

January 2020

## Usti community foundation mobilises donors around the SDGs



*Petr Veselý, Usti Community Foundation (Czech Republic), describes below how the community foundation made the connection between local priorities and the global goals and how it used support from the GCLS programme to attract other donors. Petr notes the untapped potential that exists through raising awareness of the SDGs among the general public and in fostering cooperation.*

‘The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were declared by the United Nations in 2015. However, we first came across them and the related issues as late as at the end of 2017. We did not obtain the information from Czech sources, in fact we learned about the SDGs abroad thanks to our cooperation with the Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland. Our attention was then drawn to the fact that local priorities were interconnected with global challenges, so we took the opportunity and obtained a small grant from the Academy in Poland under the Global Challenges Local Solutions programme. The activities supported by the grant aimed to introduce the SDGs at the local level and to raise awareness and understanding of the SDGs in particular among local NGOs, citizen initiatives, and also among foundation donors.

As part of the project supported by the grant, we also planned to test during 2018 what the response to the SDG related issues would be among local donors. To this end, we wanted to apply participatory fundraising techniques and the Giving Circles events.

We managed to mobilize local non-profit initiatives and, thanks to the willingness of local donors, to support 21 projects submitted by them. The ideas and activities of the projects focused on improving local conditions, responded to local priorities while contributing to the solutions sought for the global challenges and sustainable development topics listed under the following SDGs:

SDG 1 “No Poverty”

SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-being”

SDG 4 “Quality Education”

SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”

Furthermore, we worked with a group of local NGO leaders, providing them with expert support in the form of training and individual coaching. We succeeded in creating an initial group of insiders from among NGOs and enlightened donors who could continue raising awareness of the SDGs and solving the global challenges on a local level.

However, at the beginning of 2019, the foundation came under the administration of the crisis management team. As a result, the number of employees was reduced from 4.5 to the current 2.5 full-time equivalent and the plans for extending the foundation's activities towards full interconnection of local priorities with the SDGs and more intensive awareness raising work with the key community actors and the general public were shelved. This does not mean however that we gave up continuing our work on adapting the SDGs in our region. That is not the case at all. Despite our reduced capacities, we paid attention to SDG 4 (Quality Education), which we see as one of the core SDGs for our region. Thanks to another grant from the GCLS programme, among other resources, during 2019 we managed to set up two grant-making programmes in accordance with the indicators of SDG 4.1 and 4.5 (Indicator 4.5 to ensure equal access to education for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations and to Indicator 4.1 to ensure quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes). We were also successful in persuading local donors of their importance and the need for support for disadvantaged students, teacher training and mini-projects of children's teams, in the spirit of "school for life" learning. We raised the necessary funds both for this and the upcoming year.

We see a lot of untapped potential in promoting the SDGs and raising awareness of them among the general public. As one of the solutions, we plan to initiate the engagement of the local university and establish intensive cooperation with it regarding the SDGs. In the first phase, we plan to put together a collection of appropriate good practices as examples of initiatives that could be implemented in the region under individual SDGs. As a follow-up, a well-targeted campaign would be implemented through the media to raise awareness among the general public with the aim of helping to change the perception of the global challenge and contributing to making members of the local community behave more responsibly in the spirit of the motto "think globally, act locally" in their everyday lives. Our greatest wish is to persuade the local university and bring it onside for cooperation in linking the SDGs with the Vital Signs tool to fit the needs of our local area.'