

Women's Forum-Elbasan

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - The Elbasan County experienced one of its largest growths of territorial administration, together with an enhanced diversification of socio-economic groups in its supervision. For this reason, it was even more essential for the Municipality of Elbasan to develop a gender-responsive budget in both its urban and rural areas. Budgeting allows both women and men to influence local decision-making and the distribution of public resources in a way that better reflects the needs and priorities of the community.

Before Elbasan Women's Forum's Gender Responsive Budgeting program, the municipality didn't do much of intervention on these policies due to absence of human resources and specialists. The economy of this region is partly rural, where most of the families rely on self-sustainable economies from agricultural resources. The majority of the families come from lower- and middle-class ranks, where communities are categorized of high levels of unemployment and socially isolated.

GRB initiative - This initiative aspires to locate any event where domestic violence is presence in Elbasan County, and support with all cost the victims of its act by providing them shelter and security until they are out of any life threatening risks. Elbasan is the first municipality in Albania that, with the assistance of the Elbasan Women's Forum, applied Participatory Budgeting in 2006 and Gender Budgeting in 2009. The municipality has created a sustainable model of participatory budgeting with the coordination of international organizations and has received continuous support from the Elbasan Women's Forum's Gender Responsive Budgeting program beginning in December 2020.

This initiative goes in line with Law no. 9669 for "Measurements against Violence of Domestic Relationships", Article 7/1, Article 8, and Article 9. The program primary priority is to prevent any events of gender-based violence, or coercive and threatening behavior between family members regardless of gender or sexuality. There is no public institution of shelter for domestic violence victims in the Elbasan County yet, but the Municipality has continuously supported with resources and amendments the NGOs to provide these institutions.

Success of the GRB initiative - The shelter provided help victims of domestic violence to be in a secure place and a treatment facility. Women and girls who are victims of domestic violence experience physical injuries, incidence of depression and suicidal ideation. The facility aim is to prevent any future occurrence of bad events for women and girls in the future, by providing psychological treatment and teach them new skills of becoming economically independent. The initiative has also helped to strengthen the cooperation of NGOs and the municipality for improving specialized support services for the protection and treatment of gender-based violence cases.

Success factors - The Elbasan Women's Forum has been successfully advocating for an alternative and safe environment for marginalized groups in the region, resulting in an agreement with Elbasan Municipality on July 29, 2021, to cover the rent of the emergency shelter, amounting to 10% of total expenses. This deal was advocated successfully for two consecutive years. Currently, The Elbasan Women's Forum is preparing to sign an agreement that will increase the emergency shelter's funding to 1,000,000 lek, which accounts for 32% of the total expenses.

Main obstacles - The most significant obstacles to this initiative are the need to empower local officials at all levels about the significance of establishing effective gender-related policies. Without the assistance of CSO, local officials lack the knowledge necessary to address gender-based inequalities effectively. However, it should be noted that the municipal staff of Elbasan is more than willing to accept assistance from CSOs in order to further develop social policies and implement programs for women and girls.