

FINAL REPORT For Gender Budget Watchdog Report



OF PLANNED
AND EXECUTED
FUNDS IN THE
GREEN CLIMATE
FUND (GCF)



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List of Abbreviations

APR	– ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT
AE	– ACCREDITED ENTITY
BIH	– BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
BUR	– BIENNIAL UPDATE REPORT (UNFCCC REPORTING INSTRUMENT)
CEDAW	– CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
CSO	– CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION
DRR	– DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
EBA	– ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTATION
EBRD	– EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT
EIGE	– EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR GENDER EQUALITY
EU	– EUROPEAN UNION
FAA	– FUNDED ACTIVITY AGREEMENT
FAO	– FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FBIH	– FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
FP	– FUNDING PROPOSAL
GA	– GENDER ASSESSMENT
GAP	– GENDER ACTION PLAN
GBV	– GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
GBWN	– GENDER BUDGET WATCHDOG NETWORK
GCF	– GREEN CLIMATE FUND
GDP	– GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
GEN	– GENDER MARKER (UNDP GENDER EQUALITY RATING SYSTEM)
GIZ	– DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT
GRB	– GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING
IMWGCC	– INTER-MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MHEWS	–	MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS
MTBP	–	MEDIUM-TERM BUDGET PROGRAMMING
NAP	–	NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN
NCCC	–	NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
NCSD	–	NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
NDA	–	NATIONAL DESIGNATED AUTHORITY (FOR GCF)
NDC	–	NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION
NECP	–	NATIONAL ENERGY AND CLIMATE PLAN
NFCS	–	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE SERVICES
NMHS	–	NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL AND HYDROLOGICAL SERVICE
MRV	–	MONITORING, REPORTING AND VERIFICATION
OECD	–	ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PEFA	–	PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
PFM	–	PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
PFR	–	PUBLIC FINANCE REVIEW
PIU	–	PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT
PMU	–	PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT
PSEA	–	PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE
RS	–	REPUBLIKA SRPSKA
SAP	–	SIMPLIFIED APPROVAL PROCESS
SDG	–	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
SEAH	–	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT
STEM	–	SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS
UN	–	UNITED NATIONS
UNDP	–	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNFCCC	–	UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
USD	–	UNITED STATES DOLLAR

FINAL REPORT For Gender Budget Watchdog Report



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change is amplifying structural vulnerabilities across the Western Balkans and Moldova, affecting livelihoods, infrastructure, public services, and fiscal stability. These impacts are not gender neutral. Women and men experience climate risks differently due to disparities in income, asset ownership, access to finance and technology, labour market participation, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work. At the same time, men are disproportionately exposed to climate-related occupational risks in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, construction, and transport. These inequalities shape both vulnerability to climate impacts and the ability to benefit from climate investments.

As countries in the region advance alignment with the Paris Agreement, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, and European Union climate and energy frameworks, climate finance is becoming a central instrument for resilience and economic transition. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest multilateral climate fund under the UNFCCC, plays a critical role in supporting adaptation and mitigation investments and strengthening climate governance. All Western Balkan Six (WB6) countries and Moldova have accessed GCF resources and committed to integrating gender equality principles in line with national strategies and the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.

GCF policy requires funded projects to include Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans to ensure equitable access to benefits and the reduction of gender inequalities. However, the translation of these commitments into national budgeting systems, public finance practices, and accountability mechanisms remains uneven. Gender-responsive measures articulated in project documentation are often not reflected in domestic budget classifications, execution reports, procurement plans, or monitoring systems. Co-financing structures frequently prioritise infrastructure and technical components, while gender-targeted measures lack dedicated budget lines or depend on external funding.

This Gender Budget Watchdog report assesses whether and how GCF-funded and co-financed projects in the Western Balkans and Moldova reflect gender-responsive budgeting principles across the climate finance cycle. The analysis reviews gender assessments, the resourcing and implementation of Gender Action Plans, domestic co-financing practices, participation and governance arrangements, monitoring systems, and institutional coordination.

The findings reveal a consistent regional pattern. Gender analysis in project design is generally aligned with GCF requirements, but national public finance systems remain insufficiently aligned with gender-responsive budgeting standards. Gender-related activities are rarely costed transparently, expenditures are not systematically tagged or tracked, and sex-disaggregated financial reporting remains limited. Coordination gaps between National Designated Authorities, line ministries, ministries of finance, and gender equality institutions constrain the integration of gender commitments into national budget processes.

Short-term gaps include limited availability of sex-disaggregated data, weak budget transparency regarding gender measures, and uneven participation of women in consultations and governance structures. Medium-term challenges include labour market segregation and weak institutional linkages between Gender Action Plans and domestic budget systems. Long-term structural barriers include unequal access to assets and finance and persistent gender gaps in decision-making.

At the same time, GCF engagement presents a strategic opportunity to strengthen gender-responsive climate finance in the region. Gender Action Plans offer entry points for improving public finance transparency, strengthening accountability, and embedding gender equality objectives within climate policy implementation. Aligning project-level gender commitments with national public finance systems is essential for ensuring equitable climate investments, enhancing policy effectiveness, and supporting inclusive climate transition pathways.

This report provides evidence to support policymakers, civil society, donors, and oversight institutions in strengthening transparency, improving budget responsiveness, and advancing gender-responsive climate action across the Western Balkans and Moldova.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENDER, CLIMATE VULNERABILITY, AND CLIMATE FINANCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND MOLDOVA

This report provides a targeted analysis of the gendered impacts of climate change in the context of Green Climate Fund (GCF) engagement across the Western Balkans and Moldova. These economies are entering a period in which their development pathways will be shaped by increased climate vulnerability, demographic pressures, and fiscal constraints. In addition, their economic growth remains modest, accompanied with structural unemployment, brain drain, and regional disparities placing sustained pressure on public institutions. Women and men experience these trends differently. Women remain concentrated in lower-paid service sectors and are more likely to be in informal employment, while continuing to perform the majority of unpaid care work. Labour force participation rates highlight significant gaps, as far fewer women are formally employed or economically active than men on average, reflecting the persistent traditional norms and caregiving burdens.

In addition, women are faced with structural barriers, such as limited access to land, finance, technology and upward mobility, which constrain their capacity for resilience and adaptation to climate change. On the other hand, men are overrepresented in physically demanding and climate-sensitive occupations such as forestry, construction, and certain branches of agriculture. These structural patterns influence exposure to climate risks, access to public services, and the capacity to benefit from climate-finance interventions. The ability to benefit from climate-finance measures, access to public services, and exposure to climate threats are all influenced by these structural patterns.

In terms of climate impacts in the region, they are becoming more frequent and severe. Floods, heatwaves, hydrological stress, forest degradation, and declining agricultural yields increasingly affect livelihoods, infrastructure, and successful delivery of public services. In addition, gendered vulnerabilities remain evident across all countries. For example, elderly women and those in rural areas have limited access to early-warning information and reduced mobility during emergencies, and female-headed households are more exposed to energy poverty and lack the funding required for adaptation. Men face higher risks in sectors where extreme weather and environmental degradation directly heighten occupational hazards. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 2023 report, countries in the Western Balkans score significantly below the EU average on the Gender Equality Index, particularly in the domains of work (average score: 60.5), money (58.2), and power (45.7), compared to the EU-27 average of 73.4 overall. These dynamics reflect persistent gaps in employment, income, and representation that limit women's ability to access and benefit from climate finance mechanisms¹. In addition, Moldova has recorded a similar performance, with its Gender Equality Index standing at 61 points in 2023, according to a report by Partnership for Development Center, a Moldovan organization².

Climate finance in the Western Balkans and Moldova is growing in importance as countries work to meet climate goals under the Paris Agreement, Sofia Declaration and the Green Agenda for the

¹ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2023). Gender Equality Index: Measuring progress in the Western Balkans. Publications Office of the European Union. https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20233289_PDF_MH0323262ENN_002.pdf

² Partnership for Development Center (CPD). (2023). Gender Equality Index 2023: Republic of Moldova. Chisinau: CPD. <https://progen.md/indexul-egalitatii-de-gen-2023/>

Western Balkans. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) presents the UNFCCC's largest climate finance instrument, while committing around USD 400 million in the region (including Western Balkans, Moldova and the Caucasus), and an additional USD 24 million through readiness grants³. All Western Balkans Six countries and Moldova have formally affirmed gender equality commitments, adopting national gender strategies and aligning with the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan. Yet, the integration of gender into climate budgeting and projects remains inconsistent and often superficial. These issues are discussed in a recent baseline study for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although policy frameworks are in place, the study found gaps in the actual contribution of public climate spending to gender equality and called for improved gender analysis, budget allocation, and tracking of climate budgets. In other words, translating **gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)** principles from paper into practice is still a work in progress in the region.

The growing engagement of Western Balkan governments and Moldova with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) provides a significant opportunity to reinforce this alignment. With the exception of Kosovo*, all countries in the region have operational National Designated Authorities (NDAs) and have accessed GCF resources through readiness support, adaptation planning, or full-scale investment projects. Kosovo is not eligible to access the GCF because it is not a Party to the UNFCCC and therefore cannot nominate an NDA, which is a prerequisite for any GCF engagement.

Notable examples of projects financed by the GCF include Bosnia and Herzegovina's programme "Scaling-up Investment in Low-Carbon Public Buildings", Serbia's "Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests to ensure energy security of the most vulnerable while contributing to their livelihoods and carbon sequestration (FOREST Invest)", and Albania's "ALBAdapt – Climate Services for a Resilient Albania" programme. Each GCF project is required to include a Gender Assessment and a Gender Action Plan, and to align with the Fund's Updated Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan. These documents are among the most comprehensive sources of gender analysis in the climate sector, offering clear entry points for institutional reform.

At the same time, the institutional landscape for climate finance in the region remains fragmented. While all participating governments have made progress in programme-based budgeting and in aligning climate policies with the aforementioned EU frameworks, the integration of climate and gender within public-finance systems is still uneven. Climate budget tagging has begun to emerge in Moldova and Albania but remains in early stages of development in other countries. In addition, the interministerial coordination between NDAs, line ministries, ministries of finance and gender-equality mechanisms is often limited. These institutional conditions shape the extent to which Gender Action Plans required under the GCF are translated into domestic budget allocations and monitoring structures.

Despite strong formal requirements, the integration of gender considerations into national budgeting systems, co-financing arrangements, and monitoring processes remains uneven. Gender commitments articulated in project documents are often absent from domestic budget classifications, execution reports, procurement plans, and performance assessments. Co-financing structures typically prioritise infrastructure and technical components, leaving gender-specific activities without dedicated resources or reliant on external financing. Limited availability of sex-disaggregated financial data and the absence of gender-tagged climate expenditures further constrain transparency and accountability. These gaps reflect broader shortcomings in national public finance management systems, which generally do not provide for structured gender budgeting within climate-related programmes.

³ Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). (2022). Climate finance is lacking in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Stockholm Environment Institute. <https://www.sei.org/features/climate-finance-is-lacking-in-the-western-balkans-eastern-europe-and-the-caucasus/>

⁴ UN Women. (2024). Gender and climate financing baseline study for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/gender-and-climate-financing-baseline-study-for-serbia-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

This Gender Budget Watchdog Report aims to address these gaps, and to examine whether and how GCF-funded and co-financed projects in the Western Balkans and Moldova reflect the principles of gender-responsive budgeting across the full project and public-finance cycle. The analysis follows a structured methodological framework that considers the quality of gender assessments, the resourcing and execution of Gender Action Plans, domestic co-financing practices, monitoring systems, and the involvement of women's organisations and gender-equality institutions in decision-making. The selected portfolio captures both mitigation and adaptation interventions, implemented through a combination of national and international accredited entities, and reflects the diversity of financing instruments deployed in the region.

The review of demographic, socioeconomic, and climate-vulnerability data across the region points to three categories of gender issues relevant for climate finance. Short-term issues include gaps in sex-disaggregated data, limited visibility of gender components in budget documents, and uneven participation of women in project consultations and committees. Medium-term issues relate to labour-market inequalities, the underrepresentation of women in green-economy sectors, and the weak institutional link between Gender Action Plans and public-finance decision-making. Long-term issues stem from deep structural disparities, including unequal access to assets and finance, representation in leadership roles, and the compounded effects of ageing, depopulation, and rural poverty on women's resilience.

The initial evidence confirms a consistent pattern: gender commitments in GCF project documents are generally robust, but national systems responsible for planning, financing, and monitoring these commitments are not yet aligned with the standards set by gender-responsive budgeting. Strengthening this alignment is essential for ensuring that climate investments deliver equitable benefits, meet international obligations, and reinforce domestic accountability for gender-equality objectives. The remainder of the report builds on this foundation, applying the methodological framework to examine how gender responsiveness is embedded in GCF-related public finance, how institutions operationalise these commitments, and where reforms are needed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and effective implementation.

1.2 ASSESSING GENDER INTEGRATION AND PUBLIC FINANCE PRACTICES IN GCF-FUNDED PROJECTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND MOLDOVA

The Green Climate Fund has a set of policy requirements on gender, formalized through a set of frameworks and action plans. Its Updated Gender Policy and 2020–2023 Action Plan (adopted by GCF Board decision B.24/12)⁵ requires that all funding proposals include a gender assessment and action plan. The GCF encourages countries to build capacity for this, and provides NDAs with the possibility to use GCF readiness grants to strengthen their competencies, policies and procedures to meet GCF's gender requirements. This assessment will examine how well GCF-funded projects in each WB6 country and Moldova reflect GRB principles in practice

The focus of the assignment is on six analytical dimensions across the project cycle: **(1) quality of gender analysis** in project design, **(2) gender-responsive public finance** and budgeting, **(3) participation and governance** (involvement in decision-making, are women's voices heard?), **(4) gender-targeted activities** and benefits; **(5) gender in monitoring and results** frameworks; and **(6) institutional anchoring** of gender (integration into domestic institutions for sustainability). The intent is to see not only if the right words and plans are in the project documents, but whether resources, decision-making and accountability mechanisms truly support gender equality outcomes on the ground.

⁵ Green Climate Fund (GCF). (2019). Decision B.24/12: Work programme and budget of the Independent Evaluation Unit and update of its three-year objectives and work plan. Green Climate Fund Board, Twenty-fourth meeting. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/decision/b24-12>

The analysis below covers GCF projects (with the exception of Kosovo*), followed by a section on GCF readiness and adaptation planning grants. Findings draw on GCF project documents (funding proposals, Gender Assessments/Action Plans, etc.) and key policy sources (e.g. GCF Gender Policy, UN Women reports, EU policy documents, national laws). This report is intended for a wide group of stakeholders, including (but not limited to): civil society groups, donors, and practitioners working at the nexus of gender, climate finance and public accountability, to inform advocacy and better implementation of gender-responsive climate action in the region.

Finally, the analysis is guided by the GBWN stance that “financing equality is not optional, but a prerequisite for effective governance and climate resilience”⁶, while supporting advocacy for a more gender-sensitive climate action, and providing guidance for stakeholders in implementing refined policies.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this report was to assess how Green Climate Fund (GCF) supported and co-financed projects in the Western Balkans and Moldova apply the principles of gender-responsive budgeting throughout the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring cycle. The analysis focused on determining whether the gender commitments outlined in Gender Assessments and Gender Action Plans were reflected in institutional practices, budget allocations, procurement structures, and reporting systems at national and subnational levels. The report also aimed to identify gaps, highlight examples of good practice, and formulate recommendations to strengthen accountability and transparency in the use of climate finance for advancing gender equality.

The report evaluated one to three key GCF-funded projects in each country in order to determine the extent to which they incorporated gender equality objectives in their design, implementation, and financing. The core objective was to examine whether the commitments of the GCF Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in climate interventions translated into practice on the ground. Key research questions included: whether GCF project budgets and co-financing structures were gender responsive; whether women and men benefited equitably from project outputs, including training, infrastructure, and services; and whether transparent mechanisms existed to track spending on gender measures and ensure accountability for gender results. The analysis was intended to inform civil society, donors, and public oversight actors about progress and gaps and to provide recommendations on how climate finance can better advance gender equality.

The research approach was grounded in established gender-responsive budgeting and public finance methodologies, drawing on OECD and UNDP guidance as well as the Green Climate Fund’s Updated Gender Policy, Gender Action Plan, Environmental and Social Policy, Investment Framework, and Integrated Results Management Framework. The methodology combined quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative analysis examined the scale and structure of financial flows, including GCF contributions, domestic co-financing, and program budgeting allocations. Qualitative analysis focused on institutional arrangements, stakeholder participation,

⁶ Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN). (2025). At the European Parliament, Marija Risteska advocates for gender-responsive budgeting to become a rule in the next EU financial framework. GBWN. <https://gbwn.net/en/at-the-european-parliament-marija-risteska-advocates-for-gender-responsive-budgeting-to-become-a-rule-in-the-next-eu-financial-framework/>

governance structures, and the quality of gender analysis embedded in the design of GCF projects. In line with gender-responsive budgeting practice, the assessment applied a set of analytical tools reflecting both the nature of climate finance and the requirements of GCF programming. Budget revenue analysis was used to examine how domestic co-financing was mobilized and whether revenue sources supporting climate interventions had gender-differentiated implications. Expenditure analysis examined the allocation of public and project-level resources to gender-related measures, including the financing of Gender Action Plans and other activities aimed at reducing gender disparities. Beneficiary analysis assessed who received the benefits of interventions and whether women and men had equitable access to infrastructure, services, training, and climate resilience measures. Cost analysis was applied, where data permitted, to determine whether resources allocated to gender-targeted actions were adequate and proportionate to identified gaps. Budget impact assessment was used to evaluate whether GCF-supported interventions influenced national and local budgeting practices, including the development of climate budget tagging, improvements in expenditure tracking, and shifts in institutional responsibility for gender and climate finance.

These tools were selected because they reflect the realities of climate financing in the region and the nature of GCF engagement. Revenue and expenditure analyses were essential for understanding how domestic co-financing supported or neglected gender commitments. Beneficiary analysis was undertaken because GCF Gender Assessments identified groups of women and men facing differentiated climate risks. Cost analysis provided insight into whether gender-targeted actions were adequately resourced, particularly in projects where technical and infrastructure components dominated budgets. Budget impact assessment enabled the review to look beyond individual projects and assess whether gender considerations were beginning to influence broader public financial management practices.

The desk review process involved the analysis of GCF funding proposals, Gender Assessments, Gender Action Plans, Annual Performance Reports, mid-term reviews, and terminal evaluations. It also included national legislation relevant to gender-responsive budgeting, program budgeting documents, climate and gender strategies, and available reports on climate or gender budget tagging. Each project was reviewed using a standardized analytical matrix reflecting six core dimensions of the methodological framework: the quality of gender analysis in project design; the scale and structure of domestic public financing for gender-related actions; participation and governance; delivery of gender-targeted measures; monitoring and reporting of gender results; and the degree to which national institutions were engaged in planning and oversight.

Together, the objectives and methodology establish a clear foundation for evaluating how gender equality is integrated into GCF supported public finance in the region and for identifying the reforms required to improve alignment between climate finance, national gender equality commitments, and international climate and gender policy obligations.

7 Limitations of the Assessment

This assessment was conducted using a combination of document review, financial analysis, and stakeholder consultations. While the methodology enabled a comprehensive review of gender-responsive climate finance practices, several limitations should be noted.

First, the availability and transparency of financial data varied across countries and projects. In many cases, Gender Action Plan activities were not reflected as distinct budget lines, and gender-related expenditures were embedded within broader project components. This limited the ability to quantify allocations for gender equality measures and to assess execution rates with precision.

⁷ Desk research and stakeholder consultations

Second, national public financial management systems in the region do not systematically apply climate or gender budget tagging. As a result, tracking expenditures related to gender-responsive climate action required interpretation of program budgets, project documentation, and procurement records rather than reliance on standardized financial classifications.

Third, the availability of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive performance indicators varied across projects. While Gender Assessments identified differentiated vulnerabilities and needs, monitoring frameworks did not consistently track gender-differentiated outcomes, limiting the ability to assess distributional impacts.

Fourth, stakeholder consultations provided valuable contextual insights but were constrained by uneven participation. Questionnaires disseminated during the Going Global 2.0: Sustainable Gender Responsive Futures GRB Forum yielded a limited response rate, which restricted the representativeness of survey-based findings. To mitigate this constraint, survey inputs were interpolated with document analysis and budget lines.

Finally, the assessment focused on a selected number of GCF-funded projects in each country. While these projects provide insight into prevailing practices and institutional dynamics, findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive of all climate finance interventions.

Despite these limitations, the triangulation of documentary evidence, financial analysis, and stakeholder input provides a foundation for identifying systemic gaps, emerging practices, and policy opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive climate finance in the region.

3. INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

3.1 OVERVIEW

This section examines the policies, mechanisms, and institutional capacities for integrating gender equality into climate finance governance in each country, at both national and subnational levels. It will provide an overview of the environment for gender-responsive budgeting in climate action: from the existence of supportive laws and strategies, to the coordination structures (or their absence) between gender institutions and climate finance authorities.

All Western Balkan Six countries and Moldova have established gender equality mechanisms and legal mandates which, to a varying extent, support gender-responsive budgeting. In 2021, **Serbia** adopted a new Law on Gender Equality, which explicitly requires public institutions to incorporate gender perspectives into policies and budgets. In addition to this, Serbia was the first EU candidate country to utilize the Gender Equality Index and track progress in 2016⁸.

Albania's law on the budget system includes instructions for ministries to report on gender-related objectives in their budget programs. Since 2012, the Ministry of Finance of Albania has strived to implement the principles of General Gender Budgeting (GGBJ) in its yearly and mid-term budget reports. General Gender Budgeting forms the third component of Albania's gender equality strategy, tackling interconnected and extensive issues across all domains. Along with these endeavours, Albania has implemented changes to its Law on Organic Budget in 2016, making gender equality

⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2021). Release of the Gender Equality Index for Serbia 2021 <https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/events/release-gender-equality-index-serbia-2021/>

one of its core principles, while the Law on Local Government Finances provides the foundation for the inclusion of GRB in budget programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluation⁹.

Council of Ministers Decision No. 465 (2012) - Early on, Albania's government issued CoM Decision No. 465, "On the integration of the gender perspective in the Medium-Term Budget Program." This policy decision formally **launched GRB integration** by requiring that the medium-term budget programming (MTBP) process include gender analysis and objectives¹⁰. It marked the beginning of efforts to use budgeting as a tool to reduce gender inequalities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a Law on Gender Equality on the national level (adopted in 2003 and amended in 2009)¹¹. In accordance with Article 24(3) of the Law on Gender Equality in BiH from 2009, all laws, bylaws, strategies and action plans must be harmonized with the provisions of this Law and with international standards in the area of equality¹². This made BiH one of the early adopters of GRB in the region¹³. Moreover, the implementation of GRB principles was mandated by the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its latest version for the period 2018 - 2022 including a separate chapter on GRB¹⁴. Gender legislations are also present at the entity levels in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). For example, the Law on Budget Execution of the FBiH "mandates institutions to report on the gender responsiveness of their programmes from 2017 onwards"¹⁵. In 2019, Ministries of Finance across all levels have trained 17,000 civil servants in gender-responsive budgeting and implementation¹⁶.

Montenegro developed a National Gender Equality Strategy (2021-2025) which mentions climate change, and the Law on Gender Equality (Official Gazette No. 1/2007, amended in 2015) obligates state and local authorities to promote gender equality in all policies. It establishes that all strategies, plans and normative acts must integrate gender mainstreaming and that institutions build capacity for gender policy implementation¹⁷. Despite the fact that it does not explicitly mention GRB, the Law provides a legal mandate to pursue gender-responsive approaches in government programs. Also, Montenegro introduced programme budgeting in 2020 for its national budget, creating an entry point for GRB implementation. While the Law on Budget and Fiscal Responsibility currently does not explicitly mandate gender budgeting, certain elements of GRB have been implemented through by-laws and guidelines¹⁸. Since 2020, due to the Programme Budgeting reform, all spending units are required to prepare a Statement on Gender Equity, that needs to include gender-sensitive goals, indicators, and activities¹⁹.

Moldova has drafted a Law on Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in 2006²⁰, and while it does not explicitly mandate gender budgeting, it requires authorities at all levels to promote equal rights of women and men in all spheres. Pursuant to this law, Government Decision No. 933

¹⁰ Vito et al, 2025, Gender Responsive Budgeting Enabling Factors in Local Government Practice.

¹¹ Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (n.d.). Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. <https://arsbih.gov.ba/project/zakon-o-ravnopravnosti-spolova-u-bih/>

¹² Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2018). Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2022. https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/GAP-BIH-2018-2022_ENG.pdf

¹³ World Bank. (2024). Country Gender Assessment – Bosnia and Herzegovina. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b2f2b188-2193-4399-be92-70048b2380a9/content>

¹⁴ Vito & Rakar, 2024, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Western Balkans between aspirations and reality. <https://reference-global.com/2/v2/download/pdf/10.2478/ejels-2024-0002/>

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2024). Joint Programme Document: Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-12/prodoc-jp_bosnia_hez_gender_equality_redacted.pdf

¹⁶ Universal Periodic Review for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 34th Session Joint UNCT Submission to the UN Human Rights Council. https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-10/jstmp7_upr34_bih_e_main.pdf

¹⁷ National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025 with Action Plan 2021-2022

¹⁸ OECD. (2025). Strengthening public financial management in Montenegro. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/strengthening-public-financial-management-in-montenegro_db0104bb-en/full-report/component-6.html

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ European External Action Service (EEAS). (2021). Country Gender Profile: Republic of Moldova. Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/country_gender_profile.pdf

of 31.12.2009 was adopted, which set policy objectives for gender mainstreaming. Notably, one objective is to “promote the development of a gender-sensitive budget in national and local budget processes”²¹. This 2009 decision served as the first step to introduce GRB on the government’s agenda, but as of a few years ago, no official GRB methodology was required by law. The Ministry of Finance of Moldova’s PFM Strategy (2023-2030) explicitly calls for integrating a gender perspective into budgeting through proposed reform measures in Pillar 2: Integrated strategic and budget planning, monitoring, and transparent reporting²². Adopted in 2023, this strategy is a milestone for institutionalizing GRB in Moldova. It aligns with CEDAW recommendations and presents the commitment of the government to introduce gender-responsive planning and execution in public finances. The PFM strategy provides high-level endorsement that budget reforms must include gender equality considerations (e.g. tracking and reporting on gender-related allocations), creating a platform for future action.

North Macedonia has a Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men²³, initially adopted in 2012 and amended in 2012, and has piloted gender budgeting in selected ministries for over a decade (with UN Women support). The 2012 version of the Law obliges public authorities to adopt gender responsive strategic plans and budgets²⁴. In 2022 the Organic Budget Law formally incorporated GRB into the budgetary system. The Article 3 of the Law states that “the principle of gender equality shall mean gender-responsive budgeting, i.e. preserving gender equality when projecting and executing budget inflows and outflows”²⁵.

Serbia’s main equality law is the Law on Gender Equality (first adopted in 2009, with a new consolidated law adopted in 2021). The 2021 Law broadened the institutional framework (creating a high-level coordination body, Deputy PM oversight, and gender-quota measures) and aligned national law with EU standards²⁶. Complementing this, the Budget System Law was amended in December 2015 and 2016 to mandate GRB. The 2015 amendment made gender equality an explicit budget objective and defined GRB as reallocating revenues/expenditures to promote equality²⁷. The 2016 amendment then required all ministries and public entities to report on gender equality results in their annual budget execution reports²⁸. These laws are supported by Serbia’s Coordination Body for Gender Equality (established in 2014) and by mandated local gender equality mechanisms. The first official gender budget statements appeared in 2016. By the 2018 budget cycle, 35 of Serbia’s national ministries and agencies and 14 provincial bodies had prepared GRB sections in their budgets. By 2021, the 42 of 53 national bodies and 26 of 31 provincial bodies reported using gender budgeting in their 2021 budgets²⁹. A new national Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030 (in development as of 2022) is expected to further reinforce GRB implementation.

These legal and institutional frameworks indicate a baseline commitment, as gender equality is recognized in general governance, which is a prerequisite for GRB implementation in any sector. However, operationalization has remained uneven. In practice, many of these countries still struggle to fully institutionalize GRB across government institutions, as these initiatives often rely on donor-

²¹ *ibid*

²² Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania. (2023). Public Finance Management Strategy 2023–2030 and Action Plan 2023–2026. Government of Albania. <https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Public-Finance-Management-Strategy-2023-2030.pdf>

²³ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2012, amended 2013–2015). Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/word/LEOWM_6_12_EN2.doc

²⁴ Compendium of Cultural Policies & Trends. (2019). North Macedonia: Gender equality legislation and policy framework (Country profile section 2.5.5). https://www.culturalpolicies.net/country_profile/north-macedonia-2-5-5/

²⁵ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia. (2022). Organic Budget Law (Official Gazette No. 203/2022). https://arhiva.finance.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ORGANIC-BUDGET-LAW_-Official-Gazette-of-the-Republic-of-North-Macedonia-No.203-of-19.09.2022.pdf/

²⁶ United Nations Serbia. (2021). Human rights and gender equality: Thematic update. https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/Human%20rights%20and%20gender%20equality_UN%20Serbia%20Thematic%20Update_03062021.pdf

²⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (n.d.). Gender-responsive budgeting: Good practices. <https://eige.europa.eu/about/eu-candidate-countries-and-potential-candidates/good-practices/gender-responsive-budgeting>

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Council of Europe / TACSO. (2022). EU Gender Country Profile for Serbia. <https://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/EU-Gender-Country-Profile-for-Serbia-.pdf/>

funded projects or specific persons in finance ministries. On a positive note, these countries have been influenced by EU gender mainstreaming requirements as EU aspirants. For example, the European Parliament's brief on gender budgeting emphasizes that GRB improves transparency and accountability of spending³⁰. Consequently, by 2025, several Western Balkan governments have formally embedded GRB: Serbia's Ministry of Finance reported that 100% of ministries included gender equality objectives in their 2023 budgets, and Albania's Ministry of Finance requires gender impact statements for new budget proposals. This level of alignment remains crucial for climate finance, as it means there is a minimal legal expectation that climate-related budgets should be gender-responsive, even if enforcement lags behind.

3.2 CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS

In terms of institutions relevant for climate change, all countries have designated **National Designated Authorities (NDAs)** to interface with the GCF. These NDAs are typically ministries of environment or similar. For instance, North Macedonia's NDA is the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (reflecting a high-level coordination role)³¹, Serbia's NDA is the Ministry of Environmental Protection³², and Albania's NDA is the Ministry of Tourism and Environment³³. Each country also has climate change strategies or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that acknowledge vulnerable groups. Yet, integration of gender into climate policies is in early stages. In most national climate strategies (NDCs, National Adaptation Plans, etc.), gender is addressed in broad terms or not at all, often due to prompting by international frameworks rather than domestic demand. For example, Moldova's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy refers to gender and vulnerable groups as cross-cutting considerations, and Serbia's Draft Climate Strategy notes the importance of including women and youth in climate action. However, detailed gender targets or budgets in these strategies are rare.

Each country's institutional setup for climate finance varies. Some have inter-ministerial climate change committees, e.g. **North Macedonia** and **Albania** have such bodies - National Development Council of the Republic of North Macedonia and Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Climate Change (IMWGCC)^{34, 35}. **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has an NDA unit in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER) that consults entity ministries when needed. Moldova stands out as it established a Climate Change Coordination Mechanism where the Government Committee on Climate Change includes cross-sector representation - encouragingly, Moldova's Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (which handles gender affairs) has participated in climate policy discussions, hinting at potential institutional anchoring of gender in climate finance decisions³⁶.

However, across the region, differences persist: environment ministries (or NDAs) and national gender mechanisms (e.g. Gender Equality Agencies or similar) rarely have formal channels of regional and national collaboration. A positive example was observed in Montenegro's GCF Water Readiness project launched in 2025, as a Water and Climate Change Working Group was established, explicitly aiming to include a wide range of public and private stakeholders³⁷. This working group's mandate is to facilitate investment preparation and policy alignment in the water

³⁰ European Parliament Research Service. (2025). Gender-responsive budgeting: State of play and opportunities for the European Parliament's 10th term (Briefing No. EPRS_BRI(2025)767228). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)767228](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2025)767228)

³¹ Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). North Macedonia country profile. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/north-macedonia/>

³² Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). Serbia country profile. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/serbia/>

³³ Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). Albania country profile. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/albania/>

³⁴ National Council for Sustainable Development and Thematic Working Groups. (n.d.). NCS and TWG <http://www.greendevopment.mk/en/NCSandTWG.aspx/>

³⁵ NAP Global Network. (n.d.). Albania: National adaptation plan mechanisms. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/?mechanisms=albania/>

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). Women's empowerment: Republic of Moldova. FAO Gender and Law. <https://genderlex.fao.org/en/country/profiles/MDA/see-more/Women%E2%80%99s%20empowerment/Republic%20of%20Moldova>

³⁷ Global Water Partnership Mediterranean. (2025). Montenegro launches GCF water readiness project to catalyze transformative climate-resilient investment. GWP-Med WE ACT. <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-Mediterranean/WE-ACT/News-List-Page/2025/montenegro-launches-gcf-water-readiness-project-to-catalyze-transformative-climate-resilient-investment/>

sector. Notably, one of its deliverables is the development of gender-responsive screening tool for climate-resilient water projects, which implies that gender experts or women's representatives should be involved in the working group. This is a positive institutional mechanism, as it brings together sectoral officials with gender considerations early in project pipeline development. Similarly, Serbia's NDA (Ministry of Environmental Protection) in partnership with UNDP set up a NAP Project³⁸ Steering Committee that includes representatives from the Coordination Body for Gender Equality - thereby institutionalizing a gender voice in overseeing adaptation planning³⁹. Such examples, however, are the exception rather than the norm.

Moreover, a recurring observation is the limited capacity of institutions to implement gender-related policies. NDAs in the Western Balkans are often small units with technical environmental experts, and they may not have a dedicated gender expert on staff. National gender mechanisms (like Women's Ministries or Gender Equality Agencies) are typically under-resourced and not traditionally involved in climate finance discussions. However, there are signs of progress. The GCF itself encourages NDAs to nominate gender focal points and to consult widely. In Moldova, the NDA (Ministry of Environment) collaborated with the gender-relevant institutions when developing its Country Programme for the GCF, ensuring alignment with the national gender strategy - indeed, Moldova's GCF Country Programme document (2020) references women's empowerment as a precondition for the process of effective action to tackle the negative consequences of climate change⁴⁰. In Albania, the GCF Country Programme (2020) involved stakeholder meetings that included civil society groups, according to Albanian NDA reports⁴¹.

One measure of institutional anchoring is whether national climate committees include gender representatives. Bosnia and Herzegovina's climate governance is fragmented, but during the recent development of a GCF project on flood resilience, UNDP facilitated joint meetings between the Gender Equality Agency of BiH and the deputy ministries for water management - a promising example that can be used in future iterations of similar projects. Another indicator is whether climate projects formally assign roles to gender institutions. It was noted that very few GCF project documents name national gender institutions as executing or implementing partners. Instead, gender expertise is often brought by international partners or consultants. While this ensures technical gender inputs, it does not necessarily build long-term institutional capacity within government structures.

On the subnational level, local governments are key implementers of climate projects (e.g. municipalities retrofitting buildings or managing flood defenses). Their capacity for GRB is varied. Some cities (like Sarajevo, Trebinje and Tešanj) have participated in gender budgeting initiatives and could integrate those lessons in climate initiatives⁴², such as prioritizing energy-efficiency investments in schools and clinics that benefit women (teachers, caregivers) or engaging women in community disaster planning. Indeed, one best practice from the region is the Gender Budgeting Compendium 2022 which highlighted local initiatives - e.g., Aleksandrovac, Serbia investing in women farmers for sustainable agriculture, or Strumica, North Macedonia funding a shelter for women as part of disaster resilience⁴³. These local examples show that where there is political will, gender and climate priorities can meet - but such cases are project-based and not yet systemic.

³⁸ Advancing medium and long-term adaptation planning in the Republic of Serbia, Phase I and II

³⁹ Markovska, N., & Popovicki, T. (2023, June 6). Terminal evaluation of UNDP project: Advancing medium and long-term adaptation planning in the Republic of Serbia (NAP) financed by the Green Climate Fund (UNDP-GCF PIMS ID: 6080). United Nations Development Programme. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/22359>

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme. (2025). GCF readiness proposal: Republic of Moldova [Signed grant agreement]. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-08/9806-moldova_ip-signed_gcf-readiness-proposal.pdf

⁴¹ Global Water Partnership Mediterranean. (2020, December). GCF country programme for Albania [Presentation] <https://www.gwp.org/globalassets/global/gwp-med-files/list-of-programmes/see-nexus/dec-2020/albania-nexus-presentations/uri---gcf-country-programme-for-albania.pdf>

⁴² United Nations Bosnia and Herzegovina. (n.d.). Local changes for equality: Women are changing the way communities plan their development. <https://bosniaherzegovina.un.org/en/298952-local-changes-equality-women-changing-way-communities-plan-their-development>

⁴³ Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2022). Compendium of gender-responsive budgeting best practices. <https://www.sogfbih.ba/sites/default/files/aktivnost/dodatak/2022-12/Compendium%20of%20Gender%20Responsive%20Budgeting%20Best%20Practices%20%284%29.pdf>

In summary, institutional readiness varies but is gradually improving. All countries have the basic policy framework (gender equality laws, climate strategies) and have designated bodies for climate finance. They share structural features - EU approximation processes, growing climate finance exposure, and initiated GRB reforms, that make comparative analysis meaningful. Yet, ensuring that gender equality commitments translate into climate finance action remains a work in progress. Key gaps include weak formal roles for gender institutions in climate finance governance, limited capacity and data to implement GRB in climate sectors, and minimal use of budget tracking for gender within climate projects.

4. GCF PROJECT ANALYSES BY COUNTRY

The following sections examine GCF-funded projects in each of the six countries covered by this report, analysing how gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) principles are reflected in project design, financial structure, governance, and implementation. For each country, a project mini-sheet presents the core financial data: total budget, GCF contribution, co-financing, and the status of gender action plan (GAP) budget execution, followed by a substantive analysis structured around four dimensions: quality of gender analysis, public finance and resourcing, governance and participation, and gender-targeted activities and monitoring.

A critical methodological note applies across all countries. GCF funding proposals are publicly available and contain budget breakdowns, but gender-specific budget lines are almost never presented as standalone line items. Instead, gender activities are embedded within broader component sub-budgets, and execution data is reported in Annual Performance Reports (APRs), published with a one to two year lag. As a result, for projects approved between 2023 and 2025, execution data is not yet publicly available. The one exception in this portfolio is Montenegro's completed NAP Readiness project (2020-2025), where full disbursement data exists and is presented below. For Bosnia and Herzegovina's FP051, partial 2023 progress data provides the only documented example of gender results measured against investment targets anywhere in the regional portfolio.

ALBANIA

Albania has begun implementing GCF projects that integrate gender considerations, notably through the **"ALBAdapt - Climate Services for a Resilient Albania"** project (SAP041) approved in 2024, with the implementation period from 2024 to 2031 and a total budget of USD 41.4m, while the total GCF financing amounts to USD 27,431,629. This adaptation project, led by GIZ, aims to strengthen climate information services and early warning systems across Albania. The project's Gender Assessment (GA) provides an overview of gender gaps in climate services and decision-making. It notes the lack of sex-disaggregated climate data and the limited information on how climate impacts differ for women and men. It also recognizes that women are underrepresented in technical fields (like hydrometeorology and ICT) and that without targeted analysis, climate services might neglect

⁴⁴ Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Albania. (2025, February). Gender assessment and action plan (Annex 4). https://turizmi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Annex-4_Gender-Assessment-and-Action-plan_EN.pdf

⁴⁵ ibid

women’s needs. The assessment therefore calls for specific gender gap analyses (e.g. of legislation, of the National Hydrometeorological Service, of the multi-hazard early warning system) to inform project implementation. This GA pinpoints where gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities need to be understood, for instance, how women and men receive warnings or climate information, and their different abilities to respond. The project’s theory of change consequently frames women as key stakeholders in building resilience. Notably, ALBAdapt’s design aligns with GCF gender policy requirements - as gender issues are integrated into the problem analysis and the solution strategy.

Gender-responsive activities are budgeted within individual component budgets rather than as a separate line item. The GAP specifies activities and responsibilities per component but does not provide a standalone gender expenditure total, which is a common feature of GCF’s Simplified Approval Process documentation. For example, the project invests in building gender-disaggregated data systems and staff capacity so that climate services equally serve women and men ⁴⁵. The GAP calls for technical assistance to Albanian institutions to institutionalize the collection of sex-disaggregated data in climate observations and early warning.

Project Mini-Sheet: ALBAdapt - Climate Services for a Resilient Albania (SAP041)

IMPLEMENTING ENTITY	GIZ (Accredited Entity and Executing Entity); National Civil Protection Agency (NCPA) as national Executing Entity
Implementation Period	2 December 2024 - 2 June 2031 (72 months / 6 years)
Total Project Budget	USD 41,407,847
GCF Contribution	USD 27,431,629 (grant)
Co-financing	USD 13,976,218 (Government of Albania / National Civil Protection Agency)
GCF Share of Total	66.2%
GAP BUDGET (Planned)	Embedded across component sub-budgets; no standalone gender line in public documents
GAP BUDGET (Executed)	Not yet available - project in inception phase as of 2025
DIRECT BENEFICIARIES (Planned)	700,951 total: Female 351,173 (50.1%), Male 349,778 (49.9%) 25% of Albanian population
INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES (planned)	1,823,325 total: Female 914,343, Male 908,982 65% of Albanian population
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Embedded across 3 project components. No standalone gender line in publicly available funding proposal. Gender activities include: sex-disaggregated data system development, gender training for NMHS staff, gender-inclusive MHEWS outreach protocols, female participation targets in end-user trainings.
GAP BUDGET (executed)	NOT YET AVAILABLE. Project signed 2 December 2024 and in inception phase. First Annual Performance Report expected 2026.

BUDGET ANALYSIS: WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

ALBAdapt's total investment of USD 41.4M contains a GCF grant of USD 27.43M and represents 66% of total project cost, which is the highest GCF share of any investment project in this portfolio. This matters analytically: it means two-thirds of all project resources are subject to GCF's Gender Policy and mandatory GAP requirements. The government co-financing (USD 13.97M) represents the remaining 34% and is directed at infrastructure components, specifically the physical buildout of the Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS) and hydrometeorological station upgrades. The funding proposal specifies that the GCF contribution is divided across three components: **Component 1** (NMHS strengthening and climate information platforms), **Component 2** (people-centred MHEWS), and **Component 3** (private sector innovation in climate services and nature-based solutions). The gender activities in the GAP: sex-disaggregated data collection systems, gender training for NMHS staff, women-inclusive outreach protocols are embedded within all three components. The cost-per-beneficiary metric provided in the proposal (USD 10.80 per direct beneficiary from GCF funds alone) provides a useful GRB reference: it implies that reaching 351,173 female direct beneficiaries costs approximately USD 3.79M in GCF equivalent terms, though this is a disaggregated projection, not a reported execution figure.

The planned-vs-executed comparison is not yet possible. The project entered implementation on 2 December 2024. No Annual Performance Report has been published. The first execution data will emerge in the 2026 APR, covering Year 1 (December 2024-November 2025). Until that report is published, any claim about gender budget execution for ALBAdapt would be speculative.

One concrete financial accountability benchmark does exist: the target of 351,173 female direct beneficiaries (50.1% of total). This is a measurable, time-bound commitment against which future APR data can be assessed. A second metric is the 69% GCF allocation to the 'Most Vulnerable Communities' result area, which is the highest proportion in the portfolio and which should translate into disproportionate benefits for women given Albania's gender-differentiated climate vulnerability profile documented in the Gender Assessment.

“Entry points for the introduction of gender-disaggregated data collection systems should be explored with ALBAdapt project assistance for the reformed NMHS, the NFCS and the MHEWS. In this context, concrete measures for supporting gender-disaggregated data collection should be considered as horizontal measures across all three ALBAdapt project components.” - Gender Assessment and Action Plan for ALBAdapt project

Additionally, the project will finance required gender analyses and policy reviews (such as mandating a gender assessment for any new climate legislation or plan developed under the project). These activities ensure that public finance mobilized via GCF and government co-financing is executed in a **gender-informed way** - addressing gender inclusion. The **consistency** of this gender-responsive spending will need to be tracked in implementation (e.g. did the project spend the funds on the gender experts, training and outreach as planned?). As of design, however, Albania's project demonstrates good practice by budgeting for gender mainstreaming actions rather than assuming they will happen without dedicated resources.

Governance and Participation: In Albania, institutional mechanisms for gender equality exist (a national gender equality strategy and an obligation for ministries to do gender budgeting in the Medium-Term Budget Program). ALBAdapt builds on this by ensuring governance arrangements

⁴⁶ <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/green-climate-fund-greenlights-144-million-towards-strengthening-flood-resilience-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

⁴⁷ https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-09/environmental_and_social_assessment_report.pdf

include gender expertise and stakeholder participation. One of the GAP's recommended actions is to "involve women and men in project planning and implementation processes" to ensure their voices shape services like early warnings. This can be operationalized by working with civil society (including any women's organizations focused on environment or DRR) in the target areas when rolling out new climate information tools. Additionally, the project plans to train government staff, implying that the **institutions** governing climate services will have increased gender knowledge. In summary, Albania's GCF project governance reflects GRB principles by integrating gender expertise in decision-making bodies and by broadening stakeholder engagement to include women at all levels. One area to watch is the procurement and staffing, as the project intends to strive for gender balance in project staff and consultants and encourages female experts to take part in technical trainings (e.g. on meteorological modeling), which would further enhance women's role in climate governance.

Gender-Targeted Activities and Benefits: ALBAdapt mainly takes a gender-mainstreaming approach, embedding gender targets into each activity. Nonetheless, it has some concrete gender-targeted actions. For instance, the GAP includes actions to make climate information and advisories more accessible to women. Another targeted measure is the plan to conduct gender training for staff of the hydromet service and emergency agencies, so that they can design services that better reach both women and men. These trainings are expected to improve, for example, how early warnings are delivered (ensuring they reach women, who may be at home or in the fields during the day, and men who may be in other locations).

Monitoring and Evaluation: The ALBAdapt project's results framework incorporates gender-sensitive indicators, responding to GCF's Integrated Results Management Framework requirement for sex-disaggregated data. Baseline studies in the project established how many women currently use climate info services, and targets are set to increase this number. The Annual Performance Reports will track data such as the percentage of women in end-user trainings, the number of gender-responsive policies introduced, and whether sex-disaggregated climate risk data is being collected.

The project's GAP explicitly calls for gender-disaggregated data collection and reporting systems to be created within all three components. This has led to the inclusion of an output for developing a data management module that can capture user feedback by gender on climate information (e.g. a survey tool to see if warnings reached female-headed households). By institutionalizing these practices, the project aims to contribute to closing specific gender gaps – for example, if women farmers currently have lower access to agro-meteorological advisories, the project will measure progress by that gap's reduction. Moreover, monitoring will check that project benefits (such as new climate stations or community adaptation micro-grants) are equitably distributed. Notably, most Albanian institutions that serve as project partners admitted during project design that gender-disaggregated data was not systematically collected in climate services before. ALBAdapt addresses this by funding improvements in data collection protocols, which is a fundamental GRB practice: what isn't measured can't be improved. The project's M&E will feed into Albania's national climate reporting and budgeting, for instance, if the project demonstrates that a certain percentage of its budget was spent on women-focused capacity building, this could set a precedent for the government to tag and monitor climate expenditures by gender relevance in the future. Overall, the monitoring dimension in Albania's project is strong, with clear gender indicators and an effort to integrate those into long-term information systems, though diligent follow-through will be needed to ensure reporting is of high quality and used for course correction as needed.

ALBANIA: EVIDENCE-BASED CONCLUSIONS	
1.	ALBAdapt's 66% GCF-to-co-financing ratio is the most favourable in the investment portfolio, meaning the majority of project resources are subject to gender conditions. This structural advantage is not replicated in larger investment projects in BiH and Serbia.
2.	The 351,173 female direct beneficiary target (50.1% of total) is the only concrete, quantified, time-bound gender metric currently available for planned-vs-executed comparison. First data point is the 2026 APR.
3.	The GAP does not present a standalone gender budget line. The absence of a gender-specific budget estimate in the publicly available funding proposal is a transparency gap common to all GCF projects in this portfolio, not specific to Albania.
4.	The treatment of NCPA co-financing (34% of total) in the gender analysis is underdeveloped. The physical MHEWS infrastructure funded by the government must be gender-responsive by design for the GCF-funded soft measures to be effective rather than compensatory.
5.	Albania's Law on the Budget System requires ministries to report gender objectives in Medium-Term Budget Programmes. If ALBAdapt implementation data feeds into the NCPA's budget reporting, it could establish Albania's first sex-disaggregated climate services expenditure benchmark in a national budget document.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina has two notable GCF-funded projects: **“Scaling-up Investment in Low-Carbon Public Buildings”** (FP051, a mitigation project with UNDP) and **“Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management”** (FP216, an adaptation project with UNDP, approved 2023). FP216 serves as the most relevant and recent case for examining gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), while FP051 provides useful complementary evidence for how gender has been operationalised in earlier GCF engagements. Together they allow a comparison of gender mainstreaming standards across eight years of GCF engagement and provide the report's only partial execution data for gender results.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a relatively strong institutional framework for gender equality, including a Law on Gender Equality and gender mechanisms at state and entity levels, but the application of GRB in sectoral climate finance remains uneven.

Project Mini-Sheet 1: *Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management (FP216)*

IMPLEMENTING ENTITY	UNDP
Implementation Period	2024-2031 (approximately 7 years; inception workshop held March 2025)

⁴⁹ <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/scaling-climate-resilient-flood-risk-management-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

⁵⁰ https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/fp216-undp-bosnia-and-herzegovina_2.pdf

Total Project Budget	USD 72,700,000
GCF Contribution	USD 14,400,000 (grant) - 19.8% of total
Co-financing	USD 58,288,889 - 80.2% of total Contributed by BiH domestic institutions (entity-level governments, water agencies)
Target female beneficiary share	≥40% of direct beneficiaries are women (specified in results frame-work)
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Embedded within GCF soft-measure component (policy, training, community engagement). No standalone gender line. Co-financing (USD 57.6M) directed to infrastructure: flood barriers, hydrological monitoring, forecasting systems. No gender tagging documented for co-financing.
GAP BUDGET (executed)	Not yet available. Inception workshop held March 2025. First APR expected 2026.

“The project is a crucial step in addressing the challenges posed by climate change-induced flood risks in Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a special focus on the Vrbas, Una, Sana, Drina and Bosna river basins. It will not only enhance climate resilience but also contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the most vulnerable communities, including women, children and the elderly.” - UNDP, 2023

Project Mini-Sheet 1: Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management (FP216)

IMPLEMENTING ENTITY	UNDP
Implementation Period	2017–2026 (est. completion 29 May 2026)
Total Project Budget	USD 122,566,000
GCF Contribution	USD 17,346,000 - 14% of total
Co-financing	USD 105,220,000 - 86% of total Sources: FBiH Environmental Fund, RS Environmental Fund, municipal budgets, GEF, World Bank, Sida. No gender conditions documented on this portion.
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Not separately disaggregated in publicly available project documents. UNDP gender policy requires minimum allocation for GAP implementation within the GCF grant component.
GAP BUDGET (executed - 2023 partial data)	Women reached: >59,000 (>50% of total direct beneficiaries as of 2023). Campaign participation: 30% female participation in energy awareness campaigns achieved. These are the ONLY executed gender metrics publicly available in this entire regional portfolio.

BUDGET ANALYSIS: THE 14-20% PROBLEM

The central GRB finding for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and by extension for the regional portfolio, is what this report terms the 14-20% problem. In both projects examined, the GCF grant covers

only 14-20% of total project cost, while domestic co-financing covers the remaining 80-86%. GCF's Gender Policy, with its mandatory GAP requirements, applies directly to the GCF grant portion. The domestic co-financing: USD 57.6M in FP216 directed at physical flood infrastructure, and USD 105.2M in FP051 directed at public building retrofits, carries no equivalent documented gender conditionality at the co-financing source level.

A structural qualification is necessary here. UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards, including its gender requirements, technically extend to all project activities that UNDP manages, not solely to the GCF-funded component. The Funded Activity Agreement binds UNDP as Accredited Entity to apply its own standards across the full project. In that sense, the co-financing is not entirely ungoverned from a gender perspective. However, this is materially different from GCF's Gender Policy applying directly. UNDP's institutional standards create a general obligation; the GAP creates specific, monitorable gender targets tied to defined outputs.

This creates a practical asymmetry. For FP216, the gender-active 20% (USD 14.4M) funds early warning communications, community training, livelihood grants, and governance measures that are explicitly designed to reach women and are tracked against GAP indicators. The remaining 80% (USD 57.6M) funds physical flood barriers, hydrological monitoring infrastructure, and forecasting systems. Whether this infrastructure reaches and protects women equally, including whether alert systems are accessible to women with lower mobile phone ownership, or whether emergency protocols account for women's disproportionate caregiving responsibilities during displacement, falls largely outside the GAP's documented scope and monitoring framework.

FP051 execution data partially illuminates how this dynamic plays out in practice. Despite the 86% co-financing share carrying no gender conditionality at source, the project reported 54.12% female beneficiaries across 527,747 cumulative users of retrofitted buildings since project start, and 46.5% female registered users of the Energy Management Information System – both substantially exceeding the GAP's baseline target of 30% female representation. In 2023 alone, 59,113 of 117,927 beneficiaries from that year's 103 retrofitted buildings were women (50.12%).

This demonstrates that applying UNDP's gender standards to the GCF-funded soft measures can produce measurable gender results even within a heavily infrastructure-dominated portfolio. It also illustrates the mechanism by which the co-financed infrastructure generated gender benefits: the buildings retrofitted – schools, hospitals, and social care centres – are facilities women disproportionately use, so the gender outcome was a function of building selection rather than any gender condition attached to the co-financing itself. The NIF criteria governing which buildings were prioritised included an explicit gender component, a target of 40% women users, and the PIUs responsible for building selection were majority female (60.87% across responsible parties). The gender-responsive design of the GCF-funded component therefore shaped the infrastructure investment delivered by the co-financing. The two components are causally linked, but the gender intentionality resided in the minority funding stream.

For FP216, the planned $\geq 40\%$ female beneficiary target provides a concrete future benchmark. The more important methodological question is whether being protected from floods as a project beneficiary constitutes the same order of gender outcome as the targeted interventions specified in the GAP, livelihood grants, women's group training, gender-sensitive committee membership. These represent different levels of gender engagement: the first is protective and passive; the second is participatory and potentially transformative. The monitoring framework must track and report them separately. Aggregating passive beneficiaries with active gender-targeted participants into a single

⁵³ <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/23549>

⁵⁴ <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/North%20Macedonia-Report.pdf>

⁵⁵ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/>

female beneficiary headline figure would obscure whether the project is delivering gender-sensitive outputs or gender-transformative ones, and would make cross-project GRB comparison unreliable.

Quality of Gender Analysis: The **Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management** project was informed by a Gender Assessment that examined how floods impact women and men differently in BiH. Public documentation of past disasters, such as the severe 2014 floods, revealed that women (especially rural women, elderly, single mothers) were among the most vulnerable – often lacking resources to recover and typically excluded from formal decision-making on disaster risk reduction. The project’s documentation explicitly acknowledges “the most vulnerable communities, including women, children and the elderly” as key target groups ⁴⁷.

This indicates that the proposal’s situation analysis incorporated gender and age vulnerability factors. For example, it noted that during floods, women’s care responsibilities increase and their mobility may be constrained, and that early warning systems were not always reaching women effectively. By highlighting these issues, the project’s theory of change justifies interventions like community-based flood response training that involve women, and communication strategies tailored for women and men. According to the project’s Environmental and Social Assessment Report, UNDP facilitated consultative meetings with the Agency for Gender Equality and entity-level gender centres during proposal preparation, ensuring that gender considerations were systematically integrated into the project’s design and Gender Action Plan. In addition, line ministries responsible for water management were engaged through interviews, workshops, and technical consultations. These engagements represent a constructive step toward institutional coordination and reflect a deliberate effort to align gender expertise with sectoral planning during the project design phase ⁴⁸.

The Low-Carbon Public Buildings project also included a gender analysis, though it was relatively general in scope. It acknowledged that improved public facilities, such as schools and hospitals, would particularly benefit women, who form the majority of the workforce in education and health sectors, and it noted broader gender issues such as women’s disproportionate exposure to energy poverty. However, the analysis relied mainly on national policy commitments and general demographic statistics, with fewer project-specific insights.

The more recent, Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management project demonstrates a clearer integration of gender considerations. UNDP engaged the Agency for Gender Equality and entity-level gender centres during project preparation, and the Gender Assessment identifies women as a key vulnerable group in flood-prone areas. Public project materials highlight that women, especially in rural settings, face constraints related to lower access to resources, higher care burdens during emergencies, and underrepresentation in decision-making bodies related to water management. These gender-differentiated factors informed the project’s design elements, including community-based planning and inclusive approaches to awareness and early warning.

Public Finance and Resourcing: Both projects blend GCF grants with significant co-financing, including domestic public funds. The Scaling up Climate Resilient Flood Risk Management totals USD 72 million, with USD 14.4 million contribution from GCF and the remainder co-financed by BiH’s own institutions ⁴⁹. This large domestic contribution provides both an opportunity and a test for GRB. Ideally, national co-finance would also support gender-responsive measures, such as funding gender expertise within flood management institutions or supporting local initiatives

⁴⁷ United Nations Development Programme. (2023, October 24). Green Climate Fund greenlights \$14.4 million towards strengthening flood resilience in Bosnia and Herzegovina [Press release]. UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina. <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/green-climate-fund-greenlights-144-million-towards-strengthening-flood-resilience-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

⁴⁸ United Nations Development Programme. (2023, June 19). *Scaling up climate resilient flood risk management in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Environmental and social assessment report and environmental and social management framework* (Annex VI(b), GCF Funding Proposal FP-UNDP-20230616-6360). https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-09/environmental_and_social_assessment_report.pdf

⁴⁹ United Nations Development Programme. (2023, October 24). Green Climate Fund greenlights \$14.4 million towards strengthening flood resilience in Bosnia and Herzegovina [Press release]. UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/press-releases/green-climate-fund-greenlights-144-million-towards-strengthening-flood-resilience-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

that strengthen women’s resilience. However, the project documents do not indicate how the USD 58 million in domestic co-finance is allocated with respect to gender outcomes. Most domestic resources are assigned to infrastructure investments, such as improving hydrological monitoring, upgrading flood defences and modernising forecasting systems. These are gender-neutral on paper unless accompanied by targeted measures.

From a GRB perspective, the key question is whether domestic public expenditure incorporates mechanisms to reduce gender disparities, such as funding inclusive community participation processes or supporting the collection of sex-disaggregated risk data. At present, there is no evidence that BiH’s domestic climate finance under this project is gender-tagged, which highlights a broader gap in mainstreaming gender into national climate budgets.

On the positive side, the GCF grant portion does fund some specific gender-responsive inputs. In the flood project, GCF resources will support “soft” measures (policy improvements, training, community engagement) alongside the big capital investments. These activities include stakeholder engagement processes designed to reach vulnerable groups, awareness and training efforts, and improvements to community-level risk communication. UNDP, as the Accredited Entity, also applies an internal gender policy requiring that project budgets allocate resources for gender mainstreaming and for implementing the Gender Action Plan. This ensures that at least a portion of the project’s financed activities directly supports gender-responsive implementation.

The Low-Carbon Public Buildings project in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a GCF grant of USD 17.346 million, alongside approximately USD 105 million in co-finance from government and other sources. The core aim is to retrofit public buildings for energy efficiency and fuel switching. While the bulk of funding is directed toward infrastructure and technology upgrades, the project also incorporates gender considerations: a Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan were developed, recognising that many users of public buildings (such as schools and hospitals) are women, and emphasising women’s role as beneficiaries of improved building conditions. Nevertheless, publicly available documentation does not clearly demonstrate how the larger domestic co-finance portion is gender-tagged or how budget lines are designated specifically for women’s participation or gender-targeted benefits. This underlines a recurring challenge in the region: substantial public investment presents a strong basis for change, but without explicit gender-budgeting mechanisms there is a risk that co-financed funds may reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them.

Gender-Targeted Activities and Benefits: In BiH, the flood management project contains a mix of infrastructure and soft measures; the latter are where most gender-targeted activities lie. One of the project’s outcomes explicitly aims to ensure “*vulnerable communities in BiH including women, children, disabled and elderly are better protected from climate-induced floods*”⁵⁰. That said, FP216 includes targeted gender-responsive actions: tailored flood early warning systems to reach women in rural areas, disaster-preparedness training for women’s groups, and livelihood grants for women-headed households. Its monitoring framework disaggregates indicators by sex and sets concrete targets. For instance, ensuring that at least 40% of direct beneficiaries are women, and tracking participation in flood risk committees⁵¹. Likewise, the Scaling-up Investment in Low-Carbon Public Buildings project on public buildings retrofitting explicitly identifies women and children as key beneficiaries and reports outcomes with gender-disaggregated data. For example, as of 2023, over 59,000 women, slightly over 50% of beneficiaries, were reached, with 30% female participation in energy awareness campaigns as one of the project activities.

⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). Scaling up climate resilient flood risk management in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNDP Climate Change Adaptation. <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/projects/scaling-climate-resilient-flood-risk-management-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

⁵¹ United Nations Development Programme. (2023, November 24). FP216: Scaling up climate resilient flood risk management in Bosnia and Herzegovina (GCF Funding Proposal v.3.0, Decision B.37/12).

Together, these practices align with Green Climate Fund’s Gender Policy and GRB principles by embedding gender in both implementation and measurement. However, they remain the exception rather than the norm, underlining the need to institutionalize gender roles beyond project-based consultation.

Monitoring & Results: The FP216 project’s monitoring framework signals a gender-sensitive approach by committing to include women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly among the target vulnerable communities. According to the Gender Action Plan, sex-disaggregated data will be collected for stakeholder engagement, training, and community-based flood risk systems. The project also emphasises women’s meaningful participation in local flood governance and early warning design. While specific numerical targets (such as participation quotas or exact numbers of women beneficiaries) are not publicly detailed, the project documents articulate the intent to track women’s involvement and to monitor inclusion in decision-making structures. In parallel, the FP051 public buildings project incorporated sex-disaggregated beneficiary data and identified women and children as key user groups, though publicly available documentation does not specify full breakdowns of jobs created for women or benchmarks for participation.

These practices reflect a shift toward embedding gender in monitoring and evaluation frameworks in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s GCF-funded climate investments. The next step will be transparent public reporting of sex-disaggregated outcomes and linking monitoring data back into national reporting systems so that gender-responsive budgeting becomes standard rather than exceptional.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: EVIDENCE-BASED CONCLUSIONS	
1.	FP051's 2023 execution data (≥59,000 women reached, >50% of beneficiaries; 30% female campaign participation) is the only partial gender budget execution evidence in this entire regional portfolio. It establishes that UNDP's GAP implementation can deliver gender results even when 86% of total funding carries no gender conditions.
2.	The structural problem, GCF conditions applying to 14-20% of total project cost while 80-86% of domestic co-financing is gender-unconditioned is BiH's primary GRB gap and must be named as a systemic finding, not a project-level shortcoming.
3.	FP216's ≥40% female beneficiary target is a concrete accountability benchmark. It is achievable on the evidence of FP051, but will only represent genuine gender-responsive investment if the monitoring framework distinguishes passive flood-protection beneficiaries from active gender-targeted programme participants.
4.	The USD 57.6M of FP216 co-financing flows to flood infrastructure (barriers, monitoring, forecasting) with no documented gender tagging. Genuine GRB would require at minimum: (a) gender-responsive siting consultations for flood defences, (b) gender-accessible design standards for early warning infrastructure, (c) sex-disaggregated vulnerability mapping to guide investment prioritisation.
5.	The 2025/2026 Annual Performance Report for FP216 will be the first opportunity to compare planned versus executed gender activities and beneficiary counts. Its publication and the clarity of its sex-disaggregated reporting should be monitored and cited in future GBWN assessments.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro does not currently have a single-country GCF full project, but it participates in several multi-country GCF programmes and has made extensive use of GCF readiness support to advance climate planning. The country operates within a solid legal framework for gender equality and has introduced gender-responsive budgeting within its public finance system, including requirements for gender impact assessments in annual ministerial budget submissions. The key GCF-related initiative in Montenegro is the **National Adaptation Plan (NAP) support project** (a readiness grant approved in 2020). This project, “*Enhancing Montenegro’s capacity to integrate climate change risks into planning*,” explicitly set out to strengthen institutional frameworks and included as one of its three main outcomes “*an enhanced evidence base for designing gender-sensitive adaptation solutions*”⁵². This shows that from the outset, gender was mainstreamed in the country’s adaptation planning.

The NAP readiness project emphasises integrating gender considerations into adaptation planning. It includes a planned review of vulnerabilities in sectors such as water, health, agriculture and tourism, and aims to develop gender-sensitive adaptation goals, targets and indicators for priority sectors. The project documentation indicates collaboration with gender-equality institutions and envisages alignment with national gender policies. While sectoral vulnerability assessments have been conducted, publicly available documents note that data for vulnerable groups, including on gender, remains incomplete. The project is therefore laying the groundwork for future adaptation planning documents in Montenegro to more explicitly reflect gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and adaptation needs.

In terms of public finance resourcing, Montenegro’s climate adaptation planning project focuses on institutional development rather than large capital investments. The NAP Readiness project incorporates gender-responsive budgeting by allocating resources for capacity building, stakeholder consultation, and gender-sensitive training. Gender-inclusivity is a core cross-cutting theme of the project, with training programmes and institutional support aimed at enabling future adaptation financing to reflect gender considerations. While the project documentation indicates that gender-sensitive practices are being mainstreamed into planning and finance mechanisms, public sources do not always detail the specific budget lines or require that each feasibility study embed gender analysis as a formal condition.

Project Mini-Sheet: Enhancing Montenegro’s Capacity to Integrate Climate Change Risks into Planning (NAP Readiness)

PROJECT TYPE	GCF Readiness Grant (100% GCF-funded, no co-financing)
Implementing entity	UNDP Montenegro
Implementation period	October 2020 - October 2025 (60 months; completed)
Total budget (planned)	USD 1,995,605
GCF contribution	USD 1,995,605 (100%, as readiness grants require no co-financing)
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Gender as cross-cutting theme; no standalone gender line. Gender equality one of three explicit project outcomes.

⁵² Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). Enhancing Montenegro’s capacity to integrate climate change risks into planning. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/enhancing-montenegro-s-capacity-integrate-climate-change-risks-planning>

GAP BUDGET (executed)	CONFIRMED IMPLEMENTED: Independent project evaluation con-firms gender and human-rights approaches systematically applied. Women's participation documented as substantial across all project activities. Specific activity-level gender expenditure not separately reported.
GENDER MARKER	GEN 2 (UNDP system) - project consistently promoted gender equality; gender equality was a significant but not sole objective

BUDGET ANALYSIS: THE REGION'S ONLY COMPLETE PLANNED-VS-EXECUTED PICTURE

Montenegro's completed project full disbursement profile, from zero in Year 1 to a peak of USD 578,556 in Year 5 before close-out shows a classic back-loaded implementation pattern typical of NAP processes. Analytical products (vulnerability assessments, adaptation goals, sectoral indicators) take time to develop and validate and only once they are complete can capacity-building and institutional coordination activities proceed at scale. This explains why 52% of total disbursements occurred in the final two full implementation years (2023-2024) despite the project having been active since 2020.

Total disbursement of USD 1,644,545 against a planned budget of USD 1,995,605 represents **82.4% execution**. The USD 351,060 underspend is not a performance failure, but rather reflects a reflection of consolidated activities and adjusted consultation formats. The UNDP Final Evaluation confirms all core outcomes were achieved. For GRB purposes, the critical finding is that the project's GEN 2 gender marker was validated through the evaluation: gender and human-rights approaches were **systematically applied**, not ceremonially cited. Women's participation was described as 'substantial' across all project activities.

What the disbursement data cannot tell us and what the evaluation does not provide is what share of the USD 1.64M was spent on gender-specific activities versus gender-mainstreamed general activities. Because gender was a cross-cutting theme rather than a budget line, the financial disaggregation is not available. This is a transparency gap in readiness reporting standards that applies equally to Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Moldova's readiness engagements. It does not diminish the achievement, but it means the planned-versus-executed comparison remains qualitative (outcomes achieved) rather than quantitative (gender spend tracked against gender budget estimate).

Governance and participation: Montenegro's NAP project strengthened national climate governance by revitalising the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSA) and its working groups under the General Secretariat of the Government, and by clarifying procedures for integrating adaptation into national and sectoral policies. The project placed strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement, involving government institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector, and providing capacity-building to enhance their roles in adaptation planning. Gender and human-rights considerations were treated as cross-cutting issues: the project carried out gender-focused climate impact analyses in key sectors, promoted the use of gender-disaggregated data, and implemented communication and training activities that raised awareness of gender issues in climate adaptation while ensuring substantial participation of women across project activities⁵³. Together, these governance and participation arrangements have created a more structured institutional platform for integrating gender considerations into future adaptation decision-making and climate finance planning in Montenegro.

⁵³ Novović, T., & Simonović, A. (2024, June). Final evaluation of the project "Enhancing Montenegro's capacity to integrate climate change risks into planning": National Adaptation Plan (NAP) project (UNDP-PIMS ID: 6079, GCF ID: MNE-RS-002). United Nations Development Programme. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/23549>

Gender-targeted activities: As a readiness initiative, Montenegro's NAP project did not implement local adaptation measures but instead focused on strengthening the planning and institutional environment. Within this scope, the project generated several gender-focused outputs. It supported sector-specific analytical work and the development of gender-sensitive adaptation goals, targets and indicators for priority sectors, helping ministries understand how to integrate gender considerations into future adaptation planning. The project also delivered training and awareness-raising activities on gender and climate, ensuring that civil servants and technical staff gained exposure to gender-responsive approaches in adaptation and public finance. These outputs do not directly deliver services to citizens but lay down institutional foundations that will shape how future climate projects, whether nationally funded or GCF-financed, address gender disparities.

In addition, Montenegro's engagement in a multi-country GCF program - the Global Subnational Climate Fund (SnCF) - potentially brings some gender-targeted benefits. The SnCF (FP152/FP151) is a fund for green city projects which Montenegro can access for municipal investments. This program comes with a gender investment framework requiring that any city project (e.g a sustainable transport or energy efficiency project) must demonstrate how it benefits women or vulnerable groups (for instance, a project improving public transport must discuss women's safety and accessibility). Montenegro's inclusion in this fund means its cities will have to apply those criteria. Although no SnCF sub-project has been executed in Montenegro yet, the structure will enforce gender-targeted considerations, effectively transferring GRB principles to the local level. In summary, Montenegro's GCF-related activities, while preparatory, are highly gender-targeted in building the enabling environment - from guides and trainings to funding criteria - all aimed at making sure that when climate adaptation and mitigation projects roll out, they inherently address gender disparities.

Monitoring & Evaluation: In the context of readiness and planning support, monitoring is about tracking progress in capacity and policy changes. Montenegro's NAP project set specific indicators like: *number of policies/plans revised to integrate gender considerations, establishment of a functional cross-sector coordination mechanism for adaptation with gender in its terms of reference, and percentage of stakeholders in consultations who are women.* The Project's gender marker was rated GEN 2, which indicates that even though gender equality was not the sole focus, the project consistently promoted gender equality⁵⁴.

Monitoring under Montenegro's NAP Readiness project focuses on institutional progress and the integration of gender considerations into adaptation planning processes. The project's evaluation confirms that gender and human-rights approaches were systematically applied, with substantial participation of women across project activities and training. As a readiness initiative, the project tracks process-level indicators, such as strengthened coordination mechanisms, improved sectoral assessments, and increased institutional capacity to consider gender issues in adaptation planning, rather than community-level adaptation outcomes. These monitoring practices contribute to broader national reporting on climate change by documenting how gender has been addressed in planning, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Although the observable impact on communities will emerge only once full-scale adaptation measures are implemented, the readiness project has created the institutional foundations for gender-responsive monitoring in Montenegro's future climate actions.

⁵³ *ibid*

NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia does not yet have an approved single-country GCF project, but it has been actively involved in GCF multi-country programs and has utilized GCF readiness support to prepare a pipeline of climate projects. As such, the assessment for North Macedonia centers on how gender-responsive budgeting principles feature in these preparatory and indirect engagements. North Macedonia has a strong formal commitment to GRB - it was one of the early adopters of gender-responsive budgeting in the region, and by 2021 the Ministry of Finance included annual Gender Budget Statements in the national budget process⁵⁵. The country's overarching climate policy, its Enhanced NDC⁵⁶ and its upcoming Low-Carbon Development Strategy, both acknowledge gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting principles.

Quality of Gender Analysis: North Macedonia's GCF readiness engagements demonstrate a clear commitment to integrating gender considerations in early climate planning. The GCF Readiness project "Improving resilience in the Republic of North Macedonia by integrating adaptation into planning processes" (approved 2023, implemented by UNDP for 2024-2027) explicitly requires gender-balanced consultations and special attention to gender and inclusion of vulnerable groups throughout planning and decision-making processes. This ensures that women participate in identifying climate risks and adaptation priorities at both national and local levels.

The country benefits from strong gender data availability, supported by the State Statistical Office and the Country Gender Equality Profile (UN Women/GIZ). These sources confirm structural gender gaps relevant for climate action⁵⁷. Most notably, that rural women have very low levels of land ownership, typically cited as around 4% of total agricultural landowners, which restricts their access to agricultural resources, credit, and climate-support schemes. These national data serve as a crucial analytical foundation for climate projects that target agriculture, rural development, or natural resource management. In Addition, North Macedonia's Third Biennial Climate Report was one of the first to include a section on gender in mitigation, tracking metrics such as the share of women in ministerial positions relevant for climate change, percentage of female's share in the decision-making positions in energy companies, gender breakdown of the labour force in the Energy producers, etc.⁵⁸

A second GCF Readiness project "Support the decarbonization process of North Macedonia through integrated management of forest fires and strengthening climate information sharing" (approved in 2025, implemented by FAO) focuses on institutional and technical strengthening. The project documentation does not include a published gender assessment, but the project is required to comply with the **GCF Gender Policy**, meaning that gender analysis will be incorporated during the development of operational plans and future climate project pipelines.

Project Mini-Sheet 1: Improving Resilience by Integrating Adaptation into Planning (GCF Readiness / UNDP)

PROJECT TYPE	GCF Readiness Grant (100% GCF-funded)
Implementing entity	UNDP
Approval	September 2024

⁵⁵ UNECE. (2024). Report Of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the results of the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly (2000) - Beijing +30. <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/North%20Macedonia-Report.pdf>

⁵⁶ UNFCCC. (2022). Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution by the Republic of North Macedonia. <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Macedonian%20enhanced%20NDC%20%28002%29.pdf>

⁵⁷ UN Women. (2023). Gender Equality Profile: North Macedonia. <https://www.scribd.com/document/816413205/unw-cgep-nmk-eng-web>

⁵⁸ Macedonian GENDER and CLIMATE CHANGE INDICATORS. (2020). <https://api.klimatskipromeni.mk/data/rest/file/download/07015e39ea890385d9fb9786be635fa574f1313f56f64879be43002c9a8f6b7c.pdf>

Implementation period	2024 - 2027 (3 years)
Total budget	USD 1,946,505
GCF contribution	USD 1,946,505 (100%)
Co-financing	None
Key gender mandates (from proposal)	Gender-balanced consultations throughout all planning stages; full gender analysis across 5 sectors (agriculture, transport, water, forestry and cultural heritage); ≥50% women in NAP validation work-shop; sex-disaggregated data collection in all monitoring activities; gender considerations integrated into NAP document as formal requirement
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Gender as cross-cutting requirement; no standalone gender budget line
GAP BUDGET (executed)	NOT YET AVAILABLE. Project in implementation. No APR published yet.

Project Mini-Sheet 2: Support to Decarbonization via Forest Fires Management and Climate Information (GCF Readiness / FAO)

PROJECT TYPE	GCF Readiness Grant (100% GCF-funded)
Implementing entity	FAO
Approval	2025
Implementation period	2025 - 2027
Total budget	900,677
GCF contribution	Readiness grant
GENDER STATUS	No published gender assessment yet. GCF Gender Policy compliance mandatory; gender analysis will be required during inception phase per FAO's accreditation conditions.
GAP BUDGET	Not yet published

BUDGET ANALYSIS: THE STRONGEST LEGISLATIVE FOUNDATION, NO CAPITAL EXECUTION YET

North Macedonia's USD 1.95M UNDP readiness grant is comparable in scale and structure to Montenegro's completed grant, providing a reference point for expected disbursement patterns. Based on Montenegro's experience, the typical disbursement arc would be: near-zero in Year 1 (inception), gradual build in Years 2-3, with the bulk of spending in the final year before close-out. Against a 3-year timeline, this implies most substantive gender activities (sector analyses, consultation processes, indicator development) will be concentrated in 2026.

The legislatively significant point is that North Macedonia's **2022 Organic Budget Law formally incorporated GRB into the budgetary system**, following over a decade of GRB piloting. Ministry of Finance annual Gender Budget Statements have been required since 2021. This creates a direct pathway: if the adaptation priorities identified in the NAP readiness process are incorporated into the climate-relevant budget programmes of line ministries, North Macedonia could become the first country in this portfolio to produce a national climate budget programme with mandatory gender reporting. The readiness project's mandate to integrate gender considerations into NAP documents and sector plans is not an isolated requirement but a potential trigger for GRB application at the national budget level.

The 4% female agricultural landownership figure documented in the readiness proposal's gender analysis is the most specific, quantified gender vulnerability baseline in any readiness project in the regional portfolio. It should function as the anchor indicator for North Macedonia's adaptation monitoring: if the NAP process does not address this structural constraint, it will have failed on its own terms.

Governance and Participation: North Macedonia has taken a highly collaborative approach to GCF engagement, which has opened space for gender-inclusive participation. The National Designated Authority (NDA), housed within the Office of the Prime Minister, coordinates climate finance programming and works with line ministries, local authorities, and civil society organisations. As part of the GCF Readiness project "Improving resilience in the Republic of North Macedonia by integrating adaptation into planning processes" the government is required to conduct a gender-balanced stakeholder consultation process throughout all planning stages, ensuring that both women and men participate in identifying climate risks and priorities.

The readiness proposal also states that stakeholder engagement must "*pay special attention to environmental, social and gender issues, particularly to the situation of vulnerable populations, including women and men.*" This requirement mainstreams gender considerations into consultation formats, selection of participants, data collection, and the adaptation planning workflow. The document further emphasises that women's and men's needs differ across climate-impacted sectors, including transport, water, and agriculture, and that consultations should reflect these differentiated vulnerabilities. Collectively, these provisions show that gender-responsive participation is a formal requirement embedded in the country's GCF readiness governance structure. This creates an institutional pathway for women, gender experts, and vulnerable groups to influence future GCF project pipelines and climate investment decisions.

Gender-Targeted Activities and Benefits: North Macedonia's gender-targeted benefits under GCF engagement currently arise through readiness processes rather than investment projects. The GCF readiness proposal "*Improving resilience in the Republic of North Macedonia by integrating adaptation into planning processes*" includes a full gender analysis covering agriculture, transport, water, and health sectors, identifying gender-differentiated vulnerabilities such as women's limited land ownership (10–12% of agricultural holdings) and disproportionate mobility and care burdens.

The readiness grant mandates gender-balanced consultations, targeted inclusion of women and vulnerable groups, and the integration of gender considerations into national adaptation planning tools and sector priorities. These preparatory actions constitute the primary gender-targeted benefits currently attributable to GCF engagement: strengthened gender-responsive planning, improved institutional capacity for gender analysis, and the establishment of requirements for future GCF projects to include gender-responsive design, implementation, and monitoring measures.

Monitoring & Evaluation: North Macedonia’s GCF readiness activities integrate gender into monitoring and evaluation through the requirements set out in the Readiness proposal “Improving resilience in the Republic of North Macedonia by integrating adaptation into planning processes.” The document mandates that stakeholder engagement, capacity-building outputs, and adaptation planning processes must be monitored with attention to gender inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups. The proposal also requires the collection of sex-disaggregated information where relevant. This includes monitoring: participation of women and men in consultations, representation of women and men in training activities, and integration of gender considerations into adaptation planning documents and sector analyses.

These obligations align with the GCF Gender Policy, which requires readiness projects to track gender-responsive actions and document gender integration in institutional strengthening processes. At the national level, North Macedonia has begun incorporating gender considerations into broader climate reporting. In its latest Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the UNFCCC, the country includes references to gender dimensions in climate mitigation and adaptation, reflecting increased institutional awareness of gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities. This strengthens the national evidence base that future GCF projects will rely on.

NORTH MACEDONIA: EVIDENCE-BASED CONCLUSIONS	
1.	North Macedonia has the strongest domestic GRB legislative infrastructure in the portfolio (Organic Budget Law, mandatory ministerial Gender Budget Statements), but this infrastructure has not yet been applied to climate-related budget programmes. The readiness project is the primary vehicle for triggering this application.
2.	The 4% female agricultural landownership baseline is the most concrete, quantified gender vulnerability indicator in any readiness project in this region. If future NAP monitoring fails to track progress against this figure, the quality of the gender analysis will not have been translated into accountability.
3.	The ≥50% women in NAP validation workshop requirement is a governance benchmark that can be tracked. Whether it is met should be confirmed in the project's first progress report and cited as evidence of the gender mandate's operational implementation (or not).
4.	No execution data exists for either readiness project. The 2027 completion of the UNDP project is the next evaluation point.
5.	North Macedonia is the country in this portfolio best positioned to link GCF readiness investment to national GRB at the budget programme level. This potential has not yet been realised. Realising it requires a specific mechanism: a formal working group between the NAP technical team and the Ministry of Finance's GRB unit.

SERBIA

Serbia has made notable progress in integrating gender-responsive budgeting into its public finance system over the past years, and these efforts are reflected in its GCF-funded activities. Serbia has one approved single-country GCF project - **Enhancing the Resilience of Serbian Forests (FOREST Invest)™** (FP260, approved 2025), and participates in several multi-country GCF programs (such as the EBRD Green Cities Facility and the Greening Financial Systems program). Serbia's policy context is favorable: the Law on Gender Equality (2021) mandates the inclusion of gender perspectives in all policies and budgets, and Serbia is considered as one of regional leaders in institutionalizing GRB (all ministries are required to produce gender budget statements).

Project Mini-Sheet: Enhancing the Resilience of Serbian Forests – FOREST Invest (FP260)

IMPLEMENTING ENTITY	FAO (Accredited Entity); Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; public enterprises Srbijašume and Vojvodinašume (national executing entities)
Approval	2025
Implementation period	2025 – 2032
Total project budget	USD 84,000,000
GCF contribution (grant)	USD 25,000,000 – 30% of total
Government co-financing	USD 59,000,000 – 70% of total Government of Serbia (Ministry of Agriculture, Srbijašume, Vojvodinašume). Directed to: forest restoration (7,000 ha), conversion of degraded low forests to high forests (51,000 ha), agroforestry systems, energy plantations (1,000 ha of fast-growing species on abandoned land), protective shelterbelts.
Expected climate impact	8.4 million tonnes CO ₂ equivalent reduced; ~3 million people indirectly benefited
Key gender targets	≥60% of women in sectors of interest covered by training activities; ≥30% of women landowners/forest owners engaged in project investments; ≥30% of women employed in relevant sectors engaged in project activities; ≥50% of women reached by awareness and behavioural change activities
GAP BUDGET (planned)	Embedded across project components with an indicative total GAP budget of USD 4,676,378. Dedicated Gender Specialist budgeted within project management. This is the only explicitly named gender-specific budget line in the publicly available GAP documentation.
GAP BUDGET (executed)	NOT YET AVAILABLE. Project signed February 2025, inception workshop completed. First APR expected early 2026.
Gender governance innovation	Gender focal points established within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Srbijašume and Vojvodinašume, coordinated with the project Gender Specialist who provides permanent gender expertise to all project team members and partners. SEAH/GBV training mandatory for all staff and partners (FAO standard).

BUDGET ANALYSIS: THE 30/70 SPLIT AND SERBIA'S LEGAL LEVERAGE

FOREST Invest's USD 84M total budget presents a better GCF-to-co-financing ratio (30%/70%) than BiH's projects (14-20%/80-86%), but the same structural problem persists: the government's **USD 59M co-financing (70% of total)** is directed to forest restoration and agroforestry operations with no documented gender conditions, while gender-active activities are concentrated in the GCF-funded 30% (USD 25M). The USD 59M in physical forestry operations will determine who has access to sustainable forest management opportunities, who benefits from improved biomass supply chains, and who is included or excluded from forest governance, yet none of these outcomes is currently subject to gender accountability measures.

Here Serbia's domestic legal framework creates leverage that exists nowhere else in this portfolio. **The Law on Gender Equality (2021)** mandates gender perspectives in all policies and budgets. The **Budget System Law** requires line ministries to report on programme performance including gender impact where relevant. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management is required to produce an annual Gender Budget Statement. The FOREST Invest co-financing flows through this ministry's budget. **In principle, the government's USD 59M co-financing contribution to FOREST Invest should therefore be subject to the ministry's Gender Budget Statement reporting.** Whether this legal pathway is activated - whether the 2025 and 2026 ministerial budget reports actually reference FOREST Invest co-financing in their gender impact sections is the single most important GRB accountability question for this project.

The GAP sets differentiated targets across activity types rather than a single uniform benchmark: 60% of women in relevant sectors to be reached through training, 30% of women landowners to be engaged in investments, 30% of women in relevant institutions to participate in project activities, and 50% of women to be reached through awareness campaigns. A dedicated Gender Specialist is budgeted within project management as part of an indicative total GAP expenditure of USD 4,676,378. The Gender Specialist represents the only individually named gender-specific budget line, but the total GAP budget, distributed across all project components constitutes a more substantial gender accountability commitment than the single salary line previously suggested.

Quality of Gender Analysis: The **FOREST Invest** project - aiming to promote sustainable forest management, energy security for vulnerable communities, and carbon sequestration - included a comprehensive Gender Assessment. This GA is exemplary in its depth, examining gender roles and disparities in Serbia's forestry and energy sectors. It highlighted rural gender dynamics: in many fuelwood-dependent communities, men are typically responsible for wood cutting and selling, whereas women manage the household consumption of firewood (and suffer health impacts from indoor smoke). The GA drew on a 2020-21 Country Gender Assessment by FAO ⁵⁹, which highlighted **"significant gender gaps in rural areas of Serbia across diverse dimensions, including access to assets, economic participation, roles in and gains from agricultural production, the exercise of a range of welfare rights, political participation, access to social services, lifestyles and resilience to climate change and emergencies"**.

The GA also flagged that outward migration from rural areas is higher among women, as many young women leave in search of jobs, leaving behind older populations and men, which affects the labour availability for forestry activities and the social fabric of communities ⁶⁰. By mapping

⁵⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2025, January). Environmental and social management framework: Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests to ensure energy security of the most vulnerable while contributing to their livelihoods and carbon sequestration (FOREST Invest) (Annex 6, GCP/SRB/008/GCF). https://upravazasume.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Annex-6-ESMF_English_final.pdf

⁶⁰ ibid

these context-specific issues, the GA ensured the project design is sensitive to them. The **gender analysis** in FOREST Invest is evidence-based, specific to the project's sectors and target regions, and it clearly informs the project's interventions. Additionally, it aligns with GCF policy by referencing how the project supports both GCF's objectives and Serbia's national gender and climate commitments (Serbia's National Climate Adaptation Plan and its National Gender Equality Strategy). Another demonstration of analysis quality is the identification of potential project risks related to gender, for instance, acknowledging that without deliberate measures, the shift to sustainable forestry could marginalize women if it leads to mechanization (jobs lost by manual labourers, some of whom are women in nursery roles). In sum, this project shows **strong gender analysis**, providing a solid foundation for the other dimensions of GRB.

Governance and Participation: Governance of the FOREST Invest project involves multiple stakeholders - the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, public forest enterprises, local governments, and community associations - as well as international partners (FAO). Gender-responsive governance means these structures need to be inclusive and informed by gender perspectives. Serbia's project made deliberate moves in this direction. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) includes a representative of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality (Serbia's high-level governmental gender mechanism). This representative's role is to ensure oversight of the project's gender commitments and facilitate coordination with other national gender initiatives. Including them is significant, it formally brings the voice of the national gender institutional machinery into climate project governance - a practice not commonly seen in earlier projects. At the working level, the project set up a **Gender Focal Team** - comprising gender officers from the Forestry Directorate, representatives of women's associations in rural areas, and the project's own Gender Specialist - to participate in planning and monitoring meetings. This team feeds into project decision-making by reviewing annual work plans from a gender perspective and suggesting course corrections.

Another governance aspect is stakeholder participation at the community level. The project introduced measures to ensure **women participate in community consultations and benefit-sharing decisions**. In practice, this means when Village Forest Committees are formed or strengthened (to manage communal forest areas), the project requires that at least 30% of committee members are women⁶¹. In some conservative rural areas, this quota is a breakthrough - as forestry committees were historically all-male. The project supported training for women committee members to confidently fulfill their roles.

The project also collaborates with civil society: one partner is the **Women's Association of Rural Development**, which is helping mobilize women to engage in project activities and voice their needs. The presence of civil society in project governance - even if not in the top PSC, they are in advisory groups helps hold the project accountable to grassroots women. An example of participatory governance in action was during project design: consultations in 50+ localities were held, and "*engagement with women and women-focused organizations... to understand the challenges and barriers they face*" was explicitly undertaken⁶². Women highlighted issues like needing more efficient wood stoves to reduce smoke (health concern) and wanting a say in how community forests are used. These inputs were integrated (the project includes a component distributing improved cookstoves to vulnerable households, and ensures women are key recipients). In terms of broader governance, Serbia's climate change governance framework is evolving with more inclusion.

However, some challenges remain. Forestry is still a hierarchical sector; changing attitudes at all levels will take time. Overall, Serbia's project governance model is notably gender-responsive,

⁶¹ ibid

⁶² ibid

embedding women's participation in both national and local decision-making structures related to the project. It aligns well with the GRB dimension of governance by not only counting women's seats but empowering them with information and roles, and by linking project governance with Serbia's existing gender institutional framework.

Gender-Targeted Activities and Benefits: The FOREST Invest project has a rich array of gender-targeted activities - it is in many ways designed to be transformative for women in the intersecting sectors of forestry, energy, and rural development. A core objective is to improve livelihoods and energy security of 3.6 million people, with a focus on vulnerable groups⁶³. While the project's primary objective is to enhance the resilience of Serbian forests and strengthen energy security, the design embeds explicit measures to increase women's access to information, training, and opportunities in the forestry and bioenergy sectors. These measures fall into three main categories: economic empowerment, capacity building, and social benefits, all aligned with the requirement that at least 30% of project beneficiaries are women.

Economic empowerment: The project acknowledges that rural women face structural barriers to economic participation, including limited mobility, weaker access to advisory services, and lower ownership of forest land and productive resources. In response, project activities prioritise women landowners, women-headed households and women already involved in forest-related livelihoods such as non-wood forest products, rural tourism or small-scale agricultural and forest businesses.

The Gender Assessment emphasises that these groups require targeted outreach to ensure they can access opportunities within sustainable forest management and bioenergy value chains. Project communication tools and outreach methods are therefore designed to reach women more effectively, especially in areas where digital connectivity is low and where printed advisory materials distributed through municipal offices and extension services remain the most accessible information channel.

Capacity building: Capacity development is one of the strongest gender-targeted elements of FP260. The project commits that at least 30% of all participants in technical trainings, institutional strengthening activities and operator-level capacity building must be women. This applies across all training topics, including climate-adaptive forest management, nursery production, silvicultural techniques, sustainable biomass use, monitoring and governance processes.

The Gender Assessment recognises that women often lack equal access to technical forestry knowledge, and therefore calls for deliberate measures to ensure they receive timely information on training schedules, eligibility and locations. To support their participation, the project relies on communication channels that women actually use: municipal intermediaries, agricultural and forestry advisory services, and civil society organisations active in rural areas. These adjustments aim to ensure that women can realistically attend training sessions and gain the technical competencies required to participate in forestry and bioenergy value chains on an equal footing with men.

Social benefits: The project integrates gender-responsive safeguards to ensure that women can participate safely and meaningfully in project activities. The Environmental and Social Management Framework establishes a grievance and redress mechanism that is gender-responsive and includes provisions for reporting discrimination, harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. Project staff and partners receive SEAH/GBV prevention and response training in line with FAO standards. The stakeholder engagement plan requires that women's

⁶³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). Enhancing the resilience of Serbian forests to ensure energy security of the most vulnerable while contributing to their livelihoods and carbon sequestration (FOREST Invest) [Project page]. FAO Serbia. [https://www.fao.org/serbia/areas-of-work/enhancing-the-resilience-of-serbian-forests-to-ensure-energy-security-of-the-most-vulnerable-while-contributing-to-their-livelihoods-and-carbon-sequestration-\(forest-invest\)/](https://www.fao.org/serbia/areas-of-work/enhancing-the-resilience-of-serbian-forests-to-ensure-energy-security-of-the-most-vulnerable-while-contributing-to-their-livelihoods-and-carbon-sequestration-(forest-invest)/)

participation in consultations be actively facilitated so that women can express concerns about forest governance, access to natural resources and livelihood needs. Although the project does not include household-level energy or cookstove distribution, it indirectly supports women by contributing to more reliable and sustainable biomass supply systems in rural areas, where women play an important role in managing household energy use. These combined safeguards and social measures ensure that women's safety, inclusion and voice are embedded in both project governance and day-to-day implementation.

All these targeted actions together mean that **the project is expected to significantly improve women's economic status, health, and agency in the target areas.** This reflects the principles of gender-responsive budgeting, which emphasise actionable measures that change who benefits from public spending and how those benefits are distributed. FAO's public communication on FOREST Invest notes that the initiative is expected to contribute to gender equality as a co-benefit of strengthened forest governance and improved livelihood opportunities. From a GRB perspective, Serbia's approach demonstrates a shift from gender-neutral climate programming toward interventions that intentionally address gender gaps and enable women to participate more equitably in climate-resilient development.

Monitoring & Results: The FOREST Invest project applies a structured monitoring framework that includes sex-disaggregated indicators across all people-centred results, enabling systematic tracking of both climate outcomes and gender equality outcomes. The project's results framework requires that data on beneficiaries, trainees, institutional actors and community participants be collected and reported separately for women and men. This includes targets such as ensuring that at least 30% of direct beneficiaries and at least 30% of trainees in climate-adaptive forest management and related technical areas are women. By embedding these targets in the project's core indicators, the project aligns with GCF policy requirements and with Serbia's national gender budgeting mandate.

Baseline conditions identified through the Gender Assessment, such as the very low representation of women in forest user associations, limited participation in forestry-related training, and women's concentration in informal or low-paid forest-related activities form the starting point for monitoring progress. The Gender Action Plan provides a complementary monitoring matrix, outlining responsibilities for data collection and reporting, timelines and verification sources. Annual reporting to the GCF includes updates on GAP implementation, sex-disaggregated beneficiary numbers, and progress toward the 30% participation targets in training and community forest management. The project design anticipates that if gender-related indicators fall below target, management can adjust outreach, communication channels or training formats to improve women's access, consistent with adaptive management principles in GCF projects.

The monitoring framework also supports Serbia's domestic reporting obligations. Under the Budget System Law, line ministries are required to report on programme performance, including gender impact where relevant. Because FOREST Invest is co-financed by national institutions and contributes to national forestry and adaptation objectives, its sex-disaggregated data will feed into ministerial performance reporting and into Serbia's broader monitoring of climate commitments, including NDC implementation. This link between project-level data and national policy reporting strengthens the visibility of gender outcomes within Serbia's climate policy architecture.

Overall, the project's monitoring approach is designed to generate credible, comparable data on women's participation and benefits. It combines quantitative targets with structured reporting requirements and clear institutional responsibilities, ensuring that gender results

are not incidental but systematically captured. From a GRB perspective, Serbia’s monitoring framework provides the evidence base needed to demonstrate whether climate investments are reducing gender gaps in access to training, participation in natural resource governance and opportunities within the forestry and bioenergy sectors, reinforcing the principle that gender-responsive spending leads to more effective and equitable climate outcomes.

SERBIA: EVIDENCE-BASED CONCLUSIONS	
1.	FOREST Invest has the most advanced gender governance architecture in the regional portfolio. The Coordination Body for Gender Equality on the Project Steering Committee, a dedicated Gender Focal Team, and mandatory SEAH training set a benchmark that future GCF projects in the region should replicate.
2.	The USD 59M government co-financing (70% of total) carries no documented gender conditions. However, Serbia's Law on Gender Equality and mandatory ministerial Gender Budget Statements create a legal pathway for this co-financing to be subject to gender accountability. Whether the Ministry of Agriculture's 2025-2026 Gender Budget Statements reference FOREST Invest co-financing is a concrete, trackable test of this legal leverage.
3.	The targets (beneficiaries, trainees, committee members) provide the clearest planned-vs-executed framework in any investment project in this portfolio. First data against these targets will be available in the 2026 APR.
4.	The Gender Specialist position within project management is the only named, quantifiable gender-specific budget line in the publicly available documentation for any investment project in this portfolio. Its continued funding and active role should be monitored as a proxy for the project's commitment to gender integration under implementation pressure.
5.	The mechanisation risk identified in the Gender Assessment - that sustainable forestry transitions could displace informal female labour without creating equivalent opportunities is the most sophisticated gender risk analysis in the portfolio. Whether project management actually adjusts training and outreach if female participation in technical roles falls below 30% will be the practical test of the adaptive management commitment.

MOLDOVA

Moldova, as an Eastern Partnership country with developing country status, has engaged with the GCF primarily through multi-country initiatives and readiness support, similarly to some Western Balkans countries with fewer standalone projects. Moldova’s context is characterized by high climate vulnerability (particularly in agriculture and water) and significant rural poverty, where gender inequalities persist (e.g. rural women have less access to resources and migration patterns leave many women heading households). Moldova also has an established gender-equality framework (Law on Equal Opportunities, national gender strategy) and a track record of integrating gender into national climate planning through UNDP’s Climate Promise and related adaptation initiatives. In this context, the assessment focuses on how GRB principles appear in Moldova’s preparatory work, institutional arrangements, and participation in regional GCF programmes.

Project Mini-Sheet 1: National Adaptation Plan (NAP-2) Readiness Support

PROJECT TYPE	GCF Readiness Grant (100% GCF-funded)
Implementing entity	UNDP Moldova
Approval / period	Dates to be confirmed from GCF readiness database
Budget	To be confirmed (readiness grant, USD)
Gender measures	Gender-differentiated vulnerability analysis in agriculture, health, water sectors; sex-disaggregated data system strengthening; women's organisations included in sectoral consultations; gender-sensitive adaptation goals developed for priority sectors
GAP execution	Partially complete. Process indicators tracked (women's participation in consultations documented; gender integration confirmed in sectoral assessments). Financial execution not disaggregated.

Project Mini-Sheet 2: Greening Financial Systems (FP253) – Multi-Country Programme (includes Moldova)

PROJECT TYPE	GCF Investment Project (multi-country)
Approval / period	To be confirmed
Moldova-specific allocation	To be confirmed (component of multi-country budget)
Key gender relevance for Moldova	Women-led SME access to green credit lines; gender gaps in access to climate-linked lending instruments; women's collateral constraints in financial system design
GAP execution	Not yet available

BUDGET ANALYSIS: READINESS INVESTMENT WITHOUT CAPITAL EXECUTION

Moldova's GCF portfolio does not permit a planned-versus-executed financial comparison for investment. The readiness grants document process outcomes (consultation participation, sectoral assessment quality, institutional capacity) but no disaggregated gender expenditure data. This is consistent with the pattern across all readiness grants in this portfolio.

The analytically significant feature of Moldova's situation is the demographic context that makes gender-responsive climate finance particularly urgent. Male out-migration from rural Moldova has left a significant and growing share of farms managed by women, yet Moldova's agricultural advisory services, extension systems, and rural credit facilities continue to be designed around male farm operators. This presents a structural mismatch between who actually manages the climate-vulnerable agricultural sector and who the support systems are built for. The NAP-2 readiness process explicitly documents this mismatch, and it should be the primary gender lens through which Moldova's future GCF investment proposals are evaluated.

Moldova's participation in FP253 (Greening Financial Systems) introduces a dimension absent from all other projects in this portfolio: gender gaps in access to green finance. The programme examines women-led SMEs' constrained access to climate-linked lending instruments, identifying collateral ownership, credit history gaps, and financial literacy as specific barriers. This supply-side gender analysis, examining how financial institutions must change their lending criteria is more sophisticated than the demand-side vulnerability analyses that characterise most other gender assessments in the region, and it provides a template for future Moldova-specific GCF project design.

Quality of Gender Analysis: Gender analysis in Moldova's climate finance activities is strongest within GCF readiness processes and multi-country concept development. Under Moldova's NAP-2 readiness support, adaptation planning in sectors such as agriculture, health, and water incorporated gender-differentiated considerations where data were available. National institutions working on gender equality reviewed elements of these sector assessments, ensuring consistency with Moldova's gender policies and strategic priorities. These inputs have informed subsequent updates to Moldova's adaptation strategies, where gender-differentiated climate vulnerabilities, such as rural women's constrained access to agricultural inputs or the differentiated health risks linked to heat and extreme weather are more explicitly recognized.

Beyond the NAP process, Moldova's participation in regional GCF initiatives has further strengthened the analytical base. In the "Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Semi-Arid Regions" multi-country concept (led by ADA), the gender assessment highlights how drought, water scarcity, and rural out-migration affect women and men differently particularly the pressure placed on women who increasingly manage farms. Likewise, Moldova's involvement in the "Greening Financial Systems" programme (FP253) brings attention to gender gaps in access to green finance: women-led SMEs face lower collateral ownership and tighter credit constraints, which has implications for how climate-related lending instruments should be structured. Together, these analyses demonstrate that Moldova's work with GCF readiness and multi-country concepts is grounded in gender-differentiated evidence, even though the mitigation sectors (e.g. energy efficiency, transport) still show more limited gender analysis compared to adaptation-heavy areas.

Governance and Participation: Moldova's climate finance governance framework is led by the Ministry of Environment as the NDA and supported by the National Commission on Climate Change (NCCC). In recent years, the Commission has broadened its membership to include a wider set of ministries and civil society actors, and gender institutions have been involved in reviewing climate-relevant policy documents through the NAP process. This reflects a gradual shift towards more gender-responsive governance. Moldova's approach has also emphasized inclusive consultations in national and regional adaptation planning: UNDP-supported readiness reports document that women's organizations and rural women stakeholders contributed to consultations shaping adaptation priorities, which strengthens the social grounding of sector adaptation measures.

At the project governance level, Moldova's involvement in multi-country climate finance initiatives has required the inclusion of gender focal points or social inclusion specialists within national executing teams. For example, urban climate-planning processes associated with the EBRD Green Cities programme in Chisinau incorporated social and gender considerations into diagnostics and planning (with implications for accessibility, mobility, and safety). These arrangements show a gradual internalization of gender perspectives in governance, although the extent of empowerment varies across institutions. Capacity-building for the NDA and line

ministries under readiness support has encouraged more systematic review of sex-disaggregated data and stakeholder participation in project proposals, reinforcing governance processes that align with GRB principles.

Gender-Targeted Activities and Benefits: Because Moldova has not yet implemented a major single-country GCF project, many gender-targeted benefits are anticipated through the design of pipeline projects or via smaller scale pilots. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting how gender-targeted measures are built into what Moldova is planning or doing through multi-country efforts. For instance, Moldova is part of the ADA-led project “Climate Change Adaptation: Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in semi-arid ecosystems to increase rural resilience in Moldova”, on ecosystem-based adaptation targeting its southern drought-prone region.

That project, as designed, has gender-targeted activities such as providing climate-resilient livelihood support specifically to women’s groups (e.g. helping women establish vegetable greenhouse cooperatives with water-efficient drip irrigation) and facilitating access to small grants for women farmers to invest in drought-resistant crop varieties. The rationale is that many men have left these rural areas, so empowering women who remain is key to resilience. If this project is funded, it would directly benefit hundreds of women with assets and training.

Similarly, under FP253 (Greening Financial Systems), Moldova will participate in interventions designed to reduce gender gaps in access to climate finance, such as enhanced support for women-led SMEs in accessing green credit lines. While these benefits are contingent on full project approval and implementation, the enabling environment created during readiness (guidelines, training, institutional processes) positions Moldova to deliver gender-responsive benefits once larger projects commence. Overall, the pattern in Moldova is that gender-targeted benefits are integrated into planned climate interventions - whether through capacity building, livelihood support, financial inclusion, or improved services. Many of these benefits are still on the near horizon (contingent on project approvals and funding). However, even at readiness stage, some benefits like enhanced participation and small infrastructure for women have materialized. It demonstrates Moldova’s commitment to not leave women behind in climate action, consistent with the GRB mindset that specific actions are needed to level the playing field.

Monitoring & Results: Monitoring of gender integration in Moldova’s climate finance activities is rooted in the readiness M&E framework. NAP-related reporting includes indicators on stakeholder participation (including the proportion of women in consultations), integration of gender considerations into sectoral adaptation actions, and institutional progress such as the establishment or strengthening of coordination mechanisms. Annual readiness progress reports document advancements in these areas. As part of expected outcomes under NAP-2, Moldova has also worked on strengthening data systems that will support future climate adaptation M&E, including improved availability of disaggregated information to support decision-making. While current public climate data platforms in Moldova provide limited sex-disaggregated climate impact statistics, readiness documentation indicates that improvements to knowledge systems and analytical tools are underway.

Multi-country projects involving Moldova also incorporate gender-responsive monitoring requirements. For instance, FP253 will track participation of women-led SMEs in green financing, allowing Moldova to report on how climate-related lending reaches women entrepreneurs. Moldova’s national climate reporting aligns gradually with this direction: its most recent National Communications to the UNFCCC include gender considerations in adaptation and reference linkages between gender equality and climate resilience. This creates a pathway for outcome-level monitoring as larger projects emerge. Overall, Moldova’s monitoring efforts

are oriented towards process indicators: participation, institutional capacity, integration into plans, consistent with its current phase of engagement with the GCF. These foundations are essential for future GRB application and for ensuring that once Moldova mobilizes larger climate investments, gender-responsive results can be systematically measured.

MOLDOVA: EVIDENCE-BASED CONCLUSIONS	
1.	Moldova's rural gender context, where male out-migration has created a majority of women managing farms that agricultural support systems still design for male operators is the most urgent and under-addressed gender-climate intersection in this entire portfolio. Future GCF investment design must treat this as a structural condition.
2.	FP253's analysis of gender gaps in green finance access (collateral constraints, credit history, financial literacy barriers for women-led SMEs) is the most financially sophisticated gender analysis in the regional portfolio. It should be used as a design template for Moldova's forthcoming single-country GCF investment projects.
3.	No executed gender budget data exists for Moldova's GCF portfolio. All available evidence is at the process level (consultation participation, sectoral assessment quality). This reflects Moldova's early-stage GCF engagement and should not be interpreted as a performance failure.
4.	The absence of a formal coordination mechanism between the Ministry of Environment (NDA) and the national gender equality authority is Moldova's primary institutional gap. This gap is the most tractable: establishing a standing NDA-gender authority working group is a relatively low-cost administrative action that would structurally improve all future GCF project proposals.
5.	Moldova's ADA-led ecosystem-based adaptation pipeline project (targeting southern drought-prone areas with planned grants for women farmers) and FP253's Moldova component are the two nearest-term vehicles for gender-targeted GCF investment. Their approval, design quality, and eventual execution data should be treated as Moldova's primary GRB test cases.

5. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Western Balkans and Moldova face intersecting gender and climate vulnerabilities that demand a focused needs assessment. Persistent gender inequalities in employment, incomes, and access to resources constrain women's resilience to climate change. According to 2020 data, female labour force participation in the region amounts to 45%, compared to 65% of men⁶⁴. In addition, women are concentrated in lower-paid care and service sectors, while men dominate higher-paying STEM and energy jobs⁶⁵. This economic gap implies that women have fewer assets and savings to cope with climate shocks. Apart from lower labour participation rates and lower paid jobs, women's land ownership remains modest, with 25% of female landowners in Albania and Montenegro, and 17% in Kosovo and North Macedonia, respectively⁶⁶. Limited land ownership translates to limitations in women's collateral for finance and decision-making power over resource use. Such structural disparities leave women economically and socially more vulnerable to climate impacts in the long run. Estimates in regional labour market analysis from 2018 suggest that raising women's labour force participation to match men's could increase Western Balkan GDP by around 20%⁶⁷, highlighting the scale of unrealized potential in building climate-resilient livelihoods.

Climate change has already led to increases in mean and maximum temperatures and to more frequent heatwaves and warm days in Europe, with further increases projected under continued warming⁶⁸. These impacts are not gender neutral: women and disadvantaged groups tend to be more affected by climate change through multiple dimensions including health, livelihoods and agency, while also facing specific barriers to adaptation and response⁶⁹. Elderly women, rural women and other marginalised groups often experience higher vulnerability due to limited mobility and access to early warning systems and disaster preparedness resources, which reduces their capacity to protect themselves and their families during climate events⁷⁰. Female-headed households are disproportionately affected by climate stresses and energy poverty because they typically have fewer resources and lower income security to afford adaptation measures such as housing insulation, clean energy technologies, or emergency relocation⁷¹. At the same time, men are often over-represented in physically demanding and climate-sensitive occupations such as construction, forestry and agriculture, which increases their exposure to extreme weather and environmental degradation. As a result, women tend to shoulder greater burdens in unpaid care work and subsistence activities that climate stress makes harder, while men face heightened occupational risks and pressures to migrate for work as climate impacts disrupt traditional livelihoods⁷².

⁶⁴ United Nations Development Programme & Regional Cooperation Council. (2020). Women's economic empowerment: Areas for joint actions in the Western Balkans. Regional Cooperation Council. <https://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/b958b34e34b16e1d9572d23b46501fda.pdf>

⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶ World Bank. (2020, June). Gender inclusion in productive investments in the Western Balkans (Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality Assessment). World Bank Group. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/678091593499973108/pdf/Gender-Inclusion-in-Productive-Investments-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

⁶⁷ Shehaj, E. (2022, May). Regional comparative report on women's employment in Western Balkans. Regional Cooperation Council & Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP 2). <https://www.esap.online/files/admin/docs/678a3266e62b75f96cd171b0834eff7f.pdf>

⁶⁸ Bednar-Friedl, B et al. (2022). Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Chapter 13). Cambridge University Press. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-13/>

⁶⁹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/380cef3f-b8e4-4692-bff6-49fe156f0c5d/>

⁷⁰ Fruttero, A., Halim, D., Broccolini, C., Coelho, B., Gninafon, H., & Muller, N. (2023, May). Gendered impacts of climate change: Evidence from weather shocks. <https://wrd.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WB-gendered-impacts-climate-change.pdf>

⁷¹ OECD. (2023). SIGI 2023 global report: Gender equality in times of crisis (Social Institutions and Gender Index). OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/07/sigi-2023-global-report_a65d7f7f/4607b7c7-en.pdf

⁷² *ibid*

Socio-demographic trends further compound climate vulnerabilities with gender dimensions. The Western Balkans have ageing populations and high rural depopulation, leaving many older women isolated in rural areas with weak social safety nets. In climate emergencies, these women are less likely to receive timely assistance. Gender-based violence and social norms also play a role - in post-disaster settings globally, women often face increased violence and barriers to relief access. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Western Balkan countries score well below EU averages on the Gender Equality Index, especially in the domains of economic opportunity and power (e.g. average scores around 60 in work and 46 in power, versus 73 for EU-27). Moldova exhibits a similar gender inequality profile, with an index score of 61 in 2023⁷³. These figures reflect enduring gaps in employment, income, and decision-making. Such gaps directly limit women's ability to participate in and benefit from climate finance mechanisms. In short, pre-existing gender inequalities – in education, health, political voice, and economic status - shape who is most vulnerable to climate change and who can capitalize on green investments. From a climate standpoint, the region's adaptation and mitigation needs have clear gender dimensions. Women's traditional roles related to household energy, water and food management often mean they possess context-specific knowledge of local ecosystems and play important roles in community-level adaptation practices⁷⁴. Women in rural areas are central to natural resources management and subsistence agriculture, which positions them as critical actors in livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental conditions⁷⁵. However, women's contributions and needs are frequently under-recognized in climate policy design and planning processes across contexts, contributing to gaps in equitable adaptation outcomes. A persistent gap concerns the limited availability of sex-disaggregated data in climate-relevant sectors, as many planning and monitoring systems do not systematically collect or apply data on how impacts affect women and men differently, including in agriculture, disaster risk management and climate information services. This data gap obscures differentiated needs and can contribute to gender-blind policy and investment decisions⁷⁶. In the short term, targeted measures are therefore required to fill these information gaps and to strengthen women's participation in climate-related decision-making. Women's engagement in climate consultations and project governance structures remains uneven, with limited representation of women in many climate and energy planning processes. Strengthening women's voice through targeted outreach, institutional mechanisms and inclusion in climate governance bodies is therefore a pressing need for effective and equitable climate action⁷⁷.

Medium-term issues center on economic inequality and institutional linkages. Women's lower participation in the green economy - whether in renewable energy jobs, climate-smart agriculture, or environmental science - means they risk being left out of emerging opportunities as countries invest in decarbonization. Active labour market policies and training programs focusing on women in sustainable industries can begin to close this gap. Moreover, there is a weak institutional link between the gender equality agenda and climate finance decision-making in most countries. National

⁷³ Babovic, M. (2023). Gender equality index: Measuring progress in the Western Balkans 2023 – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Publications Office of the European Union. https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20233289_PDF_MH0323262ENN_002.pdf

⁷⁴ Habtezion, S. (2016). Gender and climate change: Overview of linkages between gender and climate change (Policy Brief No. 1). United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNDP%20Linkages%20Gender%20and%20CC%20Policy%20Brief%201-WEB.pdf>

⁷⁵ Mujčinović, A., Ljumović, I., Zhllima, E., Ljubičić, M., Despotović, A., Tuna, E., Simongvska, A., Nacka, M., Janeska Stamenkovska, I., & Duffhues, T. (2025). The role of women in the rural areas in the Western Balkans. Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG RRD) & Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). <https://seerural.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/The-Role-of-Women-in-the-Rural-Areas-In-The-Western-Balkans.pdf>

⁷⁶ Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT). (2024, November). Good practices for integrating gender into climate transparency frameworks. United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). <https://climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Gender-and-Transparency.pdf>

⁷⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). Gender and climate change. <https://unfccc.int/gender/>

gender strategies exist, but they operate in parallel to climate strategies with little cross-reference. For example, climate action plans seldom include targets for women's economic empowerment or indicators tracking benefits for women. Gender focal points in ministries may not be involved in climate budgeting processes. Bridging this gap requires building gender expertise in environmental institutions and vice versa - a process that can be catalyzed by joint working groups, capacity building, and gender-responsive budgeting tools (discussed later in Section 6). Without these links, even well-funded climate projects may not translate into lasting gender equality gains.

Long-term gender needs relate to deep structural disparities. Issues such as unequal access to finance and property, underrepresentation in leadership, and social norms of care work will determine the resilience of future generations. As it was previously mentioned, women entrepreneurs in the Western Balkans face greater obstacles in accessing credit, which is critical for investing in climate-resilient technology or businesses. Women represent only about 27% of business owners in the region⁷⁸, and often run smaller enterprises with limited capital. Enhancing women's property and inheritance rights (so they can own land, homes, and equipment) is both a human rights goal and a climate resilience strategy, as ownership boosts ability to invest in adaptation and to receive compensation after disasters. Furthermore, women's limited representation in decision-making (the "power" domain of the Gender Equality Index is below 50 in most Western Balkan countries) means policies may overlook women's needs. Whether in parliament, local councils, or water user associations, increasing the share of women can lead to more inclusive climate solutions. Finally, demographic changes like migration of working-age men (common in parts of the Western Balkans) are leaving women headed households to manage farms and households alone - without targeted support, these households remain highly vulnerable to climate shocks. Any comprehensive needs assessment for climate action in the region must therefore integrate gender considerations at multiple time horizons: addressing immediate gaps (data, participation, visibility of gender in budgets), medium-term challenges (economic and institutional inequalities), and long-term transformation (empowering women as agents of climate resilience).

The Green Climate Fund requires each project to include a gender assessment that highlights context-specific gender gaps and opportunities. In practice, these assessments have brought many of the above issues to light at the project level. For example, Albania's recently approved **ALBAdapt - Climate Services for a Resilient Albania** programme (a GCF project under the Simplified Approval Process) conducted a detailed gender assessment. It found that women in Albania, especially in rural areas, were less likely to receive timely climate information and early warnings, partly due to lower representation in user groups and technical fields. The ALBAdapt project design responds to these needs by integrating gender into each component. Notably, it allocates resources to improve sex-disaggregated climate data collection and to ensure climate information services reach women farmers and women's organizations. The project's Gender Action Plan includes measures such as training female data officers in the national hydrometeorological service and tailoring early warning communication to women's networks. This example underlines how a needs assessment (identifying women's limited access to climate info) leads to concrete design measures (budgeting for inclusive outreach and data systems). Across the region, similar entry points exist to align climate investments with gender needs. The following sections will analyze to what extent such alignment is happening in policy and budgeting, and what further steps are required to meet the identified needs.

⁷⁸ World Bank. (2020, June). Gender inclusion in productive investments in the Western Balkans (Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality Assessment). World Bank Group. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/678091593499973108/pdf/Gender-Inclusion-in-Productive-Investments-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

6. POLICY ANALYSIS

Building on the institutional and legal mapping presented in Chapter 3, this section examines how effectively existing policy frameworks translate formal commitments on gender equality and climate action into coherent, gender-responsive climate policies and investments.

All Western Balkans six countries (WB6) and Moldova have made formal commitments to gender equality and to climate action - the challenge lies in connecting these policy domains. On paper, the countries have relatively well-developed frameworks. Each has adopted a national gender equality strategy or action plan, typically aligned with CEDAW and EU Gender Equality norms, and most have national climate change strategies or nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, the governments have endorsed international mandates linking gender and climate. Notably, all WB6 and Moldova have associated themselves with the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender^{79,80}. This means they acknowledge the need for gender-responsive climate policy. However, in practice, the integration of gender considerations into climate policies, plans, and institutional arrangements remains **inconsistent and often superficial**. A 2024 UN Women baseline study in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates this disconnect: it found that while policy frameworks exist, there were major gaps in the actual contribution of public climate spending to gender equality, and it called for stronger gender analysis, dedicated budget allocations, and tracking mechanisms in climate programs⁸¹. In other words, translating the principles of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) from paper into practice is still a work in progress in the region. This observation is in line with the Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard of UN Women, which observes that many countries worldwide include gender language in climate strategies but few translate those into concrete targets, implementation plans or budget commitments that advance gender equality in climate actions⁸².

One issue is that national climate strategies and laws have not been explicitly gender-mainstreamed. For example, in many government and regional policy frameworks including the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, climate priorities such as decarbonisation and pollution control are foregrounded while gender and social inclusion receive limited to no attention⁸³. Similarly, sectoral climate policies (energy strategies, climate adaptation plans, etc.) tend to treat gender equality, if at all, as a peripheral social issue rather than a core design principle. However, this is slowly changing. Some countries have begun to respond to this challenge by seeking to integrate gender considerations in updated NDCs and adaptation planning processes, guided by global "gender in NDCs" guidance emphasising the need to go beyond language to measurable actions. For example, Moldova's NDC features a wide span of gender sensitive measures (24 in total), with a prominent focus on gender mainstreaming and economic security measures⁸⁴, whereas Montenegro's NDC features one gender-related measure, focused on gender-balanced participation in planning processes.

⁷⁹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). The enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan. <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-enhanced-lima-work-programme-on-gender/>

⁸⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). The gender action plan. <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan/>

⁸¹ UN Women Europe and Central Asia. (2024, May). Gender and climate financing: Baseline study for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/gender-and-climate-financing-baseline-study-for-serbia-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

⁸² UN Women. (2025, November). Gender equality and climate policy scorecard: Methodological note. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/gender-equality-and-climate-policy-scorecard-methodological-note-en.pdf>

⁸³ Regional Cooperation Council. (2025, October 22). Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Pillars <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/GAWB%20Pillars%20ENG-22102025.pdf/b05147f620d2e8fe82af3a7fc428d211.pdf>

⁸⁴ UN Women. (2025). Gender equality and climate policy scorecard <https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard/>

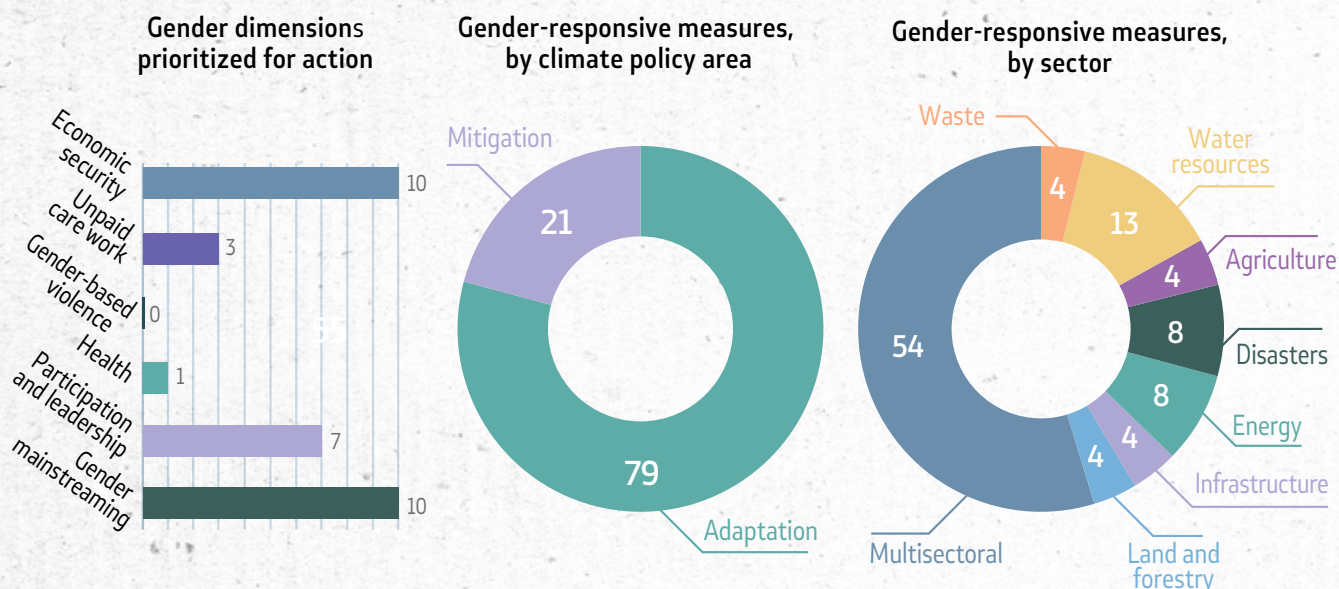


Figure 1: Moldova commitments to gender-responsive action (source: UN Women, 2025 ⁸⁵)

Yet, many other plans remain high level, without specific indicators, timelines or budget commitments that ensure women benefit equitably from climate policies such as renewable energy incentives or climate smart agriculture support. As a result, climate policies largely remain “gender blind”; they do not systematically assess differentiated impacts on women versus men, nor do they assign responsibility for gender results. By contrast, national gender equality strategies rarely address climate change or environmental risk, focusing more on domains such as education, political representation, and violence prevention, which underscores the ongoing policy siloing between climate and gender goals across the region ⁸⁶.

The **Green Climate Fund’s own policy requirements have been a catalyst for better integration**, at least at the project level. The GCF’s Updated Gender Policy (2019, operational through 2020-2023) mandates that all funding proposals include a comprehensive gender assessment and a gender action plan. This reflects GCF’s broader commitment to mainstream gender equality “from the outset” of its operations. The policy shift by GCF marked a move from a do-no-harm, gender-sensitive approach towards a gender-responsive approach aimed at overcoming historical biases ⁸⁷. In essence, GCF requires climate interventions to actively address gender gaps and ensure women and men share the benefits of climate finance. This stance is reinforced in GCF’s new Strategic Plan for 2024-2027, which explicitly calls on the **Fund to fully mainstream gender equality and rights-based approaches into climate investments** ⁸⁸. The strategic plan places gender considerations alongside climate objectives, signaling to countries that proposals and policies should interweave the two rather than treating gender as an add-on. The availability of GCF readiness grants to strengthen national gender and climate capacity is an important lever in this regard. Indeed, the GCF encourages National Designated Authorities (NDAs) - the national climate finance focal points - to use readiness support for updating their procedures and training staff to meet GCF’s gender standards.

⁸⁵ https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard?utm_source=PANTHEON_STRIPPE&f%5B0%5D=country_cs%3A4437

⁸⁶ UN Women. (2025). Gender equality and climate policy scorecard <https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard>

⁸⁷ Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund. (2025). Independent synthesis of the GCF’s gender approach (Second edition). Green Climate Fund. <https://ieugreenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/ieu-gender-synthesis-2.pdf>

⁸⁸ Green Climate Fund. (2022). Update of the Green Climate Fund strategic plan 2024-2027 (Consultation DRF.01). <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/page/consultation-drf01-updated-strategic-plan-gcf-2024-2027.pdf>

A fundamental policy challenge is the **limited inter-institutional coordination** between climate change authorities and gender equality authorities. In most countries, the Ministry of Environment (or equivalent) leads on climate policy, and the Ministry of Finance on budget matters, while a separate agency or ministry handles gender equality. These entities often work do not work in coordination. For instance, National Designated Authorities for the GCF seldom consult national gender institutions when approving projects, and climate change committees rarely include gender experts. Even where there are gender focal points in environment ministries, they may not have influence on budgeting or project design. This gap is partly due to the novelty of linking climate and gender - until recently, they were seen as unrelated domains.

Now, with climate finance growing and donors like GCF insisting on gender integration, countries are realizing the need for structural changes. **Policy reform is needed** to mandate gender mainstreaming in climate action plans and to formalize roles for gender experts in climate finance governance. Some initial steps include: updating climate-related legislation to reference national gender equality laws (e.g. requiring that climate fund programming is consistent with obligations in gender equality law), and vice versa, updating gender strategies to prioritize climate resilience for women. Kosovo (which, while not GCF-eligible, is part of the regional context) offers an interesting example: its 2020 Law on Climate explicitly mentions social and gender equity considerations, influenced by EU standards - a sign that future policies could embed gender by design. However, without innovative implementation regulations and budgeting, such mentions remain symbolic.

Another aspect of policy analysis is the role of **international frameworks and evaluations** in driving change. The UNFCCC Gender Action Plan has prompted countries to include gender in their climate reporting - for instance, countries now often include gender-responsive actions in their National Communications or Adaptation Communications. The OECD and other international bodies have also advocated for integrated approaches. It is telling that **there are few global examples of truly gender-responsive climate budgeting so far**⁸⁹, which means Western Balkans and Moldova do not have many models to follow. This underscores the importance of GCF and UN agencies' guidance. Civil society networks, such as the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) itself, are filling an important gap by scrutinizing how well policies are implemented and by providing capacity building. In December 2025, GBWN convened a regional forum ("Going Glocal 2.0") that specifically focused on climate financing through a gender lens⁹⁰. Forums like this have generated policy recommendations - for example, urging governments to incorporate gender criteria into green procurement and to ensure women's organizations have a seat in climate fund decision-making. While not official policy, such advocacy often precedes policy adoption.

In conclusion, the policy landscape shows **strong formal commitments but weak operational integration**. Western Balkan countries and Moldova have committed internationally to gender-responsive climate action and have policies on both fronts, yet their climate budgeting and planning processes have not fully internalized these commitments. The growing engagement with the Green Climate Fund is a promising avenue to reinforce alignment. With GCF-backed projects requiring gender assessments, and NDAs gaining experience in this area, there is an opportunity to use these projects as "policy demonstrators" - showing national systems how to incorporate gender. Already, **notable GCF projects in the region (e.g. Bosnia's low-carbon public buildings, Serbia's forest resilience project, Albania's ALBAdapt)** have some of the most comprehensive gender analysis in the climate sector. These projects offer *entry points for institutional reform*

⁸⁹ ODI & Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (2021). Gender and climate finance (Climate Finance Fundamentals Brief No. 10). Climate Funds Update. https://climatefundsupdate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CFF10-Gender-and-CF_ENG-2021.pdf

⁹⁰ Gender Budget Watchdog Network. (2024). Going Glocal 2.0: Sustainable gender-responsive futures <https://gbwn.net/en/going-glocal-2-0-sustainable-gender-responsive-futures/>

- their Gender Action Plans identify policy and legislative changes needed, such as improving gender in forestry regulations or including women's groups in energy audits. Governments should seize on these insights. For instance, if a GCF project in Serbia identifies that women in rural communities lack access to modern heating technologies, the government can incorporate that finding into its national energy efficiency program and provide targeted subsidies for female-headed households. Such feedback loops between project-level experience and national policy are still nascent, but they are crucial. Strengthening them will likely require formal mechanisms (e.g. task forces or including GCF project gender experts in ministry working groups).

To summarize, policy alignment in WB6 and Moldova is underway but uneven. **Pockets of progress are observed**, with examples such as the Montenegro's GRB law, Moldova's agricultural gender indicators, Albania and Moldova's climate budget tagging pilots - alongside **persistent gaps** like gender-blind national climate funds or strategies. Aligning with GCF's standards and the UNFCCC GAP will require updates to policy instruments: embedding gender criteria into climate funding eligibility, adopting guidelines for gender-responsive project appraisal, and ensuring climate strategies explicitly aim for gender equality co-benefits. The next section will delve into how these policy gaps manifest in budget allocations and execution, examining whether money is actually flowing toward the needs and commitments identified.

7. BUDGET ANALYSIS

A central question for this report is whether public financing of climate action in the Western Balkans and Moldova is structured in a gender-responsive way. In other words, do budgets – both domestic and those tied to GCF projects - reflect the gender equality commitments on paper? The findings indicate that **significant misalignments persist between gender commitments and budgetary practice**. While all GCF projects in the region come with dedicated Gender Action Plans, the translation of these plans into domestic budget lines, co-financing contributions, and expenditure tracking is often missing ⁹¹. This section analyzes the budgeting of climate funds through a gender lens, highlighting gaps in allocation, execution, and monitoring, as well as emerging good practices.

Climate finance volumes: First, it is useful to note the scale of climate finance involved. The Green Climate Fund itself has approved roughly USD 400 million for projects in Eastern Europe (Western Balkans, Moldova, and Caucasus) to date, with about one-third of that directed to the Western Balkans and Moldova specifically. In addition, approximately USD 24 million in GCF readiness and adaptation planning grants have been accessed by these countries. Each GCF dollar is typically matched by several dollars of co-financing from governments or other donors ⁹². As a result, climate projects often appear in national budgets as large capital investments or externally financed projects ⁹³. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina's **Flood Risk Management** project (FP 216, approved 2021) totals

⁹¹ UN Women ECA. (2025). Advancing gender-responsive budgeting in Western Balkans. UN Women. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/07/advancing-gender-responsive-budgeting-in-western-balkans>

⁹² OECD. (2022). Development finance for gender-responsive climate action (OECD Development Perspectives, No. 16). https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/03/development-finance-for-gender-responsive-climate-action_7bd29728/1e04e5ae-en.pdf

⁹³ Pejcinovska-Andonova, S., & Nestorovska, G. (2024). Guidebook for gender budget watchdogging in climate change financing. Gender Budget Watchdog Network. <https://gbwn.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Guidebook-for-gender-budget-watchdogging-in-climate-change-financing-FINAL.pdf>

USD 72 million, of which only USD 14.4 million is GCF grant and the ⁹⁴ remaining USD 57.6 million is co-financed by domestic institutions. Likewise, the **Scaling-up Low-Carbon Public Buildings** project in BiH (FP 051) mobilized USD 17.3 million from GCF against about USD 105 million in government and other co-finance. These ratios - a small share of highly conditioned international funds leveraging a much larger domestic contribution - present both an opportunity and a challenge for gender-responsive budgeting. **The opportunity** is that domestic co-finance could be steered to amplify gender-related measures (since it forms the bulk of resources); **the challenge** is that, in practice, domestic funds have largely been allocated to hard infrastructure components with no explicit gender tagging or targets.

To illustrate, in the BiH Flood Management project, the GCF grant financed several “soft” measures - policy improvements, community engagement, training - including activities aimed at vulnerable groups (e.g. training women in local flood response, tailoring early warning systems to reach rural women). Meanwhile, the domestic co-finance (four times larger) was almost entirely dedicated to infrastructure: upgrading hydrological monitoring equipment, constructing flood defenses, modernizing forecasting systems. These are vitally important investments, but they were treated as **gender-neutral expenditures**, without earmarks for accompanying gender-responsive actions. The project documents did not specify any portion of the USD 58 million domestic contribution for gender outcomes. In an ideal GRB scenario, some of that domestic budget could have funded gender equality measures - e.g. hiring gender specialists in water agencies, or supporting women’s cooperatives in flood-prone villages to build resilience. The absence of such allocations highlights a broader pattern: **co-financing structures typically prioritize physical infrastructure and technical outputs, leaving gender-specific activities under-funded or dependent on external grants.** This pattern was observed across multiple projects. In BiH’s public buildings energy efficiency project, the GCF portion ensured that gender considerations were included (the project’s gender assessment noted that women are major users of public buildings like schools/hospitals, and set targets for female beneficiaries). However, the **\$105 million in domestic and other co-finance had no clear gender budgeting** - publicly available documents do not show whether any of those local funds were earmarked for, say, outreach to female facility managers or training for women engineers. Essentially, without **institutional mandates** to integrate gender, the default budgeting was gender-blind, even when the project rationale was gender-informed.

In Albania’s ALBAdapt, although a relatively small project, the deliberate setting aside of funds for sex-disaggregated data systems and inclusive service design is a notable good practice. It means that when the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service improves its climate information platform, it will do so in a way that collects user data by gender and tailors content to women farmers - and the project budget is funding those enhancements. This kind of **gender budgeting within projects** is a direct result of GCF’s insistence on a Gender Action Plan with budget lines for each activity ⁹⁵. GCF is currently unique among climate financiers in requiring a gender action plan with budget at proposal stage ⁹⁶. However, the reach of that requirement is limited to the portions of a project under GCF control (usually the minority share).

The larger question is whether national public finance systems are adapting to carry forward these efforts. At present, **national budgeting processes do not systematically tag or track climate expenditures for their gender impact.** Some progress has been made on climate budget tagging - Albania and Moldova have introduced climate budget tags in their public financial management

⁹⁴ ODI & Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (2021). Gender and climate finance (Climate Finance Fundamentals Brief No. 10). Climate Funds Update. https://climatefundsupdates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CF10-Gender-and-CF_ENG-2021.pdf

⁹⁵ Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). Gender. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/projects/sustainability-inclusion/gender>

⁹⁶ ibid

systems on a pilot basis. For example, Albania’s Ministry of Finance has started marking certain budget programs as climate-relevant (to quantify climate spending across government). Moldova has done similarly as part of its budget reforms under the Paris Agreement reporting. **Yet, none of the countries have a “gender marker” attached to climate budget lines**, which would allow tracking how much of climate-related spending is gender-responsive. In fact, even standard sex-disaggregated expenditure data is scarce. Budget execution reports in these countries generally do not show data broken down by gender of beneficiaries or employees - meaning we can’t easily tell, for instance, what share of agricultural grants went to women farmers versus men. This lack of data is a major constraint on transparency and accountability. As noted earlier, “what isn’t measured can’t be improved” - without changes, governments cannot answer basic questions like: Are women receiving an equitable share of climate investment benefits? Are any climate funds being used to reduce gender gaps?

There is also the issue of **budget execution versus allocation**. It is one thing to allocate money on paper for gender activities, but another to spend it effectively. The portfolio examined in this report provides the most granular available evidence on this gap. Table below presents planned GAP budgets against execution status for each project, drawing on Annual Performance Reports and project documentation where available.

FP051 - BiH Public Buildings	Not disaggregated in public documents; embedded in GCF grant component (USD 17.3M total)	Partial (CY2023 APR available); individual GAP activity budgets reported in Section 4.2	54.12% female beneficiaries (285,595 of 527,747 cumulative); 59,113 women of 117,927 in 2023 (50.12%); 46.5% female EMIS users (1,832 of 3,935). ALL GAP targets exceeded.	FP051 APR CY2023, Section 4.2 (UNDP, submitted Sep 2024)
FP216 - BiH Flood Risk Management	Embedded in GCF grant (USD 14.4M); ≥40% female beneficiary target set; no standalone GAP budget line in public documentation	NOT AVAILABLE. Project approved Oct 2023; first APR not yet published as of Feb 2026.	No execution data available. Target: ≥40% female beneficiaries.	GCF project page; FP216 Funding Proposal (UNDP, 2023)
FP260 - Serbia FOREST Invest	USD 4,676,378 (indicative total; distributed across all project components per GAP document)	NOT AVAILABLE. Project signed Feb 2025; first APR expected early 2026.	No execution data available. Targets: ≥60% women trained; ≥30% women landowners engaged; ≥50% women in awareness activities.	FP260 GAP document (FAO/GCF, Jan 2025)
Montenegro NAP Readiness	USD 1,995,605 total (100% GCF; gender as cross-cutting theme, no standalone line)	CONFIRMED IMPLEMENTED. Final evaluation confirms gender and human-rights approaches systematically applied throughout project duration.	Substantial women’s participation documented across all activities. Specific activity-level gender expenditure not separately reported.	Final Project Evaluation (UNDP, 2025); UNDP project page

This overview reveals a structurally consistent pattern across the portfolio: **GAP budgets are planned but rarely reported as discrete executed figures.** Of the four projects with sufficient documentation to assess, only FP051 has published an Annual Performance Report with Section 4.2 gender data, making it the sole project in this portfolio where plan-versus-execution comparison is partially possible. Even there, the CY2023 APR reports gender results in terms of beneficiary percentages and participation rates rather than financial expenditure against GAP budget lines, meaning the USD amounts allocated to individual GAP activities (which are listed in the GAP document) cannot be matched to confirmed spending. For FP216, FP260, and the North Macedonia readiness projects, no APR has yet been published, so execution data is structurally unavailable rather than simply unreported. Montenegro's completed readiness project represents the one case where full execution can be confirmed, but gender expenditure was not disaggregated in final reporting. This reflects a systemic gap in how GCF monitoring frameworks require gender financial data to be reported. The APR template requires gender results tracking but does not mandate that actual expenditure against GAP budget lines be separately disclosed. Closing this reporting gap would be one of the highest-value methodological improvements available to the GCF system. Beyond the data gap, the pattern of **differential disbursement speed** between hard and soft components is a documented risk. A mid-term review of a multi-country Green Cities project (in which Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania participate) found that components aimed at community engagement, precisely where gender-targeted activities are typically concentrated, disbursed more slowly than infrastructure components. This is consistent with FP051's experience: the CY2023 APR records that the Fund FBiH failed to retrofit any buildings in 2023 due to failed tendering, while hard infrastructure components in other responsible parties proceeded on schedule. The practical implication is that even where GAP budget lines exist and gender targets are set, the absorptive capacity of implementing partners for soft-measure delivery lags behind their capacity for capital execution. This points to the need for stronger institutional support mechanisms to protect gender-related budget lines through implementation. One structural mechanism would be incorporating gender performance conditions into disbursement triggers: for example, releasing tranches of co-financing only upon confirmation that a specified percentage of training participants are women, or that a gender audit has been completed. Such performance budgeting approaches are not yet evident in any project in this portfolio.

At the **national budget level**, Western Balkan countries have gradually embraced gender-responsive budgeting in general, often with support from UN Women over the past decade. Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (at subnational levels), and Montenegro have introduced GRB methodologies into their budgeting processes to varying extents. Albania, for instance, requires each ministry to define at least one gender equality objective in its budget program and reports annually on gender budget results in a consolidated report. Serbia's Ministry of Finance had a by-law (in effect until recently) mandating certain ministries to pilot GRB. North Macedonia's new Law on Budgets (2022) includes provisions on gender budgeting. However, the application of GRB to climate-related budgets remains low.

These GRB initiatives have mostly focused on areas like education, health, social protection, and economic empowerment programs (e.g. entrepreneurship funds for women). Climate change or environmental programs have rarely been singled out for GRB scrutiny. An exception is Montenegro, where as mentioned, the adaptation planning process deliberately applied GRB concepts - allocating budget for stakeholder consultations that included women's groups and requiring gender analysis in sector vulnerability assessments. This suggests that where there is intent (and external support), it is possible to infuse gender considerations even into technical

climate budget exercises. Generally, though, environment ministries and climate funds have not been the focus of gender budgeting experts in these countries up to now. This is starting to change as awareness grows that climate finance is not gender-neutral money.

Another positive development is the involvement of **civil society and oversight institutions** in monitoring climate budgets for gender impacts. The emergence of analyses that tackle the subjects of budget commentaries on whether government spending on energy efficiency or disaster risk reduction benefits women is observed. Additionally, Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in a few countries are beginning to incorporate gender and climate into their performance audits. For example, the State Audit Office of North Macedonia, with support from international peers, conducted an audit on the government's preparedness to implement SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 13 (climate action) in a coordinated way ⁹⁷. Audits like this can highlight mismatches - such as discovering that climate adaptation funds were spent without consulting the gender machinery, or that gender action plans existed on paper but had no budget appropriation. While such audits are still rare, they represent a mechanism to hold governments accountable for integrating their commitments.

The **absence of dedicated funding for gender in climate co-financing** is arguably the clearest gap. Governments often commit co-financing to GCF projects by reallocating from existing capital budgets or borrowing from IFIs for the purpose. These funds come without the gender conditions that GCF attaches. Unless national stakeholders negotiate internally to include gender criteria, the co-finance will follow business-as-usual public finance practices. Business-as-usual in the Western Balkans public finance means gender is usually not a factor in capital project selection or design. A highway, a hydroplant, a reforestation program - these are typically analyzed for economic and technical feasibility, not for gender equality outcomes. To change this, gender-responsive budgeting must be embedded into public investment management. That could involve requiring that any climate-related public investment proposal include a gender impact statement and, if relevant, a mitigation plan or targeted measure. Some countries already require something analogous for environmental impact (e.g. large projects need environmental impact assessments). A parallel could be drawn for gender. Kosovo, for instance, introduced a requirement that all new legislation undergo a gender impact assessment - if applied to climate-relevant laws (like energy or agriculture laws), this could flag needed budget adjustments.

One encouraging sign is that **climate-related budgeting is moving toward multi-year, programmatic approaches**, which align well with GRB techniques. Rather than ad-hoc project funding, countries are adopting program-based budgeting and medium-term expenditure frameworks. Within those, they define programs like "Renewable Energy Development" or "Flood Protection Program". These are precisely the level at which one can integrate gender objectives (e.g. increase women's employment in renewable energy to X%) and attach budget resources. As noted in Section 5, Montenegro's budget instructions already demand gender impact info for each program. Serbia's program budgeting, in its latest reform, has a field for ministries to mention if a program contributes to gender equality. The missing link is to specifically connect this with climate programs. It would be worthwhile for ministries of finance in the region to issue guidance on applying GRB to climate budget tagging - ensuring that when a budget item is tagged as "climate", there is a check on whether it addresses gender gaps or could inadvertently widen them. The OECD has recommended that green budgeting (which includes climate budget tagging) be coupled with social and gender budgeting to enhance inclusive outcomes ⁹⁸. In practice, this could mean developing combined

⁹⁷ UN Women & State Audit Office of North Macedonia. (2024, March 12). Auditing SDG 5: Experiences from Western Balkans on increasing accountability toward financing for gender equality. <https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/269746-auditing-sdg-5-experiences-western-balkans-increasing-accountability-toward-financing-gender>

⁹⁸ Topalli, M. (2024). Gender-responsive green finance roadmap for the Western Balkans Six: Building blocks for a resilient and inclusive future. Regional Cooperation Council. <https://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/01701a5fe87e1ef301c705ad27848180.pdf>

tagging: for instance, marking budget lines that are both climate-relevant and gender-relevant. The methodology piloted by UN Women in Serbia and BiH essentially moves in this direction by providing a checklist for dual relevance ⁹⁹.

To summarize the budget analysis: **climate-related budgets in the Western Balkans and Moldova are not yet systematically gender-responsive.** Strong formal requirements by the GCF have ensured that within donor-funded projects, some budget is allocated to gender actions and results are tracked (e.g. targets for women beneficiaries). However, domestic co-financing and national budgets have lagged behind, often treating gender measures as external to core climate investments. Key gaps include the lack of gender tagging of climate expenditures, insufficient sex-disaggregated financial data, and the absence of institutionalized mechanisms to direct climate funds towards gender equality ends. These shortcomings mirror broader public finance issues - many countries are still building basic climate budget tracking, so the gender dimension is an added layer not yet integrated. Nonetheless, the trend is moving in the right direction. GRB has taken root in budget processes (if unevenly), and climate finance is rising on the political agenda; the intersection of the two is gaining attention due to both internal advocacy and external pressure.

Closing these gaps will require concerted efforts by finance ministries, climate authorities, and gender equality advocates. The next and final section will present conclusions and actionable recommendations to help ensure that **financing for climate action also becomes financing for gender equality**, as *"financing equality is not optional, but a prerequisite for effective governance and climate resilience"*. The recommendations will target the key actors in climate budgeting: government authorities managing climate and finance, the GCF and implementing entities, and national gender mechanisms and civil society watchdogs, aiming to institutionalize the progress and address the gaps identified in this budget analysis.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of needs, policies, and budgets leads to a clear overarching conclusion: **despite high-level commitments and some exemplary initiatives, the integration of gender equality into climate finance in the Western Balkans and Moldova remains fragmented and ad hoc.** Gender commitments in GCF project documents and national strategies are generally well-intentioned, but they are not yet backed by the systematic budgetary and institutional changes needed to realize them. In effect, there is a **"missing middle"** between policy and practice: strong words and plans on one end, and project-level activities on the other, but weak linkages through public finance systems and accountability mechanisms. Thus, bridging this gap is essential. It is not only a matter of rights or fairness, but of effectiveness - climate investments that overlook half the population's needs and contributions risk being less impactful and less sustainable. Conversely, climate actions that empower women and address gender gaps can produce co-benefits in poverty reduction, economic growth, and governance, multiplying the returns on investment ¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ UN Women ECA. (2024). Gender and climate financing baseline study for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN Women. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/gender-and-climate-financing-baseline-study-for-serbia-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

¹⁰⁰ ODI & Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (2021). Gender and climate finance (Climate Finance Fundamentals Brief No. 10). Climate Funds Update. https://climatefundsupdates.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CFF10-Gender-and-CF_ENG-2021.pdf

Encouragingly, this alignment is increasingly recognized as a priority. The GCF's strategic direction for 2024-2027 explicitly ties the success of climate outcomes to gender-responsive approaches¹⁰¹. Internationally, the enhanced UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and SDG framework provide impetus and guidance for national efforts. Regionally, networks like GBWN and various UN programs have built momentum for gender-responsive budgeting and are now extending those tools to climate-related spending. The Western Balkans and Moldova thus have both external support and internal capacity to move from pilot efforts to institutionalized practice.

Below, **actionable recommendations** for three sets of stakeholders are outlined: (1) national climate and finance authorities, who control policies and budgets; (2) Green Climate Fund implementing entities and project developers, who design and execute climate investments; and (3) national gender equality mechanisms and their partners, who can champion and oversee the integration from the gender side. Implementing these recommendations will help connect the identified gender inequalities and institutional weaknesses with concrete policy reforms and budget measures. Each recommendation is crafted to be specific and feasible in the context of ongoing processes (such as EU accession reforms, GCF programming cycles, or national budgeting improvements).

For Climate and Finance Authorities (government ministries of environment/climate, ministries of finance, and related agencies):

- **MUST: Integrate GRB into Climate Budgeting Frameworks:** Formally incorporate gender-responsive budgeting requirements into climate change financing. This means when developing climate budget tagging or Green Budgeting initiatives, include a gender dimension (e.g. a dual tag or a scoring system)¹⁰². Ministries of Finance should update budget circulars to instruct all departments to identify gender impacts for climate-related programs and to allocate resources for gender equality measures within those programs. For instance, if a budget program is tagged as "climate adaptation in agriculture," it should also report how it addresses the needs of women farmers and allocate funds accordingly.

Implementation indicators: At least one Ministry of Finance in the region issues an updated budget circular that includes a gender dimension for climate-tagged programmes by the next budget planning cycle; at least one climate programme reports sex-disaggregated beneficiary data in the subsequent annual budget execution report.

- **SHOULD:** Strengthen Inter-ministerial Coordination and Institutional Roles: Establish a formal coordination mechanism (or strengthen existing ones) between NDAs/climate policy units, finance ministries, and national gender equality institutions. One practical step is to create a Gender and Climate Budget Task Force that meets during the budget planning cycle to review major climate-related expenditures through a gender lens. Another is to include representatives from gender mechanisms in climate fund steering committees or investment appraisal committees. This ensures gender expertise is applied when decisions are made on allocating climate funds. Additionally, climate authorities should designate and empower gender focal points in their teams and include gender-results obligations in their performance plans.

Implementation indicators: At least one Gender and Climate Budget Task Force or equivalent inter-ministerial working group established and convened at least once during the annual budget preparation cycle; at least one gender mechanism representative formally included in a GCF project steering committee in the region.

¹⁰² Topalli, M. (2024). Gender-responsive green finance roadmap for the Western Balkans Six: Building blocks for a resilient and inclusive future. Regional Cooperation Council. <https://www.rcc.int/files/user/docs/01701a5fe87e1ef301c705ad27848180.pdf>

- **MUST: Allocate and Protect Funding for Gender Actions in Climate Programs:**

Ensure that domestic co-financing and national funds include dedicated budget lines for gender equality activities as part of climate projects. This could involve co-financing specific elements of GCF Gender Action Plans (e.g. government pays for the gender training component while GCF covers infrastructure). Governments should also consider establishing small grant facilities within larger climate programs specifically for women's initiatives – for example, a portion of a green agriculture program could be set aside to fund women-led climate-smart agriculture enterprises. Such allocation of funds can be guided by the needs assessments already conducted in project GA documents. Finance ministries, on their side, should issue guidelines that budget reallocations or cuts should not disproportionately hit gender-related expenditures (to prevent backsliding during fiscal tightening).

Implementation indicators: At least one GCF co-financing agreement in the region includes a specific budget line or earmark for gender equality activities; Finance ministry guidance on protecting gender budget lines from reallocation issued in at least one country.

- **SHOULD: Improve Monitoring, Data and Reporting:** Invest in better monitoring of climate expenditures and their gender impacts. This includes requiring sex-disaggregated data collection in all climate project indicators (aligned with the GCF's Integrated Results Management Framework which mandates sex-disaggregated indicators) and ensuring this data is reported in national monitoring systems. Governments should publish annual reports on climate finance that include a section on gender equality results – for example, how many women and men benefitted from year's climate projects, and what budget was spent on gender-targeted actions. Supreme Audit Institutions can be encouraged to conduct audits focusing on gender and climate budget performance, providing independent oversight and recommendations.

Implementation indicators: At least one country publishes an annual climate finance report containing a dedicated gender results section; at least one Supreme Audit Institution in the region completes a performance audit examining gender dimensions of climate expenditure within three years.

- **COULD: Leverage Readiness and EU Accession Support:** Use available technical assistance funds (GCF Readiness, EU Instrument for Pre-Accession, etc.) to build capacity for gender-responsive climate planning. This can take the form of training budget officers and climate project managers on GRB tools, developing methodological guidelines (as was done in Serbia/BiH baseline ¹⁰³), and upgrading data systems to capture gender aspects of climate finance. Additionally, as countries align with EU policies (e.g. in energy, agriculture, cohesion policy), ensure that gender equality is part of the "just transition" narrative. For instance, when preparing investment plans for the EU Green Deal or Sofia Green Agenda commitments, include chapters on how women and vulnerable groups will benefit and what funding is allocated for that.

Implementation indicators: At least one GCF Readiness proposal in the region explicitly targets gender-responsive climate budgeting capacity; at least one EU-aligned national investment plan includes a chapter on gender-differentiated benefits and corresponding budget allocations.

¹⁰³ UN Women ECA. (2024). Gender and climate financing baseline study for Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN Women <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/05/gender-and-climate-financing-baseline-study-for-serbia-and-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

For GCF Accredited Entities and Implementing Partners (national ministries, international organizations, development banks, and other entities designing and executing GCF projects):

- **MUST: Design Projects with Gender-Responsive Budgets from the Start:** When formulating project proposals, go beyond the minimum requirement of a gender action plan and embed gender equality into the core budget structure of the project. This means ensuring gender-specific activities are not just add-ons but are integrated in each component's budget. For example, in an infrastructure component, budget for community consultations that include women; in a capacity-building component, budget for targeting women entrepreneurs, etc. Use the GCF's **gender assessment and action plan template** as a guiding tool¹⁰⁴ and explicitly cross-reference those actions in the main budget tables of the project. Clear linkage will make it easier to secure co-financing for those actions as well.

Implementation indicators: All new GCF project proposals from the region include a budget table that cross-references GAP activities by component; no GAP activity in any new project approval is listed without a corresponding budget line.

- **MUST: Advocate and Negotiate for Co-Finance to Support Gender Activities:** Accredited Entities (AEs) often broker co-financing arrangements with governments or other donors. AEs should proactively discuss with government co-financiers the possibility of using part of their contribution to implement the project's gender action plan. For instance, if a government is contributing \$50 million to a project, suggest that a certain amount of funds should be allocated to gender-responsive measures (capacity building, inclusive community infrastructure, etc.). Even if not explicitly labeled, ensure the co-finance funds complementary activities that benefit women or marginalized groups. Highlight to partners that such allocation will enhance project effectiveness and align with international best practice. AEs have their own gender policies – use those as leverage to maintain pressure on all financiers to contribute to gender outcomes, not just the GCF portion.

Implementation indicators: At least one co-financing agreement in the region includes an explicit reference to gender equality activities or targets; AE supervision missions include a standard agenda item on co-finance gender allocation status.

- **SHOULD: Embed Gender Expertise in Project Management and Implementation:** Allocate budget for gender expertise throughout project implementation – this may include hiring a gender specialist on the project management unit, funding partnerships with local women's organizations for outreach, or contracting gender consultants to support specific technical studies. For example, as noted in BiH's flood project, having gender expertise within implementing institutions could vastly improve inclusive outcomes. AEs should ensure that each project's management team has the skills and mandate to carry out the Gender Action Plan, and that the cost for this is built into project management costs. Additionally, include gender criteria in procurement and sub-granting: for instance, when hiring contractors for a reforestation project, require them to have a certain percentage of female workers or to conduct gender training – and monitor these through contract budgets.

Implementation indicators: All new GCF project budgets in the region include a named line item for gender expertise within the project management unit; at least one procurement or sub-grant contract in implementation includes gender performance criteria.

¹⁰⁴ Green Climate Fund. (n.d.). Gender. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/projects/sustainability-inclusion/gender>

- **MUST: Ensure Robust Gender Monitoring and Adaptive Management:** During implementation, track gender-related expenditures and outputs meticulously. Use the GCF Annual Performance Reports to report on gender indicators and budget execution on gender activities. If monitoring shows an underspend or a lag in gender components (a common risk), invoke adaptive management – for instance, adjust activities or reallocate budget to ensure targets can be met. AEs should not treat the gender action plan as a static annex, but rather as a living part of project management that can be scaled up if opportunities arise. They can also commission mid-term gender evaluations to get independent feedback and course-correct. Importantly, when projects end, document and disseminate lessons on financing gender results (e.g. cost of achieving certain outcomes, benefit-cost insights) – this can inform government budgeting going forward.

Implementation indicators: At least one APR in the region reports actual expenditure against individual GAP budget lines, not only results indicators; at least one project undertakes a documented mid-term gender review with adaptive management recommendations.

- **SHOULD: Build Capacity of National Executing Entities on GRB:** Many GCF projects in the region use national ministries or agencies as executing entities. AEs should include within project scope training for these national partners on gender-responsive budgeting and planning. This could involve workshops with ministry of finance and line ministry staff on how to integrate gender into their domestic climate programs, using the GCF project as a demonstration. For example, if a project pilots collecting sex-disaggregated data in the water sector, ensure the government partner learns how to include that in its regular budgeting and reporting. When AEs exit, they should leave behind strengthened national systems. The GCF Readiness Programme can be coordinated with project implementation to institutionalize these capacities (e.g. a parallel readiness grant could help a government develop a gender and climate budget guideline drawing on the project experience).

Implementation indicators: At least one national executing entity in the region produces a GRB tool or guideline drawing directly on experience from a GCF project; at least one GCF Readiness grant in the region is explicitly linked to a concurrent full project for this purpose.

- **COULD: Promote Stakeholder Engagement and Accountability:** Use the project's stakeholder engagement mechanisms to amplify the voices of women and civil society in climate finance. For instance, set up project advisory panels that include women's organization representatives, and allocate project funds to enable their participation (covering travel, childcare, etc., as needed). Ensure that project grievance redress mechanisms and feedback loops are accessible to women (perhaps requiring gender-balanced community facilitators). By budgeting for and implementing these engagement processes, AEs not only fulfill GCF's participation criteria but also build local ownership and oversight, which increases the likelihood that gender-responsive approaches continue post-project.

Implementation indicators: At least one project advisory panel in the region includes women's organization representation with project-funded participation support; grievance redress mechanism accessibility for women assessed and reported in at least one APR.

For National Gender Equality Mechanisms and Civil Society (e.g. Gender Equality Agencies/ Ministries, women's rights organizations, the GBWN network, academia):

- **MUST: Assert Role in Climate Policy and Budget Processes:** National gender mechanisms (such as Gender Equality Agencies, Ministries of Social Affairs, etc.) should actively seek inclusion in climate change policy-making forums. They can formally request

(or through government orders) to be part of National Climate Change Councils, NDC committees, Green Deal task forces, and budget hearings related to climate programs. These institutions should prepare evidence-based inputs to justify their involvement – for example, present data on how climate change impacts women, or how gender-blind investments can fail. Once at the table, push for concrete gender-responsive measures and budget allocations. If the mechanism has a mandate to review policies (as some do for gender impact), ensure climate strategies and major project proposals are scrutinized from a gender perspective and recommendations are issued.

Implementation indicators: At least one national gender equality agency in the region formally represented in a climate policy or finance forum by the next budget cycle; at least one climate strategy or major GCF project proposal in the region reviewed by the national gender mechanism before approval.

- **SHOULD: Use Gender-Responsive Budgeting Advocacy to Include Climate:** Many gender advocates in the region are already skilled in GRB for education, health, etc. Expanding their focus to climate finance is timely. Civil society organizations can conduct **budget watchdog reports** (like this one) specifically tracking climate-related budgets and publishing findings in accessible formats. For instance, a CSO might analyze the national energy efficiency budget and reveal what portion (if any) is benefitting women or vulnerable groups, or how the subsidy schemes could be retargeted. Present such findings to parliamentarians and media to raise public debate. The GBWN network and partners can also develop simplified indicators, such as “Gender Climate Budget Scorecards,” rating government performance on including gender in climate spending – similar to scorecards used for gender in municipal budgets¹⁰⁵. Publicizing scores can motivate improvement.

Implementation indicators: At least one Gender Climate Budget Scorecard published for a country in the region within two years; at least one parliamentary committee in the region receives a civil society submission on gender dimensions of climate expenditure.

- **SHOULD: Demand Transparency and Apply Social Accountability Tools:** Women’s organizations and civil society should demand greater transparency on climate finance. This includes asking governments to disclose how international climate funds are used and who benefits. They can file budget information requests, attend public budget hearings, and use social accountability tools (public audits, community monitoring) for local climate projects. If a flood protection project is being built, for example, community groups can monitor whether women are being consulted in its implementation or whether promised training for women’s groups occurred, and report discrepancies. Engaging local communities, especially women, in monitoring not only empowers them but provides real-time feedback to authorities and the GCF.

Implementation indicators: At least one civil society organization in the region files a formal budget information request relating to climate co-financing within the report period; at least one community monitoring exercise covering gender-targeted project activities completed and results shared with the relevant AE.

- **COULD: Build Capacity and Knowledge on Gender-Climate Linkages:** National gender equality institutions should invest in enhancing their own understanding of climate change issues so they can engage substantively. This might involve training their staff on climate policy basics, hiring an environmental gender expert, or establishing a dedicated “gender and climate” unit. Similarly, civil society activists might partner with environmental

¹⁰⁵ UN Women. (2025). Gender equality and climate policy scorecard . <https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard>

NGOs to cross-train each other – e.g. women’s rights groups learn about climate finance mechanisms, while environmental groups learn about GRB. Universities and think tanks can support by researching topics such as the gender-differentiated economic impacts of climate policies in the region, providing localized evidence that advocates can use. The more fluent gender advocates are in climate finance language (and vice versa), the more influence they can wield in budget discussions.

Implementation indicators: At least one national gender institution in the region designates a staff member with a climate finance mandate; at least one joint training or knowledge exchange between a women’s rights organization and an environmental NGO documented in the region.

- **COULD: Leverage International Commitments and Reporting:** Use platforms like CEDAW reporting, or the SDG Voluntary National Reviews to highlight climate-related gender budgeting. For example, when countries report on SDG 5.c.1 (which measures whether countries have systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality), civil society can ensure the assessment considers climate finance tracking. If climate budgets are not gender-tracked, that should be flagged as a shortcoming under SDG 5.c.1. Similarly, include a section on climate finance in alternative CEDAW reports, urging the Committee to recommend that the country integrate gender in climate action. These international accountability mechanisms can reinforce domestic advocacy by making it part of global scrutiny.

Implementation indicators: At least one country’s SDG 5.c.1 report or alternative CEDAW submission in the region explicitly references climate finance tracking as a gap; at least one CEDAW Committee recommendation to a country in the region addresses gender budgeting in climate programmes.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The defining challenge: BiH operates two active GCF projects totalling USD 144 million, but the GCF grant portions which carry binding Gender Action Plans represent only 14–20% of each project's total budget. The remaining 80–86% is domestic co-financing directed at physical infrastructure with no documented gender conditionality. At the same time, BiH has one of the more developed GRB legislative frameworks in the region: GRB is embedded in Budget Circular No. 1 at state, FBiH, and RS level; Budget Circular No. 2 (FBiH) provides detailed GRB indicators; and the FBiH Law on Budget Execution (Article 37) formally requires gender reporting on programme performance. The gap is that this framework has never been applied to climate-related co-financing.

Recommendations:

- 1.** The Ministries of Finance of FBiH and RS should issue a supplementary instruction to Budget Circular No. 1 requiring that any budget programme classified as co-financing to an internationally funded climate project explicitly addresses gender equality outcomes. The co-financing lines for FP051 (USD 105.2M) and FP216 (USD 57.6M) should be reviewed at the next budget execution cycle to assess whether women's access to and benefit from the financed infrastructure is tracked. This does not require new legislation as it activates existing Article 37 obligations that have not yet been applied to this category of expenditure.
- 2.** The Agency for Gender Equality of BiH should formally request inclusion in the project steering committees of FP051 and FP216. These committees are currently dominated by technical ministries and water agencies with no gender mechanism representation. The Agency's mandate under the Law on Gender Equality of BiH explicitly covers monitoring gender mainstreaming across all institutional activities, which extends to co-financed climate projects.
- 3.** The FP051 CY2023 APR demonstrates that achieving over 50% female beneficiaries is feasible within an infrastructure-dominated portfolio when GAP targets are embedded in the building selection criteria. The Ministry of Education and other sector ministries that participated as responsible parties in FP051 should document (in their annual budget execution reports) the gender composition of beneficiaries in retrofitted buildings. This would be the first instance in this portfolio of domestic budget reporting capturing gender outcomes of climate co-financing.
- 4.** For FP216, the monitoring framework must distinguish between passive flood-protection beneficiaries (the full population of protected municipalities) and active gender-targeted beneficiaries (women who receive livelihood grants, training, or governance roles). The $\geq 40\%$ female beneficiary target is reachable in aggregate simply because women comprise roughly half the flood-prone population - but that does not constitute a gender-responsive outcome. The BiH Gender Equality Agency and UNDP should agree, before FP216's first APR, on a disaggregated monitoring protocol that tracks these two categories separately.

Serbia

The defining challenge: FOREST Invest (FP260, USD 84M total, signed February 2025) has the most comprehensive GAP in this portfolio; USD 4,676,378 in indicative gender expenditure, a dedicated Gender Specialist, differentiated targets for training ($\geq 60\%$ women), landowner engagement ($\geq 30\%$), and awareness campaigns ($\geq 50\%$). Yet, the same structural asymmetry applies: the government's USD 59M co-financing (70% of total) funds physical forestry operations: restoration, conversion, energy plantations with no gender conditions attached. The critical difference in Serbia is that domestic law creates a direct accountability pathway that does not exist elsewhere in this portfolio.

Recommendations:

- 1.** The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management is legally required under the Law on Gender Equality (2021) and the Budget System Law to produce an annual Gender Budget Statement. FOREST Invest co-financing of USD 59M flows through this ministry's budget. The Ministry's Gender Budget Statement for fiscal years 2025 and 2026 should explicitly reference FOREST Invest as a budget program and assess whether the co-financing allocation to forest restoration and agroforestry addresses gender gaps in land ownership, forest sector employment, and rural livelihood access.
- 2.** The gender focal points established within Srbijašume and Vojvodinašume as part of FP260 should be formalized as permanent positions funded from operational budgets rather than project funds. The gender mainstreaming capacity built during 2025–2032 should not be contingent on project continuation. This would give Serbia a replicable model for institutionalizing gender expertise within climate-relevant line ministries.
- 3.** FAO and the Ministry should agree at the inception phase, before the first APR is due, on a protocol for tracking GAP budget execution by component. The FP260 GAP contains an indicative total of USD 4,676,378 distributed across all project components, but the APR template does not require component-level gender expenditure reporting. Serbia has an opportunity to set a regional precedent: voluntarily disaggregating GAP expenditure in annual performance reporting would make FP260 the first project in this portfolio to produce genuinely comparable plan-versus-execution gender budget data.
- 4.** Serbia's Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Gender Equality Directorate should be engaged in the mid-term review of FP260 (anticipated around 2028–2029). Their inclusion would provide independent domestic oversight of whether the obligations under the Law on Gender Equality are being met in practice, complementing the GCF's own review.

Montenegro

The defining challenge: Montenegro has completed its GCF NAP readiness project (USD 1,995,605, October 2020 - October 2025), with the final evaluation confirming that gender and human rights approaches were systematically applied throughout. Montenegro is the only country in this portfolio where a GCF-funded gender commitment has been fully implemented and verified. The challenge now is institutionalization: the gender-responsive approaches piloted through the readiness process have not yet been embedded in Montenegro's domestic climate budget structures.

Recommendations:

1. Montenegro's budget instructions already require each budget programme to include gender impact information. The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance should jointly review the NAP investment priorities produced by the readiness project and assign them to specific programmes in the medium-term expenditure framework, with the gender impact fields completed. If this step is not taken, the gender analysis embedded in the NAP documents will remain advisory rather than fiscally operative.
2. Montenegro should submit a follow-on GCF readiness proposal targeting the translation of NAP priorities into gender-tagged climate budget lines, with the Ministry of Finance as co-implementing partner. This would make Montenegro the first country in this portfolio to use GCF readiness funding explicitly to build domestic budget infrastructure for gender-responsive climate finance, rather than to produce technical adaptation plans alone.

North Macedonia

The defining challenge: North Macedonia has two active GCF readiness projects, the UNDP-led NAP integration project (approved September 2024, targeting five sectors: transport, agriculture, water, forestry, cultural heritage) and the FAO-led forest fire management project (launched May 2025, two-year duration). North Macedonia's new Law on Budgets (2022) includes gender budgeting provisions, and the Ministry of Finance annual Gender Budget Statements have been required since 2021. This creates a direct legislative pathway: if the adaptation priorities identified in the NAP process are incorporated into climate-relevant budget programmes of line ministries, North Macedonia could become the first country in this portfolio to produce a national climate budget programme with mandatory gender reporting.

Recommendations:

1. The UNDP NAP project's mandate to integrate adaptation planning into five sectoral processes should explicitly include a gender budgeting component for each sector. The project's planned MRV system and investment action plan should incorporate gender-disaggregated cost estimates so that when the NAP is submitted to the UNFCCC and translated into domestic budget programmes, the gender dimension has already been costed. The $\geq 50\%$ female participation target for the NAP validation workshop is a good process indicator, but it needs to be complemented by substantive gender content in the investment action plan itself.
2. The State Audit Office of North Macedonia, which has already conducted an audit on coordinated SDG 5 and SDG 13 implementation, should be engaged early in the NAP process as

a future accountability mechanism. Specifically, it should be invited to review whether the budget programmes that implement NAP priorities, when they are eventually submitted to parliament, include gender impact assessments as required under the Law on Budgets. This would close the accountability loop between the readiness investment and domestic budget practice.

3. The FAO forest fire management project (2025–2027) operates in the same forestry sector as Serbia's FP260. Both projects should share gender mainstreaming methodologies and data collection tools, given that FAO is the implementing entity for both. A joint learning exchange between the FP260 Gender Specialist and the North Macedonia forest fire project team would prevent duplication and allow North Macedonia to benefit from the more developed gender framework in FP260's GAP.

Albania

The defining challenge: ALBAdapt is described in the report as the clearest good practice example, deliberately budgeting for sex-disaggregated data systems and inclusive service design within the climate information platform of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service. Albania also has the most advanced general GRB framework in the region: each ministry is required to define at least one gender equality objective in its budget programme, and a consolidated annual gender budget report is produced. The challenge is that this framework has not yet been applied to climate-specific programmes.

Recommendations:

- 1.** The Ministry of Finance should formally instruct the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (the climate focal ministry) to include at least one gender equality objective in its budget programme specifically for climate-related expenditures, consistent with the existing requirement applied to all other ministries. ALBAdapt's work on sex-disaggregated data in the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service provides concrete content for this objective. This would give Albania the first climate-specific gender objective in a national budget programme in this portfolio.
- 2.** Albania's pilot climate budget tagging should be extended to include a dual gender-climate marker. The methodology piloted by UN Women in Albania for cross-tagging budget lines as both climate-relevant and gender-relevant should be tested on at least one climate programme in the next budget cycle. ALBAdapt's sex-disaggregated user data platform is a natural candidate for the first tagged line, as it's both climate-funded and explicitly gender-designed.

MOLDOVA

The defining challenge: Moldova participates in the regional portfolio through at least one multi-country GCF project. Moldova has introduced climate budget tags in its public financial management system and has undertaken budget reforms under Paris Agreement reporting. However, as with other countries, no gender marker has been attached to climate budget lines, and sex-disaggregated expenditure data for climate programmes is not publicly available.

Recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Finance should add a gender dimension to the existing climate budget tagging system in the next reform cycle. Since climate tagging is already operational, adding a binary gender-relevance marker requires a methodology note and updated budget forms – not new legislation. This would make Moldova the first country in the region to combine climate and gender budget tags systematically.
2. Civil society organizations and the GBWN network should produce a baseline analysis of Moldova's climate-tagged expenditure that assesses which tagged budget lines have any gender dimension, drawing on the existing tagging data. Publishing this as a "Gender Climate Budget Scorecard" for Moldova would provide the accountability pressure needed to motivate the Finance Ministry to take the step in Recommendation 1.

In conclusion, the Western Balkans and Moldova stand at an important juncture where climate finance flows are set to increase significantly as part of global efforts and EU integration, and where gender equality is a declared political priority. This juncture is precisely where **gender-responsive budgeting can and should be institutionalized in climate action**. The evidence gathered shows both the risks of inaction - gender-blind climate spending can inadvertently deepen inequalities or miss opportunities - and the benefits of action - projects that did incorporate gender have reached more people and provided models for inclusive development. Implementing the recommendations above will require political will, technical effort, and collaboration across sectors. It will involve climate and finance officials viewing gender equality not as an external mandate but as integral to effective climate investment. It will also involve gender advocates embracing climate resilience as part of their mission to improve women's lives.

The transition to a green economy in the Western Balkans and Moldova will redefine societal structures - how jobs are created, how resources are allocated, how communities adapt. Ensuring that this transition is **gender-just** is not only a matter of rights, but it will lead to more successful and resilient outcomes. Women's empowerment and leadership can accelerate innovation in climate solutions, and gender-responsive services can ensure the whole population is protected from climate risks. By adopting gender-responsive budgeting in climate finance now, these countries can become leaders in inclusive climate action, setting examples even beyond their region. Climate change is a collective challenge; so too must be the benefits of climate finance - collective and shared equitably. The steps recommended in this report aim to provide steps so that funding invested in climate response also advances gender equality. This dual dividend - of a cooler planet and a fairer society - is the ultimate goal that climate finance in the Western Balkans and Moldova should strive to achieve. The time to act on it is now, while the institutional frameworks are still forming and investments are ramping up, to integrate gender justice into climate resilience. With commitment and coordinated action, the gap between aspiration and practice can be closed, and the region can ensure that **financing climate action is simultaneously financing equality**, securing a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

FINAL REPORT For Gender Budget Watchdog Report

