

Achievements on gender equality and violence against women work under the GoA and UN Programme of Cooperation supported by Sida soft-earmarked funding (2012-2014)

Public oversight mechanisms, civil society and media capacities

- Ombudsman, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner (ADC) and Central Electoral Committee (CEC) capacities on gender equality issues increased through tailored capacity building initiatives and technical expertise.

Enhanced outreach capacities of the ADC as well as continuous improvement of the substance of its decisions have increased public knowledge and trust in this new body. A significant increase of the gender-based and other discrimination cases brought to the attention of her office is evidenced: from 104 cases filed in 2012 to 244 cases filed the following year. The share of those decisions issued in favour of the alleged victim of discrimination has also increased, from a mere 10% in 2012 to 31% in 2013.

- 2013 Parliamentary elections marked an increase in the number of women in the Parliament; 20.0% v. 16.4% of the previous one. UN supported introduction of the quota in Albanian legislation in 2008 and recommended and advocated for gradual improvement of its formula. UN continued its advocacy efforts and partnered with international organizations and civil society to ensure implementation of gender quota. The Central Election Commission has issued many fines to political parties for failing to implement the gender quota properly. The pressure to political parties for GE is demonstrated by the highest number of women ministers in the new cabinet, reaching the 30% quota for the first time. The establishment for the first time of the women's caucus is also partly due to UN advocacy.
- During 2013, women organizations engaged in an outstanding campaign to make authorities more accountable for implementing gender equality commitments. UN supported civic engagement in terms of advocacy and accountability for women's rights. Due to higher civic activism, candidates for the national elections of June 2013 as well as the local elected officials intensified dialogue with mixed groups of men and women, or with women groups, an approach rarely used in the previous general elections campaigns. Political parties held open dialogues with their constituencies to display their electoral platform on issues of GE, GBV and empowerment of women. Citizens were able to listen and compare between views and programmes of different parties. This is considered a positive trend; it seems politicians can no longer ignore women as a constituency and generic platforms without specific reference to women's interests are not rated positively by voters. In those areas where advocacy focused on respecting the 30% quota a higher number of women MPs emerged, thus improving the overall women's participation in the Parliament. In other areas, local officials and their constituencies signed symbolic Letters of Engagement to address women's priorities for local governance. Women's groups organized public hearings with local municipal councils to advocate for integration of pro-women policies and measures in the 2014 local budget. CSOs also organized get-out-to-vote activities for women. Young men and women who were to vote for the first time, were mobilized in parliamentary debate forums around elections and actively engaged as leaders in public debates on gender equality, participatory democracy and electoral processes, family voting etc. As a result, the number

of voters that cast their ballot on June 23, was the highest in these last years of democracy (around 76%).

- With UN support strategic litigation for women's rights also noted results in 2013. 4 of 9 cases initiated in courts or other bodies were granted. This litigation has resulted in new case law established, dormant legal provisions utilized and other gender biased practices repelled. These results do not just help the individual woman that files the lawsuit, but hold the potential to change the legal status of many more women. In addition civil society monitored court decisions from the gender perspective. The findings and recommendations were broadly discussed with judges all over the country resulting in more judges referring to CEDAW and other international standards as compared to almost no references up to 2012.
- Following capacity building provided to media professionals on coverage of human rights, gender equality (GE) and gender based violence (GBV) issues including International Gender Sensitive Indicators on Media, increased gender sensitive reporting by media as highlighted by a monitoring and analysis study conducted in 2013. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes are still present requiring further intervention and work with the media in the future in different areas.
- An interactive network of "women in science" was established in November 2012 to contribute towards improving the under-representation of women in basic scientific research and at higher decision-making academic levels.

Capacities for gender mainstreaming

- Specialized training and tools developed and capacities of working groups drafting the sectoral strategies enhanced for the mainstreaming of gender issues in the NSDI 2013-2020.
- Amendments to the law on registration of immovable properties adopted with provisions to strengthen women's property rights. Capacities of the Immovable Property Registration Office and notaries strengthened to implement these provisions.
- Adoption of the Council of Ministers (CoM) Decision on gender mainstreaming in the medium-term budgetary program and subsequent development and adoption of the guidelines to provide practical assistance on how to mainstream gender into sectoral budgetary planning processes in the context of the Medium Term Budgetary Programme (MTBP). As a result, two budgetary programmes (MoLSAEO & MoAFCP) included for the first time gender objectives, targets and products in the budget cycle of 2014-2016 while for the next budget cycle this exercise is obligatory for all other line ministries.
- Criminal Code amended twice, with- gender equality and violence against women recommendations incorporated- reflecting most of CEDAW Committee's concluding observations. Other legal amendments from the gender equality perspective discussed with legal professionals in a series of consultations, resulting in reaching a consensus on the need to further clean Albanian legislation from gender biases.
- Over 380 judges and other legal professionals (lawyers, bailiffs, medico-legal personnel) knowledgeable of new legislative changes from the gender equality perspective and of international instruments on women's rights, such as CEDAW and CoE Istanbul Convention. These legal professional are also demonstrating commitment to apply this knowledge in their everyday cases thereby establishing new practices that provide better guarantees for

women's human rights and protection from discrimination and violence. School of Magistrates lecturers' capacities increased in gender equality and non-discrimination jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and European Court of Justice.

- Gender mainstreaming processes at the local level have progressed in 7 municipalities with local development strategies fully engendered or with separate Gender Equality Action Plans developed in translation of the National Strategy. These processes pro-actively involved women alongside with men in local planning and with full time gender equality employees per the requirements of the Gender Equality Law. All of the seven municipalities have now full-time gender equality employees as required by the Gender Equality Law.
- Albanian judicial practice on family law analysed from the women's rights perspective with a view to improve it in light of the CEDAW Committee recommendations

Two gender self-assessment processes in the security sector (Ministry of Defense and Albanian State Police) were conducted, producing a number of recommendations to promote gender equality and women's leadership along with the provision of a more gender-sensitive service to the community. Based on these, gender equality action plans were developed and implementation is under way.

- Key Albanian officials exposed to gender mainstreaming efforts, approaches and tools of the Swedish Government.
- Evidence has been provided through an assessment on the direct impact that high quality ECD services have on women economic and social empowerment; three quarters of the women accept that due to the fact that their children is enrolled in a service, not only it is easier for them to work and develop, but there is more harmony in their family which leads to female empowerment, reducing stress within the household; reducing violence and making women feel happier.

Combatting gender-based violence

- The UN support on gender-based violence work is spread across different levels: a) on policy and legislation improvement; b) on strengthening mechanisms and capacities for implementation of said legislation/policies at the central and local level; c) on improving data collection, in order to feed into policy-making but also to improve monitoring of progress; d) on investing in prevention through involvement of men and boys as allies in combating gender stereotypes, inequalities and violence.
- More than 1 in 2 women in Albania say they have suffered by at least 1 form of GBV in the hands of their family members. Official statistics, developed with UN support, show that prevalence has increased from 56% in 2007 to 59.4% in 2013. This increase is mainly in the psychological and emotional abuse, also speaking of a stronger awareness on what constitutes psychological abuse.
- However, the new stats reveal a slight but encouraging decrease in its most severe forms, physical and sexual violence. Authorities have considerably improved the response to cases through UN backed professional capacity building interventions, establishment and consolidation of community coordinated response (CCR), mechanisms, provision of sheltering services and monitoring and reporting through statistics. This is evidenced by the upward trend that the reporting rate to police and other authorities is constantly displaying

(from 2181 reported cases in 2011, to 2526 and 3020 cases reported in 2012 and 2013 respectively).

- With UN advocacy and technical expertise, the Criminal Code was amended twice, in 2012 and 2013 to better address various forms of gender-based and domestic violence and to strengthen accountability of perpetrators. With the entry into force of the amendments to the Criminal Code the number of criminal proceedings against DV increased; 1212 cases were criminally prosecuted in 2013 versus 867 cases in 2012. In Durres, for instance (the 2nd largest city in Albania), a good 110 of 474 reported cases were referred for criminal prosecution, in addition to civil protection orders.
- The country ratified the Istanbul Convention in December 2012, signed the COMMITT declaration in February 2012 and held a Parliament hearing on the VAW issue. A Roadmap study to inform preparations for implementation of the Istanbul Convention was developed with several technical meetings on different aspects that require Albania to improve or change to ensure compliance.
- Community Coordinated Response (CCR) mechanisms are spreading around the country. Local authorities and other stakeholders are keen on establishing a multi-disciplinary response to cases but also system accountability is also encouraged through this mechanism. Local level reports to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth show a visible difference in the number of cases reported between municipalities where there is a functioning CCR (higher) and those where there is no inter-disciplinary collaboration (significantly lower). In two municipalities an expansion of the CCR mechanism to rural areas has also been piloted.
- Development of a national online database on domestic violence cases and capacity building interventions for various types of its users, will, from the 1st of June 2014, enable the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to have statistics available in real time, to evidence non-compliance with CCR legislation, to address system bottlenecks by intervening where and as needed to continuously improve coordinated response and to develop better policies to address gender-based and domestic violence.
- Through the life of this Programme, Albania saw the highest involvement of men and boys in combating violence against women. Development of a National Plan for Involvement of Men and Boys in combatting violence against women was also largely greeted and welcomed by men and women of all walks of life.

Economic empowerment of women

- Study on Women Entrepreneurs conducted providing a baseline for women entrepreneurs' constraints and opportunities.
- A joint, UN agencies Plan of Interventions for Women's Economic Empowerment that was developed in the course of the programme was necessary to lay common grounds for future planning and coordination between agencies, as well as to encourage women's empowerment mindset in all other UN economic development programming. Implementation of some activities envisaged in the Plan are being implemented at the local level.
- In addition, a study on judicial practice in protecting women's rights in labour disputes was finalised together with guiding leaflets in lay person language to help women navigate the

legal system. The study reveals that women rarely utilize available legal remedies to demand their economic rights. Their lack of knowledge of labour legislation, does not give them a strong negotiating power from the very start of labour relations. The findings of this study provide further arguments for continuous UN assistance and increased government investment in developing policies, improving practices and increasing women's awareness towards their economic empowerment.

- Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship, through a consultative and participatory process developed a National Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs as part of the Strategy for Business Development and Innovation (2014-2020).
- Several dialogue forums conducted with the National Council on GE, civil society and key development partners on women's economic empowerment resulting in a general consensus on the requisite policy issues to foster women's economic empowerment.
- With UN support, the new draft of the NSDI contains specific objectives and activities designed to empower women economically.
- Evidence generated on the impact of high-quality early childhood services on women's economic and social empowerment – the findings of the study will guide advocacy and technical support to develop relevant cross-sectoral policies.

Gender Equality in the revised Results Framework of the PoC

The Mid Term Review 2014 has been conducted as a home-made, interactive process with contributions of staff at all levels, as well as the guidance and support of various line ministries and other government counterparts. The aim of this exercise was to look back at the first two years of implementation of the Government of Albania – United Nations Programme of Cooperation 2012 – 2016, and draw lessons and recommendations from it.

The recommendations coming from the various joint meetings already held (e.g. the country analysis workshop, the UNCT Retreat and the Programme Review) reinforced the need to adjust our results framework to a changing development context in Albania. The review process drew lessons from the UNCT Gender Scorecard conducted in 2013 and relevant aspects contained in the UN SWAP, in order to ensure a better mainstreaming and highlight opportunities for gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the PoC. The intensive internal and external consultation process, informed by previous analysis in the form of background papers, determined four results areas under the following headings:

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| Outcome 1. | Human Rights – |
| Outcome 2. | Inclusive Social Policy |
| Outcome 3. | Governance |
| Outcome 4. | Regional and Local Development |

In the four outcomes of the revised results framework, specific gender objectives are clearly articulated and encompass 6 outputs, while the remaining 9 considerably reflect gender dimensions.

The new draft NSDI for the 2014-2020 period and the updated sector and cross-sector strategies, the recommendations from the UPR review and expected Concluding Observations from the CEDAW Committee to Albania's fourth periodic review (in 2014), together with the imminent entry into force of the CoE Convention on Preventing and Combatting VAW and DV, the constitution of a new Parliament and Government and the EU candidate status prospects for Albania, constitute important opportunities to further address issues related to gender equality, women's empowerment and the combat of VAW/DV. The expressed strong interest and commitment of the current government programme to gender equality and to promoting women in leadership and decision-making positions is very encouraging. At this critical stage for Albania, the support and expertise of the UN would help the country gain a stronger momentum in progressing towards gender-equality, respect for human rights, addressing gender-based violence and discrimination on grounds of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Future areas of UN focus on the Gender Equality Agenda (2014 and beyond)

The following are some key issues requiring longer term support and commitment for the consolidation of progress in the gender equality area:

Outcome 1: Human Rights and gender equality considerations guide interactions between citizens and institutions.

- Supporting **women's leadership and political participation**:
 - Advocacy for increasing representation of women as candidates and elected officials following the upcoming local elections with a strong focus on enforcement of the 30% quota by targeting political parties and women's political forums.
 - Supporting elected women at national and local level to strengthen their capacities to network (Alliance of Women MPs), exchange knowledge and support women's agenda.
 - Political parties supported to reform their internal structures and regulations to facilitate women's political participation.
 - Strengthening of the monitoring, accountability and reporting of oversight mechanisms (Ombudsman and Anti-Discrimination Commissioner) on gender equality issues, with a particular focus on the enforcement of GEL.
 - Supporting Institutionalization of Community Based Scorecards as a monitoring and accountability tool at the very grassroots level to address women priorities and needs in local plans and budget in collaboration with the local government.
 - Capacity building of women's civil society networks and media to advocate and lobby for women as a political constituency, women's leadership and equal representation. Institutionalizing young women's and men's leadership education and skills through educational institutions.

Promoting **equitable access to justice for women and men**

- Promoting and protecting women's property and other economic rights and access to justice so as to strengthen their status in the economy and family.
 - Continuous support for strategic litigation for women's rights, court and other public offices monitoring of implementation of legislation and international norms on women's and LGBT rights.
 - Analysing barriers to women's access to justice and supporting national action to remove those barriers and make the system more accessible for a variety of women and men.
- **Preventing and combatting VAW and DV:**
 - In view of the entry into force of the CoE Convention on Prevention and Combatting of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in August 2014 and the roadmap and costing prepared with the support of the UN in 2013, further support is needed to ensure implementation and establishment of new and quality services at the national and local level, particularly by establishing two additional, regional shelters, upgrading of the National Shelter in Tirana into a one-stop-shop for services to gender-based and domestic violence survivors, establishment of a national telephone line, making the medico-legal service more friendly for survivors of gender-based violence.
 - Expansion and consolidation of the community coordinated response mechanism against domestic violence.
 - In light of the growing number of lethal cases of domestic violence in recent years, awareness raising on gender-based violence and particularly information of the rights and remedies available to survivors needs to continue, with a particular focus on youth.
 - Deepen and expand investment in prevention through solid support to implementation in of the National Plan for Involvement of Men and Boys as Partners to Women and Girls for Gender Equality and against GBV (2014-2020).

Outcome 3: The Albanian State executes major governance processes following internationally agreed democratic principles and practices, while upholding the rule of law and eliminating key factors of exclusion of women

- Advocating for **further reforms and legal amendments** from a gender perspective to influence policies and concrete interventions based on wealth of knowledge produced during 2012-2014 with a specific focus on:
 - Supporting national partners in implementing and enforcing the newly amended gender-aware legislation, thereby ensuring that legal opportunities are translated into factual gains for women.
 - Support to the gender-equality mechanism and to the gender mainstreaming process at the central and local level, taking into account the restructuring of the new government and responding to the new governmental priorities. Continue to support evidence-based policy making to ensure gender equality and proper gender mainstreaming

- Monitoring the implementation of the CoM decision on gender budgeting in the pilot Ministries and support for its implementation in all line Ministries and in the regional development funds to ensure implementation at the local level.
- Further support to data collection and processing bodies with a view to ensure proper implementation of the obligations to measure and monitor statistical indicators on gender equality and women's empowerment
- Strengthen capacities of **Parliament and electoral management bodies** in playing their core functions
 - Stronger support to electoral management bodies to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to comply with gender equality law (GEL) and electoral code provisions.
 - Capacity strengthening interventions for various commission members, including Women MPs Alliance, and for parliament administrative staff to duly highlight gender equality commitments in legislative and oversight roles of the Parliament

Outcome 4: Government of Albania implements policies that advance democratic, equitable and sustainable regional and local development

- Supporting concrete interventions on **women's economic empowerment** based on the Action Plans developed as part of the sectoral strategies and NSDI and based on the UN Plan of Interventions for Women's Economic Empowerment, with a special focus on rural and disadvantaged women with a view to help them build their economic resilience and reduce their likelihood to succumb to gender-based violence.
 - Follow-up of the Action Plan on Women Entrepreneurs in Albania being developed jointly with the Ministry of Economy and Trade. Support to proposed programs in the final Action Plan, which is an integral part of the Business and Investment Strategy 2013-2022. For instance: credit lines from women entrepreneurs; support for start-ups and growth capacity building programs for women entrepreneurs and networking etc.
 - Piloting of concrete active labor market measures dedicated to women with the purpose to improve women's employment outcomes in specific pilot areas (Gender Analysis of ALMMs in the NES-National Employment Services of Tirana, Kukes, Shkodra and Vlora have already been undertaken, so these offices are ready to accept and implement new ALMMs dedicated to women).
 - Mainstreaming gender in VET curricula and technical support to MoSWY to identify and develop VET courses in high productivity areas, particularly in high-value non-farm activities in rural areas for women.

Several concrete activities aiming at improving the economic situation of women in the regions of Dibra, Vlora and Korça are included in the 2014 WP deliverables through increasing self-employment opportunities for particularly poor, marginalized, and vulnerable women, particularly women that are de jure or de facto heads of households.

The initiatives identified following a careful analysis of all proposed areas envisage interventions in the following areas:

- **Creating and growing women economic activities in rural and semi-rural areas** – supporting initiatives to improve productivity and develop higher value products and services, in a sustainable manner, and to the benefit of women groups;
- **Delivering innovative training programs** – supporting innovative approaches to training topics that will benefit both women activities and communities, with the focus being on enabling women to become or remain economically active, and to increase household income;
- **Maximising local resources potential** – Realising the vast economic potential of the areas' environmental and cultural heritage through creating links to and between sectors such as forestry, agro-tourism, and agro processing.