environmental protection.

*Figure 12. Official ceremony of the learning centre's launch in Dubno, Rivne Oblast*





As a core activity in rural areas, dairy production is also important as a trigger for community development. Jobs, education, and health infrastructure across rural areas are associated with the development of the milk processing industry. Taking an intelligent and sensible approach to dairy farming helps protect biodiversity through the proper management of the land and contributes to halting and reversing land degradation. By conducting a full assessment of the environmental footprint of dairy producers, taking into account a broad range of environmental criteria across their full life cycle, sustainable development without harming nature can be ensured.

Representatives of the oblast state administrations and local authorities have expressed high appreciation for the initiative, seeing it as a positive investment opportunity for the sustainable growth of local communities. The initiative contributes to the socio-economic development of the local communities by promoting cooperation, generating new jobs, increasing the income of family farm members, and production of quality milk. To stimulate the development of dairy farming, the local authorities plan to endorse family farms as a strategic element in their local planning, allocating it budget subsidies.

To ensure the further scaling up of the initiative and replication of the dairy farming business model across regions, local entrepreneurs also need to be supported at the national level (e.g. through improved access to financing) and their businesses to be integrated into the local development plans of the territorial communities. Broad involvement of the stakeholders will result in well-balanced sustainable supply chains and maximize the benefits and advantages of private dairy farming.

*Figure 13. Ivan, farmer, and his sons at the family dairy farm, Dubno, Rivne Oblast*



### 2.2.2. Local initiatives evaluated, and replication plan developed

All seven initiatives piloted within the reporting period were comprehensively evaluated after completion. The evaluation was conducted by an independent national consultant in October 2020. The activity was aimed to review the implemented functional challenge-driven partnerships, the results achieved and their sustainability, to assess these partnerships' contribution to local sustainable development and to learn lessons from the initiatives. The report of the assessment is provided in *Annex 4. Assessment of Local Sustainable Development Solutions*.

The assessment was an evidence-based exercise that employed several sources of information for obtaining a mix of reliable qualitative and quantitative data, reviewing various layers of experience and lessons learned, such as activities and results, impact, quality of cooperation, and engagement. Desk review, semi-structured interviews, and online questionnaires were used as tools for evaluation.

Desk review was mainly used as the first source of information on the completion of activities and delivery of outputs. This tool was used when gathering and analyzing information, including the Terms of Reference of the grantees, and grantees' reports. A major part of the information that formed the basis of the assessment was obtained during interviews which were semi-structured and qualitative in nature. Interviews were specifically aimed at documenting success stories and lessons learned and were conducted remotely via the Zoom platform. The key implementing partners were interviewed individually or in small groups of two to three key informants together. The Project's beneficiaries (participants of project activities) were mostly interviewed in the form of small group discussions.

The key findings of the conducted evaluation (see section 3, Annex 4) can be summarized as follows:

- a) All supported challenge-driven partnerships have successfully achieved the expected results. The findings of the evaluation report demonstrated correspondence between the projects' intended and actual results.
- b) Activities of the seven supported initiatives were extended to the territory of 16 oblasts of Ukraine through establishing effective partnerships, exchange visits, training sessions, seminars, conferences, forums, and other public events in cooperation with local authorities, cooperatives, household cooperatives, businesses, non-governmental organizations, media, and local communities.
- c) All supported partnerships managed to attract significant local co-financing for the implementation of their initiatives. In total, the local partners contributed 63% of the utilized financial resources (compared to 37% provided by the Project).
- d) The implemented projects promoted social cohesion by fostering the interaction and relationships between community members and local development actors, including the authorities, civil society initiatives, and the private sector.
- e) The inclusivity and diversity dimensions were incorporated in all supported projects. In particular, gender equality was mainstreamed throughout the projects' activities, and implementing partners ensured equal access to resources for all members of target communities, including women, men, and youth. More specifically, the contribution to gender equality and inclusion was targeted by projects "Sustainable Mobility - Transport Infrastructure Modernization of the Town of Nadvirna", "Launching public workshops in 3 communities of Cherkasy region" which were focused on creating local", and "Creation of the transport and tourism hub in the Mamaivtsi amalgamate territorial community" which were focused on creating community infrastructure that was tackling the safety needs of women, men, youth, and vulnerable community members.

- f) The supported projects have significantly contributed to sustainable local economic development. More specifically, the projects “Family Dairy Farms - People's Well-Being and Sustainable Rural Development” and “The Way of a Snail” initiatives contributed to the creation of new income opportunities for the rural population. The supported initiatives have also contributed to enhancing the local infrastructure for entrepreneurship by improving infrastructure and providing equipment for business development in local communities (cities and rural communities).
- g) The supported initiatives have also contributed to the environmental sustainability of the targeted communities via implementing models and programs that reduce carbon footprint: two initiatives implemented solutions for sustainable local mobility, one project implemented a waste management model, and one project implemented a model that contributes to improving energy efficiency in the housing sector.

Based on the results of the conducted evaluation and lessons learned within the implemented initiatives, recommendations for future replication of the sustainable local development solutions were developed by the national consultant hired by the Project. These recommendations will be further supplemented by findings from the second round of the implemented local initiatives (supported under Output 3, see below) and used by the Project for preparing a replications plan, which may also require a follow-up action, which will build upon the results of the current Project.

## 2.3. Local communities benefit from social and economic improvements, realized through successfully piloted multi-stakeholder initiatives in response to COVID-19

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the global context for development. It brought a health, humanitarian, and development crisis followed by economic and social repercussions. Under the new circumstances with the COVID-19 crisis overlying, governance arrangements remain critically important for countries' immediate responses to the COVID-19 crisis and their post-crisis recovery. As the world battles with the COVID-19 pandemic, sustainable development has gained new impetus. According to the World Health Organization, Ukraine was among the most worrisome countries affected by COVID-19, where the situation was deteriorating rapidly. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically affected all regions and the newly formed amalgamated territorial communities, – administrative units created under the decentralization reform. Due to the lack of resources, both institutional and personnel, to operate under the critical circumstances, following underfunded local healthcare systems the work of local authorities have deteriorated. This affected the vulnerabilities of at-risk categories of the population, especially women and elderly, people with disabilities, rural, unemployed, who receive poor to no protection from the state.

The challenge-driven partnership approach is an effective instrument to foster sustainable development at the local level. It ensures local development actors are motivated, and that the resources they require are mobilized. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the usefulness of this approach under the condition of limited resources. It can be leveraged to support local communities as they tackle the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and to preserve progress in achieving the SDGs at the local level. In light of this, in June 2020, when the Project was extended, a new component (Output 3) was added, focusing on support for the COVID-19 response and sustainable recovery. The Project's overall goal was expanded with objectives to plan and implement gender-equitable recovery measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis, ensuring the protection of rights of the most vulnerable and continuity of the provision of state services.



### 2.3.1. Local administrations have strengthened capacities to plan and implement gender-equitable response and recovery measures

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the work of the public sector almost overnight. The leading role of public servants in the response to the pandemic became obvious and straightforward. This crisis has forced public service leaders to reprioritize quickly, determine essential positions and areas, and aggregate and redeploy resources available to meet changing demands. Local administrations lead to addressing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and fostering post-pandemic recovery of the communities and territories.

The most common development challenges that Ukrainian society faced with communities during the COVID-19 pandemic were:

- reduction of business activity due to quarantine restrictions;
- increase in the number of registered unemployed due to the shutdown of small and medium-sized businesses and the surge in the return of migrant workers;
- reduction of household incomes and foreign receipts of personal remittances;
- shortage of community budgets due to the reduction of tax revenue;
- lack of capacity of local authorities to respond quickly to pandemic challenges;
- lack of experience in partnering and cooperating, negotiating, compromising, and finding consensus among local governments and stakeholders, which results in stagnation of preventive and protective actions that communities need urgently.

At the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ukraine (April-May 2020), the Project supported the local authorities by disseminating 1,040 posters (see below), which ultimately reached about 54,000 people, including residents of multi-apartment buildings in urban areas (about 28,000), members of rural communities (about 18,000), and additionally many farmers/members of agriculture cooperatives (roughly 5,700) and entrepreneurs engaged in non-agriculture sectors (roughly 2,300).

Figure 14. Dissemination of COVID-19 awareness posters in Cherkasy Oblast





The Project also supported the local administrations in their efforts aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 and promoted post-pandemic recovery in health, economic, social, and fiscal dimensions by providing them with reliable information (recommendations of WHO and UNICEF) and sharing findings from the [COVID-19 Socio-economic Impact Assessment](#) (SEIA) conducted by UNDP jointly with other UN agencies and, in particular, [COVID-19 Impact on Households and Businesses](#) conducted by UNDP jointly with UN Women and FAO. With the support of UNDP's regional coordinators in respective oblasts, the Project provided recommendations on how to boost local entrepreneurship, secure education, and learning practices, and conduct safe outdoor activities during the pandemic outbreak. Local authorities were informed on how to mitigate sporadic effects of the crisis while strengthening their capacities and capabilities in evidence-based recovery planning. To sustain active stakeholder engagement, the Project is continuing the process of consulting with the supported partnerships which are represented among the others by more than 50 employees of the local authorities (55 percent of whom are women).

Special attention was paid to adapting the local regulatory framework, as well as forming and implementing crisis response measures that secured employment for local women and men, including the most vulnerable, and protected local SMEs, stabilized supply chains, and secured critical services provision. The issue above was articulated on the stage of new local initiatives elaboration while considering the forthcoming initiatives' institutionalization, replication, and scaling up actions. Among the recommendations provided by the Project to the local communities were to revise their current socio-economic development strategies and respective programmes considering the local potential for addressing the COVID-19 impact.

To support local authorities in addressing the COVID-19 challenges and recovery planning, the Project team collected the best international practices. The material was analyzed, adopted to the Ukrainian context, and shared with local government administrations to strengthen their capacities and capabilities in pandemic response actions and evidence-based recovery planning. In particular, the exchange of information took place during the local development forums and thematic and integrational online/offline events that have been conducted in different regions of Ukraine.

Planning gender-equitable response and recovery measures remained a top priority issue the Project team communicated to potential grantees and their partners while working on applications. Furthermore, planning and recovery actions became an integral part of local initiatives that have been implemented in close cooperation with stakeholders' representatives in Myrhorod city, Poltava region, Dunayevtsi settlement, Khmelnytsky region, Studena village, Vinnytsia region, and others. The Project provided support to local administrations – co-partners under initiatives implemented in adjusting their local development strategies and plans, drafting recovery action (working) plans following with implementation of crisis response measures to secure critical services, and goods, to support the employment of the local women and men, including the most affected ones, to stabilize supply chains of local MSMEs. The actions above ensured establishing, conducting, and deepening a policy dialogue on sustainable gender-oriented socio-economic development of territorial communities and regions. Key governmental stakeholders at local level actively participated in the process. These were self-government bodies, public authorities, and local executive institutions. Non-governmental actors actively partnered with the governmental ones on planning and implementation actions. As a result, the partnerships established involved, among others, academia institutions, social entrepreneurs, and large and medium-sized businesses. Joint efforts have brought tangible results. In close cooperation, partnerships succeeded to develop local development documents, - programs, strategies, and plans aimed to improve the local supply of social services, fostering local tourism, support local small and medium-sized businesses, to facilitate social entrepreneurship practices. Joint efforts followed with practical steps on implementation of the documents above. Respective actions took place in the Lviv region, Ternopil region, Mykolaiv region, Cherkasy region, Vinnytsia region, Khmelnytsky region, and others.

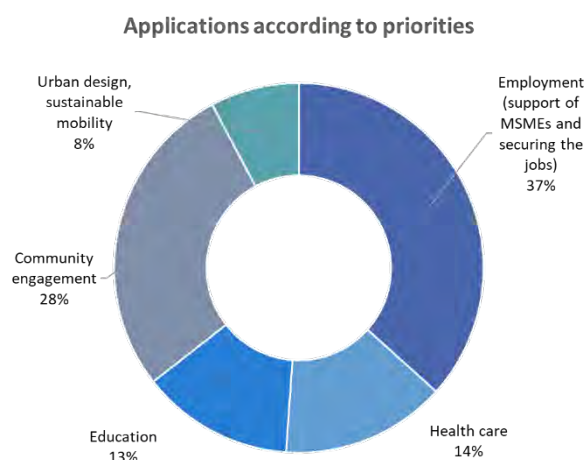
### 2.3.2. Communities have strengthened partnerships and improved skills in addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 through the implementation of challenge-driven partnerships

In July 2020, an open call for proposals was announced to identify rapidly local initiatives willing to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through challenged-driven partnerships. The announcement was posted in media and social networks and spread through partner organizations and oblast state authorities.

Eligible applicants were defined as non-governmental organizations and charitable organizations that have been establishing a partnership with a business, academia, and/or the local authorities. Depending on the socio-economic needs of the region, the proposed projects were expected to include but not be limited to innovative solutions in the field of socio-economic development, education, employment, healthcare, urban design, and community engagement. The proposed projects were to contribute to the maintenance, development, and diversification of entrepreneurial initiatives, while also responding to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It resulted in mobilizing of partnerships that engaged local governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector those ready to counter and alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the local and regional level. Overall, 90 project ideas were submitted by NGOs in partnership with businesses, academia, and/or authorities for review from 22 oblasts of Ukraine, see distribution by proposed activities on the chart below.

Figure 15. Desegregation of applications according to priorities



Out of 90 applications received, 19 partnership initiatives were reviewed during the second stage of the selection process. To analyze the capacity and sustainability of the proposed initiatives and to assess the pre-selected partnerships' ability to implement and complete their initiatives, the project team conducted online monitoring meetings with respective applicants and their partners. Planned activities, goals, objectives, expected results, and risks were discussed during those meetings. Communication covered the activities planned assessing social, environmental, and economic impacts, sustainability of the results planned, and potential replication of the action. Recommendations were provided to the applicants so they could align their proposals and make them counter and alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a more effective way. Also, implementation strategies were reviewed with specific attention paid to the partnerships' structures, their members, and roles.

In late 2020, a competitive review process was completed. Nine were selected for piloting that have been approved by the National Steering Committee for financing, namely:

- “Gender-sensitive design of safe public spaces as a response to COVID-19 pandemic challenges” (Vinnytsia Oblast, regional);
- “Developing local infrastructure for cycling: a way to reduce the impact of COVID-19 pandemic” (Poltava Oblast, regional);
- “Developing rural communities and countering COVID-19 pandemic by giving rise to small and micro-businesses” (Cherkasy Oblast, Vinnytsia Oblast, interregional);
- “Moms in Business, - Women economic empowerment as response COVID-19 pandemic” (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, regional);
- “Protecting jobs in rural areas affected by COVID-19 through small family business promotion under “Shchedre Opillya” brand” (Ternopil Oblast, regional);
- “Employment Booster for ATCs: response to economic challenges for local communities under pandemic” (Lviv Oblast, regional);
- “Mobile museum-laboratory for school children: access to quality education under COVID-19 pandemic situation” (Khmelnitsky Oblast, regional);
- “Laboratory of craft production: a creative response to economic challenges of COVID-19 pandemic” (Zhytomyr Oblast, regional);
- “Youth school of socially responsible business: learning for countering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic” (Mykolaiv Oblast, regional).

These initiatives covered four principal areas: employment (support for MSMEs and securing jobs), community engagement, urban design, and education.

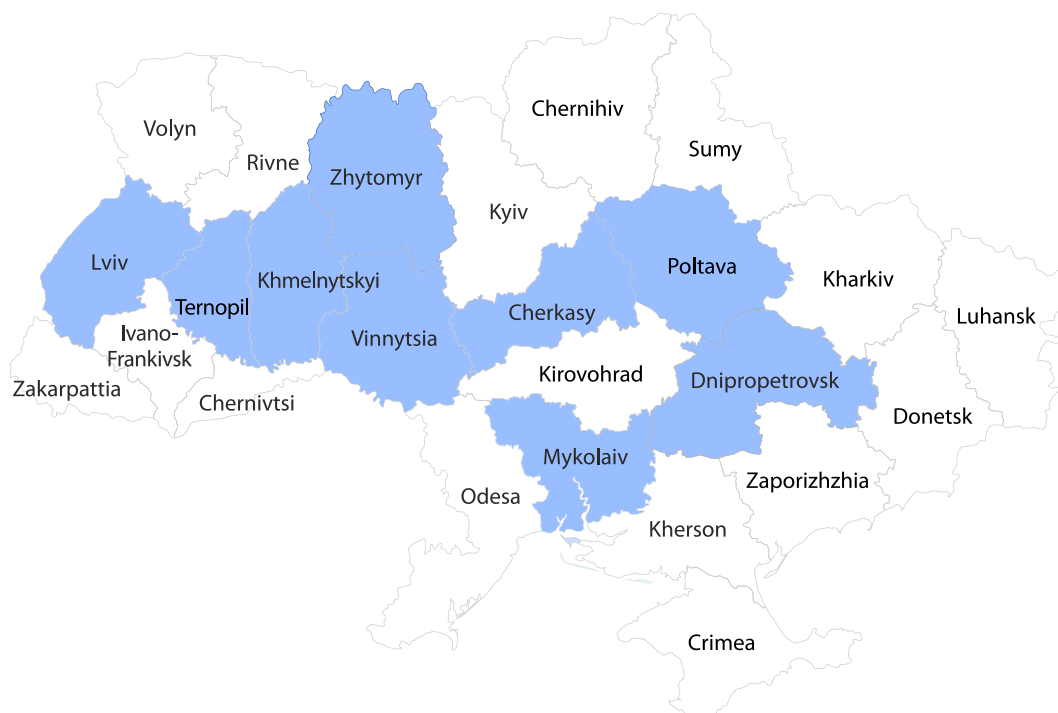
Figure 16. Thematic areas of selected initiatives from 2020 to 2021



The projects, while diverse, build on common aspirations to enable local communities in the 10 oblasts of Ukraine (see the map below) to address and mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

The supported projects were grounded on strategic and spatial planning. They consider major challenges that affect people, infrastructure, economy, and the environment, and promote a culture of partnership and cooperation focused on the interaction of community members, business representatives, and public institutions to ensure sustainable local development and socio-economic growth. Almost every project has its “soft” and “hard” parts. Training activities, which typically constitute the “soft” part, along with project-specific topics will cover sustainable development aspects and SDGs.

Figure 17. Regions where seven partnership projects were implemented from 2020 to 2021



Many of the supported projects are focused on support to MSMEs and entrepreneurship promotion. They will inspire young mothers to start their businesses, which is critically important for the post-COVID recovery of the local economy. Another important point that will be addressed concern age- and gender-responsive urban design, as well as recognizing that COVID-19 affects women and men in different ways, – and that urban responses to the pandemic need to be inclusive and gender sensitive. The project covering the area of community engagement concerns a broad information campaign on conducting socially responsible business. Specific thematic training forms part of the project’s activities. In another example, a mobile museum-laboratory will be launched to support learning in primary and secondary schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The mobile museum exhibits will also support online learning. Moreover, during the school holidays it is planned to hold an open-air exhibition and outdoor workshops to encourage learning among schoolchildren. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are to feature among the mobile museum’s exhibits.

Close partnership and cooperation (including the co-financing of the initiatives) with local authorities, scientific and research institutions, and business entities are detailed by the grantees in their declarations of partnerships. As mentioned above, the activities of the supported projects will cover ten oblasts of Ukraine through establishing effective partnerships, training sessions, seminars, and exchange visits, as well as through public events held in cooperation with local authorities, local communities, NGOs, business partners, associations, and cooperatives.



## “Moms in Business – Women economic empowerment as response COVID-19 pandemic” (Dnipropetrovsk Oblast)

The main purpose of the project was encouraging of women in territorial communities of Dnipropetrovsk oblast to launch their businesses, learn how to develop business proposals, prepare and implement their investment projects.



*“The mothers who took part in the project proved by their own example that women can easily start and run a business. The experience of participants inspired their friends and empowered women who dreamed of starting their*

*own business but were afraid to try and did not believe in success of their business,” said Daria Bukreyeva, Initiative Lead.*

As result, four finalists gained an opportunity and knowledge to kick off their small businesses. Rest of 16 participants who haven’t received business grants admitted that they received valuable networking experience and even found some potential customers. Additionally, as part of the initiative, a training facility for hybrid lessons was opened.

Figure 18. Participants of the “Moms in business” initiative







## “Mobile museum-laboratory for school children: access to quality education under COVID-19 pandemic situation” (Khmelnytskyi Oblast)

The main purpose of the project was to set up the mobile museum laboratory with interactive exhibits for children to address the disruption to education systems during the COVID-19 pandemic and increase the community's tourist potential.



*“The Dunayevetsi community has already received a request from neighboring communities to run such exhibitions. In the future, the mobile museum-laboratory will travel through the cities and villages of the entire region; new exhibits and new educational programs will*

*appear,” said Kateryna Savchuk, the initiative manager.*

As part of the initiative, the Science for Everyone training center is established in Dunaivtsi city. Visitors can enjoy around 15 interactive exhibits. Around, 30 teachers were trained to use interactive exhibits in their work.

Figure 19. Schoolchildren are visiting the museum-laboratory in Dunaivtsi, Khmelnytskyi Oblast





## “Youth school of socially responsible business: learning for countering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic” (Mykolaiv Oblast)

The main purpose of the project is to promote socially responsible business policy among young entrepreneurs of Mykolaiv Oblast through the thematic course and implementation of educational and social projects aimed to stimulate socio-economic development in the region and consequently reduce the Covid-19 pandemic outcomes.



*“Young entrepreneurs learned how to present and communicate their initiative in front of mass media. They gained basic knowledge on setting up social entrepreneurship based on the real-life cases that are implemented in Mykolaiv. The*

*educational component showed additional opportunities for young entrepreneurs, where they could try themselves in new business formats. This component of the project prepared 20 young entrepreneurs for the development and implementation of their own social or environmental projects, which they will be able to implement in cooperation with local authorities, business and non-governmental organizations”* said Viktor Sikalenko, the initiative manager.

Figure 20. Young entrepreneurs present their initiatives in Mykolaiv



All selected initiatives were aimed to address the emergency needs related to immediate negative impact of the pandemic on women and men, covering the most pressing social needs of the affected population, - the most vulnerable, people with disabilities, elderly, rural populations, as well as supportive steps to alleviate COVID-19 repercussions to the economic life of territorial communities and regions.

The total budget of the selected initiatives was USD 485,008 with 48% of grant share and 52% of partners' co-financing. The partnership initiatives were expected to cover 10 oblasts of Ukraine. It was envisaged that the duration of micro-initiatives should not exceed 6 months.

The Project team conducted verification meetings with nine applicants and their partners, which was followed with the signing of Low-Value Grant Agreements in December 2020. An active initiative's implementation phase lasted from January 2021 to January 2022. The implementation of supported initiatives took longer than initially expected due to external factors explained below.

- A. The volatile political context affected formation of partnerships and functioning through frequent changes in key staff at counterpart public institutions. So, the engagement of local authorities in the project's implementation had to be reassured.
- B. Another challenge that partnerships faced related to trust and the difference in operational modalities between local authorities, CSOs, and the private sector. Crosscutting cooperation between the disciplines, sectors of society, and between actors from business, academia, civil society, and the public sector required from partnerships more time for alignment and adaptation. All of them had their algorithms, rules, and management protocols, while synergy was needed to ensure effective and efficient timely implementation of the initiatives achieving sustainable results. The reconciliation period required some more time from the partnerships. Once an understanding was established, the process went smoothly, and no other constraints have been evidenced.
- C. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the implementation of the initiatives, with the virus-related restrictions interfering with scheduled partnership actions, in-person meetings, training, workshops, forums, and other actions. The decision to adopt alternative way of these activities was made carefully. Even though the punctuality of such activities was important, maintaining high quality was prioritized, which helped to preserve healthy relationships among the stakeholders.

By January 2022, all nine supported initiatives were completed. The challenge-driven partnerships successfully reported the targets and indicators achieved, and the grant budget value of USD 233,267 was delivered. The major shares of the grant budget utilization are as follows:

- 30.0 percent – re-granting pool (grantees provided microfinancing support to local entrepreneurs to start/enlarge their business),
- 48.0 percent – grantees' capital investment (grantees increased own material and non-material assets by 40.0 and 8.0 respectively),
- 7.0 percent – grantees ensured training/learning activities,
- 8.0 percent – grantees ensured communication and information campaign to present initiative implementation process and share the results achieved.

The Project partnerships succeeded to raise 55.0 percent of the total budget required to implement the initiatives. Its major sources of funding are subventions of budgets of different levels, local business financing, and financial and in-kind support provided by academia/training/learning institutions.

More than 13,700 people (54.3 percent women), including 12,557 middle-aged people (18-59 years), 1,174 elderly people (aged 60+), 54 IDPs, and 182 persons with disabilities, directly benefited from the implemented local initiatives.



Among them are more than 200 people (56.0 percent women) who have improved their economic situation and started or developed their business activities.

More than 370 events, including training/learning sessions, seminars, conferences, exchange visits, etc., took place as part of the implementation process of grant initiatives. Almost 4,700 people (52.0 percent women) attended the events. Almost 3,800 people (53.0 percent women) improved their knowledge and skills in sustainable local development, improving their entrepreneurial skills, gaining knowledge of social entrepreneurship, learning subject design, etc. The number of indirect beneficiaries in both rural and urban areas that have been covered by the piloted initiatives exceeded 247,000 people (52.6 percent women), including 224,304 middle-aged people, 23,021 elderly people, 138 IDPs, and 386 persons with disabilities. For more details refer to table 6.2, Annex 6.

Initiatives' implementation process was widely communicated by the grantees, their partnerships, and stakeholders. In line with detailed communication strategies and plans developed, each grantee provided regularly details on the results, targets, and indicators achieved through social media, and local information platforms, using their own and partners' websites. Implementation action was closely monitored by the Project team, partnership members, as well as stakeholders' representatives.

Along with the implementation of supported initiatives, their inspiring examples were exposed by grantees and the Project to encourage other potential stakeholders to follow them. The brightest examples of the action above were sharing of the social entrepreneurship initiatives by the project grantees NGO "MriyDiy", c. Mykolaiv and Charitable Foundation "MHP-Hromadi" via digital communication platforms, social media, and partners' information channels.

Figure 21. Final event of the "Developing rural communities and countering COVID-19 pandemic by giving rise to small and micro-businesses initiative in Cherkasy Oblast



The experience of supported crisis-response initiatives was presented to encourage relevant stakeholders to follow the examples. Another project partner, NGO “Tsentr rozvytku osvity Dniprovska Politehnika” posted inspiring success stories of women entrepreneurs who received regranting support. All materials were prepared in line with the principles of gender-responsive communications.

Figure 22. “Moms in business” article on the website of “Dnipro Polytechnic” University

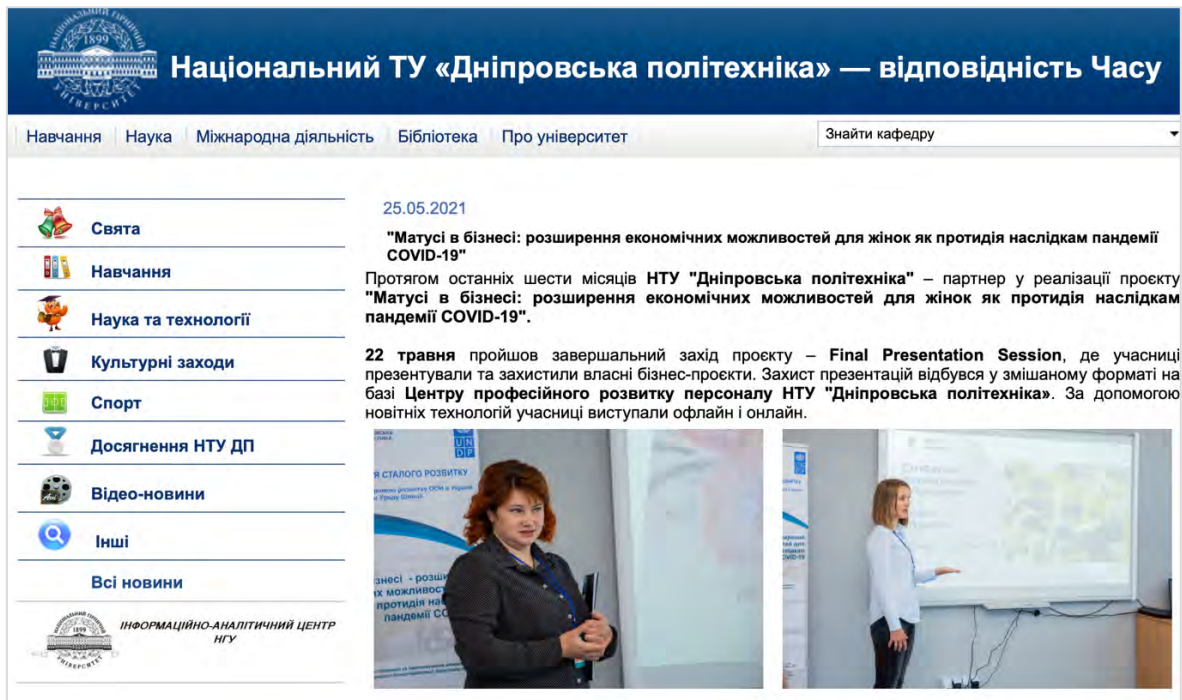


Figure 23. “MHP-Hromadi” announces a final event on their Facebook page



Further above, the Project results and the guideline materials prepared were communicated to relevant partners at the level of local and central government and recommended for replication within similar activities supported by the Government of Ukraine.

The evaluation of the initiatives implemented has proven that the concept of challenge-driven partnerships remains a potential instrument to address pressing and complex sustainability challenges. It is vital and productive in the context of decentralization reform in Ukraine when local governments received a significant share of authority from districts. However, with these powers, local governments still lack the experience, knowledge, and resources to develop and implement short-term decisions and long-term development strategies for their communities. They need to develop tools to mobilize the resources needed for local development in general and address pressing issues. Under such conditions, the partnership of government, the public, business, education, and science are important instruments for sustainable community development.

Even though the implemented initiatives were short-term ones, and the partnership was built mostly situationally, all of them possess high flexibility, proving the ability to work closely with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Along with experience gained in establishing and maintaining relationships that have been built with stakeholders, civil society, the private sector, and academia, the project partnerships enhanced their ability to measure results through reporting and monitoring, to evaluate the instruments, to communicate publicly about the results obtained on each stage of initiative implementation.

Partnerships, which also include private sector representatives, have shown a higher level of sustainability and replication. In cases where the private sector provided co-financing, this facilitated the integration of “doing business effectively” into the project implementation process, which ensures replication and scaling up of the results.

The Project grantees and NGOs/CSOs were able to effectively use their experience and knowledge to implement the initiatives and manage the partnerships successfully. They also ensured conducting of public hearings and meetings with community members, and their previous cooperation with local or regional authorities enforced the formation of strong partnership relations with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Development, implementation, and support of the results of partnership initiatives largely depend on the support of such initiatives by local authorities. It is the local self-government bodies that have become the key partner that creates the conditions for maintaining the efficiency and sustainability of the results of cross-sectoral multifunctional partnership initiatives in the future.

Applying a holistic approach by working with key stakeholders at four levels - local government, civil society, the private sector, and academia - has been key to achieving the expected goals of partnership projects. Each implemented partnership initiative was focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals depending on its direction and contained a social, environmental, and economic component. The monitoring system, implemented with the support of UNDP, made it possible to measure the results and impacts of projects on various aspects of community life and social development. Partnering and cooperation became the keys to unleashing mistrust between leaders in all sectors of society.

Evaluation of the partnership initiatives implemented has shown the feasibility and effectiveness of involving relevant regional and even national authorities if their functions are related to specific problems and needs (e.g.: adoption of relevant programs, allocation of regional budget funds, approval of regulatory documents required for implementation, etc.). Considering the above and in the face of financial resources, lack of qualified staff, and lack of national experience, a number of institutional and legislative norms need to be amended to ensure best European practices for implementing models of multisectoral partnership are followed in Ukraine.



### 2.3.3. Immediate crisis support provided to the war-affected population

In February 2022 the Project was at the final stage of its implementation and according to its work plan was focused mainly on experience dissemination activities. However, immediately after the RF's invasion of Ukraine, when the armed conflict became a full-fledged war, the Project swiftly assessed the needs of the supported communities and identified possibilities to provide urgently needed crisis support within the limited residual resources.

In March 2022, the Project was given the flexibility to repurpose up to 5 percent of the project budget for the activities in response to the crisis and to cover urgent costs, including security related. Using this opportunity and being aware of the emerging needs of the partner territorial communities hosting IDPs, the Project procured equipment for access to online education for the war-affected families with children in Studena village, including the hosted IDPs and people with disabilities. As a result, 34 people (50% women and girls) directly benefited from the improved access to education services. Moreover, the project supported the war-affected population in seven territorial communities of Rivne oblast by supporting the creation of income-generating opportunities and so sustaining their livelihoods. Ten sets of sewing equipment (sewing machines, overlock machines, steam stations) were procured and transferred to the local authorities of TCs hosting IDPs from other regions of Ukraine. As result, 43 community residents and IDPs benefited directly from new jobs opportunities. More details are provided in Annex 7.

Figure 24. A displaced child received tablet in Studena village



### 2.3.4. The experience and lessons learned from the supported pilot projects were widely disseminated among local communities across Ukraine

The relevance of the cross-sectoral multifunctional partnership approach in helping local communities to address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic as well as safeguard the progress reached in achieving the SDGs at the local level was well recognized by UNDP and donors.

Also, potential grantees perceived the action to address COVID-19 challenges as a practical time tool to respond to dynamic changes in an unstable environment which were caused by the pandemic and to re-build and upgrade social networks, fostering solidarity, mutual trust, and developing self-organization skills.

To share the results, lessons, and experience from the initiatives under implementation, information and communication activity was defined in the grantees' working plan and budget of the Grant agreements signed. Consequently, the Project grantees widely exposed their inspiring examples during the initiatives' implementation and encourage other stakeholders to follow them. Respective information was disseminated through own and partners' social and media platforms. The Project team closely monitored the activity above providing on-time recommendations and support Reports on the action completed were submitted to the granter on the monthly basis.

The "Moms in business" initiative is among the bright examples of the activity above. From the very beginning, all actions within the initiative became well communicated to all interested parties. To support communication and information activity, the partner company "Farfalla" created a web page on the website of other partner institutions, - the National Technical University "Dnieper Polytechnic" and the Center for Entrepreneurship Development "[Business Incubator](#)". Also, [accounts of the initiative](#) were made on Facebook and Instagram, Information on initiative implementation and results achieved was communicated regularly.

The Instagram page received 85 contributors. The average number of accounts covered reached 450, and the coverage of posts varied from 65 to 185. During the implementation of the initiative, 80 stories were made, including reposts with impressions from the participants of the initiative. Coverage of one post on the Fb page reached 1787, with an average of 300 posts. A number of contributors - 122. Details of the initiative were reposted from other pages repeatedly. The website of the initiative was filled with information on the grantee and its partners, the partnership's activities and actions, coaches and mentors of the training program, etc.

Grantee's copartners supported the campaign by sharing details on micro-initiatives that were re-granted and their progress via a series of success stories publications<sup>4</sup>.

Among direct beneficiaries under the initiative are young moms - women entrepreneurs who received grants to develop their own businesses. Young moms represented five territorial communities of Dnipropetrovsk oblast. They shared their feedback, results achieved, and lessons learned via Fb and Instagram posts, press conferences, and videos produced, - to find more follow the links below: <https://cutt.ly/dmom462>, <https://fb.watch/6qUlg0tRAb/>.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.rvk.news/?conferences=v-prescentri-rvk-vidbudetsya-preskonferenciya-finalistok-konkursu-biznes-pro%D1%94ktiv-moms-in-business&fbclid=IwAR1b1CO9HJW5cLnCzo0T8VJ\\_Ah3aNsQdSpTZCzIVa0HAgy\\_R2bvM5J9RLI](https://www.rvk.news/?conferences=v-prescentri-rvk-vidbudetsya-preskonferenciya-finalistok-konkursu-biznes-pro%D1%94ktiv-moms-in-business&fbclid=IwAR1b1CO9HJW5cLnCzo0T8VJ_Ah3aNsQdSpTZCzIVa0HAgy_R2bvM5J9RLI)

Grantee's co-partners, - local authorities involved in the implementation of the initiative directly contributed to the dissemination of information about the progress and results of the initiative. On the website of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council, there was a [publication](#) about the results of the initiative "Moms in business", - . "Tsyfrovyyi dokumentoobig", a communal enterprise of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council posted [relevant information](#) on the grantee's activities.

Another good example of a successful communication campaign is undoubtedly the "Schedre Opillia" initiative. The grantee has established effective partnerships and communication between project participants and beneficiaries, including local authorities, local communities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private entrepreneurs, business entities, and others. Such activities are the key element to sustainable strategic cooperation and socio-economic development in the region.

In particular, Zborivska TC, Saranchukivska TC, Psdhayetska TC, Kozivska TC, - partners on this initiative developed and adopted programs to support rural development of the TCs. Respective documents were shared on the TCs' official sites:

- [Рішення №1664 «Про затвердження програми «Розвитку сільських територій Зборівської міської територіальної громади на 2021-2026 роки»](#)
- [РІШЕННЯ № 232 "Про Програму розвитку сільських територій Козівської територіальної громади на 2021–2025 роки"](#)
- [Про затвердження програми розвитку сільських територій Саранчуківської сільської ради сільської територіальної громади на 2021–2025 роки](#)
- [Про затвердження Програми розвитку сільських територій Підгаєцької міської територіальної громади на 2021–2025 роки](#)

An integral part of the initiative was learning and conducting trainings for farmers, private households, cooperatives, and other stakeholders on the cultivation of berry and medicinal crops. In total, six training seminars were held for the target audience on growing summer and remontant raspberries, sea buckthorn, garden strawberries, medicinal herbs (calendula, Mauritanian mallow, echinacea, marigolds, etc.), and two demonstration trips were organized. The participants received information on effective farming, proper use of land resources in ASC "Faina Polyana" (8 hectares of summer raspberries, remontant, blackberries, and gooseberries), PE "Pearl of Bakota" (Kamyanets-Podilsky district) - medicinal herbs. Recording of the training seminars is available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMzJ5XD2JOCYRzxzap58nw>.

A total of 450 active participants attended the training events, and some others (about 1,700 views) get acquainted with the training materials via sessions recorded.

A set of methodological and normative documents have been developed and made available to improve yields and strengthen food safety control and improve the formation of value chains and sales, - e.g.:

- [technological map for growing berry crops and medicinal plants;](#)
- [HACCP \(Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point\) system development and performance by the agricultural service cooperative,](#) etc.

The actions above ensure the sustainability of the achieved results, further scaling, and replication of experience gained.



Similar steps to highlight the implementation of supported crisis-response initiatives were used by all nine Project grantees. The action was based on a strategic communications plan which helped to communicate the messages timely to the right people. The following five pillars were taken into consideration while planning information and communication activities, -

- communication objectives;
- mapping of the target audiences;
- specifying grantees' outreach activities;
- timing of communication activities;
- define responsible deliverer of the information.

More information on the subject above is available in the Guidelines for public administrations on the formation of cross-sectoral multifunctional partnerships to address challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

In turn, the Project team widely disseminated information on the implementation of supported initiatives and the results achieved by grantees. Relevant information was shared among the interested stakeholders at various forums, and public and thematic events at the regional and local levels, - e.g.: 5<sup>th</sup> Local Development Forum, Truskavets c., Lvivska region, *Build the Future* Integration Forum, Myrhorod c., Poltava region, etc.

In November 2021, the Interregional experience-exchange forum "Empowered partnerships for sustainable recovery and development" was held. The event was aimed to share the best experience of building effective cross-sectoral partnerships that jointly address the challenges faced by local communities across Ukraine, including those triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; to discuss ways to scale up and replicate the identified and tested best development solutions at the local level; to familiarized with similar local actions and practices in the field of sustainable economic development, poverty reduction, urban and territorial development. Recording of the event is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnVh2JM9SIw>. Digital communication platforms, social networks, and media foster the dissemination of the experience of supported crisis-response initiatives among the relevant stakeholders, - local authorities, territorial communities' members, CSOs' representatives, partners academia institutions, business entities, etc., and encourage them to follow the examples.

### 3. COMMUNICATION, VISIBILITY, AND KNOWLEDGE

To exchange information and share knowledge, the Project's partnerships have created an [online public platform](#). Over the reporting period, it has become an effective communication tool for almost 950 participants with ab. 50 thematic posts per month. In addition, the platform allows monitoring how grantees realize the initiatives and ensures communication and information part of the implementation process.

The Project's partners adhere to UNDP's communication and visibility guidelines, using a wide range of media and channels including:

- media press releases;
- factsheets, posters, and infographics;
- press conferences and press statements;
- social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter);
- banners and display boards;
- photo brochures.

Figure 25. Opening of the museum-laboratory in Dunaivtsi, Khmel'nitskiy Oblast



Samples of the visibility items were developed by the Project (see below the samples of stickers and information boards used).

Figure 26. Information board visibility sample in Nadvirna, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast



More samples of the visibility items developed by the Project are provided in *Annex 14 – Samples of visibility materials*.

To exchange information and share knowledge, the Project's partnerships have created an [online platform](#) for communication and interaction. It became a sustainable development consultation and design platform, where stakeholders can present initiatives they implemented, share their ideas, skills, and experience, and articulate the lessons learned. Currently, it includes more than 1,300 permanent members.

The Project's partners adhere to UNDP's communication and visibility guidelines, using a wide range of media and channels including:

- media press releases;
- factsheets, posters, and infographics;
- press conferences and press statements;
- social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter);
- banners and display boards;
- photo brochures.

All 16 initiatives from both stages of the Project implemented a unique solution to resolve a local development problem. To assess, formalize and promote the experience gained through the implementation of these initiatives, 16 videos were produced. The videos capture project activities and their impact on the day-to-day

life of a community also under martial law. Specific focus is made on women's empowerment and the inclusion of the most vulnerable of the population. A separate video product presents the overall implementation of the Project. All the videos are available as online resources. Links to video materials developed by the Project are provided in *Annex 15 – Links to video materials*. More information on the project communication campaign is available in *Annex 16 – Media outlets and social media coverage*.

To promote key outcomes and lessons learned, 2-days interregional forum on partnership development and promotion for sustainable regional development was conducted in November 2021. The supported partnerships shared the results they have achieved, the difficulties faced, and the risks overcome. They communicated their experience and lessons learned with a wider group of stakeholders, paving the way for scaling up and replication the activities they completed successfully. Recording of the event is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnVh2JM9SIw>.

To share the knowledge and experience gained, results achieved, and lessons learned, the Project developed in close consultations with representatives of the Ministry for Communities and Territories, the Project grantees, and their partners, including public administrations and local authorities the following documents:

- Guidelines for public administrations on the formation of cross-sectoral challenge-driven partnerships (provided in Annex 10)
- Guidelines for public administrations on addressing COVID-19 impact on women and men and post-crisis recovery (provided in Annex 11)
- Recommendations for public administrations on replication of the piloted sustainable development solutions (provided in Annex 12)
- Guidelines for public administrations on co-funding of joint initiatives within the challenge-driven partnerships (provided in Annex 13)

It is also to mention that project grantees succeeded to utilize further knowledge and skills they gained while implementing their initiatives. In particular, the Studenienska territorial community successfully carried out the next initiatives. In September 2021 they hosted an international ethnic food festival *Mamalyga vrs Banosh*. Its major locations were placed in the renewed park of Studena village which was restored under the initiative the Project supported.

In May 2022, Charitable Foundation "MHP–Hromadi", another Project grantee, decided to replicate and scale up the initiative they implemented under the Project. "In times of war, we have decided to respond to the challenges of today. We want to support business in small towns and villages", said Tetyana Volochai, Director of the Charitable Foundation.

As an integral part of the overall UNDP Country Programme, the Project interrelated and benefited from the knowledge acquired in other parts of the Programme, in particular in the areas of sustainable development, decentralization, public administration reform, civil society development, gender equality, energy efficiency, and environment.

In June 2022, prepared an [overview](#) of its war response in Rivne. The article was targeted and advertised in Rivne Oblast reaching around 12,000 residents.





## 4. LESSONS LEARNED

The Project's objectives are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the priorities of the Government of Ukraine. The Project contributes to Strategic Priority Number 1 of the United Nations Partnership Framework Program 2018-2022: Sustainable Economic Development, Environment, and Employment. The Project has successfully applied the challenge-driven partnership approach to local sustainable development. The best international practices were studied, to adapt them to the situation in Ukraine. This approach was successfully piloted in seven partner projects – this was made possible through the use of a package of specific project interventions and tools.

The key lessons learned from project implementation can be summarized as follows:

- The challenge-driven partnership approach has proved effective in fostering sustainable development at the local level, as well as in mobilizing local development actors and motivating them to work together, to address both day-to-day tasks and unexpected, unprecedented challenges such as natural disasters, industrial accidents, environmental challenges, and so on. With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, this approach was successfully employed to support local communities in addressing the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The follow-up project is in high demand and is expected to bring both knowledge and financial support to local communities especially the recently established territorial communities, which lag due to a lack of required capacities for sustainable development. They, therefore, should not be left behind;
- It is important to build on the current achievements of the Project – to maintain, empower and more actively attract these “agents of change”. The successfully piloted initiatives have generated a

portfolio of solutions for typical problems faced by the territorial communities, and so have a high potential for replication;

- Building cross-sectoral partnerships based on civil society organizations provide strong added value and allows to draw on the network of expertise that CSOs contain through their members and experience of engaging with the respective governance domains. It reinforces the interaction between governmental and non-governmental actors in addressing development challenges. Generally, implementation action proved that local authorities valued the enhanced interaction between themselves and CSOs.
- The UNDP's involvement in public sector reforms brings increased credibility.
- The partnerships, which include, among others, private sector representatives, have a higher level of sustainability and replicability. In cases where the private sector is a co-financer in the challenge-driven partnership, the integration of an "efficient" way of doing business is fostered and it increases the scalability and replicability of the results.
- Due to the established experience exchange mechanisms and ongoing communication, the supported initiatives and partnerships have cross-fertilized each other, which can be further employed and taken to a higher level in the follow-up action.
- It is advisable to increase the grant initiative implementation period, - the action is to consider a proper preparatory stage with a profound analysis of existing problems (gathering information, studying the needs of citizens, etc.) the grantee and partnership deal with, along with respective training on the steps above;
- It is important to organize the preparatory process for launching a partnership initiative, working out technical aspects, considering the timing and schedule of implementation, and planning the resources required;
- Training of the grantee and partners on procedural issues to determine the results and effects of project implementation, accounting, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation is much needed. The above aspects are added with information and communication skills the grantees and partners require while implementing the initiatives;
- Establishing trust between the members of a multi-sectoral partnership took time and, in some cases, caused challenges in managing the initiatives. However, once trust is formed, the processes flow smoothly;
- The extent and the breadth of the project impact were higher on smaller size hromadas/communities with less financial resources invested compared to larger ones. At the same time, models and development solutions successfully piloted in the larger communities/municipalities have high replication potential and are relevant for both small and large communities. However, models and solutions implemented are equally applicable, replicable, and relevant for scaling up for all three types of hromadas, - city territorial community, settlement territorial community, and rural territorial community, - irrespective of their sizes, along with regions on the subnational level, involving several different communities.
- Striking the balance between the implementation of challenge-driven partnerships and working on the policy level through the development of recommendations and guidelines was challenging and required the application of an iterative approach to integrating the lessons learned at different stages of project implementation.

The tangible results achieved through the supported local initiatives demonstrate the effectiveness of the challenge-driven partnerships approach in bringing together the resources needed to resolve urgent issues facing local communities, and in encouraging partners to engage in future projects.

It is also important that gender mainstreaming (with gender-responsive indicators) become embedded throughout all stages of the local initiative cycle. It is suggested that gender mainstreaming should be made a cross-cutting theme in the follow-up activities.

The engagement of scientific and research institutions in the implementation of local initiatives can enrich their methodology and improve the application of practical tools, thus contributing to the success and sustainability of projects.

Interaction between stakeholders from different societal sectors is now perceived as being a necessary and desirable approach to tackling local sustainability challenges. Partnership interactions allow the elaboration of local and regional development programmes and strategic documents. They strengthen local democracy by involving people in local processes and boosting social cohesion at the local level.

## 5. BUDGET

The total expenses of the Project over its implementation period from 10 December 2018 to 31 May 2022 made SEK 10 million (equivalent to USD 1,085,756). It is 100 percent of the total project budget. Detailed information on the Projects' expenses is presented in *Annex 18. Financial report*.