

# GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING:

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN NORTH MACEDONIA



### Overview of the issue

The pandemic response highlighted shortcomings in procedures, protocols, and the execution of existing plans, along with a lack of strategies and plans for managing crisis situations. Gender inequality in this area is particularly expressed in the processes of planning, decision-making and management of crisis situations as well as in the period after the crisis situations, that is, in the part of repairing the damages and the distribution of resources. The situation of disproportionate participation of women is also expressed in the bodies responsible for planning and management in crisis situations.

In the established crisis headquarters for emergency situations in local self-governments, the question arises as to **how far the principle of gender equality has been applied**. In order to achieve gender-sensitive planning, it is necessary to include women in the headquarters in order to achieve that the decisions of the headquarters reflect equally the interests of both women and men. The situation was particularly stressed in the section of fire protection of the schools and participation of women in planning and implementation of crises management plans in these regards.

**The areas of intervention were small to mid-sized municipalities in North Macedonia including Berovo, Kavadarci, Kocani and additionally in Karposh.**

### GRB analysis

**The analyses of the processes and documents included:**

- ✓ Reviewing local action plans for crisis management to identify gaps in gender-sensitive measures;
- ✓ Analysing planned versus actual municipal budgets allocated for implementing emergency response measures;
- ✓ Assessing the level of women's participation in crisis management structures and decision-making processes;
- ✓ Examining the effectiveness of financial resources in addressing the needs of different vulnerable groups, including women, children, and marginalized communities;
- ✓ Conducting a research study on the use and availability of fire extinguishers in primary schools across the target municipalities, which aimed to assess the level of preparedness in schools for fire-related emergencies, identify gaps in fire safety measures, and analyze how crisis management plans address fire protection in educational institutions.

**The results of the analyses showed that:**

Municipalities in the preparation and assessment of the crises management plans have not integrated gender perspective and does not include information about how and to which degree would reflect on women, their wellbeing as well and their role in the prevention process. The lack of gender perspective is particularly visible in the parts that are related to: absence of sex disaggregated data, effect on the various situation on women and their response. This is part of the assessments regarding danger from natural and other disasters, plans for protection and safety, operational plans for safety from disasters like flooding and fires, evacuation plans, first aid plans.

**The analyses of the situation regarding fire protection in the schools showed that:** knowledge and experience that men and women have regarding managing the fire distinguishers and other fire protection equipment is different. It also applied for the trainings they have been through. The analyses show that almost 70% of the respondents have not been through training on how to use fire distinguishers. From those who know how to operate majority do not feel safe while operating. Not all staff in the schools are adequately and fully informed about the measures some activities that school undertakes to prevent and protect from fire in the school and what are the steps that need to be taken in a case of fire. Similar results are received from the school boards members who in majority do not know well about the conditions with fire protection in the schools and the usage of the fire equipment.

## Advocacy instant impact:

The project assisted municipalities in reviewing and updating their crisis management plans to include a gender perspective. A comprehensive assessment of existing local plans identified gaps, prompting authorities to begin incorporating gender analysis recommendations into their policies through prepared gender budget appraisal documents. The gender budget appraisal reports for each municipality, were distributed to relevant stakeholders and used as a basis for further advocacy. While full institutional adoption remained to be done, **municipalities have taken important steps toward ensuring crisis planning considers the different needs of men and women**, especially those coming from vulnerable groups, based on local economic, social, and geographical characteristics. Additionally, results from the analyses of the programs and survey for usage of fire extinguishers in primary schools have been sent to the experts that were working on Integrated local development plans for municipalities (supported by UNDP). The plans are for 4-year period 2024-2027, and gender responsiveness of each program is stated based on the identified needs and directions by sector.

The action enhanced understanding among local decision-makers about the importance of including women in both crisis prevention and response, in the respective municipalities. **The active involvement of municipal gender equality coordinators has further reinforced this progress.** One key achievement that was not originally planned but had a significant impact was the project's contribution to **start conversation regarding improving crisis preparedness in schools across the three municipalities.** An assessment of fire safety measures in primary schools revealed gaps in the availability and maintenance of fire extinguishers, as well as a lack of structured fire safety training and clear crisis response protocols. Additionally, the research highlighted a gender imbalance in safety responsibilities, where fire safety knowledge and crisis response roles were often assigned predominantly to male staff. The project was additionally implemented in municipality of Karposh, in Skopje.



## General recommendations

- The recommendations of the analyses showed that there is **a need for increased investments in trainings for fire protection for school staff** which is predominantly women, improved usage of the fire distinguishers and their handling.
- There is a need for increase of the information about the **staff trained for handling the fire protection equipment**, as well and the **evacuation and preparedness plans** in case of fire.
- The same recommendations are provided for the school boards.

