



## Context

### Female unemployment in Ukraine

Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment in Ukraine. This problem has been exacerbated by high levels of informal employment and a growing skills mismatch. In 2017, almost 20% of the female youth population (15-24 years old) was categorized as not in employment, education or training (NEET).<sup>1</sup>

### Inequalities in labour market participation

Supporting labour market participation is essential for ensuring equality of opportunities. However, Ukraine faces challenges that impact the advancement of equal opportunities and rights for women. The root causes can be found in patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, but also in pervasive systemic gaps. According to a 2017 UN report on gender equality in Ukraine, women's labour force participation stands at 55.7%, 13.3 percentage points lower than males.<sup>2</sup>

### Importance of female mentorship

Female-managed firms in Ukraine tend to be smaller in size but employ a larger proportion of women.<sup>3</sup> iHUB recognizes that any effective strategy must embed inclusion and social responsibility in the business model. This initiative seeks to respond to economic and societal needs by creating a platform where female entrepreneurs support and mentor each other on their next professional steps.

## Overview

**Implemented by:** iHUB

**Where:** Ukraine

**Themes:** Gender equality; Entrepreneurship

**Funding:** Embassy of Finland; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

**Status:** Active since 2015

iHUB's Programme for the Development of Female Entrepreneurship is the first initiative in Ukraine to support women in business creation, from the initial idea to the set-up of a working business. It covers both knowledge and practical support, including providing guidance on how to attract investors.

The initiative seeks to promote gender equality and female entrepreneurship through education and mentorship. Trainees are given the tools to secure their financial independence, thereby increasing revenue and employment in their communities and ultimately moving towards higher, value-added products and services.



<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.FE.ZS?locations=UA>

<sup>2</sup> Gender Equality, UN Ukraine, <http://www.un.org.ua/en/resident-coordinator-system/gender-equality>

<sup>3</sup> Gender and employment in the South Caucasus and Western CIS, UNDP, <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/GenderandEmploymentin%20theSouthCaucasusandWesternCIS.pdf>

## Development of Female Entrepreneurship

The programme for development of female entrepreneurship is aimed at women who have start-up ideas, would like to establish their own companies or are already running their own businesses. There is a particular focus on reaching out to socially vulnerable groups, such as unemployed, internally displaced women. This group includes both women who had to leave established businesses behind and those who see self-employment as a way to enter the job market. By virtue of encouraging communication among the trainees and creating a safe space to ask for advice, women are given the tools needed to develop their entrepreneurial competencies.

The educational programme is divided into three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. While the basic stage focuses on starting a business - progressing from an idea to a concrete proposal, the second stage concentrates on the start-up itself by providing basic knowledge in the successful management of a small business. The final or third stage focuses on specialized knowledge for the development of a company.

The 450 online community members, active participants and alumni of the educational programme make up a supportive network of driven and innovative female entrepreneurs. It is a platform for friendly, positive and gender-sensitive communication, advice, experience sharing and support.



### What is iHUB?

iHUB is a network of technological and entrepreneurship hubs in Kyiv, Lviv, Vinnytsia and Chernihiv, which are created in public-private partnership with local authorities. iHUB has received a great deal of support from city councils as its activities, such as the support of tech companies, start-ups, SMEs, and innovation, and the promotion of gender equality in business and technology, are considered priorities for Ukrainian regional development. All programme activities are carried out through the iHUB network.



## How the programme works



### Awareness raising

Promotion of successful female entrepreneurs as productive members of society and role models for the next batch of entrepreneurs



### Training and educational activity

A comprehensive, gender-sensitive, business development programme for aspiring female entrepreneurs



### Provision of business incubator services

iHUB business centres and provision of consulting activities to boost development of female-led startups



### Mentoring network

Identification of successful Ukrainian and international business women to support aspiring entrepreneurs in personal growth and professional development



### Community of women entrepreneurs

Helping women to rapidly locate partners or employees, and solve common start-up problems; advice on coping with business challenges through discussions with experienced experts who have faced similar issues

## Outcomes

The iHUB network has conducted 47 female-oriented business training workshops in different regions of Ukraine, as well as four conferences. More than 4500 women took part in the business training sessions and over 1100 women participated in the information seminars. Around 200 internally displaced women participated directly in the training, and more than 400 received access to entrepreneurial materials. As a result, 30 new companies were conceptualized and developed during the business incubation activity, creating a total of more than 200 new jobs.

## Challenges and Insights

### Changing mindsets

Many women underestimate their ability to succeed in business. For this reason, they were not initially interested in the educational programme. Moreover, there was no community of female entrepreneurs in Ukraine to provide the support, advice or expertise required. To develop interest in the programme, iHUB organized conferences and information events where successful women shared their experiences to encourage others to become entrepreneurs. iHUB also conducted pilot programmes to gain initial feedback and raise awareness of the programme.

### Combining theory and practice

The curriculum of the programme is structured according to the different stages entrepreneurs have to follow when setting up a company. Consequently, subjects such as finance, marketing and accounting are taught using a chronological approach. The programme was adjusted to combine theoretical knowledge and practical training that will maximize and encourage the intellectual and emotional involvement of participants at every stage of running their own business.

### Reaching women in rural areas

The level of awareness about the potential and opportunities for starting a business is much lower in remote areas than in Kyiv or other urban regions. Therefore, it is important that activities take place across the entire iHUB network. Depending on the demand of a particular region, the educational part of the programme either takes place in person or via video streaming. A number of Seed Forum events are provided online to allow women from all over Ukraine to access information.

## Learn more

**Vadym Petrunin**, CEO of iHUB, helped to compile this document. For more information about iHUB, please contact him at [vadim@ihub.world](mailto:vadim@ihub.world) or visit <http://ihub.world/en/>.

## Discover other promising practices

The UNESCO-UNEVOC Promising Practices database presents inspiring projects tackling key themes in TVET, such as Gender equality, Youth employment, Greening, Digitalization and more.

Learn more on our website at:

<http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/promisingpractices>

Questions or suggestions? Contact our team at:

[unevoc-pp@unesco.org](mailto:unevoc-pp@unesco.org)

### Building a support network

When starting your own business, it is crucial to have not only a reliable partner but also a wise mentor that puts you on the right track. By creating the mentorship network, iHUB promotes knowledge and experience sharing, and opens up new opportunities to receive highly qualified advice from experts. Establishing a community has enabled the pooling of valuable business experiences and knowledge resources between existing and new female entrepreneurs. This offers strong early support to start-ups that lack business experience and improves their chances of long-term success.

## Looking to the future

The iHUB mentorship network offers valuable experience as well as access to wider markets. The network will continue to serve as a platform for communication and exchange of practical advice even beyond the span of the project.

