

GENDER APPROACH IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A TERRITORIAL COMMUNITY

Shyshpanova Nataliia

Mykolaiv National Agrarian University, Mykolaiv, Ukraine

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8347-5682

Abstract. The article explores the implementation of gender-oriented governance at the level of territorial communities in Ukraine in the context of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women. It examines the theoretical foundations of the gender approach, its transformational potential in overcoming structural barriers and inequalities, as well as the practical aspects of integrating this approach into the activities of local self-government bodies. The role of gender statistics, community profiling, gender analysis, and other tools in shaping effective gender equality policies is analyzed. Attention is drawn to the importance of the position of a gender policy coordinator, advisory and consultative bodies, and the involvement of residents in decision-making. Examples of successful practices in implementing the gender approach, which contribute to sustainable community development and inclusiveness, are presented. Special attention is paid to the integration of the gender-transformative approach in accordance with international standards and UN recommendations.

Introduction. Ukraine is progressing in the sphere of gender equality on par with the EU. Over the years, the country has set a high standard for implementing gender equality policies. Today, when it comes to recovery, green transformation, developing Euro-integration potential, and shaping the Ukraine-NATO program, gender policy and inclusivity are cross-cutting priorities at all levels of governance. Achieving equal rights and opportunities at the local level is impossible without incorporating the gender approach into the governance practices and policies of local self-government bodies.

The gender approach goes beyond merely balanced representation of men and women in government structures and local councils. It also involves implementing gender-sensitive management practices, reforming existing policies, and introducing specialized policies and programs.

Gender-oriented governance refers to the decision-making and implementation process across all levels of governance, involving measures, attitudes, and practices of various stakeholders aimed at ensuring gender equality and social justice [1].

The gender approach helps identify the needs of women and men and/or their respective groups, ensuring equal access to public goods. Gender equality spans all areas of life: political, economic, cultural, and social development. Accordingly, issues of equality and non-discrimination are essential components of strategic and programmatic community documents [5].

The gender-transformative approach aims to eliminate gender inequality, remove structural barriers such as unequal roles and rights, and empower marginalized populations [6].

Gender-transformative approaches work to address gender inequality by transforming harmful gender norms, roles, and relationships while ensuring equitable redistribution of power, resources, and services. UNFPA identifies gender-transformative approaches as a key accelerator for achieving the outcomes of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan [7].

The gender approach focuses on observing, analyzing, and transforming cultural, economic, and political differences that shape the conditions and status of men and women, boys and girls, causing inequality and arising in situations of discrimination and social isolation.

Tyurina D. [4], in her research, substantiates the multifaceted role of the state in shaping gender-balanced businesses and society as a whole. The author highlights the importance of gender balance in entrepreneurship, which encompasses a significant share of the economically active population, and justifies the role of public policy in creating conditions for gender equality. She identifies the main types of businesses in terms of gender balance and formulates key tasks for state regulation to support gender inclusivity in entrepreneurship. Indicators of gender balance are outlined, enabling the monitoring of progress and identifying barriers to equal opportunities for men and women in business.

Gender-transformative approaches (GTA) are programs and initiatives that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, encourage social and political influence for women within communities, and address power imbalances between genders. GTA fosters an enabling environment for gender transformation, moving beyond simply involving women as participants. It forms part of the continuum of gender integration, incorporating gender considerations into all aspects of program and policy conceptualization, development, implementation, and evaluation [7].

The gradual incorporation of this approach into public policy planning and management globally, and within the UN specifically, arises from the need to evaluate and value reality through the lens of fairness and equality. On one hand, this aims to mitigate potential adverse outcomes that leave men and women at a disadvantage – striving to avoid gender discrimination. On the other hand, it promotes equal opportunities for men and women by empowering them as rights-holders [8].

In practice, implementing the gender approach in communities involves creating equal conditions and opportunities for women and men to participate in community life, access its resources, and benefit from its services. Essentially, this represents the realization of gender equality policies. The concept of "gender equality" is defined in the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men," which came into force in 2006. Integrating gender approaches into the activities of public authorities is a matter of social justice necessary for sustainable human development, as gender parity in representation is one of the fundamental hallmarks of a democratic society.

Back in 2018, to expand opportunities for leveraging the potential of women in amalgamated territorial communities, the DESPRO project launched a support program for women leaders in local self-governance. As part of the project, participants learned effective communication, developed teamwork skills, and studied the fundamentals of negotiation practices, with a particular focus on implementing changes at the local level. The workshops were highly successful: DESPRO received over 300 applications from women representatives of local self-government from all regions of Ukraine to participate in the 2019 workshop.

Based on efforts to formalize the sequential use of the gender approach, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine issued an order approving the “Methodological Recommendations for Implementing the Gender Approach and the Human Rights-Based Approach at the Territorial Community Level” [2].

One of the initial analytical steps in applying the gender approach is collecting gender statistics (or gender-sensitive data). These accurate datasets reflect inequalities in the conditions and opportunities of men and women across different spheres of life. Gender statistics illustrate distributions by gender and other social characteristics such as age, marital status, disability, and its forms. At the community level, as well as in various government bodies and institutions, statistical data collection includes classifications by gender or other social attributes. The closer communities work with data, the better they understand where resources are needed and which initiatives should be funded.

In addition to collecting gender-sensitive data, a territorial community profile is developed to provide a detailed description of the needs of various population groups within the community. This enables the formulation of recommendations to improve service provision in alignment with those needs.

In practice, communities may develop similar analytical documents under different titles. For instance, these could be called social passports, gender passports, or community passports, among others. In such cases, it is beneficial to consolidate already collected data about community residents into a unified analytical product that presents these data and highlights trends over time.

Another tool for implementing gender-oriented governance is gender analysis. This helps identify gender gaps, account for gender aspects across various fields of activity, and incorporate a gender perspective into local budget programs, projects, policies, or the development of community strategic documents.

Gender-Oriented Governance can also involve establishing a position within the local self-governance structure responsible for ensuring gender equality at the local level. At the community level, such entities may include:

- Authorized Representative (Coordinator) for Gender Policy. This official is responsible for ensuring equal rights, coordinating projects and programs aimed at promoting gender equality in the community. The authorized representative may hold a specialized position or serve as a deputy head of the community.
- Consultative and Advisory Bodies. These are formally created groups established to collaboratively address issues related to equal rights and opportunities. They can also function as working groups, coordination committees,

expert panels, or public councils. These bodies may include local specialists from government agencies, advisors, gender policy experts, active residents, community organizations, and NGOs. Specific consultative and advisory bodies may be formed to address issues such as inclusivity in local governance or councils related to internally displaced persons.

- **Gender Advisory Groups.** These are associations of advisors focused on gender equality. Their work may include advocating for policy decisions, initiating projects, and adapting international and national gender legislation to the local level [1].

An essential requirement for achieving gender equality in governance is the representation of women and members of diverse social groups in leadership and elected bodies.

Another critical tool is engaging residents in decision-making processes to advance gender equality and inclusion. Particular attention should be given to involving and addressing the needs of those who wish to influence relevant decisions. Vulnerable social groups may have less access to information about political processes, less free time, or limited technical expertise on certain issues. Therefore, their inclusion requires special efforts, such as additional outreach and consideration of their needs when designing participation processes.

A valuable practice involves engaging external specialists in gender policy issues to provide expertise and consultancy services. External experts can be instrumental in collecting and analyzing gender statistics, developing analytical materials such as gender profiles, or offering advice on incorporating gender perspectives into local policies. This external input helps bring a fresh perspective to the local context and provides professional guidance to enhance gender-sensitive governance.

An important aspect of gender-oriented governance is not only the application of specific tools within the structure of government bodies but also the reform of practices for engaging with community residents. Gender sensitivity in the provision of public services aims to ensure equal access for men and women to services provided by local self-governance bodies.

Conclusions:

Gender equality and gender-oriented governance are key elements of sustainable development, contributing to social justice and effective management. In the current context of recovery and integration into the European community, Ukraine demonstrates significant progress in implementing the gender approach at both the national and local levels. The introduction of gender-sensitive practices into the activities of local self-governance bodies, the application of gender analysis, and the collection of gender-sensitive data ensure more balanced policies tailored to the real needs of communities.

The development of institutional mechanisms, such as the establishment of gender coordinator positions, advisory and consultative bodies, or gender advisory groups, creates favorable conditions for achieving gender equality at the local level. Gender-transformative approaches aim not only to remove structural barriers but also to redefine traditional roles and norms, fostering a progressive redistribution of power, resources, and services.

Training and support programs hold significant potential in helping female leaders in local self-government acquire new skills and successfully implement changes in their communities. Integrating the gender approach into community governance is not merely a matter of fairness but also a necessary condition for democratic development that considers the interests of all members of society.

Thus, the implementation of gender equality remains a vital priority in building resilient communities and ensuring the sustainable development of the country as a whole.

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