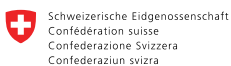




BOOKLET OF  
**HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES ON  
GENDER RESPONSIVE  
BUDGETING**

**BEST PRACTICES FOR PRACTITIONERS  
ON LOCAL LEVEL IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**



Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC







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**Editor:**

Kelmend Zajazi, NALAS Executive Director

**Publication Coordinator:**

Miodrag Kolić, NALAS Project Manager

**Authors:**

**Regional Gender Expert:** Ljupka Trajanovska

**National Gender Experts:** Anisa Subashi, Mirela Čaušević, Aleksandar Crkvenjaš, Edona Fazliu, Irina Luncasu, Ivana Nedović, Irena Nikolov, and Ervin Sezgin.

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## Introduction

This booklet presents a collection of Human-Interest Stories on Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) framed as best practices— a testament to how local governments across South-East Europe are translating gender equality commitments into tangible, everyday change. Developed within the framework of the NALAS and UN Women partnership, and grounded in the Methodology for GRB Best Practices Collection and Knowledge Management, these stories illuminate the human dimension of GRB: how budgetary decisions, when guided by inclusivity and equity, can reshape communities and improve lives.

The purpose of this booklet is to bridge the gap between policy frameworks and lived realities. By focusing on personal narratives, it highlights how gender-responsive measures lead to more inclusive services, fairer distribution of resources, and meaningful participation of women, men, and marginalized groups in local governance. Each story captures a unique journey — from identifying a gender gap, to applying GRB tools, to witnessing concrete improvements in access to services, safety, employment, education, or participation. Through these voices, the booklet demonstrates that gender-responsive budgeting is not an abstract concept, but a practical tool for social transformation and accountable governance.

The best practices featured in this booklet were identified using three main criteria: (I) effectiveness – assessing whether the practice works well and demonstrates measurable results in advancing gender equality; (II) replicability – determining whether the practice can be adapted and applied in other local contexts; and (III) learning potential – evaluating the extent to which the practice generates knowledge, inspires innovation, and contributes to institutional learning. These criteria ensure that each selected example represents a sustainable, inclusive, and results-oriented approach to gender-responsive budgeting. The ultimate goal is for local officials, practitioners, and policymakers to learn from these proven approaches, replicate successful models, and foster new, innovative solutions that advance gender equality across the South-East Europe region.

The Compendium encompasses 16 best practices from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Türkiye, and Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. The practices focus on the following areas: women's economic empowerment and employment; inclusive rural growth; care economy, health and social protection; culture, sport and inclusion; education, awareness and GBV prevention; GBV protection and response systems; women and peacebuilding; and data, governance and GRB mainstreaming. The Best Practices are collected by NALAS Group of Gender Focal Points, in cooperation with NALAS member associations, over the course of 2025.

By transforming technical data into relatable human experiences, this publication aims to inspire reflection, learning, and replication. It is designed not only for municipal practitioners, but also for policymakers, gender focal points, civil society actors, and development partners who seek to strengthen gender equality through evidence-based, participatory, and transparent budgeting. The booklet stands as both a learning resource and a celebration — honouring the municipalities that have shown leadership, innovation, and courage in advancing gender equality through local action.

Ultimately, these stories affirm a simple yet powerful message: **when budgets respond to people, they build communities where everyone belongs and thrives.**

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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo.



**Women's  
Economic  
Empowerment  
and  
Employment**

# Empowerment of Women and Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Tirana

*A sustainable municipal initiative that turns women's business ideas into thriving enterprises through dedicated funding, mentoring, and gender-responsive budgeting.*

## **Municipality of Tirana, Albania**

**Effectiveness:** 30 million ALL (approx.312.000 EUR) annual budget since 2022; over 120 women-supported businesses established or expanded.

**Gender impact:** Increased women's access to finance, mentoring, and business networks; reduced gender gap in entrepreneurship.

**Replicability:** Adopted by other municipalities such as Durrës and Shkodër as a working model.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB transforms municipal funding into a long-term mechanism for women's economic empowerment.

**Contact person:** Adela Bushaj, General Directorate of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana  
[Adela.Bushaj@tirana.al](mailto:Adela.Bushaj@tirana.al)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before 2021, women in Tirana faced significant barriers to entrepreneurship. Only 28% of small businesses were led by women, reflecting their limited access to capital, credit, and professional networks. Structural inequalities—such as the lack of mentoring opportunities and start-up support—kept many women's ideas from reaching the market.

These barriers were reinforced by gender stereotypes and traditional expectations around women's economic roles, leaving many capable and motivated women outside the formal economy. The gap was especially visible among single mothers, women from rural areas, Roma and Egyptian communities, and women with disabilities.

Recognizing that equal opportunity in entrepreneurship required more than encouragement, the Municipality of Tirana sought to create a system that would directly address these barriers through funding, training, and sustained mentoring — turning women's aspirations into viable, competitive businesses.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In December 2021, the Municipal Council of Tirana approved the Empowerment of Women and Promotion of Entrepreneurship initiative as part of its Strategy for Gender Equality and Local Economic Development. Implementation began in January 2022, when the first public call for applications was launched, allocating 30 million ALL annually from the municipal budget.

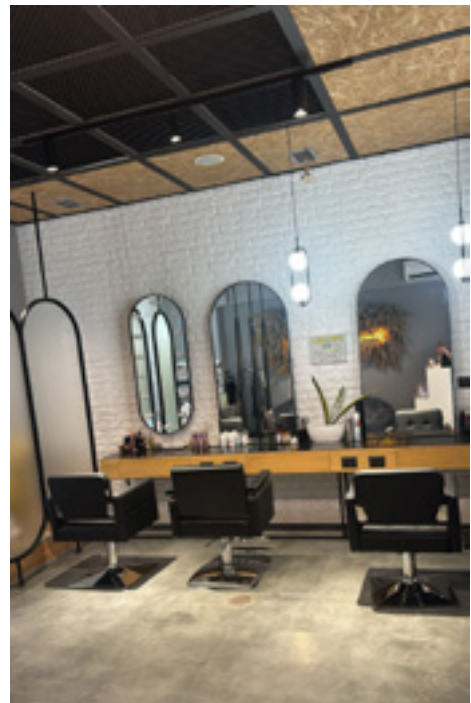
The initiative, coordinated by the General Directorate of Social Services, supports women with small-scale grants, mentoring, and business skills training. It emphasizes transparency, equal access, and sustainability, ensuring that support reaches the most promising and innovative business ideas.

Priority is given to single mothers, women with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian women, young women without work experience, and rural women, with a clear focus on inclusion. Applicants benefit not only from funding but also from personalized mentoring — a key innovation ensuring that women gain the knowledge, networks, and confidence to grow their enterprises sustainably.

Gender-responsive budgeting tools were applied at every stage — from planning and allocation to monitoring — including gender budget analysis, gender beneficiary assessment, and gender impact assessment. These tools enabled the municipality to allocate resources fairly, monitor the participation of women across diverse backgrounds, and track long-term social and economic impacts.

## Voices of Change

“My name is Katerina. In 2021 I opened my small hairdressing business. Being a single mother with young children came with many challenges and prejudices. Through the municipal support for women’s businesses, I received funding that helped me remodel my salon, integrate new services, and expand my clientele. I’ve since hired an assistant and gained confidence that we can grow even further. I recommend this type of support to every woman in business — because only by supporting one another can we truly empower ourselves.” – Beneficiary of the Municipality of Tirana entrepreneurship fund



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- More than 120 women entrepreneurs supported since 2022.
- Dedicated 30 million ALL annual budget secured in municipal planning (2022–2024).
- Creation of mentoring and training programs for women entrepreneurs.
- Simplified administrative procedures and improved access to municipal services.
- Integration of the initiative into the municipality's medium-term budget cycle.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The initiative has shifted perceptions about women's place in the economy. By financing women-led businesses and making them visible across the city, it challenged the stereotype that entrepreneurship is a male domain.

Women who were once excluded from formal networks have emerged as business leaders, mentors, and role models, inspiring others to start or formalize their own enterprises. This change extends beyond individual success stories — it is reshaping the local economy into one where women's contributions are recognized as vital for growth, innovation, and community development.

The visibility of women entrepreneurs has also encouraged institutions, private partners, and local media to view women's economic potential not as an exception, but as a standard part of Tirana's development narrative.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The initiative has become institutionalized in Tirana's budget and policy framework, anchored in national gender equality strategies and EU economic empowerment priorities. Its documentation and monitoring through sex-disaggregated indicators ensure accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

Its success has inspired replication in Durrës and Shkodër, proving that GRB-based models of women's economic empowerment could be scaled and adapted across different municipal contexts.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The initiative is fully integrated into the municipal budget and policy planning system, ensuring continuity and predictability of funding. Its sustainability is reinforced by:

- Political commitment and leadership support from the Municipality of Tirana;
- Dedicated institutional capacity within the Employment Promotion Directorate;
- Strong partnerships with civil society and business networks; and
- A structured monitoring system with gender indicators.

Lessons from Tirana show that combining financial support with mentoring produces more durable results than grants alone. The model has been recognized as a practical tool for applying GRB at the local level and is suitable for integration into training and learning platforms, promoting peer learning across the region.

# Support to Women's Entrepreneurship in Bar: Building a Gender-Balanced Local Economy

*A flagship municipal program that empowers women entrepreneurs through financial and advisory support, driving local economic growth and breaking gender barriers in business.*

## **Municipality of Bar, Montenegro**

**Effectiveness:** In the period 2019–2025, out of 341 business ideas within both general and women's support programs, 215 women have been supported. In financial means, out of total amount of €1.593.115, women get around €1 million, which means 61% for women.

**Gender impact:** Economic empowerment of women, increased participation in entrepreneurship, and reduced gender bias in access to municipal funds.

**Replicability:** Already replicated in 13 municipalities across Montenegro through initiatives of the Women's Political Network.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how long-term municipal commitment and GRB principles create lasting change in women's economic inclusion.

**Contact person:** Ms. Tanja Spičanović, Vice President of the Municipality of Bar  
[tanja.spicanovic@bar.me](mailto:tanja.spicanovic@bar.me)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before the establishment of a separate program for women's entrepreneurship, men applied more often and received more funding under Bar's general entrepreneurship support schemes. The lack of a formal mechanism to ensure equal access has limited women's participation in business development, particularly in larger or more competitive sectors.

Although local budgets allocated funds for entrepreneurship for several years, there was no clear procedure or framework that guaranteed gender-sensitive distribution. Entrepreneurship was still largely perceived as "a man's domain," both culturally and institutionally.

This prompted the leadership of the Municipality, led by Mayor Dushan Raichevich, to introduce a structured model of financial and mentoring support designed specifically to encourage women's innovation, self-employment, and business growth.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The practice was initiated in October 2019, when the Municipal Assembly adopted two key decisions that set the foundation for gender-responsive business support:

- Decision on the Criteria, Method, and Procedure for the Distribution of Funds to Support Women's Entrepreneurship (November 2019), and
- Program of Support for the Development of Entrepreneurship in the Municipality of Bar 2023–2026 (June 2023)

In December 2024, the Municipality adopted a new budget of €100,000 for women's entrepreneurship, with implementation starting on 3 March 2025, when the public competition was launched. A Commission for Distribution of Funds evaluated applications and selected total of 22 business ideas to receive financial support. The mayor signed all 22 contracts, marking a major milestone for women's economic empowerment in the municipality.

In addition to grants, Bar provides non-financial support — counselling, training, mentoring, and workshops — helping women develop business plans, register companies, and strengthen management skills.

Over seven years (2019–2025), the municipality supported 215 women business ideas and invested around €1,000,000, resulting in 125 newly established companies and a more inclusive local economy.

## Voices of Change

*"I am proud that through this program we have opened almost two hundred small factories that generate new jobs and that, from year to year, are successfully developing. The fact that over 85% of the businesses supported by the Municipality of Bar are still active and resistant to market challenges is especially pleasing. Women showed courage and determination to start their own business, and today we can rightly say that they are the driving force of local economic development." - Mr. Dušan Raičević, Mayor of the Municipality of Bar*



*"Thanks to the support I received from the Municipality of Bar, I managed to raise my business idea to a higher level and further improve the quality of my products. This support was not only financial; it was a wind at my back, a confirmation that my work has value and potential." - Sanja Tomašević Stanković, beneficiary, DOO "Simon art"*

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- 22 women entrepreneurs supported in 2025 with a total of €100,000.
- 341 business ideas financed since 2019, with €1.59 million invested for both men (39%) and women (61%).
- 125 new companies established, creating jobs and strengthening the local economy.
- Over 85% of supported businesses remain active, demonstrating long-term sustainability.
- Increased visibility of women as business owners and contributors to local economic development.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The initiative challenged the perception that entrepreneurship is male territory. By giving women direct access to funding and training, Bar created a new generation of female entrepreneurs who now participate equally in local business networks.

The program also influenced social attitudes — women who once hesitated to apply for municipal funds now lead small enterprises in tourism, crafts, services, and production, becoming visible examples of local leadership and economic independence.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The program is grounded in the Strategic Development Plan of the Municipality of Bar 2020–2025, which prioritizes “Support for Women’s Entrepreneurship through Business Ideas.”

It also aligns with the Female Entrepreneurship Development Strategy of Montenegro 2025–2028, contributing to the national indicator on the number of local governments providing program support to women entrepreneurs

The model’s success has been widely recognized — 13 of Montenegro’s 25 municipalities have already introduced similar measures following Bar’s example

### Sustainability and Learning Potential

The program continues to operate as an ongoing annual municipal measure, supported politically and financially by the Office of the Mayor. Its sustainability is ensured through:

- Continuous budget allocations;
- Strong leadership commitment;
- Cooperation with the Women’s Political Network, which advocates replication; and
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms that track business performance over one year.

Key enablers of success include leadership will, dedicated funding, and the persistence of beneficiaries who demonstrate tangible business results.

The practice proves that local gender-responsive budgeting can transform economic participation — turning municipal support into a tool for gender equality and sustainable growth.





# **Inclusive Rural Growth**

# Mobile Marketplace for Women Entrepreneurs: Empowering Local Producers in Prishtina

*A dynamic municipal initiative that brings women's businesses into the public space—linking rural producers, urban consumers, and inclusive local development.*

## **Municipality of Prishtina, Kosovo**

**Effectiveness:** Established in 2022 and formally implemented in 2023; mobile market operates three times a week in central squares; €134,000 total multi-year municipal budget.

**Gender impact:** Increased women's visibility, income, and access to markets; addressed structural inequalities in entrepreneurship.

**Replicability:** Already replicated in several neighboring municipalities with adapted models.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive planning can turn local markets into engines of equality and sustainable growth.

**Contact person:** Premtime Preniqi, Senior Officer for Gender Equality, Municipality of Prishtina [Premtime.preniqi@rks-gov.net](mailto:Premtime.preniqi@rks-gov.net)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before 2022, women entrepreneurs in Prishtina faced significant barriers to market access. They lacked permanent or affordable public spaces to sell their products and were underrepresented in agricultural and business support programs. Traditional gender roles and structural inequalities limited women's visibility and participation in local commerce, keeping many confined to informal or family-based production.

The main issue identified was the lack of equal access to markets and public spaces for women entrepreneurs. Many women producers were unable to display or sell their goods due to structural barriers and insufficient institutional support. This inequality limited their income-generating opportunities and hindered broader goals of gender equality and inclusive economic participation.

Although the Municipality supported local producers, women's economic participation remained low, particularly in agricultural markets. This gap motivated the Directorate of Agriculture and the Office for Gender Equality to design a practical and gender-responsive solution that would open public markets to women and bring equality into everyday economic life

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The Mobile Marketplace for Women Entrepreneurs was conceptualized in 2022 and formally approved in 2023 by the Municipality of Prishtina. A total of €134,000 was allocated across three years — €100,000 in 2023 for establishment, €24,000 in 2024, and €10,000 planned for 2025 — to secure infrastructure, logistics, and promotional activities

The market operates three times a week in key public locations — Zahir Pajaziti Square, Bill Clinton Square, and Adem Jashari Square — providing accessible selling spaces for local women producers.

The initiative was developed collaboratively by the Directorate of Agriculture and the Office for Gender Equality, with input from local producer associations. It was designed using Gender-Responsive Budgeting tools, including gender analysis, gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessment, and monitoring through sex-disaggregated indicators.

The public call for participation explicitly prioritized women applicants “under equal conditions,” awarding them additional evaluation points and free access to municipal infrastructure. This ensured equitable participation and transparent selection, particularly benefiting women from rural and marginalized communities.

## Voices of Change

*“Through the approach of exposing agricultural products in the mobile market, I have been able to sell the products I produce directly to consumers, establish direct contact with the community, and promote the different varieties of products I cultivate. This initiative has increased my financial income and strengthened my role as an independent producer.” - Female farmer and beneficiary of the initiative.*



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Mobile market organized three times weekly across central city squares.
- Women’s participation exceeded men’s, according to municipal monitoring.
- Women producers gained direct access to consumers without intermediaries, increasing income and market visibility.
- Rise in the number and diversity of products offered; increased availability of healthy, locally sourced food.
- Strengthened collaboration between women producers and municipal institutions, fostering trust and transparency.

### **Transformative Change in Gender Roles**

The Mobile Marketplace in Prishtina has become more than a trading space — it is a symbol of visibility, independence, and recognition for women entrepreneurs. Women who had long remained confined to the private sphere — producing from home or family farms — stepped into the city’s busiest public squares to present their work with pride.

Their presence in these marketplaces challenged long-standing assumptions that commerce and public life are men’s domains. By interacting directly with customers, negotiating prices, and promoting their brands, women producers claimed both economic and social space in the heart of the capital.

This shift in visibility not only altered community perceptions of women’s roles in agriculture and business but also inspired others — particularly young women and rural producers — to explore entrepreneurship as a viable path to autonomy. As one participant expressed, “selling in the market means being seen and valued.”

The initiative has thus contributed to a broader cultural change in Prishtina: women’s work is increasingly recognized as vital to the city’s economic life, and gender equality is being built transaction by transaction, market by market.

### **Institutional and Policy Impact**

The initiative is fully aligned with Prishtina’s Gender Equality Action Plan and Local Development Strategy, ensuring coherence with both national and EU gender equality frameworks.

It introduced a gender-sensitive budgeting model within the Directorate of Agriculture, influencing how municipal departments now integrate gender indicators and allocate funds

Evaluation findings confirmed tangible economic benefits for women, prompting the Municipality to include similar measures in its future budget planning and to advocate replication across Kosovo municipalities.

### **Sustainability and Learning Potential**

The practice is institutionalized within the municipal budget and continues to operate under the Directorate of Agriculture.

Its sustainability is supported by:

- Political will and leadership commitment;
- Multi-year budget allocation;
- Use of GRB tools for continuous monitoring and evaluation;
- Active cooperation with women entrepreneurs and local producers.

The model has been replicated in other municipalities through seasonal or smaller-scale markets, proving its adaptability. It offers strong learning potential for municipalities aiming to connect gender equality with local economic development, demonstrating that inclusive budget planning and transparent management can yield lasting impact.

# Greenhouses for Women Farmers: Growing Equality and Local Prosperity in Vushtrri

*A model initiative that empowers women farmers through modern greenhouse production, creating pathways for economic independence, healthy food systems, and gender equality in rural communities.*

## Municipality of Vushtrri, Kosovo

**Effectiveness:** Total budget €130,368; modern greenhouses and training provided to women farmers; four local fairs organized for product promotion.

**Gender impact:** Increased women's participation in agriculture, income, and market visibility; reduced economic dependence and strengthened gender equality in rural areas.

**Replicability:** Similar models introduced in neighboring municipalities; adaptable to various rural contexts.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB tools can turn agricultural support schemes into instruments for women's empowerment and local food security.

**Contact person:** Remzije Zekolli, Head of sector for human rights and gender equality, Municipality of Vushtrri; [remzije.zekolli@rks-gov.net](mailto:remzije.zekolli@rks-gov.net)

## Before Change: The Challenge

Before 2022, women farmers in Vushtrri faced persistent barriers to agricultural participation. They lacked access to modern infrastructure, technical support, and market opportunities, which limited productivity and income. Traditional gender norms kept most women engaged only in subsistence farming or unpaid family labour.

At the same time, the municipality recognized the need to strengthen local food systems and ensure a steady supply of fresh, organic produce. The absence of gender-responsive agricultural programs meant that women remained excluded from public investment schemes. Addressing these gaps became a priority for the Directorate of Agriculture, which saw women's inclusion as both a social and economic necessity.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In 2022, the Municipality of Vushtrri in partnership with the Islamic Relief Organization conceptualized a program to empower women farmers through access to modern greenhouses. The initiative was formally adopted in February 2023 under Municipal Decision No. 5544/23, with a dedicated budget of €130,368 for implementation.

Through a public call, priority was given to women applicants “under equal conditions,” ensuring targeted support for women in rural areas. Beneficiaries received greenhouses, seedlings, and technical training on sustainable cultivation.

To enhance visibility and direct sales, the municipality organized four agricultural fairs in Vushtrri and ensured transportation for women producers to participate in markets in Prishtina and Mitrovica.

The initiative was designed and monitored using gender-responsive budgeting tools — including gender beneficiary assessment and gender impact assessment — to ensure that resource allocation addressed women’s specific needs and barriers.

### Voices of Change

*“Through access to and cultivation of agricultural products, and with the kiosk provided by the municipality, I have been able to sell directly to consumers. This opportunity increased my family’s income and allowed me to promote the different types of products I cultivate.” – Woman farmer, final beneficiary*



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Women farmers gained access to modern greenhouses and technical support.
- Four local fairs enabled direct product promotion and income generation.
- Women’s participation in agriculture significantly increased, accompanied by a rise in average monthly income.
- Direct sales to consumers improved profits and reduced intermediaries.
- Women reported greater confidence and financial independence, reflecting measurable gender equality outcomes.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The greenhouse initiative broke long-standing gender barriers that kept women's work invisible and undervalued. For the first time, many women farmers in Vushtrri moved from subsistence farming to commercial production — not only growing food for their families but managing production cycles, setting prices, and earning their own income.

Their participation in local fairs and city markets gave women a public voice and economic identity. Standing behind their own stalls, negotiating directly with customers, and displaying their products reshaped how the community perceived women's roles in agriculture. What was once seen as “family help” became recognized as professional, income-generating work.

This visibility fostered mutual respect and collaboration between women farmers and municipal institutions. Women are now seen as partners in local development, actively consulted in agricultural planning and decision-making. In turn, the municipality's commitment to sustaining these opportunities reflects a growing understanding that women's empowerment strengthens the entire rural economy.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The initiative is integrated into Vushtrri's Local Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Directorate of Agriculture's Strategic Plan, ensuring sustainability and policy coherence.

It introduced a gender-sensitive budgeting model that influenced future municipal planning and resource allocation.

The experience enhanced local officials' capacity to apply GRB tools across sectors, paving the way for more inclusive development practices.

### Sustainability and Learning Potential

- The success of the greenhouse program rests on strong municipal commitment, community participation, and partnership with donors.
- Annual municipal budgets now include allocations to continue supporting women farmers through infrastructure, training, and subsidies.
- While financial limitations and infrastructure expansion remain challenges, the municipality and its partners are committed to extending outreach and ensuring continuity.

The initiative provides a scalable model for other rural municipalities: a low-cost, high-impact example of how integrating gender-responsive budgeting into agricultural policy can produce tangible economic and social benefits. It also serves as a learning case for capacity-building programs on GRB and gender mainstreaming within the NALAS E-Academy and similar platforms.

# Empowering Women through Local Incentives: Supporting Entrepreneurship and Rural Development in Prnjavor

*How the City of Prnjavor promotes women's self-employment and strengthens rural resilience through targeted budget incentives.*

## Prnjavor, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Effectiveness:** Continuous implementation of municipal incentives for self-employment and agriculture since 2018 and 2022, supporting women's participation and sustainability.

**Gender impact:** Increased number of women entrepreneurs and female heads of agricultural holdings.

**Replicability:** Easily transferable model for municipalities seeking to foster women's economic empowerment through local budget measures.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how targeted incentives and gender-responsive scoring criteria can promote equal access to resources and economic opportunities.

**Contact:** Danka Dević, Head of Entrepreneurship Department, City Administration of Prnjavor

## Before Change: The Challenge

Before 2018, women in Prnjavor faced significant barriers in accessing municipal incentives and starting independent businesses. The city lacked structured support for self-employment, and women in rural areas often depended on family agriculture without recognition or financial assistance. Entrepreneurship was predominantly male-dominated, while women's economic activity—especially in agriculture—was undervalued and informal.

Rural depopulation, limited access to credit, and lack of opportunities for young people further deepened the economic divide. The City Administration recognized these challenges through direct consultations with citizens and "Open Doors" meetings, where residents repeatedly raised concerns about unemployment and lack of support for women in rural development.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In response, the City Administration of Prnjavor introduced two complementary gender-responsive measures:

- “Start-up” Incentives for Self-Employment of Youth (since 2022)
- Agricultural Incentives with 10% Higher Subsidies for Women (since 2018)

Both initiatives were integrated into the city’s annual programs and aligned with the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality.

The Start-up program aims to support young entrepreneurs in launching sustainable businesses by providing funding in two instalments within one fiscal year. The evaluation process awards additional points to women, Roma, people with disabilities, and children of fallen soldiers, ensuring fair competition and inclusion.

In agriculture, the rulebook guarantees women farmers 10% higher financial incentives, directly acknowledging their contribution to rural development and encouraging them to stay and invest in the countryside.

Through these measures, the city has allocated 191,000 KM since 2022 for Start-ups (58,000 KM for women) and 26,960 KM in agricultural incentives for women since 2018.



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

The city’s dual incentive model has produced tangible improvements:

- A higher number of women entrepreneurs registered since 2022;
- A greater number of women-led agricultural holdings;
- Increased awareness of gender equality among applicants and city departments.

The success of these measures led to annual increases in the municipal budget for entrepreneurship and agriculture, confirming institutional commitment to gender equality.

### **Transformative Change in Gender Roles**

The initiative helped shift perceptions about women's roles in business and rural development. Women began taking on leadership and decision-making positions in local economic life, challenging stereotypes that limited them to unpaid family work. Participation in workshops and empowerment seminars further strengthened their confidence and visibility in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

### **Institutional and Policy Impact**

Both incentives are integrated into the city's Local Action Plan for Gender Equality, ensuring continuity and accountability. The City Administration's use of gender-sensitive scoring and budget rules has institutionalized fair access to municipal resources. Monitoring with sex-disaggregated data helps evaluate impact and refine future measures, making gender equality an ongoing element of local economic policy.

### **Sustainability and Learning Potential**

The practice's sustainability is ensured through dedicated budget lines, clear rulebooks, and annual monitoring. Regular consultations with citizens and gender-sensitive evaluation of applications allow the city to adjust its approach based on lessons learned.

Other municipalities can easily replicate the model by adopting transparent evaluation criteria, gender-based scoring, and targeted financial incentives for women. The success of Prnjavor shows that small, well-structured municipal measures can have lasting effects on economic participation, rural sustainability, and women's empowerment.



# Care Economy, Health & Social Protection

# In-home Care Services for the Elderly: Transforming Care and Gender Relations in Prilep, Krivogashtani, and Dolneni

*A pioneering model that turns unpaid women's care work into recognized professional employment while ensuring dignity and independence for elderly citizens.*

## **Municipalities of Prilep, Krivogashtani and Dolneni, North Macedonia**

**Effectiveness:** 170 elderly beneficiaries, 40 caregivers (80% women) trained and employed.

**Gender impact:** Reduced unpaid care burden, increased women's employment, engaged male caregivers.

**Replicability:** Applicable across municipalities with intersectoral cooperation and GRB integration.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how care work, when gender-analyzed and budgeted for, can drive both social inclusion and local economic development.

**Contact person:** Marina Tosheska, Association Center for Development and Education Prilep  
[marina\\_tosheska@yahoo.com](mailto:marina_tosheska@yahoo.com)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

In the heart of Pelagonia, the municipalities of Prilep, Krivogashtani, and Dolneni faced a shared and growing challenge – an ageing population, youth migration and a shortage of accessible social services. Thousands of elderly residents now live alone, often with reduced mobility and without family nearby. According to the 2021 Census, over 12,600 people aged 65+ live in Prilep, while Krivogashtani and Dolneni together count more than 1,600 seniors – most of them dependent on irregular family or neighbourly help.

Behind these numbers lies a clear gender dimension. For decades, care work—such as raising children, supporting the elderly, or tending to sick family members—has been seen as a private responsibility, one that has fallen almost entirely on women. Daughters, wives, and grandmothers have performed unpaid care work, often leaving formal employment or education. This invisible labour perpetuated gender inequality and poverty risks among women, while elderly citizens—especially those in rural areas—remained without reliable or professional assistance.

Municipal social plans for 2023–2026 identified a growing gap: the absence of community-based services that allow elderly people to live independently, and the need to formalize care work within the local economy.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The Association Center for Development and Education Prilep, together with the municipalities of Prilep, Krivogashtani, and Dolneni, decided to act. With support from the World Bank-financed Project for Improving Social Services and the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, they launched an innovative model: Home Care and Assistance Services for the Elderly.

The goal was twofold — to provide dignified support for older citizens and to create fair employment for women, particularly those long-term unemployed or from vulnerable groups.

Implementation began in January 2023, when the Association initiated the process of obtaining a service license under the Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette No. 104/2019). By August 2023, it became a licensed provider and hired 40 trained caregivers who started visiting homes across the three municipalities, reaching around 170 beneficiaries.

The total start-up budget was 1.68 million MKD for establishment and 22.2 million MKD for the first year of operation. Funding covered caregiver training, service coordination, and quality assurance, while municipalities provided logistical and administrative support.

From the outset, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) tools shaped the design. A gender cost-effectiveness analysis demonstrated that investing in home care yields economic and social returns, especially by enabling women's employment. A gender beneficiary assessment mapped needs by sex, age, and location, ensuring that both elderly women and men—urban and rural—were equally covered. Through a gender impact assessment, the team tracked how caregiving work, traditionally seen as “women's duty,” could be reframed as a professional and valued occupation.

## Voices of Change

*“The home care service has proven to be one of the most effective social innovations in our municipality. It not only supports elderly citizens to live with dignity in their own homes but also promotes women's employment and strengthens gender equality in the community.” – Representative from Municipality of Prilep*



*“Thanks to my caregiver, I can stay in my home and feel cared for and safe. She helps me not only with daily tasks but also makes me feel part of the community again.” – Beneficiary, Municipality of Prilep*

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

In its first year, the service achieved notable results:

- 170 elderly users—men and women equally—received regular in-home assistance, from hygiene and food preparation to companionship and psychosocial support.
- 40 caregivers were trained and employed, 80% of them women, many previously unemployed or inactive.
- Satisfaction among beneficiaries exceeded 90%, according to municipal surveys.
- Families—particularly women—reported reduced stress and caregiving pressure at home.

Beyond numbers, the initiative changed mindsets. Elderly people no longer feel invisible or dependent. For many women, the service brought the first stable income after years of unpaid domestic work.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

Care work—once invisible and undervalued—has gained recognition as both socially and economically essential.

- Men have started joining the caregiving workforce (10 of 58 total trained), challenging stereotypes that care is “women’s work.”
- Municipalities are embedding gender indicators into social protection planning and budgets.
- The community is learning that caregiving is not charity — it is professional, skilled work that benefits everyone.

*“Thanks to my caregiver, I can stay in my home and feel cared for and safe. She helps me not only with daily tasks but makes me feel part of the community again.” - Beneficiary, Prilep*

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The initiative strengthened cooperation between municipalities, the Ministry, and CSOs. It aligned with national priorities on deinstitutionalization, decentralization, and pluralization of social services. Following successful implementation, the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth signed a Management Agreement to secure continued funding for 2024–2025.

Municipalities are now collecting sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries and caregivers and using these insights to plan other gender-responsive services. The model also inspired complementary community-based programs such as “Nurse at Home,” “Physiotherapist at Home,” and “Psychologist at Home.”

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The Home Care and Assistance Service has proven to be both effective and replicable. The Association is now piloting complementary community-based services — such as mobile nursing, physiotherapy, and psychosocial support at home — responding to evolving local needs.

Its success is built on clear enabling conditions:

- Strong political will and inter-municipal cooperation;
- Partnership between government, civil society, and social work centers;
- Gender-sensitive training and monitoring systems; and
- Sustainable funding and alignment with national GRB frameworks.

Other municipalities, especially in rural contexts, can easily adapt the model provided these principles are maintained. Its dual benefit — empowering women economically while ensuring dignified care for the elderly — makes it a cornerstone example of gender-responsive local governance. Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into local care services turns social protection into an engine of equality and development. It values care as public investment — not private sacrifice — and transforms gender norms from within communities.

# Improving Access to Gynaecological Healthcare for Roma Women in Vinica

*A gender-responsive local initiative that breaks barriers to healthcare, empowers Roma women, and integrates equality into municipal budgeting and planning.*

## Municipality of Vinica, North Macedonia

**Effectiveness:** Free gynaecological services reached more than 70 Roma women; 90% were screened for the first time, and 87% said they would participate again.

**Gender impact:** Increased access of marginalized women to preventive care and information; improved gender-sensitive health planning at the local level.

**Replicability:** Applicable to municipalities with underserved Roma or rural populations where women face barriers to healthcare.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB and inclusive planning can address intersectional discrimination and promote equal health rights for all women.

**Contact person:** Elizabeta Koleva, Head of Department for Finance and Local Economic Development, Municipality of Vinica; [elizabeta.koleva@vinica.gov.mk](mailto:elizabeta.koleva@vinica.gov.mk)

## Before Change: The Challenge

Before 2021, many women in Vinica — particularly those from Roma and rural communities — faced multiple barriers to accessing gynaecological healthcare. Distance to clinics, lack of health insurance, limited awareness of preventive care, and social stigma prevented regular check-ups. Cultural norms and mistrust of institutions deepened the gap: Roma women rarely visited a gynaecologist unless serious symptoms appeared, and many pregnancies went without medical supervision.

Local data and consultations conducted within the municipal Social Plan (2023–2026) revealed that over 60% of Roma women of reproductive age had never undergone a preventive examination. The consequences were serious — late diagnosis of reproductive conditions, unplanned pregnancies, and increased risks for maternal and newborn health.

These findings also exposed a gender and equality gap in municipal budgeting. While the local health program financed general population services, no targeted measures or funds existed to address the specific needs of women from vulnerable groups.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In response, the Municipality of Vinica, supported by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) and in partnership with local CSOs and the Public Health Center Vinica, launched a pilot initiative to integrate Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) into local health planning.

The aim was to ensure that municipal resources and programs respond to the real needs of women and men, especially those facing intersectional discrimination such as Roma women.

The process began with a gender analysis of municipal health services, which identified three main problems:

- Limited access to gynaecological services in rural and Roma settlements;
- Insufficient information and awareness about preventive healthcare; and
- Lack of specific budget allocations for women's health.

Using GRB tools — including gender beneficiary analysis, gender-sensitive indicators, and cost-effectiveness assessment — the municipality, in cooperation with the Public Health Centre, re-allocated part of the local health budget to fund a targeted outreach program.

The initiative included:

- Free gynaecological examinations for uninsured and Roma women;
- Mobile medical visits to settlements distant from the town centre;
- Health education sessions on reproductive and sexual health; and
- Awareness campaigns designed in cooperation with Roma mediators and women's groups.

This was the first time that gender and ethnicity were explicitly integrated into Vinica's local health policy, linking equality with public finance.

## Voices of Change

*“The activity providing free gynaecological examinations for Roma women has made a significant contribution to improving healthcare services and promoting gender equality in our municipality. Through this approach, we ensured better access to quality healthcare for women who often face social and economic barriers. We believe that such initiatives contribute to creating a better-informed, healthier, and more active community.” - Luiza Aleksova*

*“On behalf of all Roma women who participated in the activity, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to receive a free gynaecological examination. For many of us, this was the first time visiting a gynaecologist and receiving professional advice regarding our own health. The activity helped us feel respected, safe, and encouraged to take better care of ourselves. Initiatives like this are of great importance to the women in our community, and we hope they will continue in the future.” - Zuhra Saliova*

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Over 70 Roma women used the service in its first phase, exceeding the initial target.
- The introduction of free gynaecological examination for Roma Women led to increase of the number of Roma Women (up to 90%) who conducted gynaecological examination for the first time at aged of 40+.
- 87% of participants said they would use the service again.
- Preventive examinations are now integrated into the municipal health program, ensuring continuity and embedding GRB principles in local planning.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The initiative in Vinica has gradually reshaped how health, gender, and equality are understood at the local level. For the first time, women from marginalized communities were not only beneficiaries but also active participants in identifying needs and shaping responses. Through consultations and feedback sessions, Roma women voiced the barriers they faced—long distances, lack of transport, and social stigma—and helped design practical solutions that truly met their realities.

To strengthen trust between institutions and communities, the municipality trained and engaged Roma health mediators who played a vital role in facilitating communication, organizing outreach visits, and ensuring that messages were culturally sensitive and accessible. Their involvement helped bridge long-standing divides and made local services more responsive and inclusive.

The project also challenged the silence surrounding women's reproductive health. Public discussions, workshops, and awareness sessions encouraged open dialogue in neighbourhoods where such topics had rarely been spoken about publicly. In doing so, the initiative helped to break taboos and normalize preventive healthcare as a right, not a privilege.

By addressing mobility barriers and the hidden burden of unpaid care, the municipality empowered women to prioritize their own health and dignity. This shift—from being passive recipients of care to active decision-makers in their well-being—marks one of the most meaningful transformations achieved through gender-responsive budgeting in Vinica.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The GRB process institutionalized a new approach to budgeting and accountability:

- Gender-sensitive indicators were integrated into the annual local health plan.
- The municipality now conducts sex- and ethnicity-disaggregated data collection on health service users.
- Cooperation between finance and health departments improved, creating a systematic link between gender analysis and budget decisions.
- Lessons from the pilot were shared with other municipalities through the GBWN platform, promoting replication.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The Municipality of Vinica continues to allocate funds for preventive women's health services within its regular budget and plans to extend the program to include screenings for breast and cervical cancer. Additionally, continuous GRB capacity building for local officials and health-care staff ensures sustainability.

Key enabling factors include:

- Institutional cooperation and trust between stakeholders;
- Inclusion of Roma mediators and women's groups in planning;
- Integration of GRB tools into routine budget cycles; and
- Strong evidence of both social benefit and cost efficiency.

This initiative shows how gender-responsive budgeting translates equality commitments into concrete services, improving women's health and strengthening municipal governance.

# Advancing Women's Health and Social Inclusion through Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Cruzești

*A community-driven health initiative that integrates medical, social, and cultural services to promote wellbeing, empower women, and strengthen social inclusion in a small Moldovan municipality.*

## **Municipality of Cruzești, Moldova**

**Effectiveness:** Over 500 residents reached through health education and outreach; 20 adults with NCDs supported individually; new inclusive health and recreation infrastructure created.

**Gender impact:** Improved women's access to preventive health services and public spaces; elderly women recognized as community leaders; men increasingly engaged in community care.

**Replicability:** Already adapted by neighbouring municipalities under the ViataSan project; modular and transferable across local government contexts.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how small municipalities can use GRB tools to build inclusive health systems and promote equality through community-based approaches.

**Contact person:** Violeta Crudu, Mayor of Cruzești Municipality; [comuna.cruzesti@gmail.com](mailto:comuna.cruzesti@gmail.com)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Cruzești, a peri-urban community within Chișinău Municipality, faced widening gender and health inequalities. Elderly women and adults with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) were especially affected by social isolation, limited access to preventive health services, and a lack of safe public spaces for physical activity. Men were less likely to participate in community health initiatives, while vulnerable groups — including low-income and elderly citizens — remained underserved.

A gender analysis conducted under the ViataSan project, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), revealed that women, particularly those aged 45+, lacked opportunities for physical activity and preventive care, and had lower health literacy levels than men. At the same time, traditional gender roles discouraged men's involvement in community care.

These findings motivated the local administration, in collaboration with civil society partners, to design an inclusive, gender-responsive health program that would improve wellbeing and foster civic engagement for both women and men.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The initiative was launched in 2022 under the ViataSan project, implemented with technical support from CALM and UN Women and funded by SDC. It was developed through the Cruzești Gender-Sensitive Strategy and Budget, which set out clear gender equality objectives aligned with Moldova’s national policies. The Phase I (2022–2024) introduced the “Active Health for Women” program — combining outdoor fitness activities, nutrition workshops, and cultural events that brought together women, seniors, and youth. The program encouraged social interaction and healthy lifestyles, reducing isolation and promoting women’s leadership in community health.

Furthermore, the Phase II (2025–2026) expanded the model to integrate medical and social services for adults with NCDs. A multidisciplinary team — composed of the mayor, family doctor, community social assistant, and NGO staff — worked together to coordinate care, organize screenings, and provide home visits.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools such as gender analysis, gender impact assessment, and gender beneficiary assessment guided planning, resource allocation, and monitoring.

In 2025, 100,000 MDL (approx. 5000 EUR) was allocated for equipment, training, and integration of medical and social services, including upgrades to the family doctor’s office and community outreach spaces.

## Voices of Change

*“The initiative helped us integrate health and social services, improve the wellbeing of elderly women, and create a model that can be replicated in other communities.” - Mayor’s Office, Cruzești Municipality*



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- 500 residents reached through community health education, fitness, and cultural activities.
- 20 adults (15 women, 5 men) with NCDs received guided health and social support.
- Public fitness areas and women’s clubs established to encourage participation.
- Documented improvements in health knowledge and use of preventive services among women aged 45+.
- Reduced isolation and strengthened peer support networks through local clubs and online groups.

### **Transformative Change in Gender Roles**

- The program redefined how health and equality are perceived in Cruzești.
- Elderly women emerged as community leaders, organizing activities and promoting active lifestyles.
- Men became more involved in caregiving and prevention initiatives, breaking traditional gender norms.
- Through this process, gender equality became not just a policy goal but a lived experience — visible in the daily life of the community.

### **Institutional and Policy Impact**

The initiative is fully aligned with Moldova's National Gender Equality Strategy and the Health Sector Policy Framework, contributing to both gender mainstreaming and universal health coverage goals.

It also strengthened coordination between the Mayor's Office, local NGOs, and the health sector, establishing an inter-sectoral model for inclusive governance.

CALM has already supported replication in neighbouring municipalities, demonstrating the scalability of Cruzești's approach.



### **Sustainability and Learning Potential**

The initiative continues under Phase II (2025–2026), with institutionalization planned through the municipal budget and integration into local policy frameworks.

Sustainability is ensured through:

- Political and community leadership;
- Multi-sectoral cooperation and local partnerships;
- Ongoing monitoring using gender-disaggregated indicators; and
- Documentation and peer learning via CALM and UN Women networks.

This case shows how even small municipalities can use GRB tools to create inclusive, community-driven health systems. By combining civic participation, health promotion, and gender equality, Cruzești has become a model for holistic and equitable local governance.



# **Culture, Sport & Inclusion**

## Women’s Water Polo Club “Budućnost” – Breaking the Waves of Stereotypes in Podgorica

*A pioneering initiative that introduced women’s water polo to Montenegro, creating equal opportunities for girls in sport and challenging deeply rooted gender stereotypes.*

### Municipality of Podgorica, Montenegro

**Effectiveness:** Women’s water polo club established in February 2025; 15–20 girls now train regularly with six weekly sessions.

**Gender impact:** Enabled equal access to competitive sport for girls; challenged stereotypes that water polo is a “male-only” discipline.

**Replicability:** Highly adaptable to other municipalities with existing sports infrastructure and swimming clubs.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how local political will, institutional support, and GRB principles can open new spaces for women in sport.

**Contact person:** Mr. Bojan Sukovic, Director, Swimming and Water Polo Club “Budućnost”

### **Before Change: The Challenge**

Until recently, water polo in Montenegro was an exclusively male sport. Despite being one of the country’s most celebrated disciplines, there was no women’s water polo club anywhere in the country. Girls could practice swimming, but there was no opportunity to train, compete, or represent their city and country as a team.

The Swimming and Water Polo Club Budućnost, founded in 2018, had over seven years of continuous male-only competition. Increasing interest from young girls who attended swimming lessons led the club to reconsider this imbalance. Parents and teachers also supported the idea, recognizing the lack of equal sporting opportunities for girls and the importance of promoting gender equality through physical education.

In this social context — where sport, especially water polo, was culturally perceived as a “men’s field” — creating a women’s team was both a progressive and symbolic act of equality.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The idea was first proposed in September 2024 by Mr. Bojan Shukovich, director of the Swimming and Water Polo Club Budućnost. After receiving growing requests from girls eager to play competitively, the club submitted an initiative to the Secretariat for Sport of the Capital City of Podgorica.

Following formal approval, the City Assembly adopted the budget for 2025, allocating €250,000 to the Swimming and Water Polo Club Budućnost. Within this amount, from the date of establishment, 15,000€ were spent for the women's water polo club. Additionally, the estimated annual cost, only for the women's water polo club, is 150,000€.

The Women's Water Polo Club Budućnost officially began operating on 4 February 2025. At its inception, the club enrolled 15–20 high school girls, who trained three times per week. With municipal and club support, training frequency soon doubled to six sessions per week, improving both fitness and team cohesion.

This marked the first time in Montenegro's history that a women's water polo team was established and publicly funded by a local government. The initiative aligns with the Sports Development Strategy of Montenegro 2024–2028, which prioritizes increased participation of women in sport and the creation of equal conditions for male and female athletes.

## Voices of Change

*"I think that water polo does not need special promotion, even though it is a women's team, and I am sure that the interest in Podgorica will be even greater. The wish is for this club to be the women's national team of Montenegro as early as next year, and with the support of Water Polo and the Swimming Association of Montenegro, I am sure that we will create a very beautiful story."* – Mr. Bojan Sukovic, Sports Director of PVK Budućnost



*"Water polo is a sport that is mainly associated with boys, but the girls with whom I started training water polo not only to prove that we can be successful, but I hope that we will inspire many other girls to join us in a sport that until now did not have a place on the list of sports played by girls. My club has a good professional team that had sense to try to form a water polo section for girls because girls have the same ability to do everything that boys can, if not even better."* – Eleonora Tomashevich, ninth-grade student and one of the first members of the club

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Women's Water Polo Club Budućnost established in February 2025.
- 15–20 girls now train regularly, with six weekly sessions.
- The initiative increased girls' participation in competitive sport and built a foundation for future female teams.
- Media coverage and community recognition helped attract new interest and visibility for women's water polo.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The establishment of the women's club broke long-standing stereotypes that water polo is “too rough” or “unsuitable” for women. It gave girls in Podgorica equal access to training, competition, and recognition — rights that had been reserved for male athletes for decades.

This practice also helped change local attitudes toward gender in sport, proving that with the right support and leadership, women can succeed in traditionally male-dominated disciplines. For the young players, the club became not just a place to train, but a space for empowerment and self-confidence.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The initiative directly supports the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Capital City of Podgorica (2023–2025) — specifically Strategic Objective 6: Suppress gender stereotypes and introduce gender equality policies in culture and sports.

By introducing gender equality into sports' budgeting, the city demonstrated how local-level GRB principles could be applied even in areas previously considered gender-neutral. The experience also created a model for other municipalities, particularly those with aquatic facilities, to replicate the idea.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The women's team continues to receive funding and technical support from the Secretariat for Sport and the Capital City of Podgorica. The strong leadership of PVK Budućnost and growing interest from local schools provide a sustainable base for development.

Key enabling factors include:

- Political and institutional commitment to gender equality in sports;
- Leadership initiative from within the club;
- Engagement of parents, teachers, and girls as stakeholders; and
- Inclusion of women's sports in local budget allocations.

The initiative has not yet been replicated in other municipalities but has significant potential for expansion — particularly in coastal towns such as Herceg Novi and Kotor, where water polo culture and infrastructure already exist.

# Bağcılar Women's Para-Sports Club: Empowering Women with Disabilities through Sport

*A pioneering municipal initiative that transformed women with disabilities from isolated citizens into national and international champions — proving that inclusion, equality, and excellence can thrive together.*

## Municipality of Bağcılar, Türkiye

**Effectiveness:** Established in 2008; now includes 11 para-sport branches and more than 200 athletes (80 women, 120 men).

**Gender impact:** Increased participation of women with disabilities in sports and community life; women athletes won national and international medals.

**Replicability:** Elements replicated by other Turkish municipalities; unique “role-model women athletes” initiative not yet replicated.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB tools and municipal services can be combined to empower women with disabilities and dismantle gender stereotypes.

**Contact person:** Hamza Doğan, President of the Para-Sports Club

## Before Change: The Challenge

Before 2008, persons with disabilities in Bağcılar, one of Istanbul's middle and lower-income districts, faced multiple barriers to public participation. Without accessible facilities or inclusive services, many people with disabilities lived in isolation — often hidden by their families due to stigma and discrimination.

Women with disabilities faced double exclusion: from public life due to physical barriers and from opportunities due to gender bias. As families were often overprotective, girls rarely joined community activities, and many dropped out of school early.

National data reflected a deep inequality — only 7.9% of women with disabilities were employed, compared to 27.8% of men, and fewer than 5% of women with disabilities had a university education.

Against this backdrop, the Bağcılar Municipality decided to act. Responding to citizen demand, it launched a para-sports club within its Persons with Disabilities Community Centre — marking the first step in turning sports into a vehicle for empowerment and equality.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In 2008, Bağcılar Municipality established its Para-Sports Club. Initially focused on wheelchair basketball and para-athletics, the club quickly expanded as more residents expressed interest.

Over time, it grew into a comprehensive municipal program with 11 branches — including amputee football, archery, boccia, drone sports, arm wrestling, and underwater sports — and now counts over 200 athletes, 80 of whom are women.

The women's team was created to break social isolation and build confidence among women with disabilities. The municipality applied GRB tools — including sex-disaggregated data analysis, beneficiary consultations, and needs assessments — to identify which sports and supports best met women's needs.

Recognizing persistent family hesitation, the municipality launched the Role-Model Women Athletes Initiative, where successful women athletes visit families, share their personal stories, and inspire girls with disabilities to join the club. The program also includes psychological support for families, free transportation, and equipment provision

In 2024, Bağcılar allocated €185,000 — about 90% of the club's annual budget — to sustain operations, covering salaries, training equipment, and travel to competitions. The remaining funds came from national subsidies via the Athletics Federation of Türkiye, international awards and sponsorships.

## Voices of Change

*“Success in sports brings success in life. Doing sports gives to women what their families usually can't or don't give — self-esteem, freedom, and income.” - Hamza Doğan, President of Bağcılar Para-Sports Club*



*“If there are women, nothing is impossible — in athletics.” - Hamide Kurt Doğangün, Paralympic medallist and athlete of Bağcılar Para-Sports Club*

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Over 200 athletes (80 women, 120 men) now train in 11 para-sport branches.
- Women's participation increased nearly tenfold since 2008.
- Women athletes won international medals: 4 medals in 2016, 2 in 2020, and 1 in 2024.
- The initiative improved self-esteem, independence, and visibility of women with disabilities.
- The club's model inspired other Turkish municipalities to integrate para-sport into local disability services.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The program changed how disability and gender are viewed in the community. Families that once discouraged their daughters now proudly support them in national and international competitions.

Women athletes became visible public role models, showing that disability and gender are not barriers to achievement. This transformation not only challenged stereotypes in sports but also encouraged new forms of social participation, education, and employment for women with disabilities.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The initiative aligns with the 12th National Development Plan of Türkiye, promoting women's empowerment and gender-responsive budgeting.

It also supports the municipality's strategy of prioritizing services for women, children, and disadvantaged groups.

Bağcılar's integrated approach — combining community services, sport, and data analysis — has become a national example of local-level inclusion and gender equality in municipal governance.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The Women's Para-Sports Club is sustained through stable municipal funding, sponsorships, and continuous athlete recruitment via outreach and role model initiatives.

Future plans include expanding the community centre network to increase accessibility and participation among women with disabilities from all neighbourhoods.

- Key enabling factors include:
  - Strong political and administrative commitment;
  - Continuous budget allocations and local ownership;
  - Integrated approach linking para-sport, social, and psychological support;
  - Use of GRB tools to assess needs and allocate resources equitably.

The Bağcılar model can be adapted to other local contexts, focusing on disadvantaged women, such as those returning to education or entering entrepreneurship, while maintaining its empowering and inclusive design.

# Empowering Women in Sports: Gradiška's Path Toward Equal Opportunities

*How the City of Gradiška turned its gender equality policy into concrete support for women's sports clubs.*

## **Municipality of Gradiška, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Effectiveness:** Increased municipal funding and visibility for women's sports clubs.

**Gender impact:** Improved participation and recognition of women athletes in local sports.

**Replicability:** Applicable across municipalities seeking to integrate gender equality measures in sport financing.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how gender-responsive budgeting strengthens equal access to public funds and promotes women's empowerment through sports.

**Contact:** City Administration of Gradiška, Department for Social Affairs and Gender Equality

Danijela Rosić Malinović, Senior Advisor for Education: [danijela.rosic.malinovic@gradgradiska.com](mailto:danijela.rosic.malinovic@gradgradiska.com)

Snežana Gvozden, Chair of the Gender Equality Commission: [snjezagvozden64@gmail.com](mailto:snjezagvozden64@gmail.com)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before 2021, women's sports clubs in Gradiška faced limited access to municipal funding and lower visibility compared to men's teams. Despite the dedication of local athletes, many women's clubs struggled to cover costs for equipment, training, and participation in competitions. These inequalities reflected broader social perceptions that women's sports are less important or competitive, discouraging girls and young women from active participation.

While the City of Gradiška had already adopted the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021–2024), the field of sports remained largely underfinanced from a gender perspective. Women's representation in decision-making structures of sports associations was minimal, and the absence of targeted measures perpetuated unequal access to opportunities, resources, and recognition.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

To address these disparities, the City Administration of Gradiška made support for women's sports one of the strategic priorities of its Local Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021–2024). The city applied gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools to assess how existing sports funding was distributed between men and women and identified a significant imbalance.

Based on the findings, the City Council decided to introduce new measures for promoting women's participation in sports, including:

- Increasing the budget allocation for women's sports clubs;
- Financing and co-financing training sessions and competitions for women's teams;
- Supporting local initiatives that promote sports for girls and young women.

These measures were incorporated into the city's annual sports program and systematically monitored through the Gender Equality Commission, ensuring transparency and accountability in implementation.

### Voices of Change

*"A club that didn't have the funds to compete for two years couldn't even be included in the budget. That's problematic because women's clubs often give up without support." — Snježana Gvozden, member of the City Assembly and Chair of the Commission for the Social Status of Women and Gender Equality*



*"Considering that women make up 50% of the population, it was important to achieve that balance in sports as well. Without this support and the action plans, it would certainly have been much more difficult. We even trained in school gyms, which were smaller and impractical for serious sports work." — Duško Ivetić, Sports Director of the Women's Basketball Club "Kozara" Gradiška*

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

The City of Gradiška's targeted approach has resulted in visible progress:

- Women's sports clubs now receive higher and more stable financial support from the municipal budget;
- A growing number of young women are taking part in organized sports;
- Gender equality is now formally integrated into the city's sports policy and budgeting process.

The initiative has also encouraged women to take leadership roles in sports associations and local sports councils, increasing their influence in planning and decision-making.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

This initiative challenged long-standing stereotypes about women's participation in sports. Women athletes and coaches gained recognition as equal representatives of the city, and their achievements began to receive public acknowledgment through local media and events. The increased visibility helped shift community attitudes — promoting sports as a space for inclusion, teamwork, and empowerment rather than division by gender.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

Gradiška's experience demonstrates that gender equality in sports can be achieved through evidence-based planning and transparent financing. The integration of GRB in sports budgeting is now part of the city's standard procedure, serving as an example for other municipalities across Republika Srpska. The collaboration between the Gender Equality Commission and the Department for Social Affairs ensures sustainability and continuous improvement of measures.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The initiative's success rests on strong political will and institutional coordination. By embedding gender equality objectives within the sports budget and annual programs, Gradiška ensured that support for women's sports is not a temporary action but a sustainable policy measure.

The model can be replicated in other municipalities with minimal financial input — the key is gender analysis, participatory budgeting, and political commitment to equal opportunities. The practice shows that when women's sports are valued and financed, the entire community benefits from stronger social inclusion, better health outcomes, and a culture of fairness and equality.



**Education,  
Awareness  
& GBV  
Prevention**

# Educational Train: Teaching Equality and Preventing Violence in Tešanj

*A pioneering educational initiative that travels through schools to teach young people about gender equality, non-violence, and respect — building foundations for safer and more inclusive communities.*

## **Municipality of Tešanj, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Effectiveness:** Launched in 2023 within the Local Gender Action Plan (LGAP 2021–2024); implemented in primary and secondary schools with the Multi-Sectoral Team and partner institutions.

**Gender impact:** Increased awareness among students and teachers on equality and violence prevention; strengthened cooperation between schools, police, courts, and social services.

**Replicability:** Can be easily adapted by other municipalities and school systems using the same LGAP-based approach.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how local governments can use GRB and multi-sectoral cooperation to integrate gender equality into education and community life.

**Contact persons:** Almira Prnjavorac, Municipality of Tešanj; [almira.prnjavorac@opcina-tesanj.ba](mailto:almira.prnjavorac@opcina-tesanj.ba)

Hasan Plančić, Municipality of Tešanj; [hasan.plancic@opcina-tesanj.ba](mailto:hasan.plancic@opcina-tesanj.ba)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before 2023, domestic and peer violence, persistent gender stereotypes, and low awareness of equality were among the most pressing social challenges in Tešanj's schools and wider community. Although the Municipality of Tešanj had previously established mechanisms to prevent violence, these efforts were fragmented and largely reactive, responding to cases rather than addressing root causes.

Students — particularly those in early adolescence — had limited opportunities to learn about gender roles, rights, and respectful communication in a structured way. This lack of preventive education left young people without the knowledge or language to recognize discrimination or to resolve conflicts non-violently.

Teachers and pedagogues, though deeply committed to their students, often lacked training in gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches. Parents, schools, and institutions tended to intervene only after incidents occurred, rather than cultivating mutual respect and equality from an early age.

The situation revealed a clear need for a comprehensive, community-based educational response — one that could raise awareness, change mind-sets, and make equality and non-violence part of everyday learning and growing up in Tešanj.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The “Educational Train” was conceptualized in 2023 as part of Tešanj’s Local Gender Action Plan 2021–2024, following the Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Domestic Violence (2022). Implementation began in the final quarter of 2023, after preparatory meetings and training sessions with school directors, teachers, and pedagogues.

The practice is implemented jointly by the Municipality of Tešanj, the Multi-Sectoral Team, and local institutions including the Municipal Court, Police, Health Center, and Center for Social Work.

Workshops and interactive quizzes were held in primary and secondary schools, targeting final-year primary and first-year secondary students.

Although the practice is financed through a general LGAP budget line, rather than a separate allocation, the municipality ensures continuous funding for materials, logistics, and awareness activities.

The initiative applies GRB tools such as gender impact assessment, user assessment, and resource allocation analysis to ensure that both girls and boys benefit equally and that educational content challenges gender stereotypes.

## Voices of Change

*“If, through the implementation of the Municipality of Tešanj’s Gender Action Plan, we save a single innocent life or protect one girl or woman from violence, then the expenditure of all budgeted funds and our efforts in these activities is justified.” – Suad Huskić, Mayor of the Municipality of Tešanj*



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Educational workshops and quizzes implemented in primary and secondary schools.
- Equal participation of girls and boys, with positive feedback from students and teachers.
- Increased awareness of gender equality and violence prevention.
- Strengthened cooperation between the Municipality, police, courts, health, and social institutions.
- Integration of gender equality education into regular school activities.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The Educational Train became a catalyst for change in the way students, teachers, and families in Tešanj perceive gender roles and relationships. Through interactive workshops, discussions, and quizzes, it opened honest conversations about respect, rights, and equality — topics that had often been avoided or treated superficially in classrooms.

For many students, this was the first time they could speak openly about violence, discrimination, and stereotypes, and be heard without judgment. The classrooms transformed into safe spaces for dialogue, where both girls and boys could express their experiences and learn from one another.

Teachers began to adopt gender-sensitive communication and inclusive teaching methods, consciously avoiding stereotypes and encouraging equal participation. Students, in turn, learned to recognize and speak out against peer and gender-based violence, building empathy and responsibility in their daily interactions.

The impact went beyond the school walls. Parents and local institutions became more engaged, as young people carried new attitudes home, prompting family discussions on equality, respect, and non-violence. Over time, the initiative helped nurture a culture of shared responsibility and mutual respect, proving that lasting social change starts in the classroom — one conversation at a time.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The practice is directly linked to the Local Gender Action Plan 2021–2024 and the Municipal Development Strategy 2018–2027, ensuring coherence between education, social protection, and equality policies.

It established regular cooperation among the Multi-Sectoral Team, police, and social work center, strengthening interinstitutional coordination on gender-based violence prevention

Although currently localized, its structured methodology and documentation make it easily transferable to other municipalities and education systems.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The Educational Train continues to run, supported by the municipal LGAP budget and the Multi-Sectoral Team.

Its sustainability depends on:

- Continued political will and budgetary commitment;
- Active engagement of schools and local institutions;
- Expansion to include younger age groups (kindergartens) and improved gender-disaggregated data collection;
- Ongoing training for teachers and pedagogues in gender-sensitive methods.

The practice is already used as a learning example in GRB training programs and is suitable for inclusion in regional platforms such as the NALAS E-Academy. It provides a model for integrating GRB into education and violence prevention, showing that equality can be taught and practiced from the earliest stages of learning.

# Human Rights for All: Empowering Marginalized Youth through Equality and Non-Discrimination in Tuzla

*A long-term partnership between the City of Tuzla and Tuzla Open Centre that promotes human rights, equality, and inclusion through education, culture, and media.*

## **City of Tuzla, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Effectiveness:** Implemented since 2021 through a cooperation agreement between the City of Tuzla and Tuzla Open Centre; continuous annual funding through the Department for Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Protection (approx. 130,000 KM grant line for cultural and youth events).

**Gender impact:** Increased participation and visibility of marginalized youth; strengthened staff capacity for inclusive work; improved access to services for both young women and men.

**Replicability:** Model adaptable to other municipalities through formal CSO–local authority partnerships.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how cooperation between local government and civil society, guided by GRB tools, can institutionalize equality and inclusion at the local level.

**Contact person:** Asja Redžić, Deputy Mayor for the Department of Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Protection; [asja.redzic@tuzla.ba](mailto:asja.redzic@tuzla.ba)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before 2021, marginalized youth in Tuzla were largely invisible in local policies and public life. Many faced barriers to participating in cultural, educational, and media activities, while their specific needs were not systematically recognized in youth programs or strategies. Gender aspects of inclusion were rarely addressed, and staff working with youth lacked the tools and training to apply inclusive and non-violent approaches.

As a result, young people from vulnerable and hidden groups often experienced social isolation, discrimination, and unequal access to information and local services. Local institutions acted independently, without structured cooperation or safe spaces for youth engagement.

Recognizing that empowerment and equality must begin at the community level, the City of Tuzla initiated a partnership approach that would bring together local authorities, civil society, and media to promote human rights, visibility, and participation for all youth, regardless of background or identity.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The practice “Human Rights for All” was formalized in January 2021 through a Cooperation Agreement between the City of Tuzla and Tuzla Open Centre (TOC). This partnership institutionalized years of collaboration and created a framework for joint educational, cultural, and media activities focused on inclusion and equality

The Department for Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Protection leads implementation, in collaboration with the Youth Council of Tuzla, youth associations, and RTV7 Tuzla. Activities include staff training, seminars, cultural events, public discussions, and media campaigns that highlight the rights and needs of marginalized youth.

Funding is secured through continuous annual grant lines for youth and cultural projects — with one of the priority areas explicitly dedicated to gender equality and the inclusion of marginalized groups. TOC’s activities are held in public institutions such as the Tuzla Cultural Centre, ensuring visibility and accessibility

The City applied GRB tools, including user assessment and gender impact assessment, to tailor programs to the real needs of young women and men, and to ensure that all activities reduce discrimination and foster equality.

## Voices of Change

*“Every local community must create an environment where all citizens feel free and included.” - Asja Redžić, Deputy Mayor for the Department of Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Protection*



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Continuous cooperation between the City of Tuzla and Tuzla Open Centre since 2021.
- Inclusion of marginalized youth in the Youth Strategy and Action Plan.
- Educational, cultural, and media programs implemented annually.
- Improved visibility of marginalized groups in public life and local media.
- Strengthened staff capacity for inclusive and gender-sensitive work.

### **Transformative Change in Gender Roles**

The initiative reshaped the public understanding of equality and diversity in Tuzla by transforming the way youth, institutions, and the community relate to one another. Through inclusive cultural events, media storytelling, and interactive trainings, it gave marginalized young women and men a voice and a visible place in public life — not as beneficiaries, but as active contributors to the city's identity.

For many participants, stepping onto a public stage, speaking in media, or joining policy discussions was a moment of empowerment and recognition. These experiences helped dismantle long-standing stereotypes about who “belongs” in civic spaces, showing that inclusion strengthens rather than divides a community.

At the same time, city officials, educators, and local partners learned to identify and challenge their own biases, fostering a new culture of openness and cooperation. This process turned equality from a policy goal into a shared community value, embedded in the everyday work of institutions and reflected in Tuzla's public life — where respect, diversity, and participation are now part of what defines the city.

### **Institutional and Policy Impact**

The practice is integrated into Tuzla's Youth Strategy (2017–2026) and Action Plan, ensuring that equality objectives are mainstreamed across all youth policies. It strengthened partnerships between local government, NGOs, and media, while the application of GRB tools improved transparency and accountability in resource allocation.

Through these mechanisms, Tuzla established a replicable model of participatory, rights-based governance where youth inclusion and gender equality are institutional priorities.

## **Sustainability and Learning Potential**

The initiative is ongoing and financially sustained through regular municipal budget lines and co-funding of TOC activities. Its success rests on:

- Continuous political will and leadership commitment;
- Formal partnerships with CSOs and media;
- Integration into strategic documents (Youth Strategy and Action Plan);
- A legal and policy framework aligned with anti-discrimination laws.

The practice has strong replication potential: any municipality aiming to promote inclusion and equality through education and culture can adopt its model of formal cooperation between local authorities and NGOs.

It also provides valuable learning for GRB capacity building, showing how gender-responsive tools, youth engagement, and inter-sectoral partnerships can lead to lasting institutional change.



# **GBV Protection & Response Systems**

## Emergency Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence: Providing Safety, Dignity, and Empowerment in Shkodër

*A pioneering municipal service that ensures immediate protection, care, and reintegration for women and children survivors of violence through a gender-responsive and inter-institutional model.*

### **Municipality of Shkodër, Albania**

**Effectiveness:** Established in 2016; jointly managed by the Municipality of Shkodër and NGO “Woman to Woman”; operational budget co-financed by the municipality and donors.

**Gender impact:** Strengthened protection and reintegration of women survivors; increased institutional accountability and coordination on gender-based violence.

**Replicability:** The model has been adapted by several municipalities across Albania.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB tools and intersectoral cooperation can create sustainable, life-saving social services for women and children.

**Contact person:** Arlinda Bilali, GRB Champion, Municipality of Shkodër; [arlinda.bilali@gmail.com](mailto:arlinda.bilali@gmail.com)

### **Before Change: The Challenge**

Before the shelter was established in 2016, women and girls in Shkodër who experienced domestic violence had no safe alternatives for housing, protection, or psychological support. Many were forced to remain in abusive environments due to economic dependence, lack of institutional response, and absence of specialized services.

While men had access to various social and institutional resources, women survivors were invisible within the social protection system. There was no coordinated response between local institutions such as the police, health centers, or social services, leaving victims to navigate complex procedures on their own.

This situation highlighted an urgent need for a specialized, gender-sensitive mechanism that could offer both immediate protection and long-term reintegration, fully aligned with Albania's obligations under the Istanbul Convention and national legislation on violence against women and domestic violence.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

The Emergency Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence was officially established by the Municipality of Shkodër in 2016, based on Law No. 9669 “On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations” and subsequent legal reforms on local self-government and social care services.

The initiative emerged from the municipality’s partnership with the NGO “Woman to Woman”, which manages the shelter’s operations, providing psychosocial, legal, and rehabilitation services for women and children survivors. The municipality ensures budgetary and logistical support, including premises and coverage of utility costs, while the NGO mobilizes donor funds for food, staff, and professional services.

The shelter functions as a short-term emergency service, providing immediate accommodation, safety, and comprehensive assistance. It is part of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for gender-based violence and follows the Directive No. 744/2019 of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection on minimum service standards.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) tools — such as gender beneficiary assessment, gender analysis, and impact assessment — were applied during planning and monitoring. These tools guided the allocation of financial and human resources, ensuring that services effectively addressed women’s and children’s needs and strengthened the local protection system.

## Voices of Change

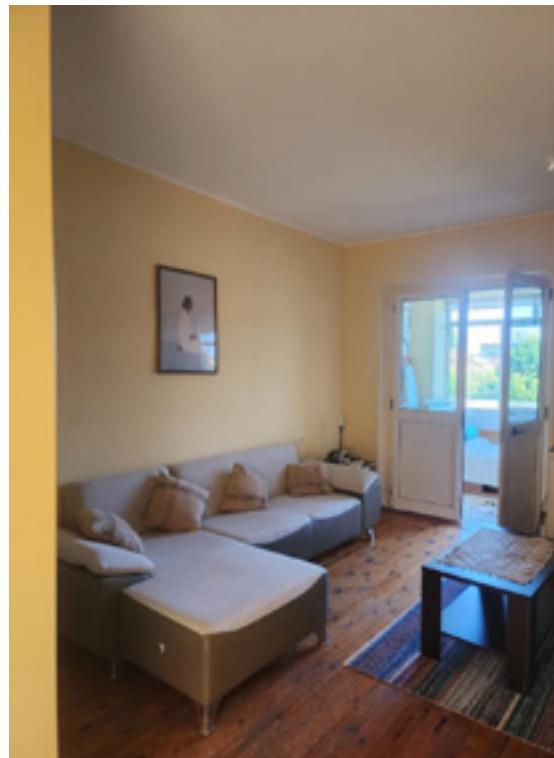
*“The establishment of the shelter has provided women and children facing violence with protection, dignity, and hope. It demonstrates how local institutions can work together to protect life and promote equality.” -*

Representative of the Municipality of Shkodër

## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Operational since 2016, providing emergency accommodation and assistance for women and children victims of violence.
- Services include psychological counseling, legal aid, healthcare, and reintegration support.
- Regular monitoring through gender-disaggregated data ensures accountability and targeted interventions.



- Contributed to strengthening local coordination between police, health services, courts, and social protection institutions.
- Evaluations show improved safety and reduced recurrence of violence among beneficiaries.

### **Transformative Change in Gender Roles**

The shelter has redefined the local understanding of care, responsibility, and gender equality. By recognizing violence against women as a public concern — not a private matter — the municipality took a decisive step toward institutional accountability.

For survivors, the shelter represents more than safety; it is a pathway to empowerment and independence. Women receive not only protection but also support to rebuild their lives, develop new skills, and regain confidence in their abilities.

Within the community, the shelter's work has challenged stigma and patriarchal attitudes, encouraging open dialogue about violence, equality, and shared responsibility for prevention. This has fostered a gradual but visible shift in how gender roles and women's rights are perceived in Shkodër.

### **Institutional and Policy Impact**

The initiative strengthened the municipality's social protection infrastructure and aligned it with Albania's National Strategy for Gender Equality and Social Protection Law.

It also improved local capacities through training of municipal staff, police, and social workers on gender-sensitive case management.

Through ongoing cooperation with the NGO sector and the Coordinated Referral Mechanism, Shkodër has become a model for institutional collaboration and GRB integration at the local level.

## **Sustainability and Learning Potential**

The shelter's sustainability relies on shared funding responsibilities and strong political commitment. The municipality continues to allocate annual resources for maintenance and coordination, while "Woman to Woman" ensures continuity of services through donor partnerships.

The model's success depends on:

- Stable local budget allocations;
- Qualified multidisciplinary staff;
- Inter-institutional coordination; and
- Continuous awareness and training programs to combat stigma.

The shelter is recognized nationally as a transferable model, replicated in multiple municipalities through Albania's coordinated gender-based violence protection efforts. It demonstrates that with consistent application of GRB tools, local governments can build sustainable, gender-sensitive services that save lives and promote equality.



# **Women and Peacebuilding**

# Building Sustainable and Inclusive Peace: Promoting Social Cohesion through Cultural Spaces in Hîrbovăț

*A pioneering initiative that uses culture and gender-responsive budgeting to bridge divided communities and promote peace between children from both banks of the Nistru River.*

## **Municipality of Hîrbovăț, Moldova**

**Effectiveness:** Established a modern dance hall, reaching 40 children (30 girls, 10 boys) and over 500 community members through public events and cultural exchanges.

**Gender impact:** Increased girls' access to safe recreational spaces, encouraged boys' participation in cultural activities, and fostered gender-balanced community engagement.

**Replicability:** The model's core elements—gender-sensitive cultural programming and cross-community cooperation—are already being adapted in neighbouring municipalities.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how GRB tools can support peacebuilding and gender equality, even in politically sensitive regions.

**Contact person:** Rodica Croitor, Mayor of Hîrbovăț; [primarhirbovat@gmail.com](mailto:primarhirbovat@gmail.com)

## **Before Change: The Challenge**

Hîrbovăț, a small village in Anenii Noi district, lies near the politically sensitive Transnistrian region. Before 2024, local children had limited access to safe and inclusive spaces for recreation or cultural expression. Gender gaps in participation were visible — girls were underrepresented in public events, while boys were less engaged in artistic and cultural activities

The absence of such spaces also reflected broader challenges of social fragmentation and limited trust between communities on both banks of the Nistru River. With traditional gender norms shaping participation and visibility, young people lacked opportunities to collaborate, express themselves, and learn mutual respect through cultural exchange.

Recognizing that peace begins at the community level, local leaders decided to address these divides through a creative, inclusive approach grounded in gender equality, culture, and youth participation.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In early 2024, the Public Association “From the Heart for Hirbovăț”, together with the Hirbovăț Town Hall and Local Council, launched the initiative “Building Sustainable and Inclusive Peace” under the Capacity Development for Local Peace Initiatives Program, supported by the CONTACT Centre, UN Women, and funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

With a total budget of MDL 89,875, the project built a modern dance hall as a safe, accessible cultural space and organized a series of cross-river exchanges with communities from the Transnistrian region. Two instructors from across the river joined the program, creating a unique platform for artistic collaboration and trust building

The initiative reached 40 children (30 girls, 10 boys) aged 7–14 and over 500 residents who attended joint performances and events. Activities were designed using gender analysis and GRB tools — specifically, gender budget analysis and gender beneficiary assessment — to ensure balanced participation and equitable access

CALM continues to support the municipality in developing a gender-responsive budget and inclusive local policies to sustain the initiative beyond its first phase.

## Voices of Change

*“The initiative helped us integrate culture and inclusion into our local governance, build peace between communities, and create safe spaces where every child — girl or boy — can express themselves freely.”* - Rodica Croitor, Mayor of Hirbovăț



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- 40 children (30 girls, 10 boys) participated in dance and acrobatics activities.
- Over 500 residents attended public cultural events.
- A modern dance hall was built and equipped for ongoing youth activities.
- Cross-river cooperation established between Hîrbovăț and Butor municipalities.
- Gender-responsive budgeting tools guided resource allocation and planning.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

The project transformed how gender and inclusion are viewed in local culture.

Girls gained confidence and visibility through public performances, while boys discovered the value of artistic expression and teamwork. Parents and community members began recognizing dance and cultural participation as empowering for all children, not just for girls.

Through gender-balanced participation and inter-community collaboration, the initiative helped challenge stereotypes, promote equality, and strengthen local resilience.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The formal cooperation agreement between Hîrbovăț (under Moldovan constitutional control) and Butor (in the Transnistrian region) institutionalized cross-river peacebuilding and cultural exchange.

The project aligns with Moldova's Women, Peace and Security Agenda, embedding gender equality into local governance and cultural policy.

CALM's continued involvement ensures that lessons learned are integrated into peer learning and GRB capacity-building programs.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The initiative's sustainability is supported through:

- Local ownership by the Hîrbovăț Town Hall and community association;
- Integration into local gender-responsive budgeting frameworks;
- Ongoing support from CALM and UN Women;
- Formal cooperation agreement ensuring continuity of cross-community collaboration.

The project's replicability has been demonstrated through its adoption by neighbouring municipalities and by inspiring similar initiatives within CALM's Women, Peace and Security programming.

It offers valuable learning potential for municipalities working in divided or post-conflict contexts — proving that cultural investment, when guided by GRB tools, can become a driver of peace, inclusion, and equality.



**Data,  
Governance  
& GRB  
Mainstreaming**

# My Purple Map Bursa: Data-Driven Equality for a Safer and More Inclusive City

*A pioneering digital platform that visualizes gender-disaggregated data to improve access to services, strengthen local equality planning, and make Bursa a safer, more inclusive city for women and vulnerable groups.*

## Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa, Türkiye

**Effectiveness:** Launched in 2024; integrated TURKSTAT and municipal data with dynamic API-based updates. The platform guides service planning and resource allocation across 17 districts.

**Gender impact:** Improved visibility of gender gaps; informed targeted workshops, new childcare and community services, and equitable resource distribution.

**Replicability:** Adaptable for other municipalities with GIS and IT capacity; recognized as the first gender-focused, API-based mapping tool in Türkiye.

**Learning potential:** Demonstrates how gender-responsive budgeting and spatial data can transform equality goals into actionable, evidence-based policies.

**Contact person:** Nefise Ateş Demir, Director of Family, Women and Children Services, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality; nefise.atesdemir@bursa.bel.tr

## Before Change: The Challenge

Before 2024, women, children, and youth in Bursa faced unequal access to municipal services — particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. While the municipality provided many services for well-being and protection, they were not widely known or visible to residents, especially women with low education levels and limited mobility.

The absence of localized data on population profiles and service accessibility created an information gap that hindered equitable planning. Women in certain districts were significantly underrepresented in service use, and gender-specific data needed for resource distribution was fragmented across institutions.

Following the 2023 local elections, the new municipal leadership committed to a progressive agenda for gender equality through the Local Equality Action Plan (LEAP) 2024–2026. As part

of LEAP's implementation, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality sought a digital, participatory, and data-driven mechanism to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting and equality-based planning across all municipal departments.

## The Initiative: How Change Began

In 2024, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality (BMM), in cooperation with UN Women and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), with financial support from SIDA, launched "My Purple Map Bursa" <https://morharitam.bursa.bel.tr/> - a first-of-its-kind digital and participatory mapping platform.

The project integrated gender-disaggregated demographic data from TURKSTAT with municipal datasets on education, health, and social services. Using an API-based system, the map allows real-time updates of municipal service points, ensuring that residents and planners have constantly updated information.

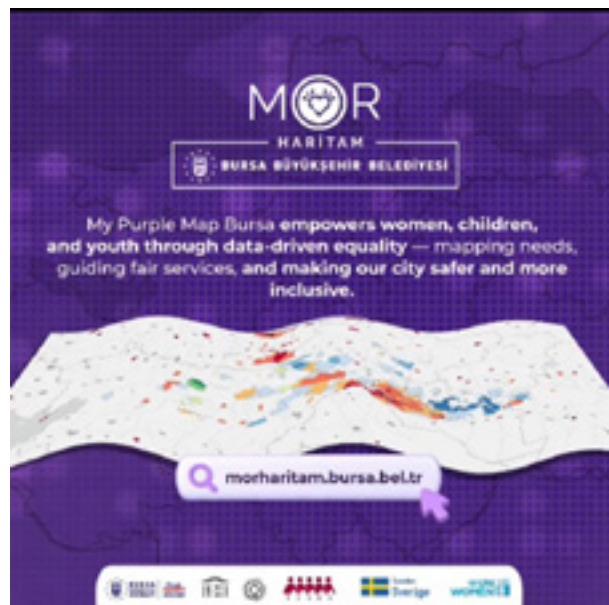
During the pilot phase in October–November 2024, the municipality used data from "My Purple Map" to organize workshops on challenging gender roles in the city's eastern neighbourhoods — areas identified through the map as having low education levels and limited service access for women.

The initiative cost USD 40,000, funded entirely by SIDA, and was implemented by BMM's Department of Social Services and Directorate for Family, Women and Children Services, with technical coordination from the IT Department.

## Voices of Change

*"We immediately recognized the benefit of the platform: in one neighbourhood with over 830 children aged 0–3, data from My Purple Map showed that women needed childcare support. The municipality reacted immediately by channelling services to the centre."* - Director of Family, Women and Children Services, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality

*"Although long overdue, this is an essential and valuable initiative. The ability to monitor demographic distribution is an advantage. If the necessary sensitivity is shown in establishing safe zones, Bursa can become a safer city."* - Koza Women's Association



## Impact and Transformation

### Effectiveness and Results

- Platform launched in 2024, reaching 30,000 users monthly
- Integrated gender-disaggregated data from TURKSTAT and municipal service datasets.
- Enabled spatial analysis of education, health, and social inequalities at the neighbourhood level.
- Guided the organization of workshops on gender roles and planning of new community and childcare services.
- Strengthened gender-responsive budgeting and evidence-based policy design.

### Transformative Change in Gender Roles

My Purple Map Bursa promotes gender equality by linking technology, data, and public participation. It helped municipal planners challenge gender stereotypes by initiating programs such as car repair and tire-changing workshops for women, while also involving men in gender equality discussions

By focusing attention on disadvantaged areas, the map made visible the structural inequalities affecting women's education and access to social services — transforming these insights into direct municipal action.

### Institutional and Policy Impact

The platform directly supports the Local Equality Action Plan (2024–2026) and the BMM Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment with the municipality's equality and inclusion priorities

My Purple Map Bursa also serves as a planning and monitoring tool for service delivery, providing gender-disaggregated data for ongoing and future municipal projects.

It has inspired recognition at the Smart City Expo World Congress 2025, where it was nominated as a finalist in the Living and Inclusion category.

## Sustainability and Learning Potential

The platform is now owned and maintained by the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, ensuring continuity through local resources.

Key enablers of sustainability include:

- Political will and leadership commitment to gender equality;
- Integration of municipal, public, and user-generated data;
- Collaboration with UN Women, TESEV, and SIDA; and
- Dedicated IT and social service staff ensuring continuous data updates and user engagement.

Looking forward, the municipality is working to expand My Purple Map's scope by integrating disaster assembly areas and earthquake container units into the platform, ensuring its contribution to safety, resilience, and inclusive urban planning.



# Conclusions



In the area of women's economic empowerment and employment, local governments applied a wide range of GRB tools such as gender-responsive budget analysis, gender beneficiary assessments, and participatory consultations with women entrepreneurs. These tools enabled municipalities to design grant schemes, agricultural subsidies, and market access initiatives tailored to women's needs. The outcomes were tangible — new women-led businesses emerged, rural cooperatives expanded, and more women gained access to stable income and decision-making positions in local economies. The initiatives proved that economic empowerment at the local level not only improves women's livelihoods but also drives inclusive community growth.

In the field of inclusive rural growth, GRB was used to identify gender gaps in rural employment, agricultural production, and access to services. Through gender analysis, local authorities recognized the unpaid labour and invisible contributions of rural women and responded with concrete measures such as mobile marketplaces, training for women farmers, and incentives for female-owned agricultural production. These initiatives enhanced women's economic autonomy, strengthened community resilience, and integrated gender equality into rural development planning.

In the area of the care economy, health, and social protection, municipalities used GRB to address inequalities in access to healthcare, social services, and elderly care. Gender impact assessments and social audits revealed the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work carried by women. As a result, home-care services for the elderly were established, gynaecological healthcare for Roma women was introduced, and social programs were tailored to better meet women's and men's needs. These interventions not only reduced unpaid care burdens but also created new employment opportunities, particularly for women from vulnerable groups.

In the area of culture, sport, and inclusion, GRB tools such as gender budget tagging and beneficiary assessment were applied to ensure equitable access to sports and cultural activities. By financing women's sports clubs, para-sports programs, and youth cultural initiatives, municipalities increased women's and girls' participation and visibility in public life. Cooperation between gender equality officers, education departments, and sports associations proved crucial to breaking stereotypes, promoting positive role models, and achieving a more balanced distribution of public resources between men and women.

In the field of education, awareness, and prevention of gender-based violence, municipalities and civil society organizations jointly used gender analysis and costing of prevention activities to design awareness campaigns, peer education programs, and local policies on equality. The introduction of gender-sensitive education modules and interactive workshops in schools helped change attitudes among youth and teachers. These actions laid the groundwork for a long-term culture of equality and non-violence in local communities.

In the area of GBV protection and response systems, cooperation between municipalities, CSOs, and national institutions has been essential. Through costing, budget reallocation, and inter-institutional coordination, local governments supported the establishment and operation of shelters and referral mechanisms. GRB tools helped quantify the costs of violence and strengthen accountability in service delivery. The result has been improved access to protection, greater institutional responsiveness, and a more diversified network of services for women and children survivors.

In the area of data, governance, and GRB mainstreaming, gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis have become a foundation for evidence-based policymaking. Municipalities used gender indicators and digital tools to monitor inequalities and track the impact of their budgets. These practices demonstrate that data-driven governance is essential for institutionalizing gender equality and ensuring transparency in the allocation of public resources.

Finally, across all areas, the Compendium's practices show that gender-responsive budgeting is not only a financial or technical process, but a transformative governance tool. When applied consistently, it builds institutions that listen to their citizens, invest equitably, and make equality a measurable, achievable objective in both urban and rural communities.

