

Women's empowerment in the high mountain region of Mestia (Georgia) – outcomes of community led local development initiatives

Information Day under the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)

“Bridging the gender gap in rural mountainous regions – challenges:
Digitalization as one opportunity”

7th March 2023, Vienna International Center – Hybrid

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Project „Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia“

Overall objective

To improve livelihoods of vulnerable households in remote, high mountainous regions of Georgia and support their economic and social wellbeing.

Specific objective

To improve diversification and competitiveness of the rural economy, the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and the sustainable management of natural resources in Mestia municipality by implementing the LEADER approach.

Local Action Group (LAG) Upper Svaneti

- ≥ 50% female participation during the establishment of the LAG as well as the development and revision of the Local Development Strategy
- 63% female representation on the LAG board, as well as representation of IDPs, youth, socially vulnerable, and a person with disabilities. The current president of the LAG is female
- Nearly half of 75 local initiatives funded by the Project were female-led.



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Austrian Development Co-operation with Georgia

Georgia has been a priority country of Austrian Development Cooperation since 2011.

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) opened its first regional field offices in Mestia (Svaneti) and Ambrolauri (Racha) in 2019, which support the implementation of an EU and Sweden co-funded project for mountain tourism and organic agriculture.

Supported projects (selection)

- Implementing LEADER in Mestia municipality for better livelihoods in high mountainous regions of Georgia
- GRETA – Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture

→ Video women-led project in LAG Upper Svaneti – Cafe Mariami



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Women projects* within the LAG Upper Svaneti

"Latliishd" – Sewing workshop and social enterprise

A school teacher from Latali community, initiated a space for empowering rural women. With support from the Upper Svaneti LAG, seven sewing machines, inventory, and a car were bought, which is used for delivery. They also acquired equipment to make Svanetian soap and sewing materials. In the social enterprise of Latali community 15 women are employed.

"Chartographi" – a map enterprise

A female geographer is the founder of the map enterprise "Cartographi" in Mestia. There didn't exist a comprehensive database of information for tourists in Mestia municipality. She has done her best to properly illustrate all relevant information for tourists on maps.

"Dental clinic" in Mestia

The female dentist could modernize and fully equip her dental clinic – upgraded equipment, x-ray machine – with the support of the LAG. Local population can receive now dental services all year round. She hired local assistants, shares knowledge with them and increases the capacity of local medical staff in Svaneti region.

* 75 local initiatives, selected together with LAG Upper Svaneti, received funding through the "Implementing LEADER in Mestia Municipality"-Project.



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“Empowering Youth Civic Activism and Digital Literacy” in Mestia Municipality

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Objectives of the project

- Digital education and skills development in young people, including in digital security
- Support of youth activism-initiatives and digital campaigns responding to the needs of local communities and young people
- Establishing and strengthening partnerships and connections in the field of digital education and activism

Activities

- “Screen Print Svaneti” - print space
- “Discover Svaneti”
- “Svanetijobs”
- “Sit, let’s go” Facebook group organizing transport
- “ecosvaneti”



აღმოსავლური მკვლევარების ჯგუფი ზემო სვანეთი
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Transnational exchange of experience as an important aspect of rural development I

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Study tour of LAG Upper Svaneti to Lesachtal, Carinthia, Austria – 29th May–5th June 2022

- Georgian local actors should experience a high mountain region in Austria, set in a remote surrounding with features of sustainable tourism concepts.
- The Lesachtal in Carinthia was selected in particular to the long-term commitment to local engagement in a high mountain context and the focus on a strategy of balanced territorial development, seeking harmony of human-nature interrelations.
- The intention was also to share the experience of obstacles and pathways by a remote region and its self-restrictions on tourism-growth.



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Transnational exchange of experience as an important aspect of rural development II

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Lessons learned

- A core guiding principle realized by the Georgian local actors is the *balancing activities of human action with natural processes*.
- Many local activities are based on *long-term socio-cultural processes* that demand a *deep awareness of place-specific conditions* and *sufficient time* for establishing adapted actions.
- The recognition of “limits of development” seems core, but also the insight, that a certain *pride and consciousness of quality of production and services* has to be developed.
- Appreciating the *wide scope of diversification* activities of farm households which indicates a significant potential, and points to the innovative power of local actors, including the *capacity of young people*.



Affiliation

I would like to thank *Morgan Siegel* from CARE Austria and *Thomas Dax* from BAB very much for their support and for the fruitful discussions regarding the preparation of the presentation.

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Thank you for
your attention!