

Project: “Gender mainstreaming in local service delivery across SEE through NALAS”

Terms of Reference

Regional Gender Expert for Collecting and Documenting Human-Interest Stories on Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

1. Background

The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe – NALAS unites 13 local government associations across South-East Europe. Its mission is to enhance local governance and public service delivery by fostering knowledge exchange, building capacity, and advocating for policy improvements. NALAS promotes collaboration among its members, disseminates best practices and aids local authorities in pursuing sustainable development and effective decentralisation.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is an innovative approach applied in the South-East Europe (SEE) region, making the exchange of best practices a critically important tool for promoting the concept and helping local governments achieve their gender equality objectives. It enables them to build on existing experiences and results, rather than starting from scratch. As the use of GRB grows in SEE and the EU, such exchanges will support progress while saving time and resources.

In this direction, NALAS continuously strives to improve its capacities, as well as the capacities of its members, the Local Government Associations (LGAs) from South-East Europe (SEE), for gender mainstreaming and especially GRB at both the governance and operational levels.

The NALAS Methodology for collecting and managing knowledge on GRB best practices was successfully applied in 2020, resulting in the creation and publication of the Compendium of Gender Responsive Budgeting: Best Practices for Practitioners at the Local Level in South-East Europe.

This compendium documents GRB best practices aligned with the gender equality objectives outlined in the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. The identified practices were selected using a methodology designed to highlight clear and tangible GRB initiatives. These initiatives demonstrate how local policymaking and budgeting processes were adapted to include a gender perspective, the GRB tools used, and their impact on the status of women and men in the municipality.

The collected GRB best practices were disseminated through the NALAS Knowledge Management System (KMS), which stimulates the exchange of information and experiences among its members. A collection of these practices was published by the NALAS Knowledge Center as an e-publication on the NALAS website. Additionally, they were featured as case studies in the NALAS E-Academy, providing practical knowledge that local government professionals could immediately apply in their workplaces.

The project “Gender mainstreaming in local service delivery across SEE through NALAS” implemented in partnership with UN Women, aims to integrate gender perspectives into local competencies by expanding the NALAS methodology for engendering local services. By applying this methodology to a selected local level service, the project will produce case studies and knowledge products, including a booklet of best practices. Through NALAS, these resources will be widely distributed to local authorities across the SEE region. To address abovementioned challenges, it is essential for associations of local authorities to take a leading role as key actors in providing knowledge and expert support. This can be achieved by implementing advanced

tools and initiatives and fostering the exchange of best practices at the national and regional levels, significantly contributing to enhanced gender equality within local governance structures.

One of the key project results includes the collection and dissemination of best practices in human-interest stories on GRB at the local level, through the NALAS Knowledge Management System (KMS), to the local authorities in the SEE region.

The booklet of human-interest stories will harness the power of storytelling to make complex and technical budgeting processes more relatable and impactful. By showcasing how GRB policies affect real people, especially women and marginalized groups, through improved access to services, participation, and opportunities, these stories will bring policies to life in meaningful and accessible ways. The booklet will not only amplify the voices of those often excluded from decision-making, but also foster empathy, raise awareness, and build support among both the public and policymakers. Most importantly, it will serve as a form of appreciation and recognition for local efforts, capturing and sharing best practices that demonstrate the tangible impact of gender-responsive policies.

2. Objective and Scope of the Assignment

Given the above, NALAS is seeking a competent Regional Gender Expert whose main objective will be to support the collection of best practices in human-interest stories on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) at the local level and to prepare a booklet for the dissemination of these practices to local authorities in the SEE region.

The Regional Gender Expert will work in close collaboration with, and provide support to, the NALAS Knowledge Management Assistants (KMA) and the NALAS group of Gender Focal Points (GFP), who will be responsible for collecting data and information on best practices at the local level in their respective economies within the SEE region.

The Regional Gender Expert shall execute the following activities and deliver related outputs:

Activity		Related output/deliverable	Expert days	Timeline
Collection and dissemination of the best practices on human interest stories on GRB at local level to local authorities				
1	Revision and adaptation of the NALAS Methodology for the collection of good practices on GM and GRB in SEE, and development of a Template and instructions for collecting best practices in human-interest stories on GRB at the local level.	The Methodology and Template prepared and consulted with NALAS GFP.	1	21 – 31 July 2025
2	Introduction of the Methodology and Template for collecting best practices in human-interest stories on GRB at the local level to the KMA and GFP (online).	The Methodology and Template introduced to KMA and GFP.	1	21 – 31 July 2025
3	Support the process of collecting the necessary data and information. The best practices (two per economy) will be gathered by the KMA and GFP from the NALAS member LGAs.	At least ten (10) human-interest stories on GRB at the local level from different countries are identified, collected and documented	2	1 August – 20 September 2025

4	Editing and writing of the best practices in human-interest stories on GRB at the local level, compiled into a single publication in the form of a booklet.	A booklet containing at least ten (10) human-interest stories on GRB at the local level prepared and ready for dissemination through the NALAS KMS.	8	21 September - 15 November 2025
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The table above outlines the tentative timeframe for the implementation of activities.

The NALAS project staff shall approve all deliverables listed in the table above. Assignment Overall Report should be prepared and submitted to NALAS, before the last payment.

3. Timing and duration of the assignment

All the above-listed activities and the delivery of the expected outputs are planned to take place **between 21 July 2025 and 15 November 2025**.

4. Required Skills and Experience

4.1. Education

- Master's degree or equivalent in gender studies, women's studies, social sciences, public administration, international development, or other development-related fields.
- Additional training or education relevant to the topic will be considered an asset.

4.2. Experience

- At least 5 years of professional experience in gender-related policy and programme development in the public sector, particularly at the local government level. At least 2 years of regional experience in the SEE region.
- At least 3 years of experience with gender-responsive budgeting in the public sector, preferably at the local government level in SEE countries.
- Experience in writing analytical documents and reports, including articles and storytelling content. Must have conducted at least 3 gender-related analyses.
- Experience in implementing gender mainstreaming agendas across various sectors, including gender-responsive budgeting in local governments. Participation in at least 2 gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting projects is required.
- Experience working with regional or international development organizations will be considered an asset.
- Experience working with local governments and local government associations (LGAs) in SEE will be considered an asset.
- Strong public speaking and presentation skills in English. Please provide at least 3 references for participation in events (preferably regional conferences, trainings, workshops, etc.) in the capacity of panellist, keynote speaker, trainer, etc.

4.3. Language Requirements

- Written and oral proficiency in English is required. Fluency in one or more SEE languages will be considered an asset.

NALAS strives to ensure equitable representation of women and minorities in all its activities.

5. Application Procedure

Interested candidates are asked to send:

- a. CV.
- b. Cover Letter that responds to all requirements of the section “4. Required Skills and Experience” of this ToR.
Please provide concise description, one paragraph for each of the bullet points from the section 4 that correspond to your CV.
- c. Financial Offer shall specify gross amount per expert-day in EUR, as well as the total amount expressed in EUR.
The selection of the Expert will be made in accordance with the quality-cost based selection method (70 % technical component and 30% price component)

The CV, Cover Letter and Financial Offer shall be sent in separate pdf files to info@nalas.eu with subject line of e-mail message as follows: Regional Gender Expert NALAS

Emails without a proper reference code in the subject line may not be taken into consideration.

The application **deadline is July 6, 2025. DEADLINE EXTENDED until July 16, 2025.**

6. Guidelines Aimed at Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

The assignment and all related activities must be implemented in accordance with the relevant policies and guidelines designed to prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Annex 1).

7. Ownership

All materials, documents and information prepared, developed or adjusted by the expert and used for the purposes of preparation, conduct and implementation of the activities, as well as reporting, remain the property of the NALAS. The service expert agree that no part of the materials, documents and information may be reproduced or distributed in any form, or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, for any other purposes and objectives than those related to this ToR, without the prior permission of NALAS.

8. Reporting

The assignment report should be submitted not later than 15 days after the realisation of all activities and submission of deliverables. The standardised Report Format to be used will be provided as Annex to the Contract.

9. Performance indicators

The indicators reflecting the expert's performance are: Timely presentation of results and outputs, quality of task realisation, participants' evaluation results and quality of the reports to be provided to the reference person of this assignment.

10. Evaluation of work

The performance of the tasks will be assessed by the NALAS.

Annex 1 - Guidelines Aimed at Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

In relation to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse:

i. Undertaking that the Expert accepts the standards of conduct set out in section 3 of ST/SGB/2003/13 including, inter alia:

1. Acknowledging that Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse are strictly prohibited. Expert engaged to perform the Services shall not engage in Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Abuse.

2. Acknowledging the following specific standards:

- a. Sexual activity with any person less than eighteen years of age ("child"), regardless of any laws relating to the age of majority or to consent, shall constitute the Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of such person.

Mistaken belief in the age of a child shall not constitute a defence under this Contract.

- b. The exchange or promise of exchange of any money, employment, goods, services, or other thing of value, for sex, including sexual favours or sexual activities, shall constitute Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

Sexual relationships between the Expert engaged to perform the Services and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of UN Women and NALAS and are strongly discouraged.

ii. The Expert must take all appropriate measures to prevent Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse by anyone including any of its employees, personnel, subcontractors and others engaged to perform the Services.

iii. Acknowledging that NALAS and UN Women will apply a policy of "zero tolerance" with regard to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse including in respect to the Expert engaged to perform the Services.

iv. Reporting to NALAS and UN Women and investigating any allegation of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse as such allegations arise in the context of the Services.

v. Ensuring that Expert engaged to perform the Services have undertaken training on prevention and response to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, including information on the definition and prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the requirements for prompt reporting of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse allegations to NALAS and UN Women and referral of victims to immediate assistance.

Training options include the UN Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse online training available at: <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=7380>.

United Nations

ST/SGB/2003/13



Secretariat

9 October 2003

Secretary-General's Bulletin

Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

The Secretary-General, for the purpose of preventing and addressing cases of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and taking into consideration General Assembly resolution 57/306 of 15 April 2003, "Investigation into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa", promulgates the following in consultation with Executive Heads of separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations:

Section 1

Definitions

For the purposes of the present bulletin, the term "sexual exploitation" means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term "sexual abuse" means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Section 2

Scope of application

2.1 The present bulletin shall apply to all staff of the United Nations, including staff of separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations.

2.2 United Nations forces conducting operations under United Nations command and control are prohibited from committing acts of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and have a particular duty of care towards women and children, pursuant to section 7 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1999/13, entitled "Observance by United Nations forces of international humanitarian law".

2.3 Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/253, entitled "Promotion of equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat and prevention of sexual harassment", and the related administrative instruction¹ set forth policies and procedures for handling cases of sexual harassment in the Secretariat of the United Nations. Separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations have promulgated similar policies and procedures.

¹ Currently ST/AI/379, entitled "Procedures for dealing with sexual harassment".



Section 3

Prohibition of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

3.1 Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards and have always been unacceptable behaviour and prohibited conduct for United Nations staff. Such conduct is prohibited by the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules.

3.2 In order to further protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children, the following specific standards which reiterate existing general obligations under the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules, are promulgated:

(a) Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal;

(b) Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;

(c) Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance;

(d) Sexual relationships between United Nations staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and are strongly discouraged;

(e) Where a United Nations staff member develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not and whether or not within the United Nations system, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms;

(f) United Nations staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.

3.3 The standards set out above are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other types of sexually exploitive or sexually abusive behaviour may be grounds for administrative action or disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal, pursuant to the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules.

Section 4

Duties of Heads of Departments, Offices and Missions

4.1 The Head of Department, Office or Mission, as appropriate, shall be responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and shall take appropriate measures for this purpose. In particular, the Head of Department, Office or Mission shall inform his or her staff of the contents of the present bulletin and ascertain that each staff member receives a copy thereof.

4.2 The Head of Department, Office or Mission shall be responsible for taking appropriate action in cases where there is reason to believe that any of the standards listed in section 3.2 above have been violated or any behaviour referred to in section

3.3 above has occurred. This action shall be taken in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of staff misconduct.

4.3 The Head of Department, Office or Mission shall appoint an official, at a sufficiently high level, to serve as a focal point for receiving reports on cases of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. With respect to Missions, the staff of the Mission and the local population shall be properly informed of the existence and role of the focal point and of how to contact him or her. All reports of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse shall be handled in a confidential manner in order to protect the rights of all involved. However, such reports may be used, where necessary, for action taken pursuant to section 4.2 above.

4.4 The Head of Department, Office or Mission shall not apply the standard prescribed in section 3.2 (b), where a staff member is legally married to someone under the age of 18 but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship.

4.5 The Head of Department, Office or Mission may use his or her discretion in applying the standard prescribed in section 3.2 (d), where beneficiaries of assistance are over the age of 18 and the circumstances of the case justify an exception.

4.6 The Head of Department, Office or Mission shall promptly inform the Department of Management of its investigations into cases of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and the actions it has taken as a result of such investigations.

Section 5

Referral to national authorities

If, after proper investigation, there is evidence to support allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, these cases may, upon consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs, be referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution.

Section 6

Cooperative arrangements with non-United Nations entities or individuals

6.1 When entering into cooperative arrangements with non-United Nations entities or individuals, relevant United Nations officials shall inform those entities or individuals of the standards of conduct listed in section 3, and shall receive a written undertaking from those entities or individuals that they accept these standards.

6.2 The failure of those entities or individuals to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective action when sexual exploitation or sexual abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for termination of any cooperative arrangement with the United Nations.

Section 7

Entry into force

The present bulletin shall enter into force on 15 October 2003.

(Signed) Kofi A. Annan
Secretary-General