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THE NEED FOR AND EXPERIENCES WITH INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA

Prof. Natalija Bogdanov

Faculty of agriculture University of Belgrade

Objectives and approach

- **Objectives:**

- To present the regulatory, policy and financial settings for implementation of integrated community (rural) development concept
- To provide insights into current developments and trends related to the key principles of ICRD
- To highlight some key issues and challenges that need to be addressed in order to facilitate ICRD

- **Approach**

- A desk review of legal and policy documents
- Results and assessments carried out within FAO and UNDP projects (2018-2019)

Setting up the structures and processes

- **Local economic development projects were initiated in 2000s**

- Supported by international development agencies
 - Preparation of local strategic and action plans; capacity building for project proposal writing and PCM, establishing local economic development offices
- Implemented in parallel with decentralization reforms
 - Asymmetrical political, policy and financial decentralisation
 - Regional level of governance has not been established

- **„Explosion“ of local strategies**

- Different methodologies, names/focuses, time frames, structure
 - Strategies of Local (Economic) Development, sustainable development..
- ... but, the common objectives
 - infrastructure, agriculture, SMEs & entrepreneurship, tourism, environmental protection
- Active and motivated CSOs and individuals
 - participation in the strategy-making phase, but not in implementation, monitoring

Policy, regulatory and funding frameworks for ICRD related initiatives

• Setting the scene

- The first initiative was launched by Ministry of Agriculture (2005);
 - The Network for Rural Development was established as an umbrella association of 16 regional offices

• Various donor, bilateral and cross border projects

- Networking, capacity building, small grants
- EU project *The LEADER Project Initiative Serbia* (2011-2013) contributed to the strengthening the human, technical, organizational and financial capacities of MAFWM; 21 potential LAGs have been identified

• Policy discontinuity

- Since 2010 MAFWM has ceased funding LEADER-like activities,
- Donor support downsized since 2014-2015
 - Many local partnerships ceased to exist, and some capacities (primarily human) are lost
- Continual support for CSOs activities in the AP Vojvodina; better horizontal cooperation

Policy, regulatory and funding frameworks for ICRD related initiatives

• Policy Framework

- Strategy of Agriculture&RD, national programme for RD, IPARD II
 - The priority area „*Improving the social structure and strengthening social capital in rural areas*“ - **objectives are broad enough to cover issues related to ICRD.**
 - LEADER measure is planned for the second package of accreditation

• Implementing rules

- The regulatory framework for LEADER and similar initiatives is in place
- AP Vojvodina and LSGU create and carry out their own subsidy programmes on their territories

• Funding

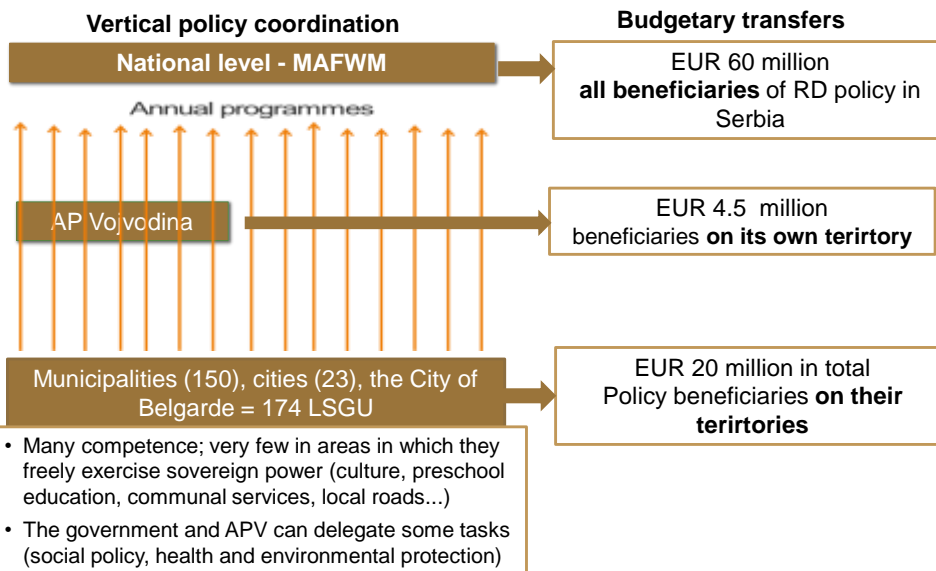
- Local funds, donors
- First national call for financing/co-financing of CSOs projects in agriculture and rural development launched in 2019

The need for change

Community development planning

- **A „new round“ of local strategic documents (since 2014) - less enthusiastic, more technical approach**
 - Most municipalities developed, updated and adopted programming documents aligned with SARD priority areas
 - The impact and outcome evaluations of previous strategies were not carried out; results were not appropriately communicated with stakeholders
 - Standardised format („copy-paste“); poorly defined indicators;
 - The lack of prioritization in the allocation of budget funds; overly ambitious action plans that require considerable resources
 - The territorial capital/potentials and challenges are poorly reflected; over-reliance on farm investment
- **The participatory decision – making issue!**
 - only 30% of LSGUs involved CSOs in preparation of local strategies (2014)
 - 84 percent of Serbian citizens know nothing about the local budget (2019)

Policy coordination and implementation of local policies related to RD



The need for change

Local actors and institutions

- **Insufficient capacities of local governments and partners to deliver ICRD programmes**
 - Lack of understanding, knowledge and experience to establish synergy across the key domains, priorities and target groups
 - There is no a critical mass of trained personnel with core competencies in ICRD;
 - Lack information about the possibilities and core principles of the ICRD philosophy
 - The stakeholders vary in their expertise, organisational set up and working modalities
 - Many CSOs and RDAs have proved their maturity and already had long-standing partnerships;
 - ... yet, **the expertise in specific subject areas - rural economy, smallholder farmers' livelihoods etc., is missing and/or are not conducive to the more advanced and innovative approaches**
 - Formation of the „project class“

The need for change

Projects related to ICRD

- The high impact of the donor-driven agenda
 - Good governance, social inclusion, capacity building for planning and management; less focus is given to rural dimension
- Locally funded projects of CSOs are limited by budget and narrow in scope
 - Promotion/branding of local products, rural tourism, study trips
- Many **projects lack a comprehensive assessment** (clear justification) and/or focus on the specific territorial context
 - High focus on on-farm income diversification, export promotion and competitiveness
 - Limited potential of partnerships in generating and programming more innovative, more relevant and suitable project ideas

Projects performances

	CSO -BGD	CSO – APV	RDA1 - CS	CSO 1 – CS	RDA 2 - CS	CSO 2 – CS	RDA - APV	CSO 3 – CS
Target beneficiaries	Local actors	Rural SMEs	Rural households Stakeholders Local self-governments	Rural youth and women Local producers Service providers in tourism	Local producers	Small business Farmers Local population	SMS in agri-food sector CSOs, Unemployed rural population	Rural population
Target sectors	PDO, PGI products		Rural tourism		Small business in food processing			
Scale	Interregional	Regional						
Impact on income generation	Capacity building Promotion	Capacity building Networking	Capacity building Creation of the support mechanism	Capacity building Promotion	Motivation, awareness raising, Tailor-made trainings Mentoring	Networking Branding Promotion	Capacity building Study visits Market-oriented services	Capacity building Transfer of know-how Promotion
Activities	Trainings, Fair, Exhibitions	Study, Trainings,	Study, Trainings,	Study, Trainings,	Study, Manuals, Trainings, Mentoring, Exhibitions	Study, Trainings, Exhibitions	Trainings, Exhibitions, International trade fair	Trainings, Exhibitions

Source: UNDP Project „Capacity building for promotion of inclusive growth through diversification of rural economy, increasing competitiveness and income generation in rural areas“

The need for change

- **Policy-making process at subnational level needs to be improved and made more transparent and inclusive**
 - Rebuilding the trust; mobilization/motivation for public participation;
 - Encourage LSGU to be more responsive to the real local needs and to be less constrained by formal or informal rules of governance
- **There is a need to strengthen institutions, to develop new mechanisms and to up-grade/refresh the knowledge**
 - Strengthen capacities and ability of all actors to deliver on ICRD programs
 - Stronger emphasis should be placed on more innovative mechanisms in order to respond to emerging needs of rural communities (aging, climate change, environmental and social issues)
 - Pooled resources, shared services, social services, integrated service delivery, e-services

Take home messages

- **Ensure policy continuity and **sustained funding** to enable independence from political shifts**
 - Capacity development and professionalization of administrative staff
- **Create a **(reasonably) flexible vertical coordination mechanisms****
 - Recognise where policies and regulations are not effective in achieving multidimensional objectives of ICRD
- **Recognize and consider the **particular local context** to be able to **respond to different needs in different ways****
 - The challenge of working effectively, collaboratively and collectively on ICRD needs to be addressed more systematically
 - evidence based policies

Thank you!

natalija.bogdanov@agrif.bg.ac.rs