IFES Ukraine

IFES has been working to support democratic reforms in Ukraine since 1994, with inclusion and gender equality continuously being cornerstones of this work. With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UK aid and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), gender equality and social inclusion through an intersectional framework are mainstreamed throughout IFES’ activities in Ukraine, in addition to being stand-alone, targeted activities.

Building off of analysis conducted in 2014, IFES recently updated its gender assessment in Ukraine, which explores the vulnerabilities and opportunities facing people of different gender identities in accessing their political rights, particularly women. The assessment covers women’s political participation, legal reform efforts, election administration, voter registration, women’s participation in political activities, political parties, civic and voter engagement, political finance and more. Recommendations stemming from this comprehensive research will help to generate public discussion, advocacy and reflection as well as guide IFES Ukraine’s future work in subsequent years.

Legislative and Policy Analysis

IFES works with civil society and legislators to analyze, research, amend and draft legislation that promotes the furtherance of gender equality in political life, including through the promotion of temporary special measures that promote the leadership and participation of women. IFES has played an important role in laying the groundwork for an improved electoral and legal environment for women’s political participation in Ukraine. In 2015, IFES developed and ensured the inclusion of a gender provision in the 2015 Political Finance Reform Law by introducing incentives for political parties to increase women’s political participation. Later in 2016, IFES led unified advocacy efforts to raise awareness regarding the problematic Draft Law # 5446, which proposed to decrease financing disbursed to political parties for complying with gender provisions. IFES actively contributed to the working group on women’s political participation under the Women’s Caucus’ Public Council for Gender Issues, and continues to provide high-quality advice and analysis of legislative reforms through a gender-lens.

Advocacy and Awareness Raising

IFES legal work is complemented by its targeted advocacy and educational efforts in promoting gender equality and women’s political participation, contributing to creating a network of active gender activists, engaged civil society leaders and experienced facilitators.

An increasing number of Ukrainians support the further participation of women as leaders and elected officials. According to recent IFES survey (2019), the majority of Ukrainians (62 percent) support gender quotas and (64 percent) of Ukrainians do not consider gender an important factor in their voting choice. During both the 2014 and 2019 elections, IFES Ukraine conducted advocacy campaigns aimed at encouraging an increase in the number of women in elected office. In 2019, IFES released two advocacy briefs and called on political parties and their leaders through letters and meetings to include more women on the top of the party lists as well as to nominate more women in winnable SMCs through the #runmorewomen campaign. IFES’ online #runmorewomen campaign reached nearly 200,000 people on social media. IFES also works with local partners to track, monitor and report on violence against women in elections online (VAWE online).
**Election Administration**

IFES works with election management and gender activists in Ukraine to mainstream gender equality in the electoral process. Since March 2016, IFES has, jointly with IFES-CEC Training Center, conducted three BRIDGE workshops on gender and elections. This particular module was developed and tailor-made for the Ukrainian context by IFES experts. Workshops assembled representatives of the CEC Secretariat, State Voter Register, political parties, academia and civil society organizations to strengthen their understanding of gender in the context of electoral processes. In 2015, IFES hosted seven election schools for gender activists across Ukraine, which enabled 100 professionals to strengthen capacity to advocate for addressing gender imbalance in political representation.

**Voter and Civic Education**

Voter and civic education provide the public with critical information on how to vote as well as how to be an engaged and active citizen. As part of IFES’ university-level civic education program, students are exposed to topics covering gender equality and social inclusion, including through dedicated “Gender Talks.” Voter education efforts mainstream visuals of women as not only voters but as leaders, and target communities with the least level of access to information.

**Intersectional Approach**

IFES recognizes the fact that the most effective approach in increasing gender equality in Ukraine is to combine structural reforms at the institutional level with work at the grass-roots level to strengthen participation of all Ukrainians in civic and political processes. IFES also recognizes that experiences between communities and groups can be radically different. Through targeted interventions, IFES works with a number of communities in Ukraine to address gendered inequalities, including: a leadership program for young women with disabilities with IFES partner Fight for Right; research and advocacy in partnership with Ukrainian civil society organization Fulcrum aimed at reducing discrimination against the LGBT community; as well as voter and civic education efforts led by and for Roma women. IFES also works to provide advice on gender quotas and electoral systems for civic activities and elected officials alike, creating a safe environment where people can come together to ask questions, discuss and learn from each other.

**Coalition Building and Allies**

Acknowledging the need for men who are allies and role models demonstrating gender equality in action, IFES conducted trainings in all regions of Ukraine as part of its Male Allies for Leadership Equality (MALE) initiative. These trainings are designed to empower men and women in a non-confrontational way by recognizing gender discrimination and building concrete steps based on this exercise to close the considerable gender gaps in representation. IFES also has begun work with journalist networks to increase gender sensitivity in the media, and provides trainings on request on gender-mainstreaming for government institutions in Ukraine.

**Upcoming Work**

In partnership with the CEC and building off of IFES’ recent gender assessment, IFES will work with election management to develop a gender policy and gender action plan, which will examine ways in which the CEC can better address barriers facing women both in political life as well as within their own institution. IFES will conduct a comprehensive intersectionality assessment in early 2019 to specifically look at compounding discrimination and coalition building. IFES will work across sectors to promote the leadership of women, particularly women facing compounding discrimination, through targeted leadership and internship programs.