

Gender Budget Watchdog Network 2019-2022 best case studies

Center for Research and Policy Making

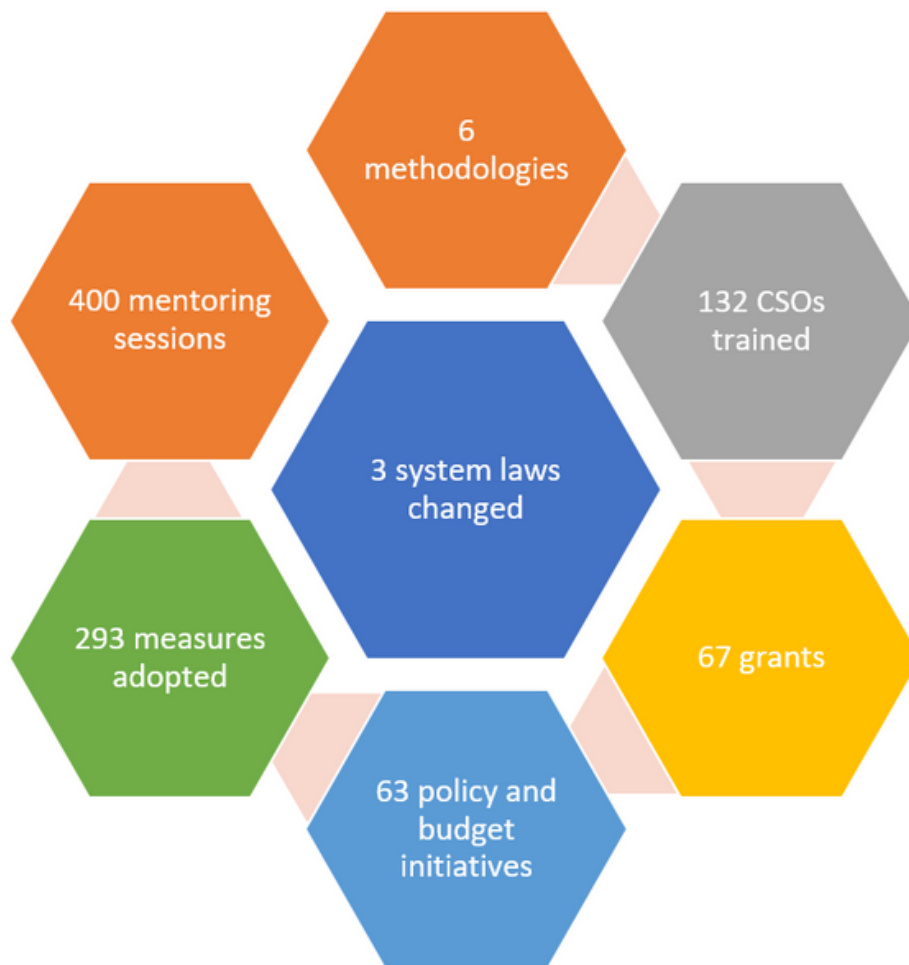
The organization – The Center for research and policy making – CRPM is based in Skopje, Macedonia. The organization is primarily a think tank – a research-focused organization that integrates cutting edge social science research in its projects and products. CRPM also acts as a do tank as it performs a well thought off communication strategy for each of its policy proposals and appries policy changes since 2004. As a do tank CRPM manages policy processes. At the beginning it just facilitated policy dialogues in polarized society; nowadays the organization pilots policy solutions than transfers to institutions for further implementation.

The approach – Since its establishment, CRPM works on the budget as a policy document. As a member of the International Budget Partnership CRPM was an Open Budget Index research organization that has developed a budget watchdog methodology since 2007. This methodology included application of gender budget analysis tools such as gender policy analysis, gender cost benefit, gender cost effectiveness analysis and gender expenditure analysis. With UN Women in 2016 the organization upgraded the approach introducing capacity building program on gender budget watchdogging for CSOs, developed a grants scheme through which the CSOs receive grants to apply the gender budget watchdog methodology and receive continuous mentoring which ensures quality of products that are used for holding (local and central) government accountable and further advocacy for better budget allocations that will impact on enhanced gender equality.

Approach analysis, strengths and weaknesses – CRPM particularly has chosen this approach as the CSOs in Macedonia and the Western Balkan region lack budget literacy; institutions do not gather or publish sex disaggregated data, while as a result of the orientation towards EU integration all governments in the region have committed to gender equality and have relatively well-developed policy frameworks for achieving it. In most countries of the region gender responsive budgeting is systematically included in the public finance management system. With this approach the CSOs get necessary knowledge and skills on gender responsive budgeting and continuous mentoring support from gender budgeting experts to apply them and hold governments accountable for gender balanced use of public finances. To address the absence of sex disaggregated data, CRPM designed a grant scheme that provides for financial support to gather primary data and produce rigorous analysis, help build arguments on ways to better distribute public money for achieving gender equality goals. Hence, the central and local governments were at the beginning not responding as they felt criticized at. It was when the approach started to include not only monitoring of budget implementation information, but also policy solutions that improve budget distribution to respond to the different needs of women and men, the government officials became more attracted to the recommendations provided by CSOs. The approach was further strengthened by networking between CSOs. The Gender Budget Watchdog Network was established by 88 CSOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Moldova and Serbia providing platform for them to exchange, speak in one voice and create tipping point for policy change regionally.

Results, findings and/or engagement efforts

Through GBWN, CRPM has expanded this approach in 7 countries of the western Balkan region and Moldova. In the period 2019–2022 the Gender Budget Watchdog Network has produced 6 methodologies, trained 132 CSOs, provided 67 grants that led to 63 gender budget initiatives encompassing 293 measures that were adopted across the region with the help of two dozen mentors that held 400 mentoring sessions. CRPM only, accounts to this approach changes of 3 system laws in Macedonia: the Budget law regulating gender responsive budgeting, the Criminal code aligning with the Istanbul convention; and the VAT tax law providing decrease from 18% to 5% VAT for menstrual hygiene products. The GBWN network accounts for many more policy results.



Lessons learned - The case of CRPM and the Gender Budget Watchdog Network shows that being a constructive critic, that does not just identify problems, but offers solutions can be an effective policy engagement strategy. One that is powerful when policy solutions of one CSOs are echoed by other CSOs from the network. The GBWN also shows that networking helps not just exchange of experiences, knowledge and approaches; but promotion of these in geographic locations outside of your organization's policy influence.

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Journalists for Human Rights

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - Data from the survey on menstrual poverty in Macedonia show that 29.5% of women cannot afford any access to menstrual health management products, so instead of standard products, vulnerable ones use newspapers, paper or homemade textile pads to manage periods. Consequently, this leads to reproductive health problems, such as an increase in numbers of infections by 70 percent, especially in a situation where 74 schools' toilets have not been renovated for 15 years. Regulating the menstrual health also presents a financial burden for women and families' budgets, especially now in times of staggering inflation. Journalists for Human Rights calculated that women spend an average of 250 MKD per month on menstrual products (with an average price of 125 MKD per pack of pads), not including stomach pain relievers and eventual absence from work. Namely, 464 women out of 1,290 respondents (36%) answered that they ask for one to two days leave due to dysmenorrhea, whereas more than 70% of the respondents use drugs to reduce stomach pain, which increases the monthly expenditure of managing menstrual health for an additional 150 MKD. Moreover, the cost for a menstrual cup is quite high (500-2,500 MKD) and another challenge is that only a limited number of stores have this product in stock. All these elements are more than sufficient to be declared a state of menstrual poverty.

GRB Initiative - Journalists for Human Rights applied a three-layered policy solution, applying costing analysis as well as intensive advocacy campaigns, especially targeting members of the Sobranie and the Ministry of Finance. When it comes to the policy proposals, Journalists for Human Rights presented the following:

Policy proposal / solution: Reducing VAT rate from 18% to 5%

Rationale: According to the calculation, in Macedonia ca. 400,000 women are menstruating. With the proposed measure, in the national treasury on a monthly basis 13,000,000 MKD less will be accumulated, or nearly minus 211,000 €. However, on the other hand, 107 MKD will be one package of pads, or the monthly cost for menstrual products of ca. 214 MKD (2 pads per period) compared to the current costs (125 MKD per package or 250 MKD for the entire monthly cycle).

Policy proposal / solution: Subsidizing the menstrual cup

Rationale: No precise subsidy amount was proposed. Instead of it, Journalists for Human Rights rationalized this initiative by providing comparative data presenting the average sum of 120,000 MKD per woman/girl who menstruates for 40 years (3,000 MKD per year on pads and tampons) with the cost of using a menstrual cup in an amount of 9,000-15,000 MKD (10 cups for the entire menstrual cycle with an average cost per cup of 1,500 MKD).

Policy proposal / solution: Access to free menstrual products for all female students

Rationale: The number of schoolgirls in the sexually reproductive period, included in the educational process is 35,200 in secondary schools and 38,541 female students in primary schools or 73,741 female students in total. In other words, every student during one school year would receive a package with menstrual products, which are the equivalent of 2,160 MKD annually or 180 MKD per month. This will provoke fiscal implications of nearly 159,280,560 MKD or 2,654,676 € per year in total. This will provide an effective and timely practice of basic human rights as well as a significant decrease of vaginal infections and absence from school due to period.

Success of the GRB initiative - On the basis of the proficient costing analysis, a comprehensive advocacy campaign was designed and implemented that encapsulated meetings with MPs, decision makers in the Ministry of Finance as well as reaching out to the general public via social media. Significant help and support was received from the traditional media broadcasting several reports on menstrual poverty. Official requests were sent to the Ministry of Finance for lowering the VAT rate, whereas on the local level similar steps were taken with the City of Skopje, especially with the Committee on Equal Opportunities. The success was imminent - after intensive debate in the Committee on financing and budget, the prime minister and minister of finance announced lowering of the VAT rate on menstrual products to 5% beginning from 1st of January 2023. Later this year, the City of Skopje council voted for free menstrual products for all female students in the primary and high schools located in the capital.

Success factors - To vocalize the issue, Journalists for Human Rights were quite loud during significant international days such as the International Day on Menstrual Hygiene - 28th of May, International Women's Day, International Day of the Girl Child and etc. Additionally, they used the Women's MP Club in the Macedonian Sobranie as a platform for lobbying and building mutual inter-party consensus on lowering the VAT rate which was demonstrated with single standing positions from all female MPs during the Budget 2022 and VAT Law discussions in the respective Sobranie committees.

Main obstacles - In times of energy and economic crisis, cutting the income part of the budget always seems challenging;

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.



Women's Association NERA

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - The CSO started using GRB tools after going through a set of trainings provided by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network. NERA deemed it necessary as there were no attempts to introduce gender equality into the policies and budgets of City of Konjic. The problem that the initiative tackles are the insufficient health services for women.

GRB Initiative - The initiative targets disabled and overweight women from the City of Konjic and aims at making the health services in Konjic more gender equal, i.e., making them available for vulnerable groups of women. Prior to these initiatives, Konjic had no gender responsive policies, there was an existing Gender Equality Committee which did not work in the domain sufficiently. The CSO initiative worked on providing equal access to services, namely two initiatives were pushed to the agenda of the City Council of Konjic:

- Procurement of an adapted gynecological table for women and girls with disabilities and women with excessive body weight, and adaptation of the gynecological clinic to women and girls with disabilities;
- Procurement of mammography cassettes for women with large breasts.

There is no existing policy or strategy in place regarding gender equality, but the initiative is in line with what the Gender Equality Committee should advocate for. The initiative was adopted at the City Council after which the Mayor of Konjic sent the inquiry to the Health Centre in Konjic on whether they are in need of these procurements.

Success of the GRB initiative - The Health Centre answered positively, and the procurement of the abovementioned will be included in the budget for 2023 which is still in the process of preparation and adoption. The planned budget allocation for this is 30 000 BAM (approximately 15 000 EUR).

Success factors - The success of the practice lies in the fact that after years of no initiatives related to gender equality and specifically gender responsive budgeting, this CSO managed to raise awareness on this issue, educate citizens of Konjic, and conduct a research which resulted in an advocacy and later a council initiative for adapting health services for women with disabilities and overweight women.

Main obstacles - The main obstacle in this initiative was the fact that Konjic changed administratively in the period of implementation of this project from a municipality to a city thus there have been major changes in the local government and some processes were postponed.

CHR ImpAct

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - CHR ImpAct went through the trainings organized by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network and as one of their main aspects in work is human rights they decided to use GRB tools to enhance the position of women in the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo. The problem that they noticed even prior to their research was the fact that women are the majority of the unemployed persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the situation is the same in the Novo Sarajevo Municipality.

GRB initiative - The main objective of the GRB initiative which targeted unemployed women from Novo Sarajevo Municipality and the Council members was to assess the gender equality of employment policies in Novo Sarajevo Municipality and advocate for their change accordingly. Also, the final objective was to introduce GRB in the municipality. The initiative aimed to change the inequality which is imposed by unequal employment access through the municipality's project "Employment for All". The initiative goes in line with the Gender Action Plan of the municipality whose activities were not implemented accordingly. This initiative aims at providing resources to women, through employment, increasing their economic independence.

Success of the GRB initiative - The Municipality of Novo Sarajevo in question plans to create a new initiative for employment and the Municipal Committee on Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Freedoms has agreed to push for an introduction of Gender Responsive Budgeting at the Municipal Council which is seen in the official records of their meeting with CHR ImpAct.

Success factors - Success of this practice is two-fold. CHR ImpAct managed to bring forward a clear gender-based analysis of the employment policy of Novo Sarajevo, while on the other hand also managed to motivate the members of the Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Freedoms Committee to push forward the initiative to adopt GRB as a tool in the Municipality and also to adopt more gender sensitive policies.

Main obstacles - The main obstacles to the implementation included a short time-frame for implementation, as well as the lack of knowledge among the local government officials regarding GRB.

Initiative of Youth with Disabilities of Boka

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - The GRB tools are very useful and powerful instruments for advocacy and monitoring in the area of rights of women with disabilities. The GRB is very efficient, but it is not often-used tool for fact-based advocacy in Montenegro. The area of work and employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) is one of the best regulated in Montenegro, considering that there is reliable legal and financial framework. The policy framework in the area of disability rights and women's entrepreneurship prescribes some measures to encourage the employment of women with disabilities, but they are not sufficient. However, the GRB tools are not used in policy making in Montenegro, neither at the local nor at the national level. Therefore, although they are sufficient funds for support to the employment of PWDs, there are not equally spent for the support of the employment of women and men with disabilities.

GRB initiative - The target group of this initiative consisted of Employment Agency of Montenegro, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Delegation of EU to Montenegro, media and general public. The direct beneficiaries of this initiative were women with disabilities and indirect beneficiaries are: their families, the public and private sector and society as a whole. The problem targeted to be resolve was the gender inequality in the area of work and employment of PWDs. The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities was adopted in 2008. and provides various types of subsidies (incentives) for employers who employ PWDs), tax relief for companies founded by PWDs, as well as financial support (grant schemes) for the implementation of the projects within which PWDs are employed. Funds for the above-mentioned are provided within the Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, which was established within the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Although the position of women with disabilities, in the field of work and employment is less favourable than that of men with disabilities, the only incentive for the employment of women with disabilities is in giving priority to those projects that provide them with employment under grant schemes.

After conducting a GRB Analysis of the Fund's expenditure, the gender inequality of women with disability is obvious. The project initiated the changes of the status of women with disabilities in the area of work and employment, by initiating the policy changes.

Success of the GRB initiative - The results of the GRB analysis were used in advocacy for the improvement of the Draft of the Strategy on Development of Women's Entrepreneurship for the period 2021-2024. We have sent our suggestions for the Draft's improvements to the Ministry of Economic Development, and almost all were adopted. The suggestions were related to providing women with disabilities with information and financial and other support needed to start their own businesses, as well as to the education of stakeholders at the local and national level on the needs of women with disabilities for support in the area of entrepreneurship. We suggested using the budget of the Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities for the establishment of the grant scheme for entrepreneurship of women with disabilities. Besides the mentioned ones, the suggestion related to the establishment of info point for entrepreneurship for women with disabilities was also incorporated in the final text of the Strategy on Development of Women's Entrepreneurship for the period 2021-2024

Success factors - The main success of the initiative was that gender equality of PWDs is become a political issue, especially when it comes to work and employment.

Main obstacles - The main obstacle to adequate implementation of the practice in the area of work and employment of PWDs is that the GRB is not yet implemented in Montenegro, neither by the national nor by the local institutions. Additionally, considering the change of Government the drafting of the Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, which is in the procedure, has been delayed.

Women's Association of Kolubara District

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - ŽUKO is an organization that works in 10 smaller local governments where over 70% of people live in villages, so GRB tools are one of the most effective ways to predict and cover the needs of invisible groups in those villages, especially the needs of women in rural areas. A total of 174,228 inhabitants live in the Kolubara district (6 local self-governments), of which 51% are women. Apart from Valjevo, which is the administrative center of district I and the only major city, 70% of the population lives in villages. The population is mainly engaged in agriculture as a primary or additional job. The Kolubar district did not have its own analysis of the condition and needs of women in agriculture when it comes to health care, and the population was not aware of the scope of the problem and its impact on the entire community. Namely, there are 27,592 registered agricultural farms on the territory of the Kolubara District, that is, 65,661 people in the district are members of family agricultural farms, of which 28,904 are women. Bearing in mind that, according to the SeCons research, as many as 93% of women who are in the status of auxiliary members of the household do not pay pension insurance, we come to the devastating fact about the number of women who do not even have health insurance. These women are almost invisible to society and institutions. They rarely turn to state institutions for examinations, so their number at the level of local communities is also invisible. The wider, rural community is not at all aware of this condition. Health care for both men and women is very scarce and in 5 out of 6 LGUs reduced to primary health care. In the aforementioned research, 30% of women stated that they had not visited a gynecologist in the previous 3 years. Therefore, this problem affects the overall health condition of women in rural areas, and then spills over into the financial condition of the family, because in severe cases of illness, women are treated in private medical clinics.

GRB initiative - Bearing in mind that, according to the SeCons research, as many as 93% of women who are in the status of auxiliary members of the household do not pay pension insurance, and that about 40% of them do not even pay contributions for health insurance, the focus of the initiative was the analysis of the availability of health services to women from rural areas and initiatives to provide free health check-ups to women without health insurance. RS public health strategy for the period 2018-2026 as objective 4.1. recognizes the improvement of health and the reduction of inequality in health and foresees as one of the activities Special researches of sensitive groups of the working population, among others women and farmers. On the other hand, in one of the 6 LGUs, a strategy for improving the health of residents was adopted, through which special activities are planned based on the gender statistics of public health institutions and LGUs, while in another two LGUs, a decree was passed on providing free health examinations to residents without health insurance in clinics in rural areas whose costs are covered by funds from the budget through program 12- Health care. In the framework of the initiative, gender analysis was used to obtain relevant data alongside gender cost-benefit analysis. Through the analysis, the state of availability of health services to women in rural areas was reviewed and an analysis of the budget of those LGUs in which the project was implemented in the Programs 12 was carried out.

Success factors - The success of the initiative is raising the visibility of the problem of the inaccessibility of health services to women from rural areas and the adoption of strategies and regulations that provide free health examinations to women from rural areas without health insurance. The initiative is sustainable through the adoption of a strategic document in one LGU and through the introduction of special goals in the budget programs in two other LGUs. The initiative improved the position of women in the field of health care where men had a better status due to greater coverage by health insurance.

Main obstacles - What were the main obstacles to implementation of the practice, its institutionalization, funding, or use by citizens (if it's a service, or good/resource)?

The most significant observations are that the institutions do not keep gender statistics, despite all the recommendations and the introduced Gender Responsible Budgeting, which obliges users of budget funds to keep gender statistics. Territorial dispersion of the women involved in the survey and the inaccessibility of the terrain and the reduction in the budget of local self-governments for 2022 had an impact on the reduction of the work of LGUs on strategic documents because they were focused exclusively on infrastructure works that were announced in pre-election campaigns.

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.

Youth Association for Human Rights

GRB tools used: sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments;

Overview - Before 2021, participation of women in budget discussions in the Municipality of Lipjan was little to inexistent. Starting in 2021, women were more directly involved in public discussions and reading the budget. In 2022 there was a gender-responsive budgeting hearing of the budget in this municipality which will continue as a practice in the upcoming years. The Article 4 point 4 of the Kosovo Law No. 05/L -020 on Gender Equality, on Prohibition of Gender Discrimination, makes "the principle of gender equality and gender integration, including benefits following pregnancy and child birth, shall be applied in all planning, budgeting and implementation of the above acts by public and private entities" obligatory "in order to prevent gender discrimination in legislation, policies, programs and practice". Moreover, Article 5 point 5 of this law, obliges the "inclusion of gender budgeting in all areas, as a necessary tool to guarantee that the principle of gender equality is respected in collecting, distribution and allocation of resources".

GRB initiative - Through this initiative, targeting municipal institutions in institutionalizing gender responsive budgeting which in return would benefit all women in the municipality of Lipjan, YAHR presented a new approach to budgeting in the Municipality of Lipjan which is more aware about the importance of gender equality allocations of the budget. Through a memorandum of cooperation, the Municipality of Lipjan has committed to the institutionalization of GRB. The CSO initiative aimed at provision of equal access to goods, and resources to women and men, boys and girls, and that will continue in the future. And that can be done by ensuring equal participation in all budget cycle phases. Alongside meetings with women assembly members, and future candidates for the 2021 local elections, YAHR held round tables and training to increase the knowledge on GRB in Lipjan at the decision-making level. YAHR provided municipal representatives and civil society the opportunity to discuss what the Municipality of Lipjan lacks in terms of GRB and how a fair allocation of the municipal budget can be achieved. On February 24, 2021, YAHR organized a round table with representatives of local institutions, political entities, and civil society. The participants of this round table discussed modalities that would enable the future drafting of the municipal budget by incorporating gender aspects and following GRB practices. On April 8, 2021, YAHR, in cooperation and with support from the OSCE mission in Kosovo, organized a workshop on GRB. Ten people participated in this workshop including women members of the Assembly of the Municipality of Lipjan and Shtime, civil society representatives, and the office for gender equality of the Municipality of Lipjan. They also advocated for more budget allocations for shelters supporting survivors of gender-based violence.

Success of the GRB initiative - Small but crucial changes like the GRB consultations and the participation of women in those have been seen immediately since the start of the YAHR initiative to continue even after the end of their initiative, signaling its long-term impact. The municipality of Lipjan, for the first time in 2021, held a public consultation meeting for budget allocation with only women participants. Considering that budget allocation consultations are mainly attended by men, having a room full of women brought to the table their perspective and needs on how funds would benefit them. In 2022, besides a public consultation meeting with women only, there was also a GRB meeting initiated by this sub-grantee. Moreover, in 2022 the Municipality of Lipjan, apart from the budget allocation for this fiscal year, added another 3,000 euros for the shelter for persons who suffered gender-based violence.

Success factors - Gender-responsive policy appraisals and sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments of public service delivery and budget priorities, were some of the GRB tools this CSO used in its initiative, together with a gender cost-effectiveness analysis. In order to achieve their goals, YAHR has signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Municipality of Lipjan who committed to ensuring gender equality allocations of the budget throughout the budget preparation cycle for the upcoming years.

Main obstacles - Public officials in the Municipality of Lipjan were not aware of GRB and its tools and it was difficult to train them in such a short time period. Moreover, women were not used to participating in budget appropriations planning as their participation in budget public consultations had been very low in prior years, as they were not aware of how their municipality can help them through the budget appropriations

Comunitati in Actiune

GRB tools used: costing analysis and advocacy;

Overview - Women's political participation is an important precondition for achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Political parties are among the most important institutions for promoting and nurturing such participation. Ensuring women's equal participation in the decision making structures of political parties is essential for promoting gender equality within them and within society as a whole. Superficial efforts to increase the number of women involved in politics that offer no real qualitative influence or decision-making powers are unlikely to produce any new or immediate benefits. Overcoming obstacles in achieving gender equality in politics will require action in many areas. Financial obstacles are often identified as a major factor.

In 2019, the national legal provisions on public funding for political parties were improved to promote political participation of women and youth in the Republic of Moldova. For instance, political parties should use 20% of the annual subsidies received from the state budget to promote and encourage women's participation in political and electoral processes, and 10% - for young people political participation.

However, there is no documented evidence how the provisions on the annual state subsidies for the promotion of women and youth in political processes are implemented de facto by political parties and how the target groups benefit from them. At the same time, the reports presented by the political parties to the Central Electoral Commission shows a lack of transparency in the use according to the destination of the subsidies from the state budget allocated to promote and encourage the participation of women and youth in the political and electoral processes within many political parties.

Initial analysis conducted by Comunitati in Actiune revealed that many political parties did not allocated the necessary resources for this goal. For instance, a half of political parties that received subsidies from the state budget did not report spending on promoting and encouraging the participation of women and youth, and every third party reported spending lower than the special quotas of 30% provided by law in the first semester of 2022. During 2021, the use of financial resources with a special purpose for actions to promote and encourage the participation of women and youth in the electoral and political processes also recorded poor results. Thus, 41.4% of the political parties receiving subsidies from the state budget did not make expenses intended for the promotion of women and youth, and about 44.8% made expenses lower than the quotas established by law and only in the case of 13, 8% of political parties were declared higher expenses.

GRB initiative - Comunitati in Actiune CSO started to implement a GRB initiative within the GBWN project to tackle the underrepresentation of women and youth in decision-making positions within political parties and to approach the transparency of allocation of subsidies from the state budget to promote women and youth in political and electoral processes. The organization submitted requests for access to information to the political parties represented in Parliament and to the Central Electoral Commission in order to obtain sex and age disaggregated data on political parties' members. At the same time, Comunitati in Actiune CSO analyzed the annual reports submitted to Central Electoral Commission by political parties that benefited from the state budget subsidies in the last three years with special focus on the use of funds to promote and encourage women's and youth's participation in political and electoral processes.

Following the analysis of secondary data, Comunitati in Actiune CSO organized six focus group discussions with representatives of the women and youth wings of political parties (central and local levels) to identify perceptions on accessing funds for the implementation of activities aimed at increasing women and youth participation. The organization also conducted a survey in order to identify internal and structural barriers for women and youth representation in politics. Thus, 175 members of political parties participated in the survey, 91.4% of whom were women, from the following age groups: 18-35 years - 17.8%; 35-60 years - 75.9%; 60 + - 6.3%. In the focus group-discussions were involved 65 representatives of four political parties that accepted participation of which 93.8% were women.

The results of the GRB report were used by Comunitati in Actiune CSO to develop recommendations for key stakeholders and to organize a public event to discuss the reasons of poor implementation of subsidies from the state budget allocated to promote and encourage the participation of women and youth in the political and electoral processes. Additionally, the organization produced and disseminated a podcast on the importance of transparency in gender targeted public funding for political parties aiming also at promoting political participation of women and youth, including those from disadvantaged groups, and provided targeted training to more than hundred women members of political parties to respond to their identified needs.

Comunitati in Actiune CSO managed to channel public interest on a very sensitive and important topic such as the use of subsidies from the state budget by political parties to encourage the participation of women and young people in the political and electoral processes.

Success of the GRB initiative - Through this GRB initiative, the organization raised awareness on the problems related to reported expenditures by political parties that should target advancement of women and youth in politics and decision-making.

Many party members learned for the first time about the funding of political parties from the State Budget, which challenged and empowered party members with leadership positions to see this process as a participatory one, which would respond to specific needs of women and youth. On the other hand, the rank-and-file members of political parties have realized that each of them should take responsibility for ensuring transparency of funds' allocation within the political party and their use according to legal provisions.

The public event organized by Comunitati in Actiune CSO involved in active discussions on effective use of state subsidies to promote women and youth within political parties various stakeholders. The event gathered the Head of Policy Department for Ensuring Equality between Women and Men of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, representatives of the Central Electoral Commission, the Court of Accounts, the Public Services Agency, political parties and civil society.

Within focus group discussions with political parties' representatives, mainly women and youth, Comunitati in Actiune CSO identified a series of training topics of their interest. By the end of the GRB initiative, the organization trained 115 women, including young women members of four political parties on the role of personal brand in advancing their career within the political party.

Success factors - Keys success factors of the initiative are considered the previous experience of the NGO in working with political parties and the knowledge of barriers women and youth face in political participation. The participation of Comunitati in Actiune CSO project coordinator in a GRB training and the support offered by the GBWN team for the implementation of the initiative represented another factor that helped the organization to channel the discussion of key stakeholders on possible solutions and facilitators to advance political participation of women and youth.

Main obstacles - The main challenge of the initiative was the refusal of three out of four political parties represented in Parliament to provide sex and age desegregated data on their members. At the same time, the Central Electoral Commission does not have sex- and age-disaggregated data on members of political parties, which prevented the application of specific techniques for gender analysis of the beneficiaries of the state budget allocated for the participation of women and youth.