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## **HUMAN CAPITAL EFFICIENCY IN INITIATIVE GROUPS ACCEPTING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN UKRAINE**

*The article analyzes characteristics and deviations from the approach to rural development via local initiative groups that has been fully accepted as a method in most part of the developed societies. It has been found, that in Ukraine such groups function better if they are composed of officials, responsible management and heads of local agencies. However, during the antiterrorist operation in 2014; in order to relocate, adapt and stabilize communities in areas of conflict in Ukraine, mixed action groups were often formed that contained a share of IDPs (internally displaced persons) and civil society activists. Such groups have shown themselves fairly well during the 2014–2016 biennium, and their potential was found to be suitable for further economic development of rural areas in Eastern Ukraine, including possible early recovery economic projects in the approximation to the conflict zone, where only voluntary associations are seen as able to produce small, but real economic effects. Features of the structure, performance, motivation of these groups and associations are highlighted in the article further below. The relevance of incentives for small and medium businesses as a way of creating new jobs in these villages and municipalities is separately discussed.*

***Key words:** efficiency, development, initiative group, internally displaced persons, settlement.*

**Introduction and review of literature.** Scientists around the world are paying close attention to the study of social factors of sustainable development of local rural communities inhabiting small settlements. Works on this topic have appeared since the 1970s. And develop to the present day. In particular, Cheryl King [1], Horst Rittel [2], Camilla Stivers [3], Melvin Webber [4], P. Fredericksen [5] and the others came to the conclusion that the degree of success with which the local village community copes with its tasks, objectives and problems depends to a large extent on the social capital of managers and Leaders of these rural communities, and stressed the need to increase investment in the development of such leaders. For measuring efficiency results of the mixed initiative groups working in the area of stabilization of communities that accept IDPs several rounds of research were conducted in 2016, the results of which have not yet been widely published. The survey, which formed part of the mentioned research [6], covered representatives of the initiative groups from 34 communities – project participants of a program of re-socialization of IDPs in hosting communities in Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine. The group included

at least 50 % of IDPs.

**The purpose of the article** is to show productive features of irregularly formed initiative groups in local settlements that accepted IDPs, which could be useful for rural economic advancement of conflict-affected territories.

**Results and discussion.** Research of group performance was conducted in order to show sustainability of local action (initiative) groups after about a year of targeted intervention. The aim was to show their strengths and weaknesses<sup>1</sup>, and to show the degree of their response to such intervention, as follows from the findings:

The question «*What social micro-projects were implemented in your community under the program?*» – has shown that all participating communities know about at least one of their micro-projects, and some even named 3 of them. This indicates that respondents are very well informed about the role of program development, the essence of intervention and the project name. All groups also know the name of the donor or, at least, an implementer, that shows that the group members are quite responsive to prolonged, regular, intensive external publicity actions.

The question: «*Please assess the usability of your micro-project (name) for the community on a five-point scale*<sup>2</sup>» showed that members of the community initiative groups *were not able* to give such an assessment, although gave us merely the names of their small initiatives. This means that they are either not able to think analytically, or do not want to evaluate the effectiveness of the project because they fear the consequences regarding further support. In general, it may indicate unfair approach to the study, no significant experience of participants and the absence of comparative base in their minds.

The question: «*How strongly united is now your initiative group?*<sup>3</sup>» we got very optimistic results, as compared to other similar studies [7]. The responses seem to be reflecting the groups' desire to continue cooperation with the territorial development organizations and fearing consequences of recognition of existing misunderstandings and conflicts that might still exist in the groups. In general, however, it is also a sign of the capacity for rapid mobilization of human capital in the host community residents of the South and East of Ukraine.

Answers to the question: «*What small projects successfully continue working in your community?*» showed that almost all communities have active small initiatives, and some have 2 or 3 active projects. Four of the 34 communities (Baydivka, Novokrasnivka, Polovynkine, and Shulhynka) answered that they had no active projects<sup>4</sup>. Because communities were chosen as project partners due to their locations and performance of the role of hosting platforms for IDPs, the overall level of

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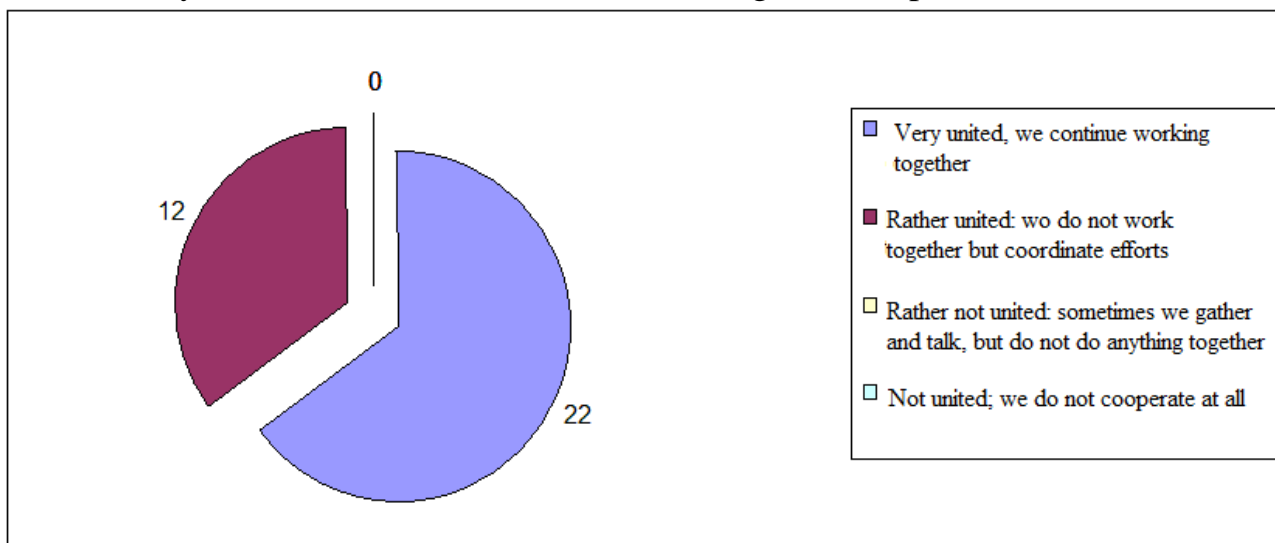
<sup>1</sup> If we consider these features as the basis for the implementation of development projects and, specifically, adaptation of IDPs;

<sup>2</sup> Where 1 – rated as “not effective at all”, and 5 – rated as “the most effective”;

<sup>3</sup> Using a 4-level scale gradations, from 1= “very united and we continue our joint work”, to 4 = “we are not united at all, in fact, we broke and do not work together anymore”.

<sup>4</sup> We must note that these communities have experienced organizational difficulties or disorder and conflict in teams, or potential weakness of the group as a whole.

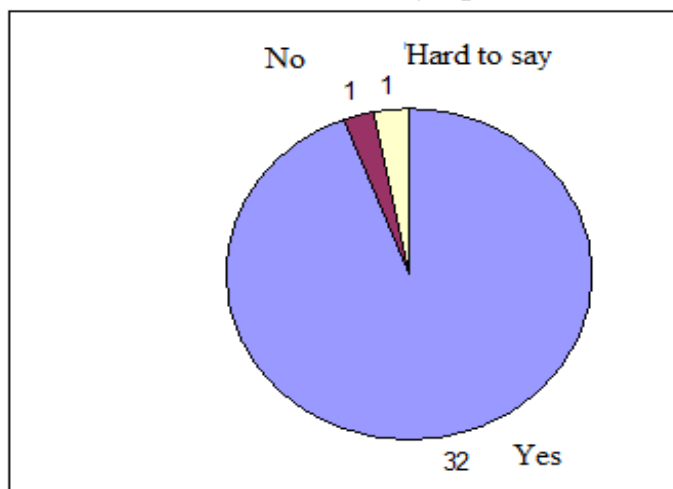
sustainability of over 88% can be considered strong and acceptable.



**Fig. 1. Distribution of answers to question: «How strongly united is now your initiative group?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

Answers to the question «Does your initiative group plan to continue cooperation in the future?» – have shown a very optimistic result:



**Fig. 2. Distribution of answers to question: «Does your initiative group plan to continue cooperation in the future?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

This result, among other things, indicates a high level of value-added social capital<sup>5</sup> and, in general, the success of implemented small projects. However, as the percentage of positive responses is very high, some of them can show the reluctance to reveal the true situation and real motives dominating in groups. At the same time, the degree of extra motivation, acquired by the groups as a result of positive successful cooperation, can be rated as high. In other words, groups in these communities have been quickly formed, showed themselves as cheerful and

<sup>5</sup> In the understanding a social «glue» that connects a group in relationships of trust and productive cooperation.

enthusiastic work, but probably tend to quickly break down in the case of failure<sup>6</sup>.

The question «What exactly are you going to do?» showed that only 8 of the 34 communities (approx. 22 %) have no clear plans, while all others had clearly identified areas of future performance and sometimes even knew the source of funds for their implementation. This means that community groups and activities continued cooperation even after the development funding from the IDP project source. At the same time, most of the groups indicated infrastructure projects as priorities, and only 3 of 34 responses indicated «soft» projects (green tourism, activities in clubs, cooperatives). This points to the fact that members of groups work under the concept in which the focus of development is strongly given to its technical support, while the element of human development is moved far to the background.

Then the respondents were asked a question: «In the future, what projects you would like and could implement more effectively to prevent irregular work migration from your village or town?». The purpose of the question was to determine the severity of the problems of ordinary labor migration<sup>7</sup> as well as potential ways of reaction of the initiative group to the issue. As a result, however, more than half of the responses have not been clearly defined. Another 9 % of respondents identified the work migration issue as irrelevant for their settlements. Up to 10 % of respondents acknowledged the serious character of the migration issue but did not determine any ways to resolve it. Only 6 of the 34 groups indicated specific ways, usually relevant in such situations. All other answers showed either the general willingness to “do something” to address this issue, or the typical infrastructure proposals. Thus, we can determine that the problem of migration in classic form for most communities that have accepted IDPs under normal conditions is not much relevant, although some lack of jobs is felt in at least a half of the communities. Interestingly, only two groups have proposed to create businesses in agriculture<sup>8</sup>, and one group reminded on the need for *investors* to deal with unemployment issues. Thus, with separate exceptions, it seems highly unpromising develop private entrepreneurship in response to unemployment in these communities. This, however, was shown in similar and past research [8].

The question «Please rate the relationship of your initiative group with local, district authorities» – received very positive responses displayed below.

Compared to other similar studies, we have a very high percentage of positive responses. This can partly be explained by the fact that the authorities in the region are in conditions close to the territory of anti-terrorist operation and are therefore sensitive to community needs. On the other hand, we must recognize that the decision-making processes in the «state-community» relationship in this region

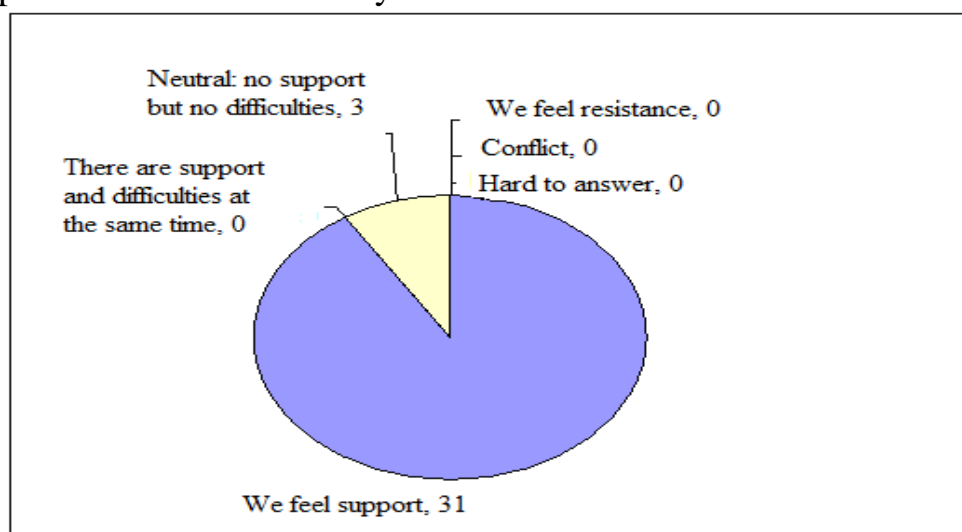
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<sup>6</sup> Therefore their social capital was high at the moment of research but probably not sustainable in the long run.

<sup>7</sup> As separate to the type of chaotic refugee-type migration caused by violent conflict in the East.

<sup>8</sup> A small farm, among other proposals, in vill. Nyzhnya Duvanka and a grapes processing plant in the vill. Studenok.

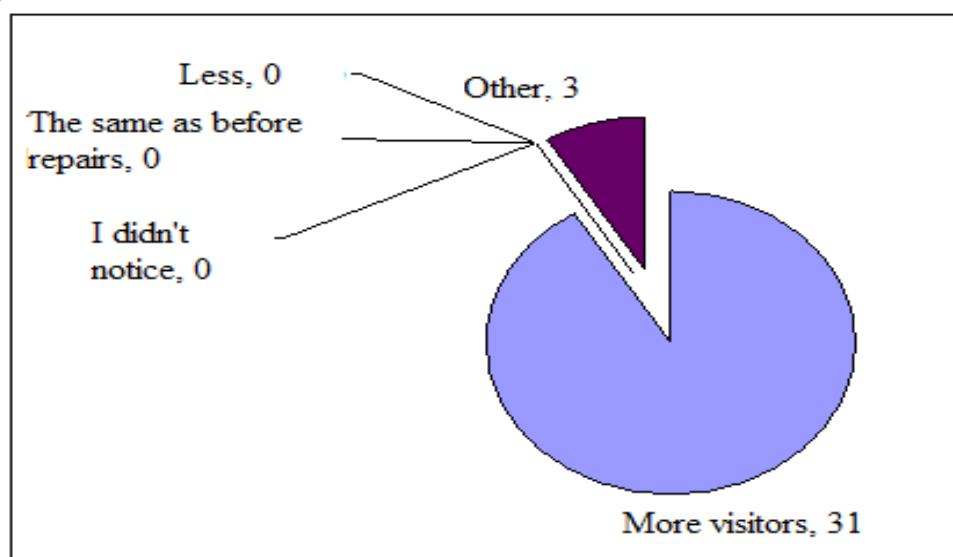
require separate treatment and study of other scientists.



**Fig. 3. Distribution of answers to question: «Please rate the relationship of your initiative group with local, district authorities», N=34**

Source: author's research.

Answers to the question: «*In your opinion, has there been an increase of visitors to the institution in which the reconstruction was funded by the donor, compared to the time when it stayed without repairs?*» – received almost unequivocally positive responses.



**Fig. 4. Distribution of answers to question: «In your opinion, has there been an increase of visitors to the institution in which the reconstruction was funded by the donor, compared to the time when it stayed without repairs?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

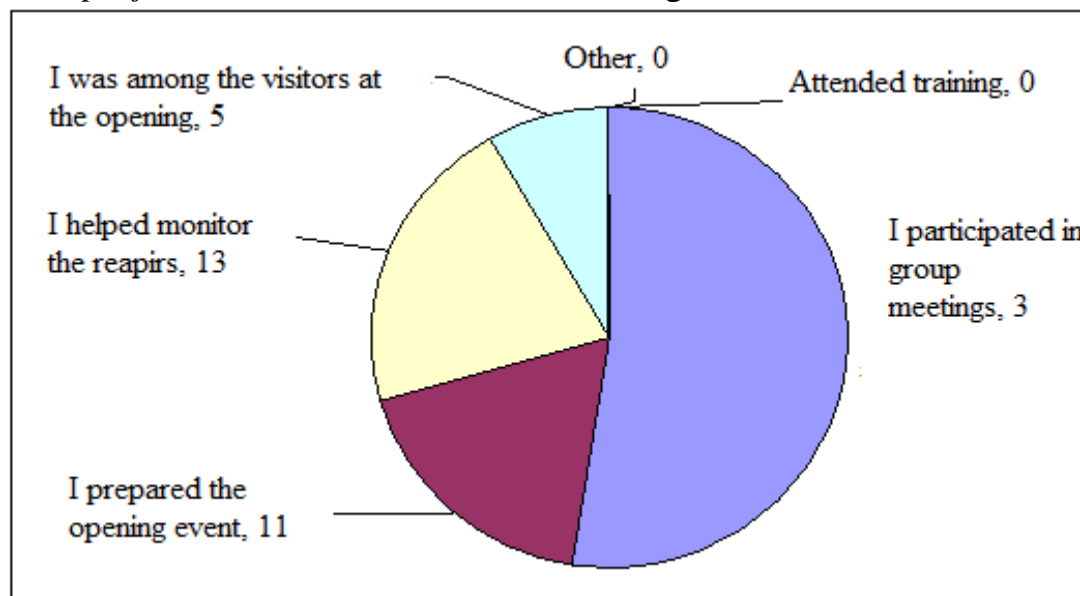
As you can see, this distribution shows a very high efficiency of measures aimed at restoration of infrastructure in the communities, and not only because the community accepted IDPs<sup>9</sup> from other regions and this necessitated the renovations,

<sup>9</sup> Answers in the «Other» group were concerned with the fact that the renovations have not yet begun and it was thus difficult to measure the increase in attendance.



but also because these facilities have long, sometimes from the mid 1980s, stayed without any sufficient repairs and the communities obviously assessed the renovations as public benefits.

The question «What have you personally done to improve the local social adaptation project<sup>10</sup>?» – has received the following answers.



**Fig. 5. Distribution of answers to question: “What have you personally done to improve the local social adaptation project?”, N=34**

Source: author’s research.

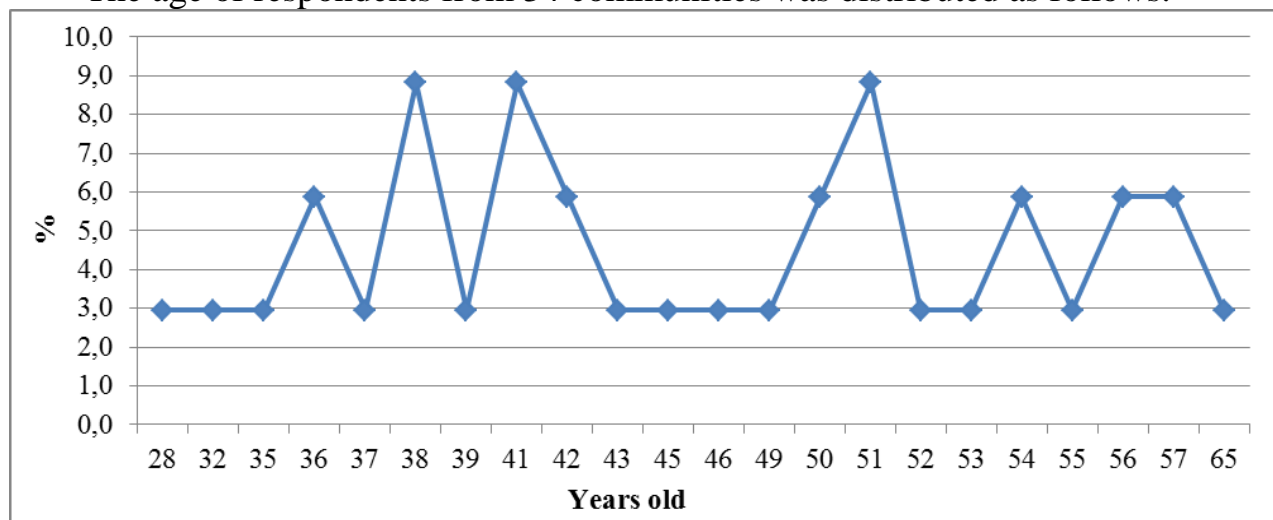
More than half of respondents participated in the initiative groups, of whom approximately a half has supervised repair works and the other half was preparing the opening events. Interestingly, the option «was among the visitors at the opening» was chosen by only five people, and the option «attended training» was not chosen at all. This means that the group clearly divided functions between the project administration and the public action. Training has not been a priority for the group's core, despite the effort spent on its organization [8] as it appears that some people were implementing the local projects, and quite other people attended capacity building trainings.

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the social structure and the effectiveness of the initiative group, polling on gender issues was conducted in host communities in the East and South of Ukraine in 2015 as part of a larger research. Gender of respondents from 34 communities was distributed at 82.4 % women vs. 17.6 % men. As we can see, the majority of respondents were women. This structure of initiative groups, and especially – the activists who are centers of ideas and sources of decisions – shows that in the target region, women traditionally occupy leading roles in such initiatives and sectors of the labor market. There is probably a fairly small proportion of men in such groups due to the fact that they didn’t show much interest in the group work; occupied with their own employment and earning money; or men

<sup>10</sup> The respondents could indicate up to 3 options in their answers.

were absent in the settlement (temporarily left it because of the conflict). However, this only strengthens the hypothesis that most of the groups' decisions will have a «female» character.

The age of respondents from 34 communities was distributed as follows.

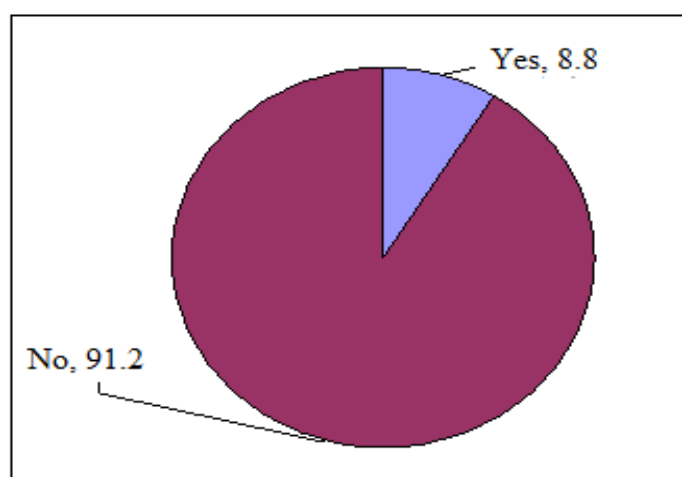


**Fig. 6. Distribution of age of respondents, N=34**

Source: author's research.

In this example we can see that initiative groups are mostly female, and are strongly represented by participants aged 36–42 and 50–57, and underrepresented by members under 35 and 43–49. Also the age distribution «gap» is observed in the interval of 52 to 53. So these two groups aged 36–42 and 50–57 apparently represent a «junior» and «senior» active and educated community members<sup>11</sup>.

Below is an analysis of a pair of related gender-based questions, namely, answers to the questions: «Was it necessary for men in your group to perform female work?» (Fig. 7) and «as it necessary for women in your group to perform men's work» (Fig. 8).

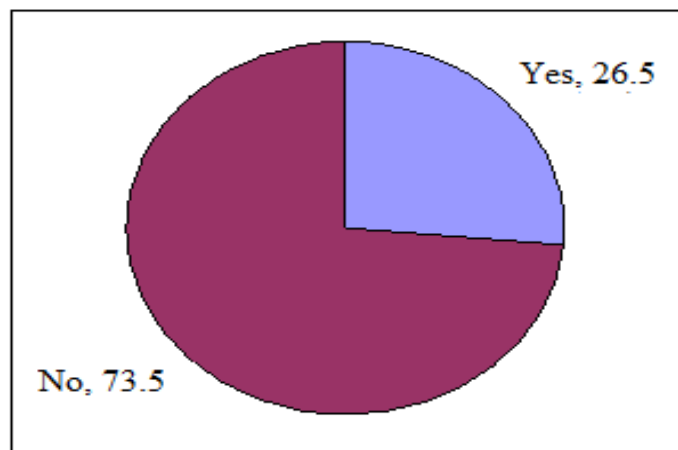


**Fig. 7. Distribution of answers to question: «Was it necessary for men in your group to perform female work?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

<sup>11</sup> Of which at least half is IDPs – as the research has covered the IDP accepting communities.



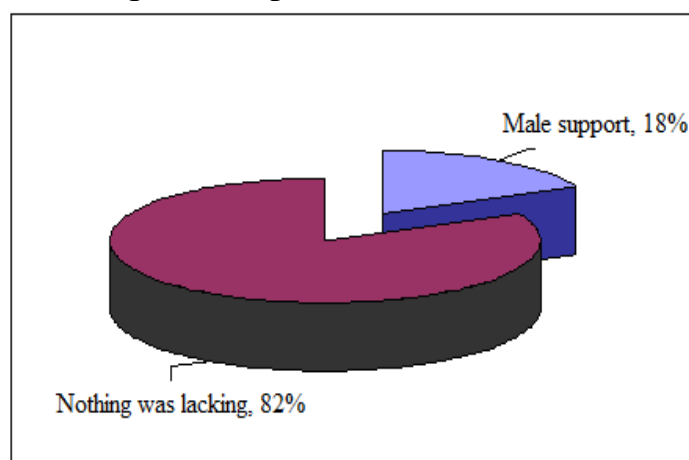


**Fig. 8. Distribution of answers to question: «Was it necessary for women in your group to perform men's work?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

The answer to the questions above have shown show that the initiative groups that worked on adaptation of IDPs felt the lack of men and their roles have not always been adequately distributed. Obviously, in times of crisis, activists, especially women, often took the men's work, especially in the situations of very low social activity of men or the men's absence in the initiative groups.

Below is an analysis of questions asked to determine the degree of development of groups in terms of socio-gender «specialization».



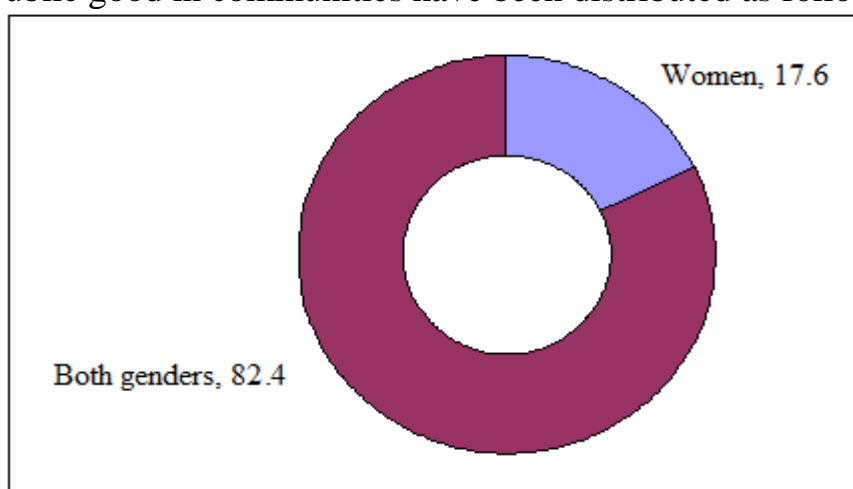
**Fig. 9. Distribution of answers to question: «Did you feel that your team lacked (...male support, female support, nothing)?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

As you can see, about 18% of the group was formed so that functional male support was lacking there. Note that the question «Did you feel ...» also had an answer option «female support», but it was not chosen by anyone. So, not only can it be stated that women were actively involved in the projects, but we'd like to emphasize once again that women sometimes performed typically men's work as the men in local communities were not willing to take part in such projects.

Analysis of responses to the question: «Have you noticed that difficult or responsible tasks in the project were avoided by ... (men, women, no one)?» – has

shown that 100 % of respondents chose the option «no one». At the same time, the analysis of responses to the question: «*Did you experience situations in conflicts / disputes on the project, when men had a different position than women?*» – has shown that 100 % of respondents chose the answer «no». These responses differ from data obtained in previous studies of gender issues [9] with similar questions, - studies performed in peacetime and in other communities<sup>12</sup>. This also, against the background of dominance of women's presence, shows that it is women in host communities and especially – in the initiative groups on adaptation – who are sources of decision-making of final opinion. Answers the following questions measuring value-added public good in communities have been distributed as follows (Fig. 10):



**Fig. 10. Distribution of answers to question: «Who received greater benefits from the project, meaning both the people who got employed and beneficiaries of project services?», N=34**

Source: author's research.

Please note that answers to this question also had an option «men», but it was not chosen by any of the respondents. Thus, in projects on IDP adaptation through the development of infrastructure and social tolerance in local communities, there is a clear focus on creating such social initiatives that traditionally create jobs/activities for women. Besides, as these projects are characterized by a common public good, there is a fact that it both genders in a territorial community benefited from them.

The analysis of the question «*Why do you think so?*» the was asked to clarify answers to the previous question showed the following: most respondents are inclined to believe that women received greater benefit from projects on IDP integration because they were more active and were striving to use all the options of the development program. Although, in some communities where jobs have been open mostly for men (such as mining settlements), it was mostly men who benefited from IDP adaptation projects. Over 40 % of respondents have noted that women within initiative groups were more active than men<sup>13</sup>. Thus it is believed that the reason for

<sup>12</sup> But also in Donetsk and other regions, including the Crimea before the conflict.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the significant differences from community to community and variations in the structure of the local labor markets.

the activity of women in the group lies in the fact that in their near-retirement age [10], they have more time and energy than men.

**Conclusions.** As a working hypothesis of the study, it was determined that such features as the ability of mixed community initiative groups of rapid resource mobilization and quick value-added growth in the their social capital – as proved by the program that helped integrate the internally displaced people in southern and eastern Ukraine – could be useful in further implementation of economic development programs in local communities. This hypothesis has partly proven to be true, but has reservations. The following results speak in favor of the hypothesis: the group members are quite responsive to prolonged, regular, intensive external publicity actions; the overall level of remaining sustainability of over 88 % can be considered strong and acceptable; the degree of extra motivation, acquired by the groups as a result of positive successful cooperation, can be rated as high.

However, the following factors impede the realization of the potential of community initiative groups for local economic development programs: group members sometimes are either not able to think analytically, or do not want to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects because they fear the consequences regarding further support; which may indicate unfair approach to the study, no significant experience of participants and the absence of comparative base in their minds. Members of groups work under the concept in which the focus of development is strongly given to its technical support, while the element of human development is moved far to the background. Although some lack of jobs is felt in at least a half of the communities, only two groups have proposed to create businesses in agriculture, and only one reminded on the need for *investors* to deal with unemployment issues. Training has not been a priority for the groups' cores, despite the effort spent on its organization.

The groups felt the lack of men and their roles have not always been adequately distributed. In times of crisis, activists, especially women, often took the men's work, especially because of very low social activity of men or the men's absence in the initiative groups. It appeared that men are not participating more than women in the micro-project or program because in the target region, women traditionally occupy leading roles in such initiatives and sectors of the labor market.

Although we admit that the results of this study can be shared to other regions with similar/different conditions (especially in Donbas region), the identification of features and tools for such sharing can be subject to a separate study.

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