

CRPM GROWING INTO **GBWN**



About us: Center for Research and Policy Making

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 CRPM Gender Budget 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.

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. When policy solutions of one CSOs are echoed by other CSOs from the network the policy changes can be achieved easier.

Follow our work on:

 www.crpm.org.mk

 www.gbwn.net



Gender Budget Watchdog Network

for a gender equal region

Motivation, strengths and weaknesses

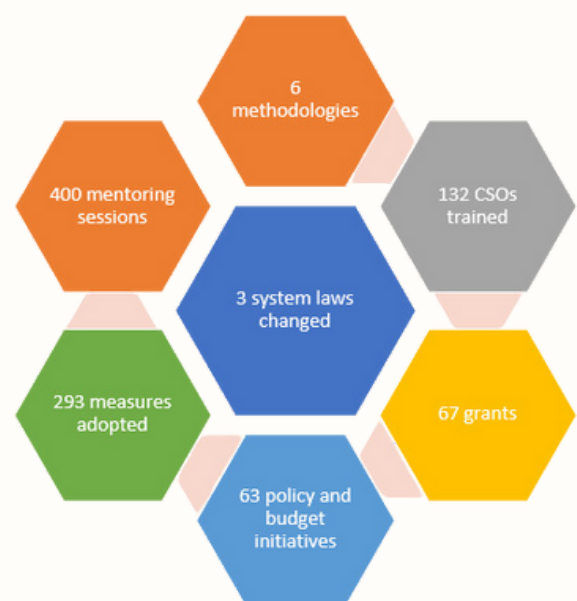
CRPM particularly has chosen this approach as the CSOs in Macedonia and the Western Balkan region lack budget literacy; institutions do not gather or publish sex disaggregated data, while as a result of the orientation towards EU integration all governments in the region have committed to gender equality 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. Today the network brings together 100+ civil CSOs and aims to strengthen their role as an interest group that contributes to increasing accountability and transparency and improving the management of public funds.

Results, findings and/or engagement effort

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.



Capacity Building

of the Civil Society

organizations (CSOs) with GRB



CSOs actively participate in holding governments accountable to their gender-responsive budgeting commitments, including those related to resilience response and actions to address climate change. In terms of the strengthening of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) on the local level, the efforts are directed towards the CSOs as the local partners in the consortium implementing the activities and the current GBWN members. The network is further supporting institutionalization of the network to confirm its quality standards, increase its regional influence and improve its international visibility. The consortium is made up of diverse CSOs (women's organizations, think tanks, disability rights advocacy groups and CSO development organizations). This diversity brings a productive mix of know-how, experience and results with initiatives that embed intersectionality.

GRB Hubs in 7 countries

Our network has GRB hubs in 7 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, N. Macedonia and Serbia) with necessary knowledge, skills and experience in applying GRB tools and offering mentorship to other CSOs in the network. Members get their capacities strengthened through Organizational and Advocacy Assessment (OACA) we perform together with them, resilience monitoring and climate finance monitoring trainings, communication trainings and further support for growth of the less developed members in the network. For the more developed members also new opportunities for leadership are provided through the regional grants' collaborations.

In terms of the capacity building, analysis and advocacy efforts are directed towards the following main CSO groups:

- 1 Women's rights organizations**
 - empowering them with capacity, knowledge and skills regarding climate change policies, the climate finance landscape and improve their understanding of processes, entry points, gaps and potentials for engendering;
- 2 Men's organizations**
 - these types of organizations are very rare in the region. Only 'Be a men clubs'¹ exist. GBWN is mobilizing other men in activism towards improvement of gender equality;

- 3 CSOs working on environment protection and climate change**
-are supported to undertake gender analysis and incorporate a gender perspective in their work, increasing their gender awareness, knowledge of the inter linkages between gender and climate change, and skills to use GRB tools for holding governments accountable for use of climate change financing;
- 4 CSOs working on implementation of UN Convention 1325**
– in most of the countries there are networks of organizations working on women, peace and security issues that we target.

Mentoring of the GBWN Members on Advocacy and Lobbying

All the sub-grantees of GBWN (currently 20 CSOs) receive the mentoring to support them in their GRB advocacy activities on the local and national level as well as to produce gender budget watchdog reports for gender balance distribution of public finances for resilience response.

Main achievements of the mentorship for CSOs include:

- 1** Action advocacy plans have been created, and some organizations have successfully implemented their advocacy plans;
- 2** Ambitious targets were translated into realistic actions that CSOs can apply immediately;
- 3** CSOs have identified the key targets/stakeholders for advocacy and made plans how to strategize with the most effective advocacy tactics;
- 4** CSOs have a real understanding of the elements of an advocacy strategy and how to use their knowledge and evidence to argue for the GRB implementation.



What are the key factors to success of CSOs using GRB tools?



- **Vocalizing the issues 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.
- Transferring the collected information **from the ground to the decision makers**,
- Proficient costing analysis/ gender cost-effectiveness analysis,
- **Comprehensive advocacy campaign** designed and implemented (using different communication channels),
- **Meetings with MPs** and decision makers (the Ministry of Finance, Agriculture, Health, Education),
- **CSO involvement in active discussions** on effective use of state subsidies to promote GRB within political parties various stakeholders,
- **Building strong networks** with other CSOs, government agencies, and international organizations to support their advocacy efforts.

What are the main challenges CSOs using GRB tools face?

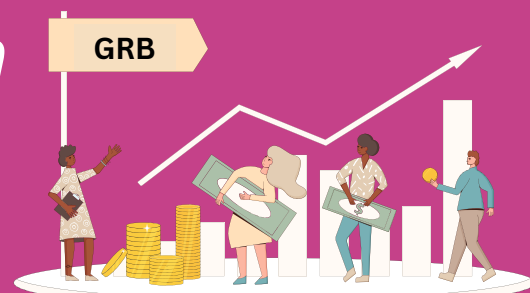


- **Civil servant mobility**,
- **Lack of knowledge among the local government officials** regarding GRB,
- **Lack of sex-disaggregated data**,
- **Need to empower local officials** at all levels about the significance of establishing effective gender-related policies (without the assistance of CSO, local officials lack the knowledge necessary to address gender-based inequalities effectively),
- **Women are not used to participating in budget appropriations planning** as their participation in budget public consultations had been very low in prior years, as they are not aware of how their municipality can help them through the budget appropriations,
- **Lack of political will or resistance** from government institutions to adopt and implement GRB recommendations,
- **Difficulty in mobilizing and maintaining** public and stakeholder **support**.



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Improving of Good Governance with GRB tools



According to the European Charter, the integration of the gender perspective into the local policies and budgets is necessary to improve the equality between women and men. The gender perspective must be taken into consideration in the development of policies, regulations, methods and instruments that affect the daily life of the local population - for example, with the techniques of “gender mainstreaming” and “gender responsive budgeting”.

How GRB can contribute to improving good governance?



Promoting Accountability and Transparency: GRB encourages transparency in budget allocations and expenditures related to gender issues. It helps in tracking how resources are allocated and spent on gender-specific programs and services, thereby promoting accountability among government agencies and other stakeholders.

Our network's impact in accountability and transparency:

- Serbia has published a comprehensive report on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB).
- In Macedonia, Gender Budget Statements have been published, and a proposal from the Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) for the revision of the 2021 gender budget has been accepted.
- Albania has released a civil budget publication.
- In Montenegro the State Audit institution has for the first time prepared the Audit of the success of the implementation of gender equality policy encompassing gender responsive budgeting.
- The Audit Office of the Institutions in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has conducted a Performance Audit on Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women for the 2019-2022 time period, including a section on the implementation of GRB



Enhancing Participation and Consultation: our GRB processes involve consultations with diverse stakeholders, including women's groups and civil society organizations. This participatory approach improves decision-making processes by incorporating a wider range of perspectives and needs into budgetary planning.

Our impact in participation and consultation:

- **Macedonia:** Under the project “Through gender lenses: appraising budgets and policies, watchdogging local action plans for gender equality implementation”, implemented by the Center for Research and Policy Making, the Rural Coalition, the Journalists for Human Rights, the Roma Women and Youth Association Luludi and the Educational Humanitarian Organisation Echo Shtip, we enhanced civil society proactivity through strengthening networking, using GRB methods for cooperation with the local self-government and shaping local policies and budgets for addressing the different needs of women and men, especially of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in 8 planning regions and 17 targeted municipalities (Chair, Shuto Orizari, Brvenica, Tearce, Kavadarci, Negotino, Delchevo, Makedonska Kamenica, Probishtip, Radovish, Gevgelija, Krushevo, Krivogashtani, Struga, Vevchani, Staro Nagorichane and Lipkovo). A total of 17 local civil society organisations were trained in the use of tools for GRB, produced monitoring reports to determine the degree of implementation of gender responsive budgeting and the creation of gender sensitive policies and programs in the local self-governments to keep the local governments accountable.
- **Kosovo:** Kosovo Women’s Office organizes a series of workshops that explain GRB, analyze annual budgets, review the Medium Term Budget Framework, and participate in public hearings. During the workshops, participants discuss the needs that municipal budgets should address in their annual plans. They also share best practices and strategies for overcoming resistance when encountering challenges to their requests. The workshops focus on issues related to disabled children, transportation, and gender using GRB tools.



Improving Services for Citizens: Gender-responsive budgeting helps prioritize and allocate resources to services that directly benefit women and marginalized groups. This leads to improved access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and social protection.

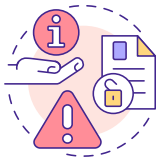
Our Impact in improving services for citizens:

GBWN budget commentaries from a gender perspective contribute to more informed, transparent, and inclusive governance. They help ensure that state budgets are responsive to the needs of all citizens, promoting fairness and equality in public resource management: <https://gbwn.net/en/contributions/>.

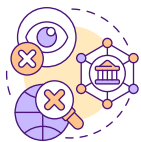
Main challenges of improving the good governance with GRB



Lack of political will and insufficient understanding and awareness about the importance and benefits of GRB among government officials, civil society, and the public.



Lack of comprehensive data disaggregated by gender and robust gender analysis. In our region, data are lacking or are unreliable, making it difficult to identify gender disparities.



Fragmented budgeting processes: in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina or Serbia, budgeting processes are fragmented and lack coherence. Integrating a gender perspective into such systems is challenging.



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GRB in Public Finance Management (PFM) systems



GRB relevance for PFM

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is crucial for public finance management as it ensures that budgetary allocations and expenditures address the different needs and priorities of women and men. GRB promotes gender equality by integrating gender perspectives into budgeting processes, leading to more effective and equitable use of public resources. It helps in identifying and rectifying gender disparities, enhances accountability and transparency in public spending, and supports the achievement of broader socio-economic development goals by fostering inclusive growth. By considering the diverse impacts of budget decisions on different genders, GRB strengthens overall fiscal governance. GBWN follows the budget-making, discussion and adoption and annually each GBWN hub submits budget commentaries and recommendations from a gender perspective to Ministries of Finance and Parliaments in the spirit of The Fiscal Femme: <https://gbwn.net/en/contributions/>

Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) work to regulate GRB in PFM

GBWN has implemented several key interventions to systematically regulate gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) within Public Finance Management (PFM) systems:

- **Capacity Building:** Training government officials and civil society organizations to understand and apply GRB principles.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Lobbying for the integration of GRB into national and local budgeting processes.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing frameworks to track and assess the impact of GRB on gender equality.
- **Public Awareness:** Conducting campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of GRB.

These interventions aim to ensure that public funds are allocated equitably, addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusive development. For more details, you can visit [GBWN](https://gbwn.net) website.

Successes:

Macedonia:

Using democratically prescribed tools for citizens' initiative Center for research and policy making as leader of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network submitted initiative to the Macedonian Parliament for changing the proposed for adoption Organic Law on Budgets through amendments. The law only included the definition of gender responsive budgeting but did not systematically include GRB in the Macedonian PFM system. Therefore, the amendments were referring to defining:

- Gender budget performance indicators;
- Gender budget statements;
- Regulating commitment to include gender indicators and gender budget statements in draft financial plans by all budget users;
- Regulating responsibility of Ministry of finance to list all gender budget statements and publish together with the draft budget document.

After the amendments were submitted, CRPM team met with each caucus leader in the parliament and built consensus along the proposed legal changes which resulted with adoption of the amendments to the Organic Budget Law unanimously in 2023.

Kosovo:

Public Finance Management Reform Strategy 2022-2026 is the main policy document of the Kosovo Government to tackle the Public Administration Reform (PAR) and specifically the Public Finance Management (PFM) system of Kosovo. The Kosovo Women's Network, the Kosovo based GBWN hub provided comments to the document.

Moldova:

National Development Strategy "Moldova Europeana 2030" was adopted within which gender-responsive budgeting is considered an important method for promoting gender equality and a priority measure to implement the objectives of the Strategy; whereas the main measures and targets for promoting gender-responsive climate change budgeting are presented in SDG13 related sub-chapter. GBWN contributed to the development of the National Program for accelerating gender equality in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027.

Main challenges for introducing GRB into PFM systems



Lack of political will and institutional commitment to integrate GRB into existing PFM frameworks.



Limited knowledge and expertise among policymakers and public officials on GRB principles and practice as well as persistent gender stereotypes and biases that undermine efforts to promote gender equality in budgeting processes.



Government representatives also argue that they have insufficient financial resources allocated to gender equality initiatives and GRB implementation, however our work is to show them that GRB does not require additional resources, but rather aims for better and more fair distribution of the existing ones.



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