

Rural Coalition

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - While monitoring the signed contracts and granted finances in the framework of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance on Agriculture and Rural Development (IPARD) which is administrated by the Agency for Financial Support of the Agriculture and Rural Development, Rural Coalition detected serious gender misbalances and proportions. For instance, as for the IPARD public call 01/2017, there have been a total of 828 realized and processed investments, of which 172 are granted to women, 561 to men, as well as 95 grants to legal entities for which there is no information in terms of the gender proportion / structure in the managerial organogram. Moreover, additional regress was detected in 2018; a total of 219 payments for investments have been made, of which only to 55 of women- holders of family agricultural entity. Translated into numbers, of the total fund for this call in an amount of 51,637,316 MKD, 11,234,287 MKD have been distributed to women, whereas the rest to men and legal entities; combined data makes a ratio of 1:4. Rural Collation also calculated that the Measure 115 which is completely devoted to supporting rural women does not compensate the enormous gender gap in terms of the allocated finances and granted contracts. Having this in mind, Rural Coalition spoke to the rural women from different ethnic background and figured it out that household workload and unpaid care, lack of timely and effective information on the ongoing calls as well as lack of knowledge and skills to complete the application procedures were the main reasons for holding rural women back in being more active in applying.

GRB Initiative - Rural Coalition combined cost analysis as a GRB tool alongside an intensive advocacy and lobbying campaign among the relevant stakeholders to bring some changes in the state aid for rural women which will result in a more gender fair distribution of the programs operated by the Agency for Financial Support of the Agriculture and Rural Development. In terms of the advocacy, the efforts were mainly directed towards increasing the amount allocated for Measure 115 from the initial 180.000 MKD to 360.000 MKD. The efforts were especially intensified during 2021 when the market prices were disturbed due to the pandemics and inflation rates progressed. On the other hand, Rural Coalition drafted proposing measures that will increase the proportion of women in the total number of applicants for the state aid measures, and consequently the proportion of women in regards to the granted finances and contracts concluded. Some of the measures are presented below:

Measure:

To increase the availability of information about the programs, measures, calls and registration of women as individuals farmers;

Tools:

Printing leaflets and guidebook, info-sessions;
Info-sessions, short videos, forums;

Cost: 167.300MKD

Measure:

Strengthening of awareness among the rural population and change of traditional stereotypes in the area of inheritance of agricultural property farms, inclusion of women in making decisions in households, as well as their registration as individual farmers with contributions paid for insurance;

Tools:

Info-sessions, short videos, forums;

Cost: 309.000MKD

The detected interventions by Rural Coalition came in a significant period for Macedonia in 2021 having in mind that the previous National Strategy on Gender equality already expired, whereas there was a delay in adopting the new one. However, the Draft National Strategy was already circulating among the relevant stakeholders, including the civil society. In the section Agriculture, the Strategy stipulate(d)/s concrete measures to tackle the (i) low percentage of women registered as individual farmers and holders of family agricultural entities, (ii) low number of women involved in making decisions about agricultural activity in the household and in the local community; (iii) insufficient access to information about developments in the sector, as well as the open opportunities for economic strengthening and development of entrepreneurship in rural areas, alongside low level of digital and information literacy. This proves that the measures / interventions are in line with the strategic document, especially in a period of a gap year.

Success of the GRB initiative - For a period of one year, the situation was significantly improved. By using advocacy and lobbying techniques alongside the costing analysis and targeting the main focal point at the Ministry of Agriculture and its decentralized units, the Agency for Financial Support of the Agriculture and Rural Development as well as local female farmers, Rural Coalition succeeded in their intervention. Namely, with the draft Budget on 2022, the allocations on Measure 115 were doubled and set on 360.000 MKD and on 7th of November, 2022 70 new contracts with female farmers have been signed. Additionally, this increasing will enable female farmers to make more tangible investments such as grape processing equipment, solar dryers, pasteurization equipment, fodder production and investments related to honey and other bee products, which was not the case in the past having in mind that the allocations were not sufficient for investing in advanced technologies. Additionally, the call for last year on Measure 115 was gender sensitive for the first time using terms such as female applicants, female farmers and etc. While the visibility and dissemination measures were not part of the previous budget programs, still success has been done in that area too having in mind that Rural coalition is intensively lobbying for them to become systematically institutionalized in the new Law on counseling services. Meanwhile, Rural coalition alongside with the rest of the CSOs working in this area continue to tackle this gap by their own resources and capacities succeeding in increasing the registered female farmers in the last two years by 2.000 new registrations.

Success factors - Using the opportunity of having a gap in legislative sense and in a situation when the National Strategy on Gender Equality was expired, Rural Coalition convinced relevant authorities that in such circumstances, progress needs to be demonstrated. Prior to this, narrow stakeholder mapping was done, targeting mostly the ones to have a power for decision making. Additionally, transferring the collected information from the ground to the decision makers proved to be efficient.

Main obstacles - The pressure of the inflation and the still present saving and cutting practices of the government due to the pandemic were pressing elements, alongside the still present in that time measures for stopping the spread of the virus.

