

Dear Gender Budget Watchdog Network Members and Colleagues,

As we approach the festive season and the dawn of a new year, I extend my warmest greetings to each one of you.

The holiday season is a time for reflection, celebration, and anticipation for the possibilities that lie ahead. It is also a perfect moment to reinforce our commitment to a cause that is at the heart of our mission – gender equality.

In our journey towards fostering gender equality in South East Europe and the Republic of Moldova, the Gender Budget Watchdog Network has played a crucial role in advocating for policies and budgets that respond equitably to the needs of women and men, girls and boys.

Our collective vision creates a future where public resources are distributed in a just manner, ensuring that the benefits of development reach all genders. Let's hold this vision as a high intention for the upcoming year too! Not only that, let us intensify our efforts to hold governments accountable and to empower civil society organizations in their watchdogging role in contributing to gender equality. This entails providing them with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to advocate from the perspective of equity, fairness, and efficiency. Strengthening the capabilities of CSOs is pivotal in fostering a collaborative environment where all stakeholders actively participate in shaping policies that promote gender inclusivity.

As we embark on the challenges and opportunities that the new year brings, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a more just and equal society. May our shared endeavors lead to positive transformations in our societies.

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

Marija Risteska

Regional Director
Gender Budget Watchdog Network



GBWN Partners' News

GADC PARTICIPATED IN THE ALBANIAN PARLIAMENT SESSION ON STATE BUDGET

On November 13, 2023, the Albanian parliament hosted a hearing session of the Committee for Economy and Finance to review the budget and planned investments of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for the year 2024. GBWN team from Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) engaged by contributing views on crucial matters like gender-responsive budgeting in education, public security, domestic violence prevention, and healthcare at the significant session in the Albanian parliament, with a key point on the 2024 state budget.

The meeting was chaired by the Committee for work, social issues, and health care, which holds the key to decisions impacting employment, social policies, and health care in the country.

During the plenary session it was opened for discussion the review on the bill for the state budget of 2024 with stakeholder to ensure that every legislative move aligns seamlessly with the well-being and needs of the population. During the discussion, it was proposed by Albanian MP Erion Braçe that women and girls should be granted paid menstrual leave at work for the duration of their menstrual cycle as well as to remove VAT on essential menstrual hygiene products.

KEYSTONE MOLDOVA PARTICIPATED AT THE EVENT HOSTED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The GBWN team from Keystone Moldova took part in an event hosted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova on 8th of November 2023.

The purpose of this gathering was to examine the mechanisms of transposition of the Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978, a significant directive aimed at progressively applying the principle of equal treatment for men and women in the area of social security.

The transposition of European Union directives regarding gender equality stands as a crucial milestone in the Republic of Moldova's trajectory towards European integration. During the event, our team not only had the opportunity to contribute to this vital process but also to engage in discussions and analyses with fellow stakeholders on the effective implementation of this directive.



PERFORMANCE AUDIT ON GENDER EQUALITY AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CONDUCTED IN FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The performance audit in FBiH had the goal of examining the effectiveness of institutions in achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women. It covered activities of 33 subjects: Gender Center of FBiH, Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 11 committees for gender equality in FBiH, 10 cantonal ministries responsible for social policy and 10 social work centers.

The audit determined that the basic prerequisite for GRB - program budgeting - was not introduced yet. The transition to program budgeting is expected to take place in 2025. Principles of GRB are integrated into the budget instructions, while in the previous period, as the audit indicates, 7 federal ministries included gender components in the distribution of grant funds.

POSITION LETTER ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS OF THE GENDER TASKFORCE BY KEYSTONE MOLDOVA



Keystone Moldova has drafted a position letter on behalf of members of the Gender TaskForce calling on The Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova to prioritize the incorporation of gender-responsive budgeting in the upcoming 2024 draft Budget Law. Although there have been previous efforts, there are significant shortcomings. It recommends strengthening efforts for a sound regulatory framework, stressing the importance of integrating costs into the national budget according to the gender equality programme. This ensures a consistent and sustainable approach to gender equality in the Republic of Moldova.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF) AND KOSOVO WOMEN'S NETWORK (KWN) ADVOCATING FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

In collaboration with the Women's Economic Forum (WEF), the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) met the Prime Minister of Kosovo, the Minister of Finance, Labour, and Transfers and the Deputy Minister of Finance, Labour, and Transfers to advocate for institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting, among other issues. WEF presented recommendations for the 2024 budget. The Prime Minister and Minister promised to take the proposals under consideration.

KWN also sent a letter to all Members of Parliament (MPs) with recommendations for the 2024 budget prior to approval. Key issues included institutionalizing GRB in accordance with legal commitments and international best practices; fulfilling commitments to allocate financing for addressing gender-based violence against women and children; allocating adequate financing for the Personal Assistance Scheme for assistants of persons with disabilities; establishing a budget line for civil society organizations; and addressing the informal economy and workers' rights. KWN also actively advocated to MPs to raise these issues during parliamentary debates. An MP acknowledged KWN's input and some of the issues in the letter were raised during debates. While the budget was approved on 14 Dec. 2024, KWN awaits its publication to analyse the extent to which recommendations have been addressed.

WEF is a coalition of civil society organizations including the Riinvest Institute; KWN: Democracy for Development (D4D); Kosovo Center for Gender Studies; the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations in Kosovo; Kosovo - Women 4 Women; and the GAP Institute.



KWN SUPPORTS CONDUCTING A GENDER ANALYSIS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, SPATIAL PLANNING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure approached KWN to request support in conducting a gender analysis for Infrastructure. They recognised KWN's expertise providing such support to the Ministry towards gender-responsive budgeting in prior years, before Infrastructure was added to this Ministry's responsibilities, and emphasised the need to conduct a gender analysis of infrastructure, which has not been conducted. KWN and Ministry representatives agreed to meet again in the new year to discuss the methodology and how gender analysis as a first step to gender-responsive budgeting may be institutionalised in the Ministry's work related to infrastructure. They also discussed potential collaboration in the context of GBWN's forthcoming gender analysis on the transport sector, which relates to this Ministry's work.

GENDER KNOWLEDGE HUB COOPERATION WITH THE WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE

In November 2023, Gender Knowledge Hub (GKH) continued valuable cooperation with the Women's Network for the Protection of Nature, which began in June 2023 during the fourth meeting of the Network. During the workshop on gender-responsive budgeting, emphasizing the importance of framing and structuring women's environmental activism in broader concepts such as eco-feminism, feminist climate and environmental justice and also using different tools to keep decision makers and governments responsive to women. In the workshop held in November 2023, GKH engaged in participatory reading of the Budget of the Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia and also developed a methodology for monitoring the budget for the implementation of the Green Agenda in 2024. This includes aspects of circular economy, support to civil society organizations, and other program activities. Next step is to acquire the first set of data from the ministry about expenditure and budgeting in 2023. Stay tuned for the results, but first of all, an overview of the gender dimension in the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans!



GBWN Recent Events Participation

International Conference “Gender Mainstreaming as an effective Means to Achieve Gender Equality”

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with Uzbekistan’s Ministry of Justice organized the international conference Participants at the conference “**Gender Mainstreaming as an Effective Means to Achieve Gender Equality**” which brought together representatives of the government of Uzbekistan, non-governmental organizations, women’s groups, private-sector firms, and experts from around the world to share their insights and experiences regarding combating gender-based violence. Our regional director, Marija Risteska was invited as the speaker on gender statistics as a tool for monitoring gender policies.



BEYOND THE CLIMATE CRISIS: WOMEN AND GIRLS EMPOWERED THROUGH BUDGETARY SOLUTIONS

GBWN partners participated at the roundtable “**Beyond the Climate Crisis: Women and Girls Empowered through Budgetary Solutions**” on Thursday 14th December from 12:00 CET to 13:30 CET online hosted by UN Women Europe and Central Asia. The event served for sharing the findings collected from the GRB and Climate Finance Study conducted in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The focus of this event was to explore avenues for strengthening synergies in addressing gender equality and climate change while improving the tracking of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) financing.

The roundtable made for a platform to share best practices and lessons learned, emphasizing strategies to tackle the core drivers of gender-based vulnerabilities and leveraging climate action as a catalyst of gender equality and women’s empowerment.



GBWN Subgrantees

INFORMAL MEETING WITH THE DIRECTORATE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH MITROVICA, KOSOVO*

The MWAHR - Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights, our sub-grantee from Kosovo, arranged an informal meeting with the Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development in South Mitrovica for the project Gender Budgeting as a Transformative Tool for Municipal Institutions. The meeting was facilitated by the project manager, Vetone Veliu, and aimed to inform participants about the directorate's support for women and its implementation of responsible gender budgeting through subsidies. The director of the directorate, Ferdi Kadriu, discussed the challenges in implementing gender budgeting for women due to their limited involvement in agriculture, particularly in cases where support criteria involve ownership of property.

A notable instance this year was when farmers were supported with a tractor, and the criterion was that the farmer must have a tractor in their name. No woman applied for the support, as no tractor was her property. Mr. Kadriu acknowledged women's contributions to agriculture, citing the 'Konaku i Mitrovices' fair.

Participants made demands, including subsidizing handicraft businesses, supporting women's ventures in northern municipalities, hosting more frequent fairs, facilitating study visits, and providing training for women's activities.

The meeting, attended by 20 participants, ended with certificates distributed to 'Konaku i Mitrovica' fair participants, emphasizing the project's commitment to empowering women in agriculture.



FIELD VISIT TO RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS CENTER NOVUS – STRUMICA N. MACEDONIA



The GBWN team from the Center for Research and Policy Making, together with Lisa Curman from one of the project donors, Sida - Swedish International Development Agency, conducted a field visit to one of our sub grantees in N. Macedonia, the Center for research and analysis.

During the visit, we engaged in discussions about the overall situation in Strumica, their contributions to our network's development, and their advancements in implementing the local project on gender-responsive budgeting.

The representatives from NOVUS shared the preliminary findings from their research on support in crisis situations, addressing the needs of women, men, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.



JOIN OUR E-ACADEMY!

Our e-academy is **open for all interested individuals – practitioners, scholars, civil servants, activists who are very welcome to join.**

Training is also a kind of ‘initiation’ in GBWN so we also welcome you to our Network as well!

If you are interested in joining our training courses please write an e-mail to gbwn@crpm.org.mk in which you will list the following details:

- Name and surname;
- Country;
- Short motivation on why do you want to complete the GRB for Beginners module;
- Which language variation(s) you want to be enrolled to (English, Albanian, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian/Montenegrin/Bosnian).

[More information on the current courses on our website.](#)



WATCH OUR LATEST WEBINAR!

GBWN organized the webinar **“State Funding for SOS Helplines in the Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova”** that took place online on 12th of December (Tuesday) from 3pm to 5pm CET and presented the findings from the GBWN policy brief related to funding of SOS helplines, one of specialized services for combating gender-based violence in the Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova. 50+ representatives of CSOs joined us online.

All Western Balkan governments have ratified and/or adopted into their legal frameworks the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as the “Istanbul Convention”). As per the Istanbul Convention, governments should fund non-governmental women’s rights civil society organizations (WCSOs) and recognizing they are key actors and partners in advancing women’s human rights and gender equality. Moreover, ensuring funding for commitments under the Istanbul Convention should be an objective and result of gender responsive budgeting.

What is the reality of funding of WCSOs and SOS helplines services they provide?

[Webinar on SOS helplines REPORT](#)

[Watch the recording on our YouTube Channel:](#)



YOUTUBE CHANNEL

@GenderBudgetWatchdogNetwork



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GBWN IN THE NEXUS PFM PODCAST

Tune into the Nexus PFM Podcast with the regional director of GBWN, Marija Risteska, and Claire O'Donnell of International Budget Partnership on the recent International Budget Partnership publication on [Addressing Gender Responsive Budget Implementation: How Civil Society is Holding Governments Accountable to Gender Promises in Budget Execution.](#)

Find the two episodes here:

Episode 1

Episode 2



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Civil society is filling the gap of not having sex-disaggregated data and not having capacity of the governments to analyze from a gender perspective the needs of the citizens and how the measures that they are adopting and implementing are addressing the different needs.

Marija Risteska





To end off on a positive note, we are sharing with you some **tips and tricks for gift ideas**, both environmentally friendly and promoting gender equality!



Support handmade products made by women from your local community, such as clothing, accessories & decorations.



Reusable and eco-friendly products such as stainless steel water bottles, bamboo utensil sets, or beeswax wraps.



Organically made beauty and health products made in your country (possibly produced by women-owned SMEs).



Choose eco-friendly holiday decorations that are protecting our planet and make it a holiday of nature celebration rather than consumerism.



Donate to your local organizations/ activists who accept donations (both for gender equality and environment) or apply for a workshop or a training with a dear person.




Happy 
Holidays