

Case Study on Local Development Models: Perspectives of Introducing LEADER Approach in Armenia



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of WINNET Armenia Network of Women Resource Centers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

**PROMOTING LINKS BETWEEN THE
RURAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS:
LEADER APPROACH IN EAP REGION**

**Case Study Report on Local Development Models:
Perspectives of Introducing LEADER Approach in Armenia**

© 2020, EaP CSF Secretariat, *Support to the activities of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum II*

The study was conducted by WINNET Armenia Network of Women Resource Centers (WRCs) within the framework of “Promoting Links between the Rural Economy and Development Actions: LEADER Approach in EaP region” project.

7/14 Ankakhutyan street, Goris,
Syunik region, 3201, Armenia
E-mail: winnetarmeria@gmail.com

Author of the Report is:

International Center for Human Development (ICHD) Think Thank

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABBREVIATIONS	5
FOREWORD	6
RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES	6
METHODOLOGY	6
Desk Review	7
Key Informant Interviews	7
Focus Groups.....	8
1. COMMON FEATURES AND CHALLENGES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS: HOW MAY WINNET PRACTICE CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADER APPROACH?	9
1.1. Background	9
1.1.1. LEADER Approach	9
1.1.2. WINNET model and its introduction in Armenia.....	10
1.2. Comparison of the Key Features of WINNET Model and LEADER Approach	12
1.2.1. Bottom-up Approach	12
1.2.2. Area-based Approach	12
1.2.3. Local Partnership	12
1.2.4. An Integrated and Multi-sectoral Strategy.....	13
1.2.5. Innovation	13
1.2.6. Networking	14
1.2.7. Cooperation.....	14
1.2.8. Women Empowerment and Knowledge Development as Other Key Features of WINNET Model	15
2. KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS	16
2.1. Motivation of Local Actors to Actively Engage in Community Development	16
2.2. Cooperation Perspectives Among Different Sectors	21
2.3. Leadership Models and Management Processes	25
2.4. Sustainability of Local Development Models	28
2.4.1. Sustainability of financial resources	28
2.4.2. Strategic Planning	30
2.4.3. Human Resources and Capacities of Local Actors	32
3. CONCLUSIONS	34
(i) Motivation of Local Actors to Actively Engage in Strategic Development of Their Community	34
(ii) Cooperation Perspectives Among Different Sectors	35
(iii) Leadership Models and Management Structures/Processes	35
(vi) Sustainability of Local Development Models	36
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANT INSTITUTIONS	41

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE 42
**APPENDIX 3: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE REPRESENTATIVES OF WINNET
ARMENIA AND WOMEN RESOURCE CENTERS (WRCS) 43**
APPENDIX 4: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE..... 45

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to use this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has supported the expert team throughout the course of this case study conducted within the project “Promoting links between the rural economy and development actions: LEADER approach in EaP region”. We are grateful to everyone for genuinely sharing their views and experience related to the project and preparation of this report.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the EaP Civil Society Forum, which granted us the opportunity to conduct the study.

We would like to offer our special thanks to the following institutions and organizations, without whom the study would not have been possible: National Assembly of RA, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, RA National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Goris, Berd, Yeghegnadzor municipalities, Austrian Development Agency Armenia (ADA), Office of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Program Armenia (UNDP), Armenian national agrarian university Sisian branch, “Dispro line” LTD, “Mirhav” hotel, “Women for development” NGO for their inspiring involvement, invaluable constructive criticism and friendly advice throughout the project and research. We are grateful for their willingness to share their straightforward and insightful insights on a number of issues related to the case study.

Our very special thanks go to Goris, Sisian, Meghri, Yeghegnadzor, Berd and Vanadzor Womens’ Resource Centers, without whom it would not have been possible to make the provisions of the analysis subject of wide-ranging debates and put together professional opinions and approaches.

We are also thankful to our project partners: National LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) and Foundation “Accion Contra el Hambre” (Action Against Hunger, Georgia) for their continued support and inputs.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
CSO	Civil society organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FG	Focus Group
LSG	Local self-government
MLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MTAI	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SE	Social Entrepreneurship
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WRC	Women's Resource Center

FOREWORD

1. This study report is prepared within the framework of the project “Promoting links between the rural economy and development actions: LEADER approach in EaP region” funded by EaP Civil Society Forum and implemented by “WINNET Armenia” Network of Women Resource Centers (Armenia), National LEADER Network in the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) and Foundation “Accion Contra el Hambre” (Action Against Hunger, Georgia). The project aims at contributing to the successful application of LEADER approach in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, through enhancing cross-country collaboration, knowledge development and experience sharing.
2. The report summarizes findings of the country research on the perspectives of introducing LEADER instrument in Armenia. Inasmuch as there is no accumulated experience of applying LEADER approach in the country and the main endeavours towards its introduction are scheduled for the second half of 2020, the study strives to reveal possible country-specific challenges and opportunities for its successful design and later implementation. For that reason, it reflects on the existing experience of local development models and practices, by focusing on the practice of WINNET model to promote community development.
3. The particular case has been opted due to its success of sustainably addressing local needs and continuous expansion across the country. Moreover, two models share similar local development goals and key principles of actions, which makes it possible to reveal the possible challenges and opportunities for effective application of LEADER approach based on WINNET’s successful practices, challenges and lessons learnt.

RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

4. The research goal is identifying the key factors for effective design and implementation of local development models in Armenia by examining the introduction and practice of the WINNET model of women’s resource centers, as a key case for sustainable local development. Such analysis aims to further contribute and serve as an initial guide for introducing LEADER approach in Armenia.
5. The study specifically addresses the following questions:
 - i. Motivation of local actors to actively engage in the strategic development of their community;
 - ii. Cooperation perspectives among different sectors;
 - iii. Leadership models and management structures/processes;
 - iv. Sustainability of local development models.

METHODOLOGY

6. The research has been conducted using **illustrative case study** methodology, as this methodology facilitates the exploration of the defined questions within the context of a specific successful local development model in Armenia, WINNET. The case study is well adjusted for answering the “how” and “why” questions, the key focus of this research, and identifying contextual conditions relevant to local development approaches and models in Armenia.
7. The proposed case study particularly focuses on the processes laying the ground of WINNET practice by analysing three embedded units, describing the model in **various social, economic, political, and cultural environments**. Thus, the proposed *first embedded unit* relates to initiating and introducing the **WINNET** Armenia model in major communities of Syunik marz (Meghri, Goris, Kapan) of Armenia back in 2008 - 2009. The *second embedded unit* illustrates the expansion of the

model across south, central and north (Sisian, Yeghegnadzor, Ijevan) Armenia in 2015, with a special emphasis on the dimension of social entrepreneurship. The *third embedded unit* focuses on expansion of the model in the past two years, in the new reality that was shaped after the 2018 peaceful anti-Government protests, commitment of the new leadership to developing a new comprehensive reform agenda based on the rule of law, protection of rights, fight against corruption and good governance.

8. For that purpose, six Women Resource Centers were examined in the communities of Meghri, Goris, Sisian, Yeghegnadzor, Vanadzor and Berd, comprising the above-mentioned embedded units of WINNET Armenia's practice and being in different stages of development.
9. As a small-scale qualitative research, this case study has employed a classical inventory of qualitative methods, including desk review of relevant research and official documents, in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Desk Review

10. An in-depth desk review of relevant policy and regulatory documents, studies and WRC reports have been carried out to establish the key policy, regulatory and environmental factors contributing or hindering local development initiatives in Armenia. The desk review mainly included the following legislative and regulatory documents: RA Law on Local Self-government; Adopted on 07.05.2002; entered into force 21.06.2002. RA Law on Non-governmental Organizations; Adopted on 16.12.2016, entered into force on 04.02.2017. RA law on Foundation; Adopted on 26.12.2002, entered into force 22.02.2003. Government Decree 1708-N on Approving the Procedure for Provision of RA State Budget Subventions to Communities of November 16, 2006. Concept Paper on Social Entrepreneurship (Draft), 2017, Yerevan.
11. In addition, to reveal conceptual and methodological framework of LEADER approach and WINNET model, as well as study activities, management and strategic planning processes of WRCs relevant official documents and reports have been reviewed, i.e. Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016; Rules of Procedure of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers. Adopted on 30.11.2018 by the Annual Assembly of WINNET Armenia; Strategic Plan for the Activities of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers for 2016-2020; Handbook on implementation of LEADER/CLLD – community-driven rural development initiatives. Republic of Moldova. 2018. For that reason, also information available at the Official Website of European Network for Rural Development (accessed at <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/>); Official Website of WINNET Armenia (accessed at <https://WINNETarmenia.org/en/>), Official Website of WINNET Sverige (accessed at <http://WINNET.se/>) has been reviewed.

Key Informant Interviews

12. To collect relevant primary data, 20 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the representatives of government officials, members of parliament, representatives of international organizations, as well as the above-mentioned six women resource centers, local businesses, community-based institutions, local self-government bodies and academia.
13. The interview guidelines have been developed with the intention to identify and explore the opinions, opportunities, challenges and recommendations addressing the key factors for successful design and implementation of local development models.

Focus Groups

14. Two focus group discussions have been conducted. The 18 participants of the focus groups (FGs) were members and stakeholders of the Women Resource Centers who represent the phases of initiation and expansion of the model across south, central and north communities of the country. The specific beneficiary groups of target WRCs were divided into two FGs with certain logic behind. The first FG included WRC beneficiaries from Meghri, Goris and Sisian (Syunik region). These communities are distinguished with established and effectively functioning WRCs and successful social enterprises run by women. The second FG consisted of WRC beneficiaries from Yeghegnadzor (Vayots Dzor marz), Vanadzor (Lori marz) and Berd (Tavush marz). WRCs in these communities have been functioning and exercising WINNET Armenia's model for a relatively shorter period of time. All discussions were organized in close cooperation with Women's Resource Centers of target communities.

1. COMMON FEATURES AND CHALLENGES OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS: HOW MAY WINNET PRACTICE CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEADER APPROACH?

1.1. Background

15. In the recent decade, communities of Armenia have undergone crucial structural and institutional reforms. The process of formation of the local government system, thus the power devolution in Armenia was initiated with the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (RoA) in 1995, the Law on Administrative Territorial Division (1995) and the Law on Local Self-Government (1996).
16. However, there are significant differences between the communities in terms of the population and territory, as well as social and economic infrastructures. The extensive fragmentation of the territorial system of the country has resulted in a number of small communities that do not have the capacity and resources to provide the services prescribed to them by the law. As of 2018, Armenia has 502 communities, of which 48 are urban and 454 are rural. Over 1 million people live in rural communities while around 1.9 million in urban. Social and economic growth (including GDP per capita and incomes) in Armenia is mostly limited to Yerevan, which hosts around 40% of the total population.¹
17. Different endeavours in the form of initiatives for community development are being implemented by civil society organizations, international development actors, as well as by state through its subvention program. Some of the most effective initiatives to support and enhance local development were implemented by international development agencies and local CSOs. For instance, women empowerment, enhancement of their participation in the local development are the primary tasks of the Women Resource Centers (WRCs), which has introduced the WINNET model in Armenia. Women for Development NGO is implementing different projects on community development with the special emphasis on Shirak marz. Recently, they have launched a development project, the primary focus of which is the introduction and pilot of the LEADER approach in 8 communities in Shirak marz. UNDP Armenia, Austrian Development Agency (Armenia) and FAO Representation in Armenia are also involved in incorporation of community development models in Armenia. The recent one is the EU funded large scale project, which is in the preparatory stage and intends application of LEADER approach in the northern regions of Armenia.
18. Taking into account that development needs and problems are quite similar across the communities, local development models and initiatives may face common challenges while trying to address community needs. Hence, the experience and expertise of women resource centers may be useful for the effective application of LEADER approach, especially in the case the two models have common features and principles of activity.

1.1.1. LEADER Approach

19. The LEADER approach is associated with local empowerment through local strategy development and resource allocation. The Local Action Group (LAG) is the main tool of the LEADER approach for engaging the community members in decision-making processes for community development. The acronym 'LEADER' derives from the French words "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économique Rurale" which means, 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'. The idea was to unite the energy and resources of the people and institutions for contributing to their community development via forming public-private-civil sectors partnerships. In 1990 it was the first time when the LEADER approach was presented by the group of officials at the European

¹ Number of De Jure Population of the Republic of Armenia as of July 1, 2020 (accessed at <https://bit.ly/3fXniFw>)

Commission. 1991-1993 is considered as an experimental phase for the LEADER approach which involved 217 regions with the main focus on disadvantaged rural areas, however this continued till 1999. In 2000-2006 the method expanded in order to cover all types of rural areas, since the results of the experimental phase were very promising. In 2007-2013, which is the fourth programming period, the LEADER approach was incorporated and became an integral part of the EU's rural development policy, covering 2402 rural territories across the Member States. Due to rapid expansion, the network structures have become ever more important to LEADER implementation. The state-funded National Rural Networks (NRNs) are established and operating in all the Member States, with the mission to support the capacity building, networking activities, partner search for transnational cooperation, etc. The same mission has the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) directly helping both NRNs and LAGs at the European level.²

20. For the 2014-2020 funding period, the applicability of the LEADER approach was further extended as multi-funded Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) in rural, fisheries and urban areas.
21. Currently, the Leader approach is implemented by around 2 800 Local Action Groups (LAGs), covering 61 % of the rural population in the EU and bringing together public, private and civil-society stakeholders in a particular area (situation as of end 2018 - EU-28).³ About half of the EU's LAGs are members of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), which is an NGO-based cooperation forum of LEADER areas. A strong commitment and faith in the methodology creates a shared ethos among the LEADER practitioners and networks, and has been recognised by external evaluators.
22. The LEADER method is based on seven specific features, which must all be present simultaneously in order to use the method right. These seven features define LEADER as a methodology and separate it from funding programmes:
 - (i) bottom-up approach;
 - (ii) area-based approach;
 - (iii) local partnership;
 - (iv) multisectoral integration;
 - (v) networking;
 - (vi) innovation;
 - (vii) inter-territorial and international cooperation.⁴

1.1.2. WINNET model and its introduction in Armenia

23. Having its roots in Sweden and being introduced about 30 years ago, the WINNET model is nowadays applied all over Europe and beyond. Its primary task and mission are to enhance women's participation in sustainable regional and local development through the activity of Women Resource Centers (WRC).
24. WINNET model is an innovative reflection of the Quadruple Helix, which embeds university-industry-government relations of the Triple Helix by adding a fourth helix, the "media-based and culture-based public" and "civil society". The model aims to increase women's role and participation in—and benefit from—local and regional development actions via focusing on creative industries and emphasizing values.⁵

²Official Website of European Network for Rural Development (accessed at <https://bit.ly/2FpgArB>)

³Official Website of European Network for Rural Development (accessed at <https://bit.ly/3kNqS58>)

⁴Official Website of European Network for Rural Development (accessed at <https://bit.ly/3ixrsls>)

⁵ Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016

25. The construction of joint action networks involving different groups and actors is one of the main features of the WINNET model. In order to support women realize their ideas, WRCs have systematically constructed new constellations of actors from public, private, academic and civil (non-profit) sectors that are capable of contributing, e.g. public authorities, SMEs, global corporations, banks, business development centres, employment offices, research institutes, consultants, educational associations, NGOs and foundations. The WINNET model constitutes an example of creative thinking in the organization regarding how joint action networks can make new knowledge and innovation prosper, thus contributing to the welfare of communities and societies.
26. The key foci of WINNET model are: a) gender equality perspectives in regional and local policies; b) women's entrepreneurship and SME development; c) gender equality perspective on innovation and ICT; d) social inclusion and women's opportunities in the labour market⁶. One of the key assets of the model is its extensive network and respective viable networking practices.⁷
27. In Armenia, WINNET model was introduced in 2007 by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. In 2008, OSCE office in Yerevan offered guidance and technical support to a group of motivated and active women, sharing a visionary understanding of local development needs and women's role in this effort, to establish three resource centres in Meghri, Goris and Kapan communities of Syunik region. These women became the core of the resource centres and pioneered in the creation of a support circle for women in the region. Appreciating the power and capacities of a network, these resource centres united into Syunik Women's Resource Centers Network, which joined WINNET Europe as the first member from a non-EU country in 2014. Later in the year it was renamed 'WINNET Armenia – Network of Women Resource Centers'.⁸
28. In the next two years WINNET Armenia expanded the network. In 2015, with the support of European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and OSCE Office in Yerevan it established new Women's Resource Centers in three other communities two of which are in different regions: Sisian Women's Resource Center Foundation, Ijevan Women's Development Resource Center Foundation and Yeghegnadzor Women Resource Center Foundation. In recent years two more WRCs have been established - Berd Women's resource center and Vanadzor Women's Initiative Group.
29. Thus, today WINNET Armenia includes around ten resource centres and initiative groups countrywide in their Network. WINNET Armenia's mission is to support social, economic and political empowerment of women and their participation in sustainable local development through effective implementation of gender policies at all levels; enhanced participation of women in political decision making; protection of women's health; improvement in social protection of women; prevention of gender-based violence; participation of women in conflict regulation and peace-keeping; enhanced economic role and increased competitiveness of women; development of institutional capacities of the Network and its members; expansion of Network's activities both in Armenia and the EaP region. However, the activities of WINNET Armenia is not limited to the addressing women's needs. It follows up with any need that rises within the community or the region.

⁶Official Website of WINNET Sverige (accessed at <http://WINNET.se/>)

⁷In 2006, WINNET Europe, the European Association of Women Resource Centres, was established by Women Resource Centres across Europe. The network's mission is to strengthen the role of WRCs as key actors in regional growth and support participation of women in regional development in a collaborative effort with national, federal/regional and local organisations in EU Member States, the countries of the Baltic Sea region, and Armenia.

⁸Official Website of WINNET Sverige (accessed at <https://WINNETarmenia.org/en/>)

1.2. Comparison of the Key Features of WINNET Model and LEADER Approach

30. Below, the practice of the WINNET model is juxtaposed and mapped vis-a-vis the concept of the LEADER approach, revealing the relevance of the WINNET model to LEADER practice and key features, namely bottom-up approach, area-based approach, the local partnership, an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy, networking, innovation and cooperation.

1.2.1. Bottom-up Approach

31. One of the core principles of the LEADER model is considered to be the Bottom-up approach, conceiving that local people are the most interested party in the development of their community. Ideally, they are the ones who should define the local development strategy, prioritise the needs to be addressed. In both cases - LEADER approach and the WINNET model - active participation of local people is encouraged. Both approaches stem from the grassroots, which is believed is the main driver for the community change and development. Local people are actively engaged in every stage of application of LEADER approach - during formation and operation of LAG and strategy development, implementation, evaluation and review.
32. However, one of the main differences is the target groups of these two models. In case of LEADER approach, it intends engaging all active parties of the local community, while WRC is intended to be an open actor that is available to all women looking for change and development in their communities. One of the main directions of WRC activity is the political empowerment of women and enhanced participation of women in local decision making. Thus, in target communities WRCs act as active participants of local decision-making, with members and beneficiaries participating in the design of community development programmes and actions.

1.2.2. Area-based Approach

33. According to the area-based approach of the LEADER model, the area is considered a small, homogenous, socially and functionally cohesive territory, often characterised by common traditions, a local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations and makes the basis for the development of the local partnership and strategy. Thus, the programme funding targets the priorities of the area as a whole, not specific projects or groups of projects and is distinct from a 'project-based approach'. LEADER also sets criteria for the area to have clearly defined geographic borders, which don't have to follow the administrative borders and to meet certain population criteria (between 10,000 and 150,000 in most cases, as set out in the Common Provisions Regulation EU No 1303/2013). The borders of the area may be revised as the strategy and partnership develops depending on the development priorities and who is involved.
34. While, WINNET model does not suppose specific criteria for selecting communities, rather than the presence of motivated local women with the intention to make change in their area. Moreover, work in WRCs is based on a combination of ongoing activities, called 'basic activities', and targeted projects. It should be noted that though the WRCs do not explicitly promulgate the area-based approach of the LEADER, their basic activities are inherently based on the approach, because the choice of what activities each of the WRC pursue depends on the specific community and varies from a WRC to another and across countries. These activities manifest 'the common traditions, a local identity, a sense of belonging or common needs and expectations.'
35. The projects are solutions to a specific problem that the WRC team is committed to solving and can be local, regional, national and international. Though each project is managed in compliance with the rules and regulations of the development partner, it should clearly reflect basic values and vision of WINNET Armenia.

1.2.3. Local Partnership

36. In the framework of LEADER, the local partnerships for area development work through a specific and structured governance mechanism – Local Action Group (LAG). A LAG intends to comprise

partners from public, private and civil society; it should be well-balanced and broadly representative of local interests and the different socio-economic sectors in the area. At the decision-making level no one sector can represent more than 49% of the membership of the local partnership.⁹ The WINNET model, in its turn, is an innovative reflection of the Quadruple Helix, which embeds the university-industry-government relations of the Triple Helix by adding the 'media-based and culture-based public' and 'civil society' helix. One of the key dimensions of WINNET activity is the construction of joint action networks in order to empower women and enhance their participation, involving actors from different sectors of the society - the public, private, academic and civil (non-profit) sectors.

37. The LAG's legal form may vary from country to country, but it is often a non-profit, registered organisation. Regardless of their legal form LAGs may nominate a suitable partner to act as their formal accountable body. In terms of WRCs they often are registered either as non-profit organizations or foundations, which simplifies their engagement in social entrepreneurial activities in the future according to the conducted interviews.

1.2.4. An Integrated and Multi-sectoral Strategy

38. At the base of LEADER lay integrated and multi-sectoral area based local development strategies, distinguishing the approach from traditional top-down sectoral agricultural policies. As the acronym LEADER suggests it aims to build the 'links between the rural economy and development actions'. Partnerships and their Local Development Strategies (LDS) therefore aim to capitalise on the links between local sectors to exploit the potential multiplier effects. In doing so they explore and address the needs and opportunities of the area in an integrated way to achieve the desired common goals. The actions and projects contained in local strategies should therefore be linked and coordinated as a coherent whole. Integrated does not mean all-encompassing however, strategies should not try to tackle everything at once or give everything the same weight, some things lie out with local scope to influence or deliver. In their integrated LDS LAGs should make choices and focus on those objectives and actions that add value to support which already exists and have the greatest chances of contributing to the changes they want to achieve.
39. In case of WINNET model, the network of WRCs itself has developed a 5-year strategic development plan. WRC activities come from grassroots, as it identifies local needs and specific features of the community where it exists and functions, as well as assesses the available resources based on which implements activities aiming for women empowerment and community development in general. Based on the SWOT analysis of each community, WRCs are localizing the strategy as well as prioritise the needs and the most areas of intervention. WINNET Armenia's activities are not limited only to women empowerment, poverty reduction, combating unemployment or ecological initiatives. It follows up with any need that rises within the community or the region at a given time. Thus, it has engaged in various regional development programmes ranging from environmental issues, development of tourism and hospitality services, to access to health services for women. Individual WRCs have actively participated in numerous community initiatives, co-funded by local governments, thus proving the viability of Quadruple Helix WRCs advocates.¹⁰

1.2.5. Innovation

40. The quest for innovation remains one of the most exciting, ground-breaking and yet challenging parts of the LEADER approach. Seeking out and fostering new and innovative solutions to local problems or to take advantage of opportunities has been a core part of LEADER from its outset. Innovation applies to what is done, the types of activity supported, the products or services

⁹ Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council

¹⁰ Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016

developed etc. but importantly it also applies to how things are done. In fact, in the beginning the LEADER approach itself was the main innovation. Each LAG established based on the LEADER approach aims to bring new elements and solutions to the development of its territory. This applies in its strategy, its delivery and animation structures and processes and in its decision making and project selection. By creating the right conditions and carefully cultivating new and fresh ideas LAGs are able to produce substantial and sustained changes and benefits for their territories, the real added value which LEADER is designed to achieve.

41. The WINNET model of turning women's potential into a community development force is also regarded as an innovative approach by itself. WRCs seek to be active agents within local and regional innovation networks, based on quadruple helix model and liaising with the academy, other civil society members, governmental authorities and the private sector for supporting innovation and sustainable development with a gender perspective, creating and coordinating customized projects around women's innovative start-ups and businesses, supporting and counselling women innovators and inventors in their career paths. One of the main inputs of WRCs in community growth and innovation is the enhanced capacities of social enterprises to introduce a new or significantly improved process or a product (good or service) to the market. Recently, due to the pandemic situation - COVID-19 and state of emergency challenges the WRCs with finding new, innovative solutions together with their beneficiaries in order to adapt to the new reality.

1.2.6. Networking

42. Besides the fact that LAG is a network of local partners which through its strategy and activities promotes links between local actors and others in the development chain, LEADER/CLLD approach also acknowledges the benefits of networking beyond this local horizon; local, national and international networks have become ever more important linking rural and non-rural areas, people and actions. National Rural Networks (NRNs) are established in all the Member States through the Rural Development Programmes. Although they target a wider range of rural stakeholders, their remit specifically includes support for LAGs; some involve LAG subgroups. At the European level the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) has been established, which directly helps both the NRNs and the LAGs and also includes a LEADER / CLLD sub-group. The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD), an international non-profit making membership organisation and cooperation forum, includes a large number of LAGs and many of the voluntary national and regional LEADER groupings.
43. The key dimension of WRC activities is networking. It takes place on various levels: local, regional, national and transnational. The networks explore ideas and potential areas of collaboration. When members of the network share common interests, cooperation follows naturally. WRC networks rely both on women's resources and any external support which sympathises with the WRCs' cause. Networking allows women's empowerment to become a reality, and not simply a promulgated value, as well as to identify a diversity of perspectives on various issues and stimulate innovative thinking. Regular networking events are organized, discussions are encouraged to generate new ideas, and new groups of people are regularly invited to participate in the WRC work. Networking is also regarded by interviewed WRC representatives as one of the most crucial factors contributing to effective and sustainable functioning of their centres.

We are like a family. We all know about each other every day, achievements and problems, and always try to help each other.

Berd Women's Resource Center

1.2.7. Cooperation

44. Cooperation goes further than networking by involving local people and Local Action Groups in working with other stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels. Cooperation may involve a LAG undertaking a joint project with the urban centre of the region, another LEADER

group, or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region – or even another country. Cooperation is considered to be a key source of innovation, new perspectives and knowledge development for LAGs. Of course, cooperation is not an end in itself, there should be a clear purpose and benefit in working with others.

45. At the same time, in order to support women fully realize their potential, WRCs systematically construct joint action networks involving different groups and actors. They actively design and implement joint projects with actors of public, private, academic and civil (non-profit) sectors at local, regional, national and international levels. Such cooperation ensures contribution of wide range of stakeholders to provide and develop knowledge on specific dimensions of women empowerment and greatly condition effective functioning of WRCs.
46. The cooperation is particularly strong among WRCs of different communities of Armenia. Except for periodic networking events, WRCs design and implement joint projects based on each other's knowledge, good practice and lessons learnt. Newly established WRCs greatly lean on the expertise and professional support provided by more developed WRCs on a wide range of topics such as project management, public communications, business planning and production process.

We have closely cooperated with Goris Women's Resource Center to organize trainings for carpet weavers who have later conducted trainings for bigger groups. A group of women now make carpets, and another group prepare different products from the material, such as bags and wallets.

Meghri Women's Resource Center

1.2.8. Women Empowerment and Knowledge Development as Other Key Features of WINNET Model

47. There are also other features of WINNET model which are beyond the conceptual framework of LEADER approach and are at the core of WRC activities, namely women empowerment and knowledge development.
48. Women are considered as active actors capable of taking control of their own lives and contributing to local and regional development within the WINNET model, thus empowerment and mobilization of women's resources is a key trademark of the WRC activities. WRCs empower women to become competitive agents of development thanks to application of diversified specialized toolkit, business and personal counselling, individual and group mentoring and networking. In this regard, WRCs have been particularly active in engaging vulnerable women: women with disabilities, victims of gender-based violence, the poor in Armenia.

I have suffered domestic violence, and participation in WRC activities helped me to apply for a grant project, establish my own small business and change my life.

Focus group participant, Goris community

49. The WINNET model is also anchored on knowledge development based on locally identified needs, which implies a creative combination of women's initiatives in entrepreneurship, and public promotion of joint action networks.
50. WRC acts as a focal point for generating and sharing knowledge and experience about women's issues, thus turning into a valuable asset for the development of a society. WRC can be a centre of information and documentation necessary for shaping perspectives and opinions on gender equality and for developing and using effective tools for promoting gender equality in the area. WRC is also a watchdog to ensure that women's interests are considered and protected in regional and local development work.
51. WRCs are indeed hubs for generating and sharing collective knowledge, as the centres offer conducive environments for women from different disciplinary backgrounds to interact with each other, different situations, contexts, processes and products, and thus be more creative, than homogenous groups. These creative settings then incite innovative solutions, which benefit both

women and their societies at large. As such a focal point, it helps women identify financial and other kinds of resources for realising their personal and professional development goals.

52. A key agent of knowledge generation with this model, is the WINNET Centre of Excellence ® (WCE), an international network of researchers promoting teaching, policy making and research on gender, innovation and sustainable development. The Centre documents, analyses, disseminates and mainstreams the experiences from Women's Resource Centres in Europe since the mid-90s. Combining several interdisciplinary approaches, its strategic research agenda is to increase understanding of the emergence, organization and results of WRCs and thus inform the future design of policy measures for regional growth. The Centre of Excellence aims to interlink researchers experienced in WRC involvement and to compile empirical data from WRC projects which have been funded by different EU programmes. Through joint identification of relevant research issues, joint applications for R&D projects, and joint strategies for influencing policies and practices, the Centre optimises the WRCs' impact on the European innovation system and EU policy programmes¹¹.
53. To summarize, the main difference of two models consists in the fact that WINNET model primarily addresses the needs of local women and aims to enhance local development through women's active engagement in social, economic and political life of the communities, while LEADER approach does not presume such gender focused actions. Trying to address women's needs, WINNET applies an approach which is mainly in line with the seven key features of LEADER, namely bottom-up approach, area-based approach, the local partnership, an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy, networking, innovation and cooperation. As described above, the main differences between two models may be found in the application of "area-based" and "local partnership" approaches.
54. One of the main features of the WINNET model that represents additional value and is not involved in the key features of LEADER is women empowerment and knowledge development. WRCs enhance and mobilise women's capacities, apply specialized toolkit, business and personal counselling, individual and group mentoring and networking WRCs encourage women to become competitive agents of development. In this regard, WRCs in Armenia have been particularly active in engaging vulnerable women: women with disabilities, victims of gender-based violence, the poor.

2. KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS

2.1. Motivation of Local Actors to Actively Engage in Community Development

55. Many local development models, including WINNET were introduced in Armenia directly by or with the support of international development partners. Therefore, motivation to engage in local development initiatives through these models was largely extrinsic and was being sustained within the framework of specific donor-funded initiatives.
56. The first resource centers in Armenia were established under proactive intervention of OSCE Office in Yerevan based on the WINNET Sweden model. Initially, women initiative groups were formed in four communities of the Syunik region: Goris, Kapan, Meghri and Sisian. According to the logic of the project, prior to the formal registration of initiative groups as women resource centers they should have engaged in voluntary work, addressed different community problems and consisted as teams and community development actors. As a result of this process, the initiative group in Sisian

¹¹Official Website of WINNET Sverige (accessed at <http://WINNET.se/>)

community dissolved, and in 2008 only three resource centers were founded with the support of the OSCE office in Yerevan: Meghri Women's Resource Center (NGO), Kapan Women's Resource Center (NGO) and Goris Women's Development Resource Center (Foundation)¹².

57. Later, Goris women's resource center with active collaboration of the other WRCs took the role of expanding the network and have assisted the formation of women initiative groups in other communities of Armenia. With the financial support of European Endowment for Democracy 3 women resource centers were established in 2015 in Yeghegnadzor, Sisian and Ijevan communities and currently, under EU-funded "Future Today: Empowering Women, Youth and Children for Deepening Democracy in Armenia" project, 3 resource centers are being formed in Berd, Vanadzor and Gyumri. It should be stated that the establishment of the first 3 WRCs and later expansion of the network differ to the extent of initiative and motivation from the grassroots.

We do not have any specific criteria of choosing communities for the establishment of WRCs, rather than the presence of a group of motivated women willing to make changes. However, our vision is to have WRCs all over Armenia and even assist in spreading WINNET model in the region. Within different platforms we are getting acquainted with active and promising women from different communities, who often express interest in our activities and willingness to cooperate. And if the need of having WRCs and contributing to community development is acknowledged, we start to work with local women and enhance their capacities. And after realizing that they can run a women's resource center on their own, we are trying to attract financial means and assist the initiative group to register WRC.

Goris Women's Resource Center

58. If the first women's initiative groups were established under proactive and intensive support of an international development actor, later establishment of WRCs is mainly based on the extensive local knowledge on successful practices of Syunik's WRCs and local women's clearly defined aspirations and willingness to join the network.

We were 6 women whose children were studying in the same class. We had to wait together for our children to finish classes. Day after day we became closer and revealed that we have similar interests and want to be socially active. We have started to produce handmade jewelry, initially for our use only and later for the business. Later, we have organized an exhibition of handmade products, and the president of Goris WRC was also present as an invitee. We have talked to each other and realized that our goals and ideas on community development are quite similar. This is how the decision of joining the network and establishing Vanadzor WRC was made.

Vanadzor Women's Initiative Group

59. Reflecting on the motivation of local people to contribute to community development, local actors from public, private and civil society sectors state that the level of local participation through existing formal and non-formal participatory mechanisms is not high and emphasize the challenges of motivating community members.
60. In regard to the participation in **local decision making**, local actors claim that community members are mainly unresponsive to the municipality calls for participation in community council meetings or public hearings. It is also stated that community members are not inclined to share the 'sense of responsibility' for community governance.

¹² Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016 .

People, especially in rural areas, are not inclined to participate in the discussion of community development strategies, as they have lots of daily problems and do not feel the responsibility to participate. They often say I have elected the community leader to solve those problems, why should I decide.

“Women for Development” NGO

61. On the other hand, representatives of local self-government bodies share examples of active public discussions in regard to different community problems, resulting in the overall consensus among community members on the ways and successions of addressing those problems. In this regard, along with applying formal mechanisms, proactive and targeted communication with the community, explaining the impact of those decisions on their personal and community life, is considered to be important.

As a matter of fact, announcements that tell only the time and place of the public hearing will not be enough to encourage participation. There is a need to further tell people the importance of the discussion, by saying, for example, that it will determine which street or play garden will be renovated. This was the case for the public discussion organized in January on subvention programmes. People have participated eagerly and voiced community problems. Of course, we were aware of those problems but we also learned how important they are for the community and what are their priorities.

Yeghegnadzor municipality

62. Interestingly, participants of the focus groups tend to be aware of the existing participation mechanisms of local decision-making, with some of them claiming that they periodically follow the invitation calls made by the municipalities via social network platforms. However, only in a few cases participants share their personal experience of participating in public discussions and having a ‘real impact’ on local decision-making.
63. In regard to the engagement of community members in **CSO or voluntary activities**, some representatives of WRCs claim that local people may have controversial attitudes towards the activities of NGOs and informal initiative groups. According to them, in contrast to the trustful relations with people who have cooperated with centers or benefited from their action, the general community may lack knowledge on the essence and role of civil society organizations and be sceptical about the abilities of an NGO or women to make tangible changes.

Women and resource centers may not be considered to be powerful enough to have significant input in community development. We hear expressions like: “They are women. What can they do?”, “It is not a state agency, it is not an international organization. What can a small local non-governmental organization do?”

Sisian Women’s Resource Center

64. Also, some of the interviewees stress lack of motivation among local people to be engaged in long-term voluntary work and non-paid community development actions, claiming that they are mostly concerned with everyday earnings.

People are mostly interested in their everyday earnings. Almost 99 percent of the appealing received by Goris municipality refer to personal material problems, and only a few of them refer to community problems expecting assistance of municipality in implementing community development initiatives.

Goris Municipality

65. Based on the assumption that in the current level of the socio-economic development of the communities the main concerns of community members are employment opportunities and everyday earnings, some of the interview participants consider perspectives of introducing workplaces as one of the most useful ways of motivating local people and engaging them in community development. Such a statement is also confirmed by general assumptions of focus group participants on community motivation and, in some cases, by their reflections on their personal drivers for joining WRC activities.

After working as a statistician for almost twenty years, I lost my job. When I was looking for opportunities to find a job or establish my own business, I heard about Sisian WRC. Engagement in WRC has greatly changed my life. It helped me to write a project proposal, to participate in capacity building trainings and start my own small business.

Focus group participant, Sisian community

66. The lack of motivation and community initiative is claimed to be particularly relevant to the situation in border villages, where the main concerns of the people are the security of their families and peace in the frontline. Moreover, border communities are claimed to be used to receiving donations, state, non-governmental and international aid programmes, also affecting the mentality of local people.

The situation at the border has greatly affected our mentality. It has made it challenging to dream bigger, to initiate long term-plans and run our own businesses, while it is much easier to think about earning money for today. We often sit and wait for someone to help us. However, many women here do quite a good job, run their small farms and businesses. They often don't have good management skills or sufficient access to market and do not believe in their abilities. There is a certain need to enhance their autonomy and motivate towards action.

Berd Women's Resource Center

67. The other frequently used technique by WRC representatives to motivate local people is building a reputation, showing tangible results of their activity, personal examples of making changes and overcoming challenges. The importance of seeing the tangible results of municipality and civil society actions is also raised by some participants of the focus groups, claiming that it is the necessary condition to build trust towards an organization and enhance motivation for having personal input.

The best lesson for a child is his/her parents' example, their behaviour. Maybe it is not the best or appropriate comparison, but it is rather illustrative.

Vanadzor Women Initiative Group

68. In general, the importance of continuous civic education aiming to enhance sense of ownership about and sense of belonging to a community are emphasized by some of the interview participants.

Educating people is also one of the main tasks of the community. For that reason, we are applying different techniques. We are even taking photos of the houses, which have beautiful gardens and share on our FB page expressing our thankfulness as a community. If some community-owned property is distorted, we are illustrating that fact also and telling that it is all ours.

Goris Municipality

69. Also, transparent and accountable governance and targeted communication with the community are considered to be essential by a municipality representative to build trustful relations with the community members and encourage a sense of justice and harmonize different interests.

The community council meetings are broadcasted and people see that everyone is equal and anyone can apply to the municipality. People see that there is no tolerance about corruption and there are no favourites among community members. Generally, we are trying to explain our decisions: e.g., water is firstly supplied to this part of the city, because it has more economic potential. The next one will be your neighbourhood.

Goris Municipality

70. In regard to challenges and possible ways of **motivating local actors from different sectors** to engage in community development initiatives, some experts emphasize common practice of pursuing narrowly defined private interests.
71. In this regard, motivating business organizations to actively engage in community development is, perhaps, the most mentioned challenge, as the main driver of the business organizations is considered to be a narrowly defined material profit. Interestingly, both through interviews and focus groups, participants tend to raise their concerns on the insufficient or ineffective engagement of business organizations rarely, in contrast to their expectations from local self-government bodies and civil society organizations.

In our society the culture of running socially responsible businesses is not well established and the businesses are mainly concerned with their material gains, which are expected to be seen in the very close future. The business organizations should be clearly shown that investing in community is not only for public good, but will in the long run contribute to the prosperity of their businesses, e.g. will enhance the flow of the tourists to the community.

Goris Women's Resource Center

72. In this regard, UNDP representative, also, reflecting on their experience of implementing joint projects with local businesses, states that at the initial stage of designing a project business organization should be clearly shown the potential of the project to provide favourable conditions for business activities to keep them motivated.
73. In the case of CSOs, the main concerns among interview participants refer to the inconsistency of local NGOs in pursuing their ideological goals. This fact, according to some interviewees, is conditioned by the institutional underdevelopment of local NGOs and their insufficient capacity to ensure financial sustainability.

Although, there are also institutionally developed CSOs who remain in the frames of their statutory goals, NGOs not always remain consistent in pursuing their goals and changing the course of action by the money flow. The race for finding financial resources may take most of their time.

"Dispro Line" LLC

74. The representatives of WRCs mainly claim that local self-government bodies are open and willing to support different community development initiatives. However, according to another opinion, community leaders may also be reluctant to contribute to the actions that are beyond their legislative obligations.

Sometimes, the head of the community should clearly see their interest to contribute. Perspectives of having tangible outcomes in the result of the project that can be also claimed to be the result of the municipality activities can significantly enhance the motivation of local

authorities and make cooperation easier. In this regard, visibility of their participation and input should be ensured.

RA National Institute of Labour and Social Research

75. It is also mentioned that it may appear easier for international development agencies to engage local actors in community development initiatives, as their expectations for tangible material results are higher and there is higher motivation to get engaged in 'bigger' or 'global' processes.
76. In general, two main ways of encouraging local actors from public, private and civil society actors are mentioned. Firstly, the role and importance of civic education is emphasized claiming also that it may be quite challenging to reach the point where public good is acknowledged by everyone.

A lot of factors matter. The knowledge, experience and even the public image of coaching organizations may have a significant impact. First of all, coaches should be the bearers of the ideas they are going to talk about.

UNDP Armenia

77. Secondly, the interests of all stakeholders should be taken into account before designing local development models, strategies and initiatives and there should be active engagement of different interest groups from the initial stage of planning.

To ensure effective participation of 3 sectors, we are initiating a participatory process of designing community development action plans, which is different from the requirements of law. We are conducting community needs assessment and, in this stage already we are distinguishing the bearers of those needs and trying to understand how each of the sectors may have an input in addressing local problems. We are organizing community meetings and trying to find motivation and interest in each sector necessary to ensure their active and purposeful participation.

UNDP Armenia

2.2. Cooperation Perspectives Among Different Sectors

78. Representatives of WRCs frequently reflect on successful cooperation practices with both local self-government bodies, businesses and academia, claiming that clearly defined community development goals, their professional communication with local stakeholders and ability to build trustful relations significantly support in gaining necessary assistance and implementing joint projects. By reclaiming the fact that successful cooperation may very often be based on the recognition of private interests of each actor and ability to motivate them, WRC representatives also share examples of cooperation driven exclusively by the community development incentives.

In Ijevan, we have also successfully cooperated with one of the most successful business holdings in Armenia. They immediately responded and approved our idea of renovating the part of the public kinder-garden. By seeing us as a trustful partner, they continued to assist different development initiatives. It was a pure act of social responsibility, they did not expect nothing in return, even advertising.

Berd Women's Resource Center

79. WRCs mainly regard cooperation with **municipal authorities** as fruitful, and the most mentioned forms of the cooperation are resource allocation from community budget, provision of community-owned office areas, information sharing, as well as participation of WRCs in local decision-making.

The representative of Goris municipality also mentions the common practice of working together with local NGOs to design and implement community development projects.

We have experience of successful cooperation with the municipality. We are the only non-governmental organization that has received office space for 10-year possession. Initially it was in a very poor condition, we have renovated the place and it is quite welcoming. Seeing our efforts and the change we are making, after the 10-year municipality agreed to provide another office area nearby, we have renovated it within a project and turned it into Teahouse-studio.

Meghri Women's Resource Center

80. Representatives of WRCs, reflecting on their cooperation experience **with the organizations from private, civil society sectors and academia**, also mention different success stories and state that trustful partner relations built within a specific project or for addressing specific issues tend to sustain for further community development initiatives.

There were a lot of professional issues to be addressed for initiating and successfully running the greenhouse project. For that reason, we applied to the Sisian branch of Agrarian University for providing professional assistance. Two agriculturists were involved in the project development stage. The cooperation was continuous and they continued to provide professional assistance during the project implementation and even supported to introduce the project in different networking events and gain the attention of donor organizations.

Sisian Women's Resource Center

81. Local self-government bodies, businesses and academic institutions that used to cooperate with WRCs tend to evaluate the collaboration as fruitful and tangible, mentioning joint implementation of sectoral programmes, active participation of WRCs in local decision making and community events.

The cooperation with WRC has greatly affected the way I look at things, it helps to develop alternative thinking. While planning circles of sport school, I have acknowledged that there are only circles that mostly boys prefer here, we have suggested to include sports that attract girls.

Goris municipality

82. Establishing fruitful cooperative relations **among local NGOs** is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks, as NGOs, according to some WRC representatives, tend to be engaged in competing rather than cooperative relations. In some cases, it is regarded to be more difficult for an NGO to effectively cooperate with local civil society actors rather than engage actors from public and private sectors.

We tried to contact an NGO dealing with gender equality issues, even suggested signing a memorandum of Cooperation to fight against domestic violence, but we could not arrive at an agreement.

Goris Women's Resource Center

83. In general, throughout the interviews and focus groups, participants tend to evaluate the **overall level of local multi sectoral cooperation** to be insufficient and institutionally underdeveloped. It is also claimed that the success and failure of the cooperation may rather depend on personal connections, political affiliations and mutual attitudes of different community-based organizations, than joint development vision and goals.

In our society, organizations are often associated with their manager. The fact that my family and I used to have political disagreement and conflict with the previous governor of Syunik marz greatly affected the work of Goris Women's Resource Center. I can bring just one example: after organizing a meeting of active women from Syunik marz with the female politician from opposition, the governor called me and required me to "leave the region". Even seeing the efforts and visible achievements of the center, such as creating new workplaces in the Syunik region, regional and municipal governments have not supported it. As a result of recent political developments, people in governing bodies have changed, and the situation has changed.

Goris Women's Resource Center

84. Further, the absence of dialogue and joint working culture are mentioned by some of interviewees as the main factors resulting in isolated operation of each stakeholder, prevailing stereotypes on and criticism of each other's actions. It should be noted that interviews with the representatives of different sectors also tend to reveal certain criticism and expectations from other local actors to make cooperation fruitful.
85. More often, the role of community leader and their personal features are considered to be crucial in harmonizing different interests and ensuring fruitful multi sectoral cooperation at community level.

In my opinion, the head of community has a big influence on the project implementation. In the communities where the mayor is cooperative and motivated, usually projects are successful. Unfortunately, local authorities may pursue their private interests, and in order to make cooperation possible their material and non-material benefits should be clearly shown.

RA National Institute of Labour and Social Research.

86. Further, importance of transparent and accountable working of local self-government bodies and functional democratic governance are emphasized by civil society and business representatives. In the most target communities WRC representatives consider municipal authorities to be proactive in informing on public hearings and encouraging NGOs to participate and express their viewpoints. However, across the interviews and focus groups, the opinions are divided on the actual outcomes of the participatory process: on one hand it is claimed that evidence-based and progressive considerations are taken into account, on the other hand discussions are mainly considered to have formal nature not having actual impact on reforms.
87. Reflecting on the cooperation practices with CSOs, a municipality representative mentions the 'project-based' approach and insufficient consistency of CSOs in addressing local needs as one of the main hindrances of bilateral cooperation.

An NGO may conduct a budget monitoring programme and achieve tangible results. However, the project ends and when it comes to discussing the annual budget plan, the NGO does not participate. Actually, we are calling NGOs one by one and inviting them to participate in public hearings. While designing community development and working plans we are also asking for recommendations but often do not receive answers.

Goris Municipality

88. The representatives of local self-government bodies and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure also mention the insufficient level of cooperation with local authorities within different community development initiatives considering it as a significant hindrance to effectively and sustainably addressing local needs.

Different grant projects are implemented in the community addressing a wide range of issues. The problem is the insufficient level of cooperation with local authorities and other stakeholders, whereas municipal authorities are quite aware of the real needs and resources of the community and may effectively contribute.

RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

89. For enhanced engagement of private sector companies in community development initiatives the role of municipal authorities is emphasized to provide favourable conditions for business development and proactively engage them in design and implementation of local strategies.

Before having any expectations from the local business sector, LSGs should provide favourable conditions for businesses. We are thinking about setting tourism tax, however until we have not provided all favourable conditions for local businesses, such as renovated streets and street lighting, we cannot put the tax. We have discussed those ideas of introducing alternative taxes with business sector representatives and, interestingly, they do not mind, they appreciate our work and express their willingness to make their input.

Goris municipality

Business should be seen as one of the most prospective actors for economic development of the community, not just an investing unit, as it is today. There are many small and mid-scale businesses (especially touristic), which can promote development of communities if they are engaged in discussions and strategy planning processes with local authorities.

"Dispro Line" LTD

90. Some of the representatives of civil society and international development agencies, reflecting on their experience of working with local businesses, stress that cooperation with established businesses is different from those that have been initially supported by their organizations. In the latter case businesses are claimed to be more socially responsibility and the relations are already based on mutual trust and shared values.
91. More often, local authorities and NGOs are considered to be actors who should initiate and promote multi-actor dialogue and cooperation at local level.
92. In general, the need for understanding benefits of joint work and cooperation by all local stakeholders is emphasized. Lack of knowledge and narrowly defined interests of different actors are considered to be main factors preventing them from full realization of the potential input of other stakeholders in pursuing their goals and greatly affecting their motivation.

LSGs should see business development as one of the main ways to enhance effectiveness of local self-governance and to develop the community. Very often LSGs do not have such understanding and they may even see businesses as competitors for the provision of certain services, e.g. scavenging. Business organizations, in their turn, should see community development as a necessary precondition for successfully running and enlarging their businesses.

Goris municipality

93. This fact is claimed to greatly affect successful application of the one of existing community development mechanisms introduced by RA Government in the form of subvention programmes, state budget allocations earmarked for specific projects requested by the communities.¹³

It will be more effective if the local business participates together with the local authorities while designing subvention programmes. CSOs can also significantly contribute with their ideas and capacities. In this case, the “investment” into the community will be more effective and targeted for further development.

RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

94. According to some experts, the cooperation among business, local authorities and CSOs will work if they are engaged from the very beginning of the process and work together to explore community needs, prioritize issues and develop local strategies. On the other hand, the collaboration may fail in the case when one side raises an issue and expects the others to join in half way.
95. Further, to minimize the effect of ‘human factor’, one of the interview participants emphasizes the importance of structured cooperation, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of each sector, claiming that those rules should be the result of agreement among local actors and conscious participation, not forced from the external actors.

We were developing a strategic plan for combating poverty and should have engaged civil society representatives in the process. NGOs were expected to select representatives, however discussions lasted hours and days. As a result, we have acknowledged the need to set concrete indicators for the selection. Firstly, we have derived sectors such as education, social protection and health. Then, for each sector we have developed criteria for the appointment of representative NGOs, discussed those indicators with civil society representatives and finally came to the agreement. If criteria are decided precisely, the competition will loosen and it will be easier to construct dialogue and cooperation.

UNDP Armenia

96. The representative of an NGO, having implemented different community development initiatives, also claims that relations of local stakeholders have their specific characteristics and challenges, and it would be very difficult to have one common guideline/instruction relevant for all communities. In this regard, the importance of developing thorough knowledge on local relations and drivers of each actor is stressed.

2.3. Leadership Models and Management Processes

97. Establishment of a Women’s Resource Center has its grounds in the existing resources and specific features of a given community, region and country. However, regardless of the particularities of each community, the idea of establishing a WRC comes from a group of women who get together to consolidate and address women’s needs and engage in local and regional development.
98. To earn legitimacy as a representative of women’s interests, to be able to generate financial resources for their operations, and to manage their activities effectively, women’s initiative groups formalize their status and register officially at some point. Legal-organization forms of WRCs differ across countries depending on the general legal environment, including voluntary associations,

¹³Government Decree 1708-N on Approving the Procedure for Provision of RA State Budget Subventions to Communities Adopted on 16.11.2006.

NGOs, cooperatives or foundations. In some cases, WRCs have chosen to join another organization with a similar mission, as an adjacent entity.¹⁴

99. Regardless of the type of legal-organizational form, WRCs are expected to reflect the basic principles of WINNET mission in their statutes, specifically openness to women in the geographical area of its location and to all professional/vocational groups; internal democracy; management by women for women; participation of men sharing WINNET values; promotion of an equal society and sustainable development.¹⁵
100. Management structures and procedures also differ across countries and depend on the legal status of the WRC. However, a key approach which WRCs share universally is ensuring **internal democratic procedures** in all aspects of work in a WRC. Interestingly, WRC representatives also tend to mention the importance of participatory decision-making and equality, while referring to leadership and management as factors for successful design and implementation of local development models. The effect of applied leadership and management processes on the effective functioning of WRCs is not touched.
101. In Armenia, some of the WRCs (Goris, Sisian, Yeghegnadzor, Berd) have chosen foundation as a form of their registration, to keep their sustainability, because according to the RA law on foundations this kind of organizations can open LLCs and gain benefits.¹⁶ While the others registered as NGO (Meghri) to have more opportunities to apply for grant projects. Throughout in-depth interviews, WRCs mainly give importance to the registration form of the centers as a factor influencing their sustainability and not affecting internal democratic processes.

Goris Women's Resource Center was registered as a foundation. There are resource centers that are also registered as foundations which will let them have opportunities to run business and keep their financial stability. Although after changes on RA Law on Non-Governmental Organizations NGO also has the opportunity to open LLC and make a profit.

Goris Women's Resource Center

102. The annual Assembly of WINNET Armenia is the highest decision-making body of the network. The governing body between annual meetings is the coordinating Board, which consists of 5 members and is elected by the Assembly. At each annual meeting the board reports on the WRC performance, including the scope of the WRC activities carried out during the year, results achieved and challenges faced, as well as financial reports. The important part of the annual meeting is a presentation to the board recommending a work plan for the next year which is being discussed and confirmed by the members.¹⁷ The importance of annual meetings for ensuring transparency and consistency of WRC's activities, as well as for knowledge and expertise sharing are emphasized by the majority of interviewed WRC representatives.
103. At a WRC level, the board is responsible for division of work at WRC. It specifies the tasks of the board members, and defines the working procedures of the center.¹⁸ The members of the board play an important role in the organization's developments and strategies. Throughout the interviews, motivation and enthusiasm of the board members, their personal features and leadership skills are considered to be crucial for sustainably supporting women and establishing the legitimacy of WRCs as an actor in development work for sustainable growth.

¹⁴Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶RA law on Foundation; Adopted on 26.12.2002, entered into force 22.02.2003.

¹⁷Rules of Procedure of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers. Adopted on 30.11.2018.

¹⁸Ibid

104. Another factor positively influencing effectiveness and multi-sectoral nature of WRC activities, as well as cooperation with local stakeholders is considered to be the fact that WRCs in different communities strive to engage board members representing different fields of public activity and being occupied in public, private and academic institutions of the community.

There is differentiation of our roles based on our profession and current occupation. For example, the member who is also a member at the city council, mostly deals with the empowerment of women, enhancing their role in politics. Another board member deals with the social issues, referring to the beneficiaries, collecting and distributing clothes, food and other highly important first aid goods to the beneficiaries. The other one deals with the psychological support and health issues.

Yeghegnadzor Women's Resource Center

105. Board appoints a WRC executive who is responsible for day-to-day operations of the center. The executive is the liaison between the board and the WRC staff. The staff holding a position higher than the executive in the organizational hierarchy still works on tasks the latter assigns them.¹⁹ Clear distribution of work and delegation of roles and responsibilities are considered to be essential by some WRC representatives for effective functioning of a WRC.
106. Another important aspect of WRC management is considered to be enrolment of beneficiaries, inasmuch as beneficiaries are considered to be the main drivers of the organization's future development. Among the researched organizations, beneficiaries are recruited taking into account the community priorities and WRC's strategic dimension.

We are trying to make more emphasis on engaging vulnerable women, such as alone elderly or poor women.

Sisian Women's Resource Center

107. During the interviews WRC representatives pay attention to the beneficiaries enrolling mechanisms and criteria. The majority of interviewees note that the most powerful mechanisms for engaging citizens and reaching target groups in the regions are personal connections and cooperation with local stakeholders, claiming that formal enrolment mechanisms may not appear to be effective.

During the years of work, we had developed databases for women from vulnerable groups, also in cooperation with other actors, such as police of RA, municipality and social workers. Understanding that youth is not active in regions, we were intensively cooperating with universities to engage them in our activities.

Goris Women's Resource Center

¹⁹Rules of Procedure of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers. Adopted on 30.11.2018.

2.4. Sustainability of Local Development Models

108. Ensuring sustainability and continuity of actions are also among most emphasized challenges for successful design and implementation of local development models. Most frequently, **sustainability of financial resources, strategic planning and capacities of local actors** are viewed as crucial factors for ensuring long-term intervention possible.

2.4.1. Sustainability of financial resources

109. Evidently, throughout the interviews, scarcity of financial resources and insufficient ability of local actors to ensure financial sustainability are the most referred factors hindering effective and sustainable intervention. Such a statement is considered to be particularly true for the operations of local self-government bodies and the civil society sector. In the case of local self-government bodies, the issues of insufficient community budgets and lack of mechanisms and tools for the promotion of economic activity are emphasized.

One of the main problems is scarce financial resources of the communities, the community should have an opportunity to gain alternative finances. One of such financial sources may serve 10% of income tax, as applied in Georgia. For that, competition among communities will be enhanced, businesses will assist LSGs to receive the financial means. Nowadays, LSGs do not have many options and mechanisms to promote economic activity.

Goris Municipality

110. On the other hand, some of the interview participants mention that there are still mechanisms present at local level that are underused by local stakeholders and have the potential to sustain multi sectoral cooperation and enhance socio-economic development of the community. In this regard, the role of municipal authorities is mainly emphasized and the opportunities of enhancing multi sectoral cooperation through joint design of subvention programmes and delegation of community services are mentioned.

We do not have a culture of joint work. Communities are applying for subventions and may delegate implementation of subvention programmes to the business sector. However, LSGs do not always know how to announce tenders and delegate services, and the private sector also is not aware of such opportunities. Civil society may also provide services with state budget means. Hence, there are mutual interests around which cooperation may work. But with the absence of knowledge, wild competition prevails.

UNDP Armenia

111. In regard to the interventions of international development agencies and non-governmental organizations, some of the interviewers claim that they are often project-based and stop with the end of financial support.

112. In this regard, some of the interviewed civil society and municipality representatives stress the role of state agencies and targeted state programmes to support the efforts of local stakeholders and enhance sustainability of community development initiatives.

The ministry always tries to support initiative groups, organizations and other institutions that plan to implement activities with the local community development component. However, the ministry or the department does not have specific strategy or any regulations for support, it is just based on the will.

RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

113. In the case of the WINNET model, continuity of WRC actions is provided through basic activities, which vary from a WRC to another and across countries. The basic activities of each WRC are bound to the needs of the specific community and/or region, where they are based. WRCs regularly conduct needs assessment to identify the direction of their main activities for a given period.²⁰
114. For ensuring financial sustainability, WRCs across the world, depending on the type of legal organization form, apply membership fees; donations to specific operations or projects; support from partners, e.g. provision of free premises, or access to office equipment; income from commercial services and social enterprises; service fees from project participants and voluntary contributions.²¹
115. In Armenia, adjacent to some WRCs small **social enterprises** have been launched which provide local women with opportunities for sustainable income and secure a continuous financial resource for WRCs. Moreover, social entrepreneurship promotes socio-economic development of rural communities through strengthening capacities of rural women, creating sustainable income opportunities, enhancing quality and competitiveness of the existing products and addressing different community needs.
116. Since 2010, WINNET Armenia, supported by international development partners and local communities, has helped over 150 rural women artisans and entrepreneurs to engage in WRC handicrafts studios by crafting carpets, pottery, crochet, and needlework; to introduce quality control schemes; and generate sustainable income. Since 2009, it has established handicraft studios across the Syunik region, engaging women and girls in vocational education and ensuring income generation for them. WINNET Armenia's social entrepreneurship initiatives have been inspired by its first endeavour - Goris Crochet Studio, a local handicraft brand.²²
117. The Wool-to-Carpet Studio is another key social initiative of Goris WRC, which successfully revived a post-industrial site into a modern manufacturing facility, turning it into a successfully operating social enterprise and an attractive tourist destination. Later, successful social enterprise projects have been designed and implemented in other communities of Armenia, such as Tea-studio in Meghri, organizing a constant exhibition of local products; Greenhouse in Sisian, where women are cultivating organic vegetables and implement social assistance actions to families in need; and a small production of dried fruits in Yeghegnadzor, donating its products to local kindergarten. At the time of interviews, other social entrepreneurship projects were in the stage of design, as stated by WRC representatives.
118. WRCs' experience in social entrepreneurship shows that successful initiatives rely heavily on local market demand, as well as clearly identified local resources and needs. Involvement of local and international experts in product development is also regarded as an effective instrument.
119. In regard to the overall challenges and hindrances of social entrepreneurship development in Armenia, interview participants mainly mention lack of strategic approach of state agencies, absence of necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, SE promotion mechanisms and tools. The existing legislative framework implies the same regulations for running business organizations and social enterprises. It should be mentioned that those problems are expected to be addressed by the

²⁰Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016.

²¹Ibid

²²Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women's Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016.

Concept on Social Entrepreneurship Development, currently being developed by RA Ministry of Economy.²³

At least 20 mandatory tasks are addressed by RA Law on Local self-government to be ensured by each community. The first two tasks refer to ensuring sustainable development of the community and ensuring a favourable environment for business and entrepreneurship development. This means that the local authorities should support local entrepreneurs with the possible resources – area, financial, organizational assistance and etc. However, tasks entitled to communities are not enough, since all the necessary legal, regulatory frameworks and instruments are not in place. There should be cooperation between the ministries – Min. Economy, MLSA, MTAI, in order to put all the mechanisms and instruments for social entrepreneurship development.

RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

2.4.2. Strategic Planning

120. Clearly defined vision of community development, effective and jointly designed local strategies, consistency and cooperation of local actors in pursuing common goals are necessary preconditions for ensuring sustainable development of the communities. Those issues are raised throughout the interviews with the local actors of all sectors, as well as representatives of international development and state agencies.
121. In the current model of local self-governance, the main strategic document for community development is a 5-year strategic development plan, developed by the head of the community and adopted by the Council of Elders.²⁴ The strategic development plan is assumed to reflect the results of analysis on socio-economic situation of the community, community needs and locally available financial, economic, natural and human resources.²⁵ However, some of the interviewees state that, in practice, local development strategies are not based on the thorough evaluation of community needs and resources and are often ‘copy pasted from the previous community development plans’ with the same definitions of the community problems. Even strategic development plans of different communities may resemble, with strong and weak features described in the same way.
122. Moreover, the importance of having and clearly formulating community development vision is considered to be of significant importance.

In Goris case, municipal authorities have come to the realization of the cornerstone of community development: promoting the local economy. There are communities that are just investing in infrastructures, which is proved to be not effective in terms of community development. And the main focus is done on tourism development and by improving infrastructure we always have in our minds how it should affect business and tourism development. As a result, more businesses want to provide services: if 2 years ago we had only 7-8 building permits, nowadays there are 170-180.

Goris Municipality

²³Concept Paper on Social Entrepreneurship (Draft), 2017, Yerevan.

²⁴RA Law on Local Self-government; Adopted on 07.05.2002; entered into force 21.06.2002

²⁵Ibid

123. It should be mentioned that the most mentioned way of municipality representatives to conduct need assessment are citizens' reception and face-to-face meetings. Other mechanisms are establishing public councils adjacent to the head of the community to address specific aspects of community development, project-based need-assessment surveys and statistical reports of agricultural departments.

In cooperation with local civil society organizations we have organized an anonymous inquiry among 300 youngsters of the community to reveal their needs. It was an effective way to discover the problems.

Berd Municipality

124. Ensuring effective public participation and engagement of local actors in strategic planning is considered to be important not only to reflect interests and needs of different stakeholders and design more effective strategic development documents but also to develop 'sense of ownership' among local actors and enhancing further cooperation for community development. In this regard, along with formal platforms of local participation, prescribed by RA Law on Local Self-Government and decisions of the Community Councils on rules and procedures of public participation in local self-government, the importance of proactive actions of local authorities are emphasized.

Everything has changed in terms of relations between the citizens and the local authorities. The meetings became more systematic and intensive. Couple of meetings were organized at our hotel. Different sector representatives (culture, business and other) were gathering together to discuss projects and initiatives for the local development. It was voluntary based, and it was pure discussion and plants for development of the community.

"Mirhav" hotel

125. The representatives of civil society organizations also reflect on their experience of bringing together representatives of different sectors and the process of compiling and harmonizing interests of different groups:

We are going to work with a small group (8-10 people) in order to collect and raise community issues, changes to be brought to the community. Those active community members will conduct surveys in their communities by going to the houses of community members and asking them on the main community issues and their probable solutions. Most probably, 70-80% of the families of those communities will be engaged in this survey. Representatives of different social groups will express their thoughts based on which the community development strategy will be developed.

"Women for Development" NGO

126. At the same time, to ensure uninterrupted implementation of civil society and international development community efforts, the importance of taking the considerations of the local authorities and cooperating with them in all stages of community development projects is emphasized by municipality and MTAI representatives, claiming that successful partnership may create opportunities for making intervention continuous even after financing ends.
127. In general, in the case of civil society organizations, along with financial sustainability, the idea and vision, consistency in pursuing organizational goals are considered to be of crucial importance for ensuring sustainability of actions.

The biggest guarantee of our stability is our team. We know our goal and unite to reach it. There were times when almost a year we were working without any finance and salary, but nobody left us. Now people seeing our work and achievements want to invest and cooperate with us.

Goris Women's Resource Center

128. In Armenia, WRCs manage their activities in line with a mid-term (usually four years) strategy, which is adopted by the Annual Assembly of the network which highlights the main priorities of the network on which they will focus for a given period and is essential for providing consistency of WRC activities to the vision and goals of WINNET model.
129. In addition, WRCs implement their activities according to annual work plans, prepared by the board and adopted by the members at the annual meeting. The interviewees note that ensuring **effective participation** in this process and assessing the needs and resources of a particular community is a cornerstone for effective and targeted activities of the organization.

Arriving at a common focus and common goals is essential and it is ensured through women's inclusion in planning the WRC work. A WRC is a democratic and learning organisation, which is necessary to continuously develop the centre's capacities. In the process of developing our strategic priorities and action plans we are doing an assessment analysis to understand the needs of local women.

Goris Women's Resource Center

2.4.3. Human Resources and Capacities of Local Actors

130. Representatives of all sectors mention insufficient capacities of local actors and scarce human resources as crucial factors hindering the effective implementation of local development actions. They refer to the difficulties of finding specific professionals from different backgrounds, as well as insufficient job-related capacities of people engaged in public, private and civil society organizations.

For our community it is difficult to engage professionals, we do not have qualified financial and procurement specialists. Usually, if we have such issues, we ask local businesses, private organisations and workers to help us.

Berd municipality

131. Local actors of different sectors particularly stress the insufficiency of project design and management and English language skills, preventing them from applying to the calls announced by the international development agencies. Representative of the newly established Berd WRC also mentions the need for enhanced knowledge on business planning and promotion. Another interview participant expresses concerns on the level of knowledge on the regulatory framework of local self-government and insufficient strategic planning skills. Also, the importance of organizing capacity-building activities for the representatives of all sectors and implying continuous mentoring activities is emphasized, inasmuch as assistance may be needed in everyday working with community.
132. In some cases, community consolidation is considered to have a positive impact on the ability of communities to engage more competitive professionals. However, the issue of low salaries unattractive to qualified professionals remains relevant. Also, legislative framework prohibiting community servants from undertaking other kinds of activity and lack of other promotion

mechanisms, such as social packages and reimbursed health services result in competitive staff leaving. The same issue is raised also by the representatives of WRCs, stating that engagement in an NGO activity often presume voluntary or law-paid work thus creating problems with ensuring continuous and sustainable work of WRCs.

When being elected as an MP, I had to leave my position as the director of Sisian WRC. It was a quite difficult task to find a replacement for that position. It is an issue to find a person who would agree to work and dedicate time for community development on a voluntary basis.

National Assembly of RA

133. To provide sustainability of the WINNET model and engage WRC beneficiaries as active actors in community development, one of the key directions of WRC activities is assisting local women to take initiative and run their own projects and businesses. In other cases, women are assisted to become competitive and get engaged in the labour market. For that reason, a wide range of capacity building activities are organized and their personal networks are enhanced.
134. The participants of focus groups also stress the positive impact of WRCs on their life, describing examples of using acquired capacities through further professional careers. In other cases, WRC activities have supported them to become engaged in politics or start and run their own businesses. In the latter case, the input of WRCs is considered to be essential not only due to capacity building activities, but also search for business assistance programmes, joint business planning and proposal writing activities. Such collaboration, according to some WRC representatives, allows to involve the social entrepreneurship component in newly establishing business of the community and enhance socially responsible business class.

I have participated in almost all the trainings and capacity building activities organized by WRC. Now, I am the one who conducts trainings and I am extensively using that knowledge in my daily work.

Focus group participant, Sisian community

I am a mother who alone takes care for two children. I have participated in carpet-weaving training, and now I am using my skills to earn money and take care of my family.

Focus group participant, Goris community

135. The other participants state that the participation in WRC activities enhances women's self-confidence, especially those from vulnerable groups.

When a woman has a job, she becomes self-confident to raise her voice in the family and outside. Sometimes, I see women who used to have financial or psychological problems completely changing their attitudes to their abilities and even starting to change their appearance.

Focus group participant, Goris community

136. The engagement in WRC activities is claimed to enhance women's knowledge on different aspects of community life and to change attitudes towards community problems.

We are gaining very practical knowledge on the possible ways of addressing personal or community problems. Most importantly the way we look at things changes. By seeing violations of ecological norms by hydroelectric power stations, I would have just passed by, now we are taking photos and sending them to responsible bodies.

Focus group participant, Meghri community

3. CONCLUSIONS

To summarise the findings from this research study, the following points can be highlighted:

137. Taking into account that development needs and problems are quite similar across the communities, local development models and initiatives often face common challenges while trying to successfully contribute to community development. Hence, the experience and expertise of women resource centers may be useful for the effective application of LEADER approach, especially given the fact the two models have common features and principles of activity.
138. The main difference of two models consists in the fact that WINNET model primarily addresses the needs of local women and aims to enhance local development through women's active engagement in social, economic and political life of the communities, while LEADER approach does not presume such gender focused actions. Trying to address women's needs, WINNET applies an approach which is mainly in line with the seven key features of LEADER, namely bottom-up approach, area-based approach, the local partnership, an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy, networking, innovation and cooperation. The main differences between two models may be found in the application of "area-based" and "local partnership" approaches.
139. One of the main features of the WINNET model that represents additional value and is not involved in the key features of LEADER is women empowerment, mobilization of women's resources. WRCs enhance and mobilise women's capacities, apply specialized toolkit, business and personal counselling, individual and group mentoring and networking WRCs encourage women to become competitive agents of development. In this regard, WRCs in Armenia have been particularly active in engaging vulnerable women: women with disabilities, victims of gender-based violence, the poor.
140. Throughout the case study on the introduction and practice of the WINNET model of women's resource centers, the following key factors are referred as cornerstones for effective design and implementation of local development models in Armenia: (i) motivation of local actors to actively engage in the strategic development of their community; (ii) cooperation perspectives among different sectors; (iii) leadership models and management structures/processes; (iv) sustainability of local development models.

(i) Motivation of Local Actors to Actively Engage in Strategic Development of Their Community

141. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the level of local participation through existing formal and non-formal participatory mechanisms is not considered high and challenges of motivating community members are emphasized. In regard to the participation in local decision making, the unresponsiveness of community members to the official announcements of LSG bodies on community council meetings or public hearings is emphasized. On the other hand, it is claimed that proactive and targeted communication with the community, explaining the impact of those decisions on their personal and community life may result in active public discussions.
142. In regard to the engagement of community members in CSO or voluntary activities, local people may lack knowledge on the essence and role of civil society organizations and be sceptical about the abilities of an NGO or women to make tangible changes. Also, local people may be mostly concerned with everyday earnings and lack sufficient motivation to be engaged in long-term voluntary work and non-paid community development actions. In this regard, perspectives of introducing workplaces is considered to be one of the most useful ways of motivating local people and engaging them in community development.

143. The lack of motivation and community initiative tend to be particularly relevant to the situation in border villages, where the main concerns of the people are the security of their families and donations, state, non-governmental and international aid programmes have significantly affected the mentality of local people.
144. In regard to challenges and possible ways of motivating local actors from different sectors, the issues of isolated operation and common practice of pursuing narrowly defined private interests seem to be crucial, with business organizations pursuing daily material profit and not implying long-term business planning, NGOs showing inconsistency in pursuing their ideological goals and being occupied with a 'race to find financial resources' and community leaders being reluctant to contribute to the actions that are beyond their legislative obligations.
145. Also, it may appear easier for international development agencies to engage local actors in community development initiatives, as their expectations for tangible material results are higher and there is higher motivation to get engaged in 'bigger' or 'global' processes.
146. Interestingly, both through interviews and focus groups, participants tend to raise their expectations and concerns on the insufficient or ineffective engagement of business organizations more rarely, in contrast to their expectations from local self-government bodies and civil society organizations.

(ii) Cooperation Perspectives Among Different Sectors

147. Successful cooperation practices and joint projects with both local self-government bodies, businesses and academia tend to be based on clearly defined community development goals of the particular initiative, their professional communication and ability to build trustful relations with local stakeholders. Meanwhile, establishing fruitful cooperative relations with local NGOs may appear to be more challenging rather than engaging actors from public or private sectors.
148. In general, throughout the interviews and focus groups, the overall level of local multi-sectoral cooperation is considered to be insufficient and institutionally underdeveloped. The success and failure of the cooperation seem to depend on personal connections, political affiliations and mutual attitudes of different community-based organizations, rather than joint development vision and goals.
149. Further, the absence of dialogue and joint working culture seem to be crucial factors resulting in isolated operation of each stakeholder, prevailing stereotypes on and criticism of each other's actions. It should be noted that interviews with the representatives of different sectors also tend to reveal certain criticism and expectations from other local actors to make cooperation fruitful.
150. In general, there is a certain need for understanding benefits of joint work and cooperation by all local stakeholders. Lack of knowledge and narrowly defined interests tend to prevent them from full realization of the potential input of other stakeholders in pursuing their goals and greatly affecting their motivation.

(iii) Leadership Models and Management Structures/Processes

151. Regardless of the specific characteristics of each community, local development initiatives tend to succeed when these are based on grassroots groups, e.g. local women in the case of WINNET model.
152. When these initiatives are formalised, their legal-organization forms, management structures and procedures may differ across countries depending on the general legal environment. However,

local development models should have clearly defined principles of leadership and management, which, in the case of WINNET model are: openness to women in the geographical area of its location and to all professional/vocational groups; internal democracy; management by women for women; participation of men sharing WINNET values; promotion of an equal society and sustainable development.

153. Several factors may have an impact on the effectiveness of management structures and processes, namely clear distribution of work and delegation of roles and responsibilities, as well as ensuring transparency and consistency of activities to strategic development plans appear to be crucial.
154. Moreover, motivation and enthusiasm of the management, their personal features and leadership skills seem to be crucial for sustainably addressing local needs and establishing the legitimacy of particular initiative as an actor in development work.
155. Another factor positively influencing effectiveness and multi-sectoral nature of local development actions, well as cooperation with local stakeholders may appear to be participatory and inclusive process of forming the management. E.g., in the case of WINNET model, WRCs in different communities strive to engage board members representing different fields of public activity and being occupied in public, private and academic institutions of the community.
156. Inasmuch as community members are the main drivers of local development, the enrolment mechanisms of beneficiaries of particular initiative are of crucial importance. In the case of WINNET model, beneficiaries are recruited taking into account the community priorities and WRC's strategic dimension. Interestingly, some of the most powerful mechanisms for engaging citizens and reaching target groups in the regions seem to be personal connections and cooperation with local stakeholders.

(vi) Sustainability of Local Development Models

157. Throughout the interviews, sustainability of financial resources, strategic planning and capacities of local actors are viewed as crucial factors for ensuring long-term and sustainable intervention possible.
158. Evidently, **scarcity of financial resources** and **insufficient ability of local actors to ensure financial sustainability** are among the most referred factors to hinder effective and sustainable intervention. Such a statement tends to be particularly true for the operations of local self-government bodies and the civil society sector. On the other hand, it is claimed that there are still mechanisms present at local level that are underused by local stakeholders. In this regard, the role of municipal authorities appears to be crucial for enhancing multi sectoral cooperation through joint design of subvention programmes and delegation of community services.
159. The role of state agencies and targeted state programmes are also considered important to support the efforts of local stakeholders and enhance sustainability of community development initiatives.
160. In the case of the WINNET model, continuity of WRC actions is provided through basic activities, which vary from a WRC to another and across countries. The basic activities of each WRC are bound to the needs of the specific community and/or region, where they are based. WRCs regularly conduct needs assessment to identify the direction of their main activities for a given period.
161. In Armenia, adjacent to some WRCs small social enterprises have been launched which provide local women with opportunities for sustainable income and secure a continuous financial resource for WRCs. Moreover, social entrepreneurship promotes socio-economic development of rural communities through strengthening capacities of rural women, creating sustainable income

opportunities, enhancing quality and competitiveness of the existing products and addressing different community needs.

162. In regard to the overall challenges and hindrances of social entrepreneurship development in Armenia, lack of strategic approach of state agencies, as well as absence of necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, SE promotion mechanisms and tools seem to be of crucial importance. The existing legislative framework implies the same regulations for running business organizations and social enterprises.
163. In addition, **clearly defined vision of community development, effective and jointly designed local strategies, consistency** and cooperation of **local actors** in pursuing common goals appear to be necessary preconditions for ensuring sustainable development of the communities.
164. In the current model of local self-governance, the main strategic document for community development is a 5-year strategic development plan, developed by the head of the community and adopted by the Council of Elders. However, strategic development plans may not to be based on the thorough evaluation of community needs and resources and be 'copy pasted from the previous community development plans' with the same definitions of the community problems. Even strategic development plans of different communities may resemble, with strong and weak features described in the same way. Moreover, the absence of having and clearly formulating community development vision is considered to be a significant hindrance.
165. Ensuring effective public participation and engagement of local actors in strategic planning is also considered to be important not only to reflect interests and needs of different stakeholders and design more effective strategic development documents but also to develop 'sense of ownership' among local actors and enhancing further cooperation for community development. In this regard, along with formal platforms of local participation, proactive actions of local development actors are needed.
166. Also, the importance of taking the considerations of the local authorities and cooperating with them from the initial stage of designing different community development projects appears to be a crucial factor to make intervention continuous even after financing of the donor organization ends.
167. In general, in the case of civil society organizations, along with financial sustainability, the idea and vision, consistency in pursuing organizational goals are considered to be of crucial importance for ensuring sustainability of actions.
168. **Insufficient capacities of local actors** and **scarce human resources** seem to be crucial factors hindering the effective implementation of local development actions, in particular difficulties of engaging specific professionals from different backgrounds and insufficient job-related capacities of employees engaged in public, private and civil society organizations are emphasized.
169. In particular, insufficiency of project design, management and English language skills are mentioned, preventing local actors from applying to the calls of the international development community. Also, there seems to be need for enhanced knowledge on business planning and promotion, regulatory framework of local self-government and improved strategic planning skills.
170. In some cases, community consolidation is considered to have a positive impact on the ability of communities to engage more competitive professionals. However, the issue of low salaries unattractive to qualified professionals remains relevant. Also, legislative provision prohibiting community servants from undertaking other kinds of activity and lack of other promotion mechanisms may result in competitive staff leaving. Engagement in an NGO activities, in its turn,

may presume voluntary or law-paid work creating problems with ensuring continuous and sustainable work of WRCs.

171. In the case of WINNET model, one of the key directions of WRC activities is assisting local women to take initiative and run their own projects and businesses. In other cases, women are assisted to become competitive and become engaged in the labour market. For that reason, a wide range of capacity building activities are organized and their personal networks are enhanced.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

To successfully design and implement local development models and LEADER approach and enhance effective participation of local people and stakeholders in community development, it is recommended:

172. To ensure proactive, targeted and continuous communication with the community, explaining the impact of LSG decisions and different community development activities on their personal and community life;
173. To motivate local people through building a reputation and trustful relations, showing tangible results of their activity, personal examples of making changes and overcoming challenges. Transparent and accountable governance, democratic processes are also essential to build trustful relations with the community members, encourage a sense of justice and harmonize different interests;
174. To conduct continuous civic education aiming to enhance sense of ownership and sense of belonging to a community and acknowledgement of public good;
175. To actively engage representatives of different interest groups from the initial stage of need assessment and strategic planning, take into account and reflect the interests and needs of all local stakeholders. Each actor should be clearly shown the potential of the initiative to promote pursuance of their 'private' goals;
176. To ensure effective communication with local stakeholders from public, private and civil society sectors and build trustful partnering relations with them. Prospects of effectively engaging academic institutions should also be kept in mind, as actors generating professional knowledge at local level;
177. To make multi sectoral cooperation structured with clearly defined roles, rights and responsibilities of each sector, which is essential to minimize the impact of 'human factor' and personal relations;
178. To make sure that cooperation among local actors is the result of conscious participation and not enforced from the outside. Cooperation rules and procedures should also be the result of 'internal' agreement;
179. To keep in mind that relations of local stakeholders have their specialities and challenges and there is not a common guideline/instruction relevant for all communities. In this regard, it is important to develop thorough knowledge on local relations and drivers of each actor;
180. To develop knowledge among local stakeholders on the mutual benefits of cooperation and joint work, the interests they share. There are mutual interests around which cooperation may work;
181. To organize capacity-building activities for the representatives of all sectors, based on thorough need assessment. Implying continuous mentoring activities is also important, inasmuch as assistance may be needed in everyday work;
182. To take measures to ensure financial sustainability of local development initiatives. Social entrepreneurship may appear to be a successful undertaking if relying heavily on local market demand and clearly identified local resources and needs. Involvement of local and international experts in product development is also an effective instrument.
183. To put in place necessary legislative and regulatory frameworks, mechanisms and instruments to support sustainability of community development initiatives, particularly through strategic development of social entrepreneurship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Concept Paper on Social Entrepreneurship (Draft), 2017, Yerevan.
- Government Decree 1708-N on Approving the Procedure for Provision of RA State Budget Subventions to Communities of November 16, 2006.
- Implementation Handbook for Launching and Running Women’s Resource Centres Successfully. Third edition, 2016.
- Handbook on implementation of LEADER/CLLD –community-driven rural development initiatives. Republic of Moldova, 2018.
- Number of De Jure Population of the Republic of Armenia as of July 1, 2020
- Official Website of Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (accessed at <https://www.armstat.am/en/> on 15 July, 2020)
- Official Website of European Network for Rural Development (accessed at <https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/> on 17 July, 2020)
- Official Website of WINNET Armenia (accessed at <https://WINNETarmenia.org/en/>)
- Official Website of WINNET Sverige (accessed at <http://WINNET.se/>)
- RA law on Foundation; Adopted on 26.12.2002, entered into force 22.02.2003.
- RA Law on Local Self-government; Adopted on 07.05.2002; entered into force 21.06.2002.
- RA Law on Non-governmental Organizations; Adopted on 16.12.2016, entered into force on 04.02.2017.
- Rules of Procedure of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers. Adopted on 30.11.2018.
- Strategic Plan for the Activities of WINNET Armenia, Network of Women Resource Centers for 2016-2020.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANT INSTITUTIONS

	Organization
1.	National Assembly of RA
2.	Ministry of territorial administration and infrastructure
3.	National institute of labour and social research (MLSA of RA)
4.	Goris municipality
5.	Berd municipality
6.	Yeghegnadzor municipality
7.	UNDP Armenia
8.	Austrian Development Agency, Armenia
9.	Office of The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
10.	Sisian Women's Resource Center
11.	Yeghegnadzor Women's Resource Center
12.	Berd Women's Resource Center
13.	Meghri Women's Resource Center
14.	Goris Women's Resource Center
15.	Vanadzor women resource center
16.	Armenian national agrarian university Sisian branch
17.	Dispro line LTD
18.	Mirhav hotel
19.	Women for development NGO

APPENDIX 2: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

1. *Motivation of local actors to actively engage in the development of the community*

- How did you learn about the activities of WRC? Why have you decided to participate in WRC projects?
- What is, in your opinion, the level of engagement of local people in local self-governance, community development actions and voluntary activities?
- In your opinion, what are the main ways of motivating people to actively participate in local development?
- How would you evaluate the input and achievements of WRC, as a local development actor, in addressing community needs and promoting gender equality?
- How would you describe your life before and after becoming an active member of the community development activities?

2. *Local development actors and multi-sectoral cooperation*

- How would you evaluate the level of engagement of key stakeholders from public, private, civil society sectors and academia in community development?
- Who can be the driving force for the enhanced cooperation among community-based organizations? If applicable, please expand on your experience of cooperation with above mentioned organizations.
- To which extent, in your opinion, state and local self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations and international development agencies operate effectively in detecting and addressing community needs?
- How would you evaluate openness and transparency of local self-government bodies and non-governmental organizations and their ability/willingness to engage people in community development?

3. *Sustainability of local development models*

- If applicable, please describe your own initiative based on the knowledge you gain from WRC activities.
- In your opinion, what is the potential of LEADER approach to sustainably address the needs of your community?

APPENDIX 3: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE REPRESENTATIVES OF WINNET ARMENIA AND WOMEN RESOURCE CENTERS (WRCS)

1. *General information*

1.1 Please specify the main local development initiatives that Women resource center has carried out in your community, by providing information on:

- the main goals;
- achieved results;
- best practice;
- challenges and lessons learnt.

1.2 Who are the main groups of the population empowered through the activity of women resource center? What are the main criteria that specific area should meet for the establishment and effective functioning of a women resource center?

1.3 What are, in your opinion, the necessary conditions for your organisation to effectively address local needs? Please specify on following key factors:

2. *Motivation of local actors to actively engage in the strategic development of their community*

2.1 Please reflect on your experience of initiating and establishing WRC. How have you recognized the need for change and made a decision on taking an active role in community development?

2.2 Please expand on the WRC practices/mechanisms of motivating local people (and organisations) and engaging them as development actors rather than beneficiaries, by taking particular attention to challenges, achievements and lessons learnt.

3. *Cooperation perspectives among different sectors and local development actors*

3.1 Please expand on the cooperation practices between WRC and community based organizations, specifying bilateral and multilateral cooperation patterns with local authorities, civil society organizations, businesses and academia.

3.2 What kind of role WRC and other community based organizations have played in initiating, promoting and institutionalizing multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation for community development?

3.3 Please describe your experience of bringing together representatives of different sectors and ensuring effective collaboration among them, by providing information on challenges, achievements and lessons learnt.

3.4 Please expand on the networking and cooperation practices among WRCs of different communities and their interactions with other local development initiatives, by providing information on challenges, achievements and lessons learnt.

4. *Leadership models, strategic planning and management structures/processes*

4.1 Please expand on the governance and management structures of WRC? To which extent, in your opinion, such management structure contributes to/prevents fulfilment of organizational and local development goals?

4.2 What is the legal and organizational form of the women resource center? To which extent, in your opinion, such legal form contributes to/prevents fulfilment of organizational and local development goals?

4.3 Please expand on the formal and informal procedures of enrolling beneficiaries, by specifying WRC efforts to ensure transparency, inclusiveness and fairness of those procedures? What are the ways of engaging vulnerable women and their families?

4.4 Please reflect on the strategic planning procedures and practices of WRC, by providing information on: (i) main aspects/sectors of community development addressed by long-term and mid-term strategies and the level of integration of different development priorities; (ii) level of engagement of local people and community based organizations in defining/implementing strategic development goals. To which extent, in your opinion, such strategic procedures/ practices contribute to/prevent fulfilment of organizational and local development goals?

4.5 Please expand on the level of initiative and autonomy of WRC beneficiaries in regard to proposing and implementing new actions/projects?

5. Sustainability of local development models

5.1 To what extent has WRC managed to ensure the continuity of its actions and find financial resources to support its activities? In which way?

5.2 To what extent, in your opinion, has WRC increased the capacity of its beneficiaries to continue their own initiatives and businesses independently?

5.3 What do you consider to be the main challenges and opportunities for ensuring sustainability of WRCs and WINNET Armenia model in Armenia?

APPENDIX 4: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. *Motivation of local actors to actively engage in the strategic development of their community*

- 1.1 What is, in your opinion, the level of engagement of government, local self-government bodies businesses, civil society organizations and academia in formation/ implementation/monitoring of local development strategies and initiatives?
- 1.2 To what extent your organization/ has taken part in formation/ implementation/monitoring of local strategies and community development initiatives?
- 1.3 What are, in your opinion, the main ways of motivating community-based organisations to act as development actors rather than beneficiaries?

2. *Cooperation perspectives among different sectors and key local stakeholders*

2.1 Please, expand on the cooperation practices between your organization and WRC, by providing information on:

- cooperation goals;
- continuity of joint actions;
- achievements and added value for the community;
- challenges and lessons learnt.

2.2 How would you evaluate the level of cooperation among key stakeholders from public, private, civil society sectors and academia regarding formulation and delivery of local strategies, community development actions and resource allocation? If applicable, please provide information on:

- cooperation examples and goals;
- continuity of joint actions;
- achievements and best practice;
- challenges and lessons learnt.

2.3 How would you evaluate the efforts and achievements of WRC in addressing community needs and promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation for local development?

3. *Leadership models and strategic planning*

3.1 Please reflect on the strategic planning procedures and practices in regard to community development, by providing information on:

- level of engagement of local people and community-based organizations in formation/ implementation/monitoring of local development strategies;
- mechanisms of defining development priorities and main aspects/sectors of community development strategies;
- ways of reflecting, integrating and harmonizing interests of different groups and multi-sector priorities.

4. *Sustainability of local development models*

4.1 What do you consider to be the main challenges and opportunities for ensuring sustainability of local development initiatives, taking particular attention to:

- sustainability of the financial means;
- capacities of local stakeholders;
- multi-stakeholder cooperation.

“The project benefits from support through the EaP Civil Society Forum Re-granting Scheme (FSTP) and is funded by the European Union as part of its support to civil society in the region. Within its Re-granting Scheme, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) supports projects of its members that contribute to achieving the mission and objectives of the Forum.

Grants are available for CSOs from the Eastern Partnership and EU countries. Key areas of support are democracy and human rights, economic integration, environment and energy, contacts between people, social and labour policies.”

