

GRB Forum **GOING GLOCAL 2.0: SUSTAINABLE GENDER RESPONSIVE FUTURES**

10-11 December 2025

Skopje, Holiday Inn Hotel

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Introduction

International GRB Forum “*Going Glocal 2.0: Sustainable Gender-Responsive Futures*”, which took place in Skopje on 10-11th of December 2025 linked global expertise and local experience with the main focus on climate financing from a gender perspective. The forum using the label “*good budgeting*” once more confirmed that the good budgeting improves the overall quality, transparency, accountability, efficiency and inclusiveness of the process, brings to the surface social inequalities and injustice and provides solutions to better tackle these problems, towards equality. This forum hosted more than 100 participants (84 females and 19 males) from 19 countries and engaged the audience into models and mechanisms of environmental and other policy-making processes.

The forum objectives included:

- **Strengthening further the role of civil society in Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB):** the forum gathered the knowledge from the field work of CSOs, particularly women’s rights and environmental organizations, in monitoring climate finance and resilience response from a gender perspective.
- **SO2: Promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue and networking on gender and climate change:** this international event created a platform for dialogue between civil society, government representatives, donors, and international experts to discuss and share best practices in integrating gender perspectives into resilience, mobility, energy, and sustainability policies. It fostered connections between the gender equality and environmental sectors, encouraging cross-sector collaboration to enhance policy impact and promote the inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making processes.
- **SO3: Advocating for gender-transformative climate policies and improve public debate on good governance:** by engaging policymakers, the media, and other stakeholders, the event raised awareness about the importance of gender-responsive approaches in climate action, support policy reforms at national and subnational levels, and contribute to better governance and sustainable development in targeted countries.

DAY 1 of the Forum

Official opening

The forum was opened by the **President of Republic N. Macedonia, HE Gordana Siljanovska Davkova**, who in her speech stressed the importance of the GRB as a tool that ensures good governance—enhancing transparency, accountability, and the fairness of public spending. She also stressed the importance of the GRB process in relation to climate financing, in particular the importance of gender analysis, without which the climate financing risks reinforcing inequalities instead of reducing them. She encouraged the audience in the efforts to join a powerful regional network of civil society organizations in sending an important message that climate resilience requires shared responsibility.



Opening remarks were given by **HE Ambassador of Austria to North Macedonia Martin Pammer** who emphasized the importance of GRB process by sharing Austrian example of having GRB process in the constitution of the state. He stressed the achievements of the Gender Budget Watchdog Networks within the region and beyond. He underlined the cross-border character of the network related to climate change character.



Elisabet Dahlberg Frisk, Deputy Ambassador of Sweden to North Macedonia stressed the importance of the GRB process and the support of Sweden in enhancing the CSO watchdog efforts in gender equality as the support Sweden provides in the euro integration process of the country. She noted that gender equality is not only value that we all aim at but also a moving force of progress.

The director of the directorate for European Union in the ministry for foreign affairs and trade Andrej Lepavcov stated that this event shows that the region has capacity, will and vision to move forward the policies that place the equality in the center of its development.



Marija, Risteska, Regional Directress of GBWN pointed out that around our region and worldwide civil society organizations are often the first to identify gaps between policy commitments and lived realities. She opened the forum with a simple, yet powerful message: “Budgets tell the story of our priorities. Watchdogging ensures the story is truthful. And looking at climate finance from gender lenses ensures the story is just.”



PANEL 1: CSOs Watchdog Role: Status of Gender Responsive Budgeting Implementation

This panel explored multi-level approaches to Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and the critical watchdog role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in its monitoring. The discussion focused on how CSOs can enhance accountability and transparency by scrutinizing public funds through a gender lens, ensuring that climate and resilience policies address the distinct needs of all genders. It enhanced a dialogue with the national gender mechanism and discussed possible cooperation between CSOs and national gender mechanisms within the resource center for GRB.

The latest Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) monitoring report on the status of implementation of SDG5c1 indicator for the 2023 budget cycle across seven economies: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Serbia shows that the region demonstrates steady progress in institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), with Criterion 1 performing strongest (regional average score 0.86), Criterion 2 moderate (0.57), and Criterion 3 weakest (0.43). Montenegro and Moldova show the most significant improvements since 2021, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo remain below regional averages. The findings emphasize that although legal frameworks are largely in place, full implementation and data transparency remain challenges.

Mirela Arqimandriti, Executive Directress, Gender Alliance for Development Center (ALB) has stressed the fact of GRB as unfinished business in spite of the existing regulations for its implementation. The GRB process is not only a technical process, but it's rather a democratic process where the CSO role is indispensable in its monitoring and execution. Latest monitoring reports stress that there is Steady institutional progress when it comes to the legal and policy setup. However, execution is modest. In Albania the process is ongoing with 11 ministries but when it comes to its implementation is not as expected and its without full implementation.

Samir Numanović, Director, Gender Centre FBiH (BiH) presented the importance of integrating gender mainstreaming into the processes related to gender equality. He stressed that gender responsive budgeting is a solution to all gender-related problems, including economic empowerment and climate change. The process of GRB provides solutions to all problems that

occur in relation to gender equality. The budgets that are subjects to GRB are budgets for equal societies that drive positive and just full development. He noted that the Western Balkans Countries need to transfer the legal framework into practice when it comes to GRB. The implementation is a challenge in all countries. CSOs play a crucial role in the process as they know and communicate people's needs in the budget making processes and implementation of policies. The major challenges in Western Balkans include: lack of institutional mechanisms, lack of political will on all levels, lack of responsibilities, lack of inter-sectoral cooperation, lack of clear indicators in the planning processes, evaluation of implementation of the processes, lack of gender analyses in the planning processes, lack of approval of budgets until GRB is implemented. The decision makers have to be educated on the process to be able to lead the implementation of it. This will make them see the economic benefits of the GRB process. Each program in its definition must be analyzed from perspective how it affects men and women, boys and girls. Specifically, one of issues addressed can be how GRB can contribute to increasing the participation of the women in labor market.

Ermira Lubani, Regional GRB Specialist, UN Women (TUR) has provided insights in the process of the EU integration and requirements posed from the EU in relation the GRB processes. Fulfilling the requirements, it's not only ticking the boxes that some processes have been through but also the content of the processes done and performed. She provided an overview of the reports and the findings of reports regarding the progress of the Western Balkans countries. For instance, for Albania 59% of the budget opt for gender equality but it's not reflected in the expenditures. Serbia programs budgeting but lacks public participation in the process, BIH has progress towards GBR process, N. Macedonia has GRB as part of the Budget law, but the report states that there is a need for having good indicators and implementation. The role of CSOs in the GRB process is crucial as its right to access justice, and it's also a human right – a democratic need. The GRB is also considered disruption to the budgeting process, but it's a necessity that has to be implemented. UN Women supports Governments to enable GRB, but also CSOs in the watchdog efforts in the EU integration processes. Strong GRB processes are crucial for the EU integration process of each country.

Gabriela Madzoska, Resource Center for Gender Responsive Policy Making and Budgeting (MKD) presented the National mechanism for GRB and the role of the resource center and its

works to enable the GRB process in N. Macedonia. She presented the legal setup for the GRB process in the country as well as the establishment of the resource center in Skopje aimed to support the institutions in the GRB process. The Resource Center provides training to improve the capacities of civil servants in the field of gender equality and gender responsive budgeting. It is a knowledge center and provides research, analysis and other resources related to gender equality and gender responsive budgeting. The Resource Center provides mentoring and support for the inclusion of a gender perspective in public financial management, strategic planning and policy making of state institutions.

The panel ended with the key messages:

- CSOs are crucial drive for effective GRB as they keep the governments responsible.
- Partnership between the actors in GRB is crucial for its success not only in programming but also in implementation
- The GRB process is firewall of democracy and human rights



PANEL 2: Multi-level Approaches to GRB & Climate Financing

This panel explored how greater transparency and accountability can strengthen the effectiveness of climate policies and ensure that they address the diverse needs of women and men. Speakers shared approaches to developing and applying indicators for regular reporting, as well as methodologies for civil society monitoring of climate-related measures. The discussion brought insights from recent research on the links between climate change, security, and gender equality, showing how climate risks intersect with social and health vulnerabilities in the region. By bringing together institutional, civil society, business and research perspectives, the panel stressed practical ways to make climate action more inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

Tiffany Sprague, Just Transition and STEM4ALL Platform Specialist, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (NLD) shared insights from an OECD study exploring how women are positioned within emerging green labour markets. The numbers painted a stark picture: women remain underrepresented across all countries, holding fewer than 3% of green jobs. Even though opportunities are growing, the transition is far from inclusive. She explained how green job creation is concentrated primarily in the services sector and industrial regions, spaces where women historically have had less access. On top of that, women face a 60% higher risk than men of losing their jobs during the transition, largely due to limited skills and the persistent STEM gap. She stressed the combination of social norms, childcare responsibilities, and hiring biases as core reasons why women struggle to enter or advance within green industries. To change this trajectory, she emphasized the need to invest heavily in data, targeted trainings, mentorship programs, and active labour market measures that help women feel included and safe in new, often male-dominated environments. She concluded with a clear message: we must shift paradigms, strengthening education systems, universities, and companies to attract and support more women in STEM and green fields.

Zorana Antonijevic, KPC Gender Expert (SRB) turned the conversation toward green finance, where women face a similar pattern of underrepresentation, this time as recipients of funding. She described findings from studies conducted within regional green programs, showing that banks overwhelmingly design and market green loans with a male “default client” in mind. Structural barriers such as lower income levels, lack of collateral, and inequitable social norms

make it significantly harder for women to qualify. Shockingly, she highlighted that in Macedonia alone, women have received €10 million less in green loans than men. Even though women tend to be diligent and reliable borrowers, they remain disadvantaged. Traditional household roles also limit their decision-making power when it comes to investments, while the technical language used by banks often discourages women from even attempting to apply. Zorana stressed the essential role of GRB in breaking these patterns. By using gender-responsive budgeting, institutions can reveal gaps, promote transparency, and build internal mechanisms, such as gender equality trainings in banks, that reshape the financial landscape. She called for multi-stakeholder cooperation, greater transparency around green taxes, and targeted efforts to empower women both financially and socially. She also pointed to the need for continued support of youth and student movements pushing for regional justice, noting their role in long-term change.

Shpresa Sheremeti Smakiqi, Coordinator of the Human Rights and Gender Equality Unit - Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (XKK) offered an institutional perspective, highlighting Kosovo's pioneering role as the first country in the region to introduce gender equality officers in both ministries and municipalities. Despite this progress, she noted that limited sex-disaggregated data remains a major challenge especially in climate-related sectors where understanding gendered impacts is essential. She emphasized that while gender perspectives are increasingly being included, many officials still see gender as merely a social phenomenon, not as a transformative policy tool. At the municipal level, the different needs of women and men often go unrecognized. To address this, she proposed developing gender checklists for every policy, ensuring clarity on who benefits, who is left behind, and what indicators will measure progress. Shpresa also underscored the importance of awareness campaigns and collaboration with schools and NGOs, especially to reach rural women who face multiple layers of exclusion. Her vision was simple yet powerful: a world with clean air and gender perspectives woven into all spheres of governance.

Małgorzata Walczak, Investment Director at PFR Green Hub (POL) shifted the discussion toward the investment landscape and the market failures that restrict capital flows into green innovation. Although global green investment is expanding, Europe still lags behind major players like the US and China. She spoke about the unique role of PFR Green Hub, a fund investing directly

in companies to drive both sustainable and inclusive outcomes. Yet, even within this space, she has seen a worrying lack of women, whether in politics, business leadership, or founder roles. Conducting around 100 interviews with startups each year, she consistently observes strong biases against women founders. Diversity, she argued, is essential for better decision-making. She called for legal reforms such as implementing the *Women on Boards Directive* and emphasized that age should never be a barrier, women of all ages should have access to capital and opportunities to lead. Her closing message was clear: *“We need more women in policymaking, in business, and in investment ecosystems if we want an equitable and effective green transition!”*

Concluding remarks:

- Gender disparities persist across labour markets, finance systems, and climate institutions.
- Women face structural barriers in accessing both green jobs and green financial instruments.
- GRB is essential for diagnosing inequalities, guiding investments, and ensuring transparency.
- Investments in women’s skills, education, childcare, and mentorship are critical for an inclusive transition.
- Legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms must better support women’s participation and leadership.
- Cross-sector cooperation is indispensable; governments, banks, NGOs, and international actors must work together.
- Achieving a gender-responsive green transition requires both systemic reforms and shifts in societal norms.

World Café discussions



DISCUSSION 1:

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE: GENDER, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND AGRICULTURE

FACILITATED BY: Neira Raković - WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION "MAJA KRAVICA" (BIH)

This discussion explored how climate change affects women and men differently in agriculture and rural livelihoods. Participants examined how unequal access to land, water, and technology deepens gender gaps in resilience, productivity, and adaptation.

Participants discussed how GRB can better support women in agriculture amid climate pressures. While some local measures exist, such as budget lines aimed at supporting women in agriculture in Berane and Bratunac, and subsidy "extra points" for women owners. Participants noted that

progress is often more visible on paper than in practice, with implementation lagging behind laws and policy commitments. Major key issues include:

- **Implementation gap and “project-ization”:** Gender provisions are increasingly written into strategies and policies but remain project-based rather than embedded in a strategic, long-term approach and mainstreamed funding.
- **Customary norms still shape access and rights:** Even where formal frameworks exist, customary law and practices continue to influence women’s land, asset ownership, and decision-making, affecting eligibility and real access to support.
- **Care and social protection blind spots:** A specific concern was maternity leave and protections for women working in agriculture, where employment status and informality can leave women excluded or unsupported.
- **Climate change as a gendered driver of migration:** Participants emphasized that climate change is already affecting women in agriculture and contributes to migration pressures, including within the region.

Participants pointed to a need for more structured, GRB-aligned programming and budgeting, including:

- Targeted programs for youth in agriculture, linked to climate resilience and rural livelihoods.
- Learning from Moldova’s Ministry of Agriculture example, noted as a reference for institutionalized approaches (as cited in discussion).
- Dedicated budgeting programs that move beyond ad-hoc projects toward sustained support for climate-resilient agriculture.
- Support to women’s entrepreneurship connected to agriculture and rural value chains, aligned with GRB principles and subsidy design.

The discussion underscored that resilience in agriculture requires more than policy wording: it needs strategic budgeting, enforced implementation, and gender-aware climate responses that recognize women’s realities, especially informality, care burdens, customary constraints, and climate-driven livelihood insecurity.



DISCUSSION 2: STRENGTHENING LOCAL CRISIS PREPAREDNESS THROUGH GRB

Facilitated by Mirela Gjoni- Elbasan Women's Forum (ALB) and Katarina Ranković- ŽUKO (SRB)

This session focused on how GRB can be used as a practical tool to ensure that emergency measures and recovery budgets address the specific needs of women, men, and vulnerable groups. Participants discussed how gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can strengthen local preparedness, response, and recovery in times of crisis. Drawing on experiences from municipalities in **Moldova, Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine**, the discussion highlighted how crises whether sudden shocks or chronic disruptions consistently expose existing structural inequalities rather than create new ones. Across diverse scenarios, including refugee responses, earthquakes, floods, health emergencies, and gaps in everyday social and health services, participants emphasized that women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and other marginalized groups are disproportionately affected when preparedness is weak or absent.

Key themes raised

- **Crisis impacts are gendered and predictable:**

Participants repeatedly noted that crises follow familiar patterns: women absorb unpaid care work, elderly people become isolated, children lose access to services, and persons with disabilities face compounded barriers. These impacts are foreseeable, yet rarely budgeted for in advance.

- **Preparedness gaps stem from missing data and weak planning cycles:**

The absence of gender-disaggregated data, clear indicators, and full policy cycles (from planning to monitoring) keeps vulnerabilities invisible. As a result, responses remain reactive and improvised rather than systemic and preventive.

- **GRB as a tool for anticipation, not only response:**

Participants agreed that GRB can shift crisis management upstream by supporting targeted budget lines for social services, early-warning systems, community health, care services, and support mechanisms for vulnerable groups before emergencies escalate.

- **Local tools exist but are underused:**

Risk mapping, community consultations, vulnerability assessments, and participatory budgeting were identified as practical tools that could improve inclusive preparedness, yet are often applied sporadically or only within short-term projects.

- **Civil society and women's networks strengthen resilience:**

Strong examples were shared of NGO collaboration, community platforms, and cross-sector coordination. Participants stressed that when women organize, exchange knowledge, and engage institutions, prevention improves and crisis responses become more effective and humane.

- **Accountability remains a weak link:**

A recurring concern was the lack of clear responsibility, monitoring, and oversight in crisis preparedness and response. Without defined accountability mechanisms, emergency action depends on goodwill rather than systems.

DISCUSSION 3: CLOSING THE LOOP: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND GREEN CITIES

Facilitated by: Magbule Huseni- EcoKosWomen (XKX) and Diana Grosu- Adolex (MDA)

This session invited participants to explore how circular economy policies and practices, such as waste management, recycling, and sustainable production can integrate gender perspectives. The barriers that women face in entering green jobs were identified. Opportunities for creating inclusive circular economy models that recognize women's contribution to sustainable resource use, innovation, and entrepreneurship as well as infrastructure improvements (water, sanitation, street lighting) which can significantly improve safety and daily routines for women and vulnerable groups was discussed.

The barriers that women face when entering green jobs and circular-economy value chain are multiple and intersecting. They include:

- **Lack of information and awareness** about green job opportunities, funding schemes, and circular economy initiatives across sectors.
- **Limited monitoring, valuation, and recognition** of women's work across value chains, particularly in informal or emerging green sectors.
- **Care responsibilities**, especially for single mothers, single parents, refugees, and women without family support. Limited kindergarten hours (e.g., services closing at 16:00–17:00) and rigid work schedules make participation in green jobs and entrepreneurship difficult.
- **Access to finance barriers**, including requirements for property ownership or collateral, which many women lack due to unequal property rights and inheritance practices.
- **Implementation gaps in legislation**: although laws on gender equality and labor rights are strong on paper, in practice women face wage gaps, discrimination, and male-dominated ownership structures.
- **Gaps in education and skills**, including limited access to economic, business, technological, and entrepreneurial knowledge, as well as insufficient capacity-building, mentorship, and investment support for women in green sectors

Municipalities and states can promote gender-responsive circular economy initiatives by:

- **Providing targeted incentives for women**, especially in agriculture, tourism, recycling, and circular production, with a focus on underdeveloped municipalities.
- **Establishing business zones**, incubators, and business centers that actively support women-led green enterprises.
- **Ensuring equal access to subsidies**, grants, and public procurement for women entrepreneurs in circular economy sectors.
- **Launching awareness-raising campaigns** to increase understanding of the circular economy, its economic potential, and women's role within it.
- **Integrating care-sensitive measures**, such as flexible schedules and childcare support, into municipal green-economy program

Several good practices demonstrate the potential of gender-responsive circular economy models:

- Farmers collecting and reusing water for irrigation and using by-products to create new value-added products.
- Awards and incentives for creative and innovative circular solutions, encouraging women's entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Repair and reuse schemes, where citizens can repair broken household items and receive up to 80% reimbursement from the public budget. (Exists in Austria)
- Incentives to promote green public transport, encouraging citizens to shift from private vehicles to sustainable mobility options.

DISCUSSION 4: INCLUSIVE BUDGETING FOR ALL: GRB & MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Facilitated by Anka Vukićević- MNO Mozaik (MNE) and Elisaveta Djurnovska - NOVUS (MKD)

Building on GBWN findings on social inclusion and public finance, this discussion examined how gender-responsive budgeting could intersect with the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of citizens. What is needed for the inclusion that promotes equity in access to services, employment, and participation in decision-making. Participants identified budgetary measures and advocacy approaches that ensure that policies and programs are both gender- and disability-responsive, leaving no one behind.

The discussion confirmed that inequality in access to public budgets and decision-making remains structural and persistent. Women, persons with disabilities, Roma communities, rural populations, and young people continue to be underrepresented not only as beneficiaries of public spending, but also as actors shaping budget priorities.

Administrative barriers were highlighted as a serious obstacle. In highly decentralized systems, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, overlapping institutional responsibilities make coordination difficult, including in disability services. These challenges are reinforced by major data gaps. There is still no unified disability registry, and institutions often respond slowly or incompletely to data requests. Without reliable data, inclusive planning is impossible.

Participants emphasized that persons with disabilities represent around 12 to 15 percent of the global population. If families and caregivers are included, this becomes a significant part of society. This reality underlines why inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting is not a niche issue, but a core requirement for effective public policy, especially in the context of climate change, where vulnerable groups are often the most affected.

Concrete examples related to transport and persons with disabilities that were mentioned during the discussions included:

- In a regional town, public funds were allocated to modernize the local transport fleet. New buses were purchased, and the project was officially labeled as inclusive. However, only a small part of the fleet was accessible; stops were not adapted, and schedules did not match the needs of persons who rely on assistance or specific travel times. As a result, a wheelchair user could technically board a bus, but still could not reach the hospital or workplace independently. The budget was spent, but access did not meaningfully improve.
- In another city, a person using a wheelchair managed to reach the public polyclinic thanks to adapted transport. However, access ended there. The medical offices were located on upper floors, the building had no elevator, and the only way to reach the doctors was by stairs. At the same time, the entire ground floor of the same public building was rented out to private clothing shops. In practice, this meant that public space was used for

commercial purposes, while important healthcare services remained inaccessible to a wheelchair user.

The discussion also highlighted several practical GRB tools that can address these challenges: gender and social budget tagging, ex-ante impact assessments, disaggregated indicators, and participatory budgeting. Without these tools, so-called “neutral” policies continue to benefit only those who are already advantaged.

The conclusion of the World Café was clear that inclusive and intersectional budgeting is not optional; it is essential for our societies to function well. Without better stronger data systems, and meaningful participation in decision-making, public budgets will continue to reproduce inequality instead of reducing it.



DAY 2 of the Forum

PANEL 3 Gender-Responsive Pathways to Well-Being and Sustainability: Building Inclusive Communities, Cities, and Regions

This panel explored multi-level approaches to fostering well-being and creating sustainable communities, cities, and territories from a gender perspective. Panelists discussed how integrating gender considerations into policies and initiatives can drive more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development. The session covered best practices in gender-responsive urban planning, community engagement, urban and rural dimensions of resource management that prioritize the needs of all citizens and overall social good.

The panel was divided into two rounds of discussions. Firstly, there were discussions around Setting the Stage: Evidence, Challenges & Realities and the second part was for presenting the Solutions: Tools, Innovations & Success Models.

Ana Bojchevska Mitrevska, Reactor – Research in Action (MKD) elaborated the 13 years of work of Reactor is on the issue of feminist urbanism and gender and pointed out that it is a technical discussion, how women live in the city and how they feel in terms of safety. Reactor did some research on women about their feeling on safety in Skopje and outside Skopje. This discussion concerns the way public space is designed. Women are different from men; women are more likely to take children to some places. If there are safe parking lots and public transport, women connect the well-being of the community and participate in social life. In this way, we learned the perspectives of urban cities. Reactor has ongoing initiatives on safety in public spaces that delve into the Her City approach, applying youth-led, gender-responsive urban design tools to create safer, more inclusive public environments. The findings and solutions include the "*Platforma Reagiraj i bidi bezbedna*" created 10 years ago, an information tool for women about places where they are not safe and where they can take precautionary measures. The second experience and example is the "*Revision Box*", in Skopje and Tetovo, information and notifications during the day and at night, about traffic, accidents, women should be warned about walking at night. Street lighting is a very important aspect in notifying

women; this can be a reason/way for committing offenses and violence. Light bulbs, sidewalks, greenery and public parks; these are important aspects for women to feel safe.

Anna Korzeniewska, Founder of the Social Impact Alliance for Central and Eastern Europe (POL) shared why it is important to mobilize private capital, what is blocking it, and how the process can be advanced. In Poland, this sector has huge impact. Most of the organizations in the ecosystem and private capital have public funding or EU funding. The more stable finance organizations get, the better they have high level needs. Data collection on organizations that impact gender equality and profit has been made, and organizations need to change the way they operate. Public policy and advocacy are also important. The most important thing is to change the culture, in terms of responsibility, accountability, consequences of decisions, etc. *“What changes need to happen on the ground to make it work and ensure its long-term sustainability?”* When it comes to impact, it is very hard to find organizations in Central and Eastern Europe that are working on supporting gender budgeting. The data tells us that the middle class and people over 40 who could have money for social good that other more significant priorities in that period of their lives. According to Anna, the private sector needs to make a good proposal in order to attract donors to support gender equality. Changes are happening right now. Women can make a difference for other women by being successful in politics, academia, business, etc. Many families have women who make decisions for the household, and they are in charge of the family budget.

Alexandra Sian, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MDA) elaborated that Ministry of agriculture and food industry conducted pilot research on gender budgeting in Moldova. Women have been equally threatened in the planning of the budget. The most important things are how indicators are taken and which data are used as well? *“The donors educate our society. A lot of support in Moldova comes from EU. This should be channeled through additional supporters. As a user, it is good to know what values women experience.”* If a woman has the courage to start a business, women receive training and information on agricultural programs and activities from advisors/experts. Government institutions still have a serious lack of expertise. In Moldova we do not have experts on gender issues, that is why we work together with the UN. Regarding the implementation of gender indicators with gender budgeting in 70% of agricultural programs in Moldova, the technical expertise from different sectors is very valuable. The stakeholders must

see the change of differences. There were 17 subordinate institutions that worked to change the way of the people's perceptions, specifically, what does the land and water have to do with the women/ gender? Therefore, this matter needs to be addressed in a complex manner, including government, civil society, institutions (private and public) etc. A lot of institutions have not a proper expertise for gender budgeting

Giovanna Badalassi, Independent Researcher on Gender Budgeting (ITA) elaborated that the gender impact on a budget is through gender stereotypes, manner of life, environment. Furthermore, gender separation in terms of production and reproduction, we have different values, principles, different perspectives. In a public domain, we talk about money in terms of profit. We have some conflicts about the environment, where our children are, where we are working, and what we consume. We need to be aware of these stereotypes! There is a connection between gender, environment, and budget. How women work as climate change managers and with gender budgeting is very similar to the macroeconomic cycle, including households, families, businesses. If there are more women in politics and executive boards, efforts to reduce carbon use will increase. The most effective approaches to ensure that environmental and infrastructure investments deliver equitable outcomes from design to delivery was presented through the example of Italy with local perspectives in 2013. *"We started a local network of 23 municipalities boosted by the EU project. We have guidelines for research on gender budgeting. No, we did not have revolution on gender issue budgeting; our mission was to act at different stages of the budget cycle."* The political will is needed for the gender budgeting otherwise it will be only on a paper. Second, civil society or independent movements are needed to support the laws on gender budget, to strengthen the idea for gender budgeting and the gender data are needed to measure the gender quality in the budget, what we need, what and where are the gaps. It is a systemic change. In Italy there is a good law framework, but there is a need to be aware that having a law does not solve every problem. When it comes to money and budget, there are many obstacles even in the smallest municipalities. When the gender impact is realized then the process will be moved forward. On the closing question on the impact of the submitted report for gender budgeting, and if there are more discussions in the parliament in Italy Giovanna additionally responded: *"It is a complicated situation; we do not pay so much attention to it. We have mandatory law, public hearing,*

broadcasting on TV with plenty of actors/participants on this theme, and very weak civil society pressure. Women in Italy have strong roots for economic independence, we have small changes at local level and cannot achieve a pressure on individual level. One interesting thing is the popular law on mental health since COVID-19. In Italy there is a personal commitment to gender sensitive issues."

Conclusions:

- Gender perspective is essential to sustainability, not an add-on.
- Women's everyday experiences reveal how inclusive and safe communities truly are.
- Examples show progress in urban safety, agriculture, financing, and gender budgeting.
- Key gaps remain: data, technical expertise, funding, and political will.
- Laws alone are insufficient — action, accountability, and culture change are needed.
- Strong partnerships between government, civil society, and private sector are crucial.
- Moving forward requires better gender data, capacity building, and systemic approaches.
- Inclusive, gender-responsive policies benefit everyone and strengthen community well-being.



PANEL 4: From Transport Poverty to Inclusive Transport Solutions

This session explored how GRB tools and inclusive policy design can help overcome transport poverty and ensure that subsidies and investments truly reach those most in need. How transport subsidies can be made both gender- and climate-responsive, prioritizing women, youth, and marginalized rural communities whose mobility needs often remain invisible in traditional planning was discussed. The session will highlight the importance of criteria that go beyond commuting.

Alma Midžić, CEE Bankwatch Network (BiH) shared findings from research conducted across several cities, including Sarajevo and Tbilisi, revealing persistent gaps in gender responsiveness in urban mobility planning. In many of these cities, air pollution remains severe, streets are overwhelmingly car-centric, and public transport systems are overcrowded, unreliable, and often unsafe. More than 30% of women reported experiencing or fearing gender-based violence in transport settings. In Sarajevo, a campaign by the Sarajevo Open Center helped raise awareness by using QR codes and an SOS platform that enabled citizens to report violence immediately. Still, 74% of women said they did not feel safe in public transport environments. Both Sarajevo and Tbilisi are part of the EBRD Green Cities programme, yet their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) remain gender-blind. Participation in policymaking during SUMP development was weak, and although the plans involve major investments of up to €500 million, they often fail to include the people who rely on public transport the most. For example: 43% of women in surveyed areas turned down job opportunities because workplaces were too far and transport too difficult. 50% skipped social activities, and 30% missed educational opportunities due to transport limitations. Eliminating transport poverty would require tackling corruption, improving sex-disaggregated data, and designing action plans that meaningfully incorporate women's and LGBTQ+ perspectives

Darko Arsovski Petrovski, Go Green (MKD) offered a mixed technical and activist perspective, focusing on cycling and multimodal mobility systems. He described cycling as a form of transport accessible to everyone, unlike cars, which often remain in the hands of men, particularly after

divorce, when women typically rely more heavily on public transport. Skopje's streets are *"designed by men, for men,"* and that traffic safety is disproportionately a women's issue. Road accident rates in North Macedonia are more than double the EU average, amplifying fear and insecurity among women who walk or cycle. The introduction of the city train in Skopje is a positive development, diversifying mobility options for the first time in many years. However, the system uses old train stations located far from residential areas and lacks proper bus connections, making it effectively inaccessible, especially for women. There is absence of standardized cycling regulations in North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania. Unlike EU countries, there is no harmonized rulebook: bicycle lanes vary in width, design, and color, creating confusion and risk. Moving forward, he stressed the need for a multimodal, low-carbon mobility approach that is systematically maintained and accessible to all.

Slavica Striković, Women Action (MNE) focused on Montenegro's transport poverty challenges, referencing GBWN research that compared mobility patterns between women and men. Economic disparities play a major role: women in Montenegro earn 18% less than men, and this income gap limits their access to different modes of transport. Key findings included: Women use public buses 18% more than men, primarily due to work, medical needs, and caregiving responsibilities. Only 28% of women own a car. Women report significantly lower levels of safety when traveling alone or at night. Women cycle more frequently than men, but not for work or school. Montenegro's 2026 budget is already adopted and cannot be influenced at this stage, but the lack of program-oriented budgeting leaves space for GRB integration in future cycles. After GBWN presented its findings in Parliament in July 2025, there was strong interest from policymakers, including the State Secretariat for Transport. Several municipalities have already taken action: Berane Municipality is developing safer, gender-responsive urban mobility infrastructure. Nikšić Municipality adopted a Local Action Plan for Gender Equality with activities targeting women's transport needs through GRB. The progress already made includes influencing policies to expand cycling lanes, improve lighting, enhance bus stations, increase accessibility for people with disabilities, and create gender-resilient climate adaptation measures. She stressed that ongoing political will and collaboration at both national and local levels remain essential.

Alexandru Gribincea, Keystone Moldova (MDA) spoke from a disability-rights perspective, emphasizing that most buses and bus stations in Moldova are not accessible. Rural barriers compound the problem: poor road conditions, long distances, and safety fears make mobility even more restrictive for women and people with disabilities. Despite women in Moldova having higher levels of education, many cannot take jobs simply because transportation is too costly or too difficult. Without proper mobility infrastructure, women struggle to reach workplaces, schools, or health services. Achievable solutions include: Replacement of small buses with accessible vehicles. Upgrading bus stations, trolleybuses, and major routes with inclusive design features. Conduction of consultations with people with disabilities who make up roughly 7% of Moldova's population, before planning new infrastructure and increasing parking taxes and investing more heavily in safe sidewalks and general infrastructure improvements.

Elirjeta Beka, Kosovo Women's Network (XKK) addressed safety concerns, a key barrier to women's mobility. Although sexual harassment is punishable by law in Kosovo, only 1% of harassment incidents occurring in transport have been reported to the police. One major challenge is the lack of data: authorities do not track where harassment occurs, nor is there gender-disaggregated data that could guide prevention measures. A campaign carried out with the Ministry of Environment and the Municipality of Pristina helped increase awareness, posters were placed in public spaces, and a reporting app was developed. However, the app was never fully institutionalized because the police declined integration into their database. As a result, once the project ended, the tool became inactive. Kosovo has gender policies, but they are not synchronized with budgeting processes. Many institutions still perceive GRB as solely the responsibility of gender equality offices, rather than a tool every department must use. There is the need for: Targeted transport lines for women; Better digitalization and signalization; Intersectional planning, government willing to collaborate across sectors.

Conclusions

- Transport poverty disproportionately affects women, youth, rural communities, and people with disabilities.
- Lack of safety, unreliable public transport, and inaccessible infrastructure restrict women's education, employment, and mobility choices.

- SUMPs and major urban mobility plans often remain gender-blind despite large investments.
- GRB offers a practical tool to integrate gender needs into transport planning and budgeting.
- Municipal action can lead to tangible improvements, like better lighting, safer stations, more accessible routes, and inclusive mobility infrastructure.
- Data gaps remain a major barrier; sex-disaggregated and intersectional data are essential.
- Collaboration among governments, NGOs, communities, and transport authorities is necessary to create just, inclusive, and climate-resilient mobility systems.



PARALLEL INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS: Climate Financing from Gender Perspective

WORKSHOP 1: GENDER ANALYSIS IN CLIMATE FINANCING PROJECTS

Facilitated by: Hamdija Mujezin (BiH) and Donjeta Morina (XKX)

This workshop equipped participants with tools to apply gender lenses to climate financing projects, from design to implementation and monitoring. This session guided participants in understanding planned vs. executed funds in the Western Balkans and Moldova in the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and in the Western Balkan Investment Fund.



The workshop began with a short introduction to workshop delivered by Hamdija Mujezin. Participants were grounded in the purpose of the session within the broader GBWN Phase II agenda, which sought to improve transparency, inclusiveness and accountability in climate budgeting. The facilitator briefly explained expected outcomes and how participant feedback directly shapes the final versions of both watchdog reports. The first presentation was delivered by Donjeta Morina, who presented the watchdog findings on the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). She outlined regional access to SCCF funds, compared planned and executed amounts, and examined where gender considerations are present, or absent, across the project cycle, from funding proposals and budgeting to implementation, monitoring and reporting. The presentation

highlighted systemic barriers such as limited gender criteria, insufficient sex-disaggregated reporting and weak institutional responsibilities. It concluded with initial recommendations addressing fund administrators, implementing partners, and national governments. This was followed by a second presentation from Hamdija Mujezin, focusing on gender-responsiveness within the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) climate portfolio. He introduced WBIF's institutional and regulatory architecture, exploring whether gender equality is integrated into its strategies, procedures, templates, and screening processes. He also presented project-level findings revealing how benefits, participation, and reporting practices affect gender outcomes. The segment closed with preliminary recommendations aimed at improving gender-tagging, data transparency, accountability mechanisms, and monitoring of results. The workshop then moved into a joint stakeholder discussion and validation exercise, moderated by both facilitators. Participants were invited to react to the findings, share their country and institutional perspectives, and identify which barriers are most relevant to ensuring gender-responsive climate financing in the region. The discussion focused on validating evidence, assessing feasibility of recommendations, and refining advocacy priorities.

The session concluded with a short wrap-up summarizing validated findings and jointly agreed improvements. Presenters confirm the next steps for report finalization and invited participants to continue contributing to GBWN's advocacy efforts. The workshop closed with a shared commitment to advance gender-responsive climate finance as a cornerstone of sustainable, equitable development across the Western Balkans and Moldova.

WORKSHOP 2: TRACKING GLOBAL CLIMATE FINANCE IN THE REGION

Facilitated by: Mirnesa Bajramović (BiH) and Nihad Harbas (BiH)

Focusing on global climate funds, this session guided participants in understanding planned vs. executed funds in the Western Balkans and Moldova. Using examples from GEF, GCF, SCCF participants practiced how to monitor flows, assess transparency, and develop watchdog questions to hold institutions accountable.

The workshop followed the model “context → method → practice → reflection → action.”

- Nihad presented the Green Climate Fund: institutional structure, project cycle, allocation and disbursement modalities, key aspects of GCF's Gender Action Plan, and key regional priorities of GCF in the WB6 and Moldova.
- Mirnesa introduced the GEF framework, thematic focal areas, co-financing rules, gender policy requirements, and examples of GEF-funded regional projects.
- A brief explanation of the GBWN analytical framework: planning–implementation–evaluation, GRES scoring, donor budget reading, and identifying gender commitments versus expenditures was provided
- Then a group exercise took place where participants worked in two groups (GCF and GEF) and received task instructions in a printed form. The GCF group analyzes either ALBAdapt or the Low-Carbon Public Buildings project and relevant indicators; the GEF group reviews two-three GEF projects. Based on given instructions and projects samples, tasks included understanding project's purpose (area), primary beneficiaries, mapping planned vs. executed budgets, identifying gender-relevant budget lines, applying GRES, and potential role of NGOs.
- Groups presented the findings followed by facilitator-led reflection on differences between GCF and GEF projects, transparency challenges, and how gender commitments materialize in practice.

WORKSHOP 3: GREEN INVESTMENTS AND REGIONAL FINANCING MECHANISMS

Facilitated by: Marija Vuković (SRB) and Ioana Borza (ROU)

This workshop examined regional and international financing mechanisms such as EIB, and EBRD green projects. Participants analyzed case studies of green investments, identified their gender implications, and debate how CSOs can engage more effectively to ensure inclusiveness in large-scale climate projects.

The session was designed as a learning-by-doing experience that demonstrates how the gender analysis methodology — developed under GBWN Phase II — is applied in real-life contexts. Participants became familiar with theoretical principles but will also practiced applying the methodology themselves through a hands-on case study exercise

Presentation on analytical framework used in the GBWN methodology, focusing on: The three phases of analysis: Planning – Implementation – Evaluation; Key data sources (EIB project database, WBIF, ESDS, national policy frameworks); The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) with its five scoring levels, was provided

Participants received a short handout or QR code linking to the methodology summary. Participants worked in small groups to analyze one green investment case (energy, transport, or water). They identified gender entry points, score inclusiveness using the GRES matrix, and propose corrective measures. Facilitators guided the group work and provide methodological support. Groups presented findings, followed by facilitator-led discussion on differences, similarities, and lessons learned across cases.

This flow ensures that participants move through the full learning cycle — from understanding theory → applying tools → interpreting results → formulating practical recommendations.

WORKSHOP 4: DOMESTIC RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE AND GENDER EQUALITY

Facilitated by: Nino Serdarević (BiH)

Focusing on national budgets and fiscal space, this session introduced a new methodology for monitoring domestic resource mobilization from a gender perspective

Introduction was provided by facilitator with the ppt presentation followed with discussion from participants on the recommendations, relevance, timing, feasibility and networking potentials.

First round of discussions was on Role of civil society - monitoring and advocacy in taxation and fiscal policy reforms. The discussions were carried out in two sequences. DISCUSSION 1: Taxing Wealth for Dedicated Gender Equality and Care Investment Fund where themes which were discussed included Advocate for Taxing Wealth to Finance Gender Equality and Care Investment Fund, Recurrent Property Tax, Progressive Inheritance Tax, Advocate for Luxury Assets Levy, Luxury Jeweler and Watches Levy, Progressive Luxury Car Surcharge. Advocate for Luxury Services Levy. Second sequence of discussion included Improving Gender-Responsiveness of VAT Systems Across the Region.

Second round of discussion was on Role of civil society – monitoring and advocacy in public borrowing. The discussions included: Strengthening Advocacy on Gender Budgeting, Debt Transparency, and Social Sector Protection; Promotion of Gender-Responsive Procurement and Support Women's Economic Participation; Advocating for Open Contracting and Mandatory Gender-Responsive Environmental & Social Management Plans; Establishment of Gender-Sensitive Grievance and Community Support Mechanisms; Advocating for Gender-Inclusive Labor Provisions and Training Programs; Integration of Gendered Health Impact Assessments and Pollution Monitoring; Provision of Legal Aid and Land Rights Support for Women Landholders.

