

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ELBASAN

POSITION PAPER

WOMAN FORUM ELBASAN



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Topic: Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Municipality of Elbasan

➤ Topic Background

The municipality of Elbasan is located in the central part of Albania. The municipality of Elbasan is bordered on the north by the municipality of Tirana, on the east by the municipality of Librazhd, on the south-east by the municipality of Prrenjas, on the south-west by the municipality of Gramsh and on the west by the municipalities of Cërrik and Peqin. The center of the municipality is the city of Elbasan.

The municipality of Elbasan is one of the largest in Albania, as well as one of the most complex municipalities to be administered. The city of Elbasan, with about 80 thousand inhabitants, currently has about 60% of the population of the municipality while the rest were attached after the new territorial division which consists of 12 administrative units, units Bradashesh, Papër, Gjergjan, Labinot - Fushë, Labinot - Mal, Funarë, Gracen, Tregan, Shushuica, Shigjan, Gjinar and Zavalina. The area of Elbasan is 872 km, from 79 km before the Territorial Administrative Reform of 2014. We have an increase of approximately 110 times the area of the municipality.

The Municipality of Elbasan is the first municipality in Albania to initially implement the principles of Participatory Budgeting in 2004 and then Gender Budgeting in 2009 with the support of the Woman Forum Elbasan. Budgeting is a method through which women and men influence local decision-making and the allocation of public resources to better reflect the needs and priorities of the community. With the support of International Organizations, this municipality has created a sustainable model of participatory budgeting, while from December 2020 it has received support from the Woman Forum Elbasan through the Gender Responsive Budgeting program. One of the direct and tangible achievements of this project was the funding of the rent of the emergency shelter managed by the Woman Forum Elbasan for victims of domestic violence for 10 months by the municipality of Elbasan.

Men and Women are not equal. They have different practical and strategic needs. They have different access to resources and assets. The local government knows better than the central government who in its locality are the poorest and most marginalized. These populations differ from the general national characteristics of the poor. Municipalities need to acknowledge and use national, regional and international human rights standards (including CEDAW) in developing their strategy and monitoring their implementation to assess their impact on core equality.

The municipality of Elbasan since 2010 has appointed a Gender Equality Officer who played until a few months ago the role of Local Coordinator against domestic violence. The municipality of Elbasan currently has a full-time Gender Equality Officer and a full-time Local Coordinator

against Domestic Violence. This is an achievement after many efforts by the Directorate of Social Care and lobbying of civil society in Elbasan and beyond.

The municipality of Elbasan *signed the European Charter on February 23, 2017*, making it part of the documents and instruments that guide the actions and steps taken in all aspects of life: political, economic, social and cultural.

It has drafted the first Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018 - 2020, which is an important tool for the implementation in practice of public commitments undertaken by the municipality of Elbasan in relation to the principles of equality, planning and implementation of women's needs and rights and men¹, young men and women², as well as girls and boys³. It was prepared as the first step in the practical implementation of the European Charter for the Equality of Men and Women in Local Life⁴.

Certainly, the municipality of Elbasan, in support of the international and national legal framework, as well as national and local priorities, has made its efforts over the years to build a society of equal opportunities, taking a series of concrete steps in this direction. The municipality of Elbasan was the first municipality in Albania to initially apply the principles of participatory budgeting (since 2004) and then gender budgeting (2009).

Yet, equality between women and men, young men and women, girls and boys in practice, in everyday life, is still far from being a reality! Therefore, the established gender equality structures in the municipality and the Municipal Council play an important role in budgeting services for victims of domestic violence. In the municipality of Elbasan, the following have been established and are functioning: the Gender Equality Commission in the Municipal Council and the Gender Equality Commission, the Alliance of Women Councilors of the Municipal Council and recently the Extended Alliance of Women Councilors of the Municipal Council has been formed, which consists of heads of departments in municipality. The Gender Equality Commission in the Municipal Council ensures that certain gender decisions are analyzed in relation to gender effects before projects are adopted.

One of the positive initiatives that the Woman Forum Elbasan has achieved through lobbying with local government institutions and particularly the municipality of Elbasan and the Municipal Council was the signing of a cooperation agreement to support with municipality funds the rent of the emergency shelter for women and girls' survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence for 10 months. On July 29, 2021, this agreement between the municipality and the Woman Forum Elbasan to cover the rent of the emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence, was approved by the Elbasan Municipal Council, where the mayor, council of the mayor, general

¹ "Women and men" include the age period starting from over 35 years, until the end of life (ie. including the elderly).

² "Young people" includes the age period from 18-35 years

³ "Girls and boys" include the age period from 0-18 years

⁴ http://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf

secretary, budget chief, alliance of women councilors, the head and members of the Municipal Council played a major role for reaching this agreement.

➤ Country Policy

Beside the Law on Gender Equality, the National Strategic Plan on Gender Equality, other legal frameworks on GRB in the local level are:

- **Law no. 57/2016**⁵ on some amendments and additions to law no. 9936, dated 26.6.2008, "On the management of the budget system in the Republic of Albania", amended. The amendments included mandatory hearing sessions with each Central Budget Institution and with the Ministry of Finance. In addition, minutes taken in the hearing session will be part of the Mid-term Budget Programing (MTBP) document.
- **Law 68/2017- "On local self-government finances"**⁶. This law on Local Finances made GRB a mandatory requirement and created opportunities for effective inclusion of GRB in all phases of the local financial management cycle such as annual and mid-term budget programing, monitoring and reporting, evaluation as well as auditing by LGU. Article 2⁷, point 8 states that the law itself aims to ensure that the creation and distribution of local financial resources of local self-government units is accelerated and gender equality is achieved.

Article 36⁸, point "c" on Mid-Term Local Budget Program, states that at least one of the policy objectives of the programs should address issues of gender inequality or full respect for gender equality, clearly identifying products and other measurable indicators based on gender.

In addition, Article 54⁹, point 2, letter "I" which deals with financial reporting emphasized that financial indicators that are published include, but are not limited to, the ratio of expenditures to policies that support gender equality to total expenditures.

➤ Possible Solutions

Discrimination against women / girls is evident in decision-making and benefiting from public funds, therefore an increased attention is required for citizen awareness, especially of women / girls, monitoring of budget building processes, expenditure analysis and lobbying for a budget that responds to the needs of women and men, in the most balanced way without creating large gender differences. Some issues to considered are recommended as follow:

- Increase the active role of the Gender Equality Officer as part of working groups in drafting strategies, programs and when participatory budgeting meetings are organized and community needs are discussed.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Retrieved from: <https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/LIGJ-nr.-68-date-27.4.2017.pdf>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

- The establishment and operation of a rehabilitation center for victims of domestic violence with long-term residence is one of the priorities set by this municipality, for which it is recommended to continue working in order to budget this important service.
- Establishment of 1 or 2 kindergartens in two of the largest tailor companies in the Municipality Elbasan, in order to employ and economically empower women.
- Design / diversify women's economic development programs by increasing their access to small business subsidy schemes offered by the municipality of Elbasan.
- Lighting of areas with potential risk of violence and abuse, especially for women and children (Rinia Park, etc.).
- Development of sports with volleyball, basketball, tennis and the creation of a women's football club.
- All directorates should be committed to achieving gender equality by not considering this only as the responsibility of a directorate, that of social services and gender officers.
- It is recommended to strengthen the Needs Assessment Units as well as the extension of services in the Administrative Units.
- Creating the conditions for gender-responsive local governance Often, a local government's willingness to advance gender equality on the political agenda is directly and strongly linked to its knowledge of what gender equality is and why striving for equality between women and men brings communities political, social and economic benefits. Municipal GEOs should strive to demonstrate the link between gender equality, socio-economic development and local governance. However, it is necessary that the process of building knowledge and skills be led by the leaders of the municipality.
- Knowledge should be combined with the capacity to implement effective projects and programs aimed at addressing gender-based inequalities. The first step towards capacity building should be to raise awareness: to make local officials, at all levels and in all positions, aware of how our institutions, systems, processes, relationships and policies are based on ideas and (often) stereotypes about the different and unequal roles and responsibilities of women and men - and why it matters. Without this basic awareness, efforts to build gender-related capacities can easily be ignored, no longer prioritized, encountered resistance, or actively undermined.
- Development of technical systems that enable the collection of an accurate database for local policy making. From a gender perspective, the most important systems to set up at the local government level are data systems that enable the collection, processing and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. Gender-disaggregated data - collected to include both men and women, and analyzed by gender experts - are essential for the development of relevant public policies and services that respond to women's needs and priorities. and men, girls, and boys.
- Adaptation of national frameworks for gender equality according to local realities. This is not just a result of decentralization. It is about better understanding the specific needs, priorities and interests of women and men, boys and girls, which are shaped by local practices as well as local socio-economic and political realities.

CITED WORKS

1. **Law 57/2016 on Organic Budget Law**

https://www.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/LOB_i_ri_nr_57_dt_02.06.2016_-_MIRATUAR_ne_KUVEND_ENGLISH.rtf

2. **Law 68/2017 on Local Self-government Finances**

<https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/LIGJ-nr.-68-date-27.4.2017.pdf>

3. **Guideline no.7/2018 "On standard procedures for the preparation of the medium-term budget program**

https://www.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Udhezimi_nr.7_date_28.2.2018_Per_procedurat_standarde_te_pergatitjes_se_PBA.pdf

4. **Public Financing Management Action Plan 2020-2022**

<https://www.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PFM-Action-Plan-Revised-2020-2022.pdf>