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Kosovar Gender Studies Center



“GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION”

Prishtinë, 2016



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in European Integration”*

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Kosovar Gender Studies Centre (KGSC) is a gender-focused organisation. In its 14 years of existence, it has contributed to gender mainstreaming and made continuous efforts to achieve gender equality in Kosovo.

The mission of the Kosovar Gender Studies Centre (KGSC) is to integrate gender-sensitive analysis, programs, and policies in all sectors of Kosovar society by increasing gender awareness and a focus on gender issues, developing gender studies and ensuring the inclusion of gender-sensitive policies through research, policy development, advocacy and lobbying.

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CONTENT

Executive Summary	2
1. Background	4
1.1. Project Background.....	4
1.2. Research Background.....	4
2. Methodology	4
3. Main Findings	6
3.1. Municipality of Dragash	6
3.2. Municipality of Malisheve.....	9
3.3. Municipality of Prizren	11
3.4. Municipality of Rahovec.....	13
3.5. Municipality of Suhareke	15
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	17
Annex 2: Guidelines for FGDs	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by AnketaCo as the final deliverable of the research exercise implemented on behalf of KGSC in the municipalities of Prizren region. The research subject to this report is part of the activities implemented with the assistance of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Kvinna till Kvinna. It is also part of larger framework of activities implemented by KGSC and its partner organizations in the Prizren Region (Dora-Dorës) through the “Equality and Gender Mainstreaming across Borders” project, funded through the cross-border cooperation scheme of the European Union Office in Kosovo. The primary objective of the research were to map local knowledge on the EU integration process as well as gender mainstreaming as an overarching concept for all policies. It is the understanding of AnketaCo that the findings from this survey will be fed into the policy debate and used by KGSC and its partners in planning follow-up interventions in the project-covered region.

The methodology used to implement the research consists of qualitative methods comprised of in-depth interviews with Key Informants, review of primary and secondary materials, and focus group discussions with primary target audience-women and women organizations in the Prizren region. The interviews with key informants have been carried out through utilizing the Guidelines for Interviews, which represents a draft list of topics and broad questions to be covered during the interview (based on respondent’s background). Review of relevant materials also included review of municipal documents, reports and materials produced by other organizations, media articles, as well as other legal and policy documents at national level. The FGDs have been carried out in each of the municipalities in the Prizren region and around 8-10 women participated in each of them. The FGDs were administered by a moderator through utilizing the Guidelines for FGDs, which represents a blueprint of topics to be discussed in group. FGDs were recorded for quality assurance purposes.

The research on mainstreaming gender through EU integration reveals several important aspects that KGSC would like to note. First and foremost, there is a general lack of knowledge on the part of both women and women organizations, and municipal officials on the flow of the EU integration process and what opportunities it brings forth for mainstreaming gender. There is a general lack of knowledge on the instruments made available by the EU for advancement of human rights in general and gender mainstreaming specifically. The research also reveals that most women and women organizations included in the research are not very familiar with the concepts of gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive planning and budgeting and similar approaches to integrating gender mainstreaming as cross-cutting aspects of all policies. Knowledge on both EU integration process and gender mainstreaming is also deficient within the local authorities, which aside from having a Gender Equality Officer (and sometimes a small budget for 'women projects'), do not have a proper understanding of gender mainstreaming or have much interest to introduce gender mainstreaming tools. Consequently, the 50% quota foreseen in the Gender Equality Law to be reserved for women throughout public administration at all levels is not respected. This particularly holds true for higher-level decision-making positions.

Some of the biggest obstacles and limitations to greater gender equality and to introducing mechanisms through EU integration that enhance gender equality that were identified by respondents/participants from the Prizren Region include:

- Education of women
- Cultural/social norms and gender-based bias
- Inheritance rights and implementation of law on inheritance
- Employment of women and implementation of the Law on Gender Equality

In such setting, the research team strongly recommends that serious efforts in educating the target audiences on the opportunities provided by the EU integration process, its overall flow and what specific processes will take place in each of the phases of integration, should be made. Without a genuine understanding of the integration process and the instruments made

available by this process, women and women organizations cannot effectively use the process to advance the situation of women in the country.

The nature of the EU integration is such that the process through which changes are introduced is equally important as the final outcome/changes introduced. The importance of EIDHR and other civil funding mechanisms and importance of regular contributions to the EC Progress Report should be strongly advocated for among women and women organizations. In the Kosovo scenario, and in particular with regards to gender mainstreaming, advocating through the EC progress report has proved to be very effective way to advance the gender equality agenda. Once included in the report, it automatically becomes an obligation for the Kosovo Government about which they need to report in the next reporting periods.

Given the broad lack of knowledge on topics like gender-sensitive budgeting and gender-sensitive planning of policies and laws, there is immediate need to develop templates, tools, explanatory manuals, as well as, carry out training of responsible officials of the application of these tools. Past efforts and activities have provided evidence that the most effective way of forwarding the gender equality agenda has been by building success stories, which can then replicated in other places across the country. As such, it is highly advisable to undertake pilot gender sensitive budgeting process with beneficiary municipalities and provide for the example for others to follow.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Project Background

“Promoting Gender Equality through Gender Mainstreaming” Project, supported by the *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Kvinna till Kvinna* has an overall objective of the project to: Improve mainstreaming of gender, and include gender as a cross-cutting issue into EU integration process and planning of EU programs in Kosovo, and into the National Strategic and Development documents in Kosovo.

By instilling gender-sensitive terminology and gender sensitive planning in EU integration processes and distribution of EU funding, the project aims at also channeling financial support for priorities of women and challenges faced by them. Moreover, introducing gender as a theme from the onset of EU planning processes, ensures that this aspect will be followed-upon in all future stages.

“Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Across Borders” project has started its implementation in October 2014, supported by the *EU under IPA cross-border cooperation between Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)*. The objective of the action is to establish a cross-border network of women organizations active in gender mainstreaming at local and regional level by empowering local NGOs to forward the gender mainstreaming agenda, raising organizational capacities of local women organizations in the project covered area, giving technical assistance in exercising watchdog functions and improving local and national media coverage of women-related topics.

1.2. Research Background

The research subject to this report was commissioned by KGSC with the purpose of obtaining a clearer picture in the field and providing CSOs with strong arguments for successfully advocating for issues related to the promotion of gender equality at the EU level. It was implemented in the period April - July 2016, while reporting and presenting of the report was completed in the period August - September. As part of this contract, AnketaCo was responsible for the design and implementation of research on "Promotion of Gender Equality in EU Integration", which was implemented in close cooperation with KGSC and its partners from the Prizren region.

The study also aimed to become a blueprint for local women NGOs and equip them with a strategic vision and consequent positioning in the EU integration process and utilizing the process to advance women's rights agenda. Consequently, the research expectations were also linked to providing information and recommendations that respond to the specific needs of women, and guidelines that address issues of high priority in promoting gender equality in EU level.

2. METHODOLOGY

Given the objectives of the research as specified above, the most optimal methodology to collect all data requested by KGSC came in the form of a qualitative approach, whereby, the research was carried out through qualitative instruments, namely, secondary literature review, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. The instruments were designed to be reflective of anticipated knowledge of the target audience and the specific situation within the target groups.

The sample of respondents for FGDs consisted of 47 participants from the target audience. Specifically the sample was broken down geographically to include one municipality per FGD and within each municipality between 6-10 participants. The municipalities included in the research are those in the Prizren region, namely:

- Municipality of Prizren
- Municipality of Suhareke
- Municipality of Rahovec
- Municipality of Dragash
- Municipality of Malisheve

The selection of respondents was done in cooperation with KGSC and its partner organizations in the Prizren region. The sample of participants in the FGDs included primarily CSO representatives and women activists, but also gender officers in the selected municipalities.

The sample for In Depth Interviews with Key Informants was seven persons. The sample was considered to be sufficient to cover the most important and informed stakeholders including here local and international NGOs, central level institutions, and municipal authorities.

The method used for sampling the Key Informant target population for the in-depth interviews was that of snowballing. By utilizing this technique, AnketaCo in cooperation with KGSC identified two initial respondents. These respondents were each asked to suggest 2 respondents each. The 7 respondents that received the highest number of referrals were chosen to be interviewed. By using the snowballing technique, AnketaCo team removed bias in choosing the respondents, hence influenced the results minimally. Moreover, this method also enables adequate identification of most active and important entities as perceived by stakeholders themselves.

Following the completion of FGDs and in-depth interviews, AnketaCo proceeded with drafting the findings report (this document). The draft findings report was presented to a selected group of civil society organization from the Prizren region and results and recommendations discussed with them in a roundtable discussion. This step was designed to obtain final inputs on the draft report of the research, hence, increasing the representativeness of the report to the views and perceptions of the target audiences even further.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

There appears to be general lack of understanding on how gender mainstreaming can be facilitated in practice, though there is some knowledge to what gender mainstreaming is. In some cases, even gender mainstreaming concept is vaguely understood, making further contribution through EU integration process fairly impossible. While some participants provide well-rounded responses to what gender mainstreaming represents, often the idea of mainstreaming is largely misconceptualized and/or limited/marginalized.

With regards to the EU Integration process, participants are generally not able to elaborate on expected steps/phases and what Kosovo will undergo in each of them. Without a general understanding of the process and the tools available to mainstream gender through this process, little progress can be expected in terms of improved gender equality resulting from the integration process. Women organizations and activists should be trained on the integration process, the instruments available to the gender-mainstreaming agenda.

Furthermore, adequate templates, manuals, policies and other practical to use tools should be introduced and municipalities assisted to deploy them in practice. Below findings for specific municipalities are presented into more detail in separate sections. Pilot exercises of gender-sensitive budgeting or gender-sensitive policy planning should be implemented with municipalities and institutions at central level that are most willing to introduce such changes in their planning and policy cycles.

3.1. Municipality of Dragash

The Focus Group Discussion in Dragash was carried out on April 20th 2016, starting at 13:00 and a total of seven participants were present in the discussion. The coverage of the topics began with discussion on gender mainstreaming as a concept and what do the participants understand by it. To this end, the participants provided a fairly accurate insights broadly defining it as everyone having equal rights in all spheres of life and gender equality becoming an integral part of all policies. Such understanding of gender mainstreaming, though expressed in basic terms, is sufficient to mobilize local resources to forward the gender mainstreaming agenda at the local level.

Following a definition of gender mainstreaming, the discussion was steered into covering obstacles and challenges to gender equality and mainstreaming. To this end, participants were able to depict a number of issues that can be generally be grouped into cultural challenges and socio-economic challenges to full-fledged equality between sexes. Within the cluster of cultural factors inhibiting women's equality with men numerous aspects were discussed by participants from Dragash Municipality.

Backward mentality is considered to be the biggest obstacle to overcome in terms of gender mainstreaming in Dragash. The participants in the FGD, while noting the achievements made since 1999 onward, in their view, significantly more remains to be done for overcoming the cultural obstacles impeding gender mainstreaming.

Dragash is qualified by the participants in the FGD as one of the most conservative regions even within the reality in Kosovo. Although there are visible changes since the opening of Prizren University, the situation for women in this municipality continues to be challenging. Mentality is the primary reason for women still largely giving up on their inheritance rights in favor of their male siblings. The topic of equal division of inheritance among both men and women is still considered a taboo topic and is generally frowned upon. The hope for change in mentality lies primarily with the young, as it is not very realistic that the older generations will be able to transform their mindset and endorse more progressive views on equality between sexes.

Discrimination in inheritance rights towards women was also noted as a structural socio-economic factor adversely affecting women. While within the Albanian community Dragash, women rarely claim inheritance rights from common property, this is not the case in Gorani community where women often claim their rights to such inheritance. Without property, women have far more limited choices to personal and professional development, earning income, and taking decisions for themselves. The situation continues in their married lives, where they become largely dependent on their spouses.

Education is considered as the second key ingredient to successful advancement of women's rights and the gender equality agenda. Education is also perceived as the key catalyst to positively affecting the change in mindset and mentality which was considered the biggest obstacle. Referencing to the positive impact that opening of Prizren University has had for the increase of the number of young women attending higher education, women in the FGD in Dragash note the importance of educating both girls and boys for the future. Low education level was perceived as primary reason for difficulties in achieving the 50% quota for women, particularly in decision-making levels. Advocacy on behalf of young girls completing higher education is needed in the view of participants to further advance the situation of women in Kosovo.

Early marriages is another issue brought to the discussion in Dragash Municipality as being of great importance. The early marriages which are often motivated by poor economic situation and aim at creating better livelihood abroad affect women of this region very negatively. Numerous recorded cases of early marriages particularly among the Gorani community, where girls get engaged as early as 14-15 years of age. The backward mentality where women objectified and expectations of socially acceptable behavior for men and women are based on a double standard and lack of opportunities and hope for better life have jointly contributed to this phenomenon to further continue.

The situation with employment of women in the Municipality of Dragash is highly unsatisfactory, and small steps towards greater involvement of women are being undertaken. Employment in the public sector remains

problematic, whereby within the municipal administration out of 115 employees, only 13 are women. A combination of lack of willingness to implement the Law on Gender Equality and lack of qualified women cadres, the situation pertaining to women in decision-making remains concerning.

Employment in the private sector is also equally problematic. To this end, the generally low economic development pace prevailing in this municipality adversely affects women. The limited employment available in the region puts women in a disadvantaged position as culturally it is not acceptable for them to work before their spouses and/or male siblings. "Cultural suitability" is also an obstacle that further narrows the opportunities for women to find employment and many positions in the private sector are considered socially unfit for women. Lack of kindergarten in the municipality is also perceived to be a hindering factor to women's employment. In the absence of a public institution where working mothers would leave their children during the day, conditions the work of women with the readiness of their families to care for their children.

Women in politics and public institutions have been largely marginalized. Within political parties, women are marginalized in women forums, expected not tackle issues of high politics, which are reserved for men. Even at municipal assembly, where women represent 30% of total members, they rarely engage in discussions. They never promote the gender equality agenda or the rights of women in the municipality. Consequently, they have not created women constituency support and generally even women do not vote for women in Dragash.

With regards to the EU integration process and the general understanding of participants about this process, the views are not entirely accurate. There is a general lack of knowledge about the integration process and the expectations about it appear to have been largely built around the approach of the EU in Kosovo. The participants in the FGD in Dragash consider EU integration process being primarily for minority communities, and the first comments made on the topic regard the good situation of minority communities in this municipality. In general, there is lack of knowledge on the mechanisms and tools available to mainstream gender and women's rights through the EU integration process.

Improvement of implementation of legislation is perceived to be highly important for forwarding the gender equality agenda in Dragash. To this end, full implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and other gender-related legislation (i.e. labor law provisions on maternity), would directly and immediately affect women and equality between sexes in Dragash.

There is a generally shared view that in order to achieve gender equality, women must have the courage to demand their rights and that the success will largely depend on their resolve in pursuing their rights. Also, it is generally considered that there is significant need for awareness raising both for women and men, with particular focus on youth, which should be worked with to ensure change in the future.

3.2. Municipality of Malisheve

The Focus Group Discussion in Malisheve was carried out on April 18th, 2016, starting at 10:00 and a total of eight representatives of women's organizations partook in the discussion. The discussion in the group began with the concept of Gender Mainstreaming, whereby following the brief explanation of the FGD rules, participants were invited to discuss. To this end, the participants provide an understanding which is fairly limited in scope and pertains to everyone having equal rights within municipal departments. The participants consider that Municipality of Malisheve has made significant progress towards gender mainstreaming, but considerable efforts still need to be made to have equality between men and women in this municipality.

When discussing the cultural challenges to full gender equality in the society participants firstly note the issue of property inheritance. This issue is considered to adversely affecting women and to be one of the most important to address to achieve gender equality. In the view of participants in the FGD in Malisheve, this issue requires special attention by both the institutions and civil society. While acknowledging that inheritance issue is problematic throughout Kosovo, participants in Malisheve consider that being a predominantly rural municipality, the proportions of the problem become bigger. With most property being divided being agricultural land (usually surrounded by land of other family), it is difficult for women to enjoy the rights of use of land even in cases where they can legally claim it.

The participants from Malisheve also note to the positive changes experienced in the aftermath of the war with regards to gender equality. Education and employment areas have more positive changes comparing with other sectors where gender should be mainstreamed. The participants note that several women act as directors of departments within municipality, but acknowledge that there are far from implementing the 50% representation quota reserved for women, particularly at decision-making levels.

The second type of constraints--those pertaining to socio-economic aspect that represent structural challenges for gender equality, participants in the FGD in Malisheve firstly note the double standards towards men and women particularly with regards to education and employment. While taking note that the situation has significantly improved, particularly with regards to education, participants from Malisheve testify to awareness-related issues about the importance of women receiving education. This is considered by participants to be primarily a decision taken at family level, and consider that interventions should tackle specifically this angle. Discrepancies in education are perceived to be closely linked to employment inequalities, hence being of utmost importance to address.

Another major constraint with regards to socio-economic structural challenges for gender mainstreaming noted by the participants, is the prevailing perception that women are only good as housewives and raise children, but to take important decisions. To this end, the institutions have done very little and greater pressure from civil society is needed to intensify their efforts for gender equality. These social bias adversely affects employment of women as they are generally considered as the weak gender. Participants note public opinion surveys where prejudice towards women in decision-making are largely present. Women in decision-making positions are undergo greater scrutiny and generally their mistakes are interpreted as being related to their gender. This is not the case when men in decision-making positions make mistakes of similar nature.

In favor of greater women employment particularly at the municipality administration, participants provide numerous arguments among which the ability of women to multitask, greater level of sincerity and more difficult to corrupt as compared to men. All these aspects are considered to be valid

arguments that should be used for advocating greater women representation in public offices.

Similarly to Dragash, Malisheva participants also do not have an understanding of the EU integration process and how gender mainstreaming can be funneled through it. The discussion on this topics led to discussion on quotas, which participants consider to have been introduced as part of the EU integration and propose that it should be increased to 50%, thus reflecting the percentage of women in the society. The challenge to such proposal comes from availability of women cadres, hence making such proposal possible only in the future when situation with women's education improves. It is worth noting that none of the participants was able to indicate the integration steps until full membership and neither the activities that take place in each of them. They were also generally not familiar with the tools available to mainstream gender through EU integration or the funding available for advancing the equality agenda.

The participants in Malisheve also note that the legal infrastructure is only partly being implemented. Functional review of the administration would have greater impact in facilitating greater implementation of gender-related legislation. Lack of specific budgets committed to promote gender equality and dependency on central-level institutions for funding are noted to be greatest challenges to mainstreaming gender in Malisheve municipality.

When discussing the role of civil society in the EU integration process and as catalyst of change with regards to gender mainstreaming, participants consider that civil society plays an important role, but at the same time, acknowledge that the impact from their work is limited. Civil society is marginalized and genuine change is perceived to be possible only through politics and political parties, who represents main decision-makers in Kosovo. They see the role of civil society more as a bridge between the government and the communities, or as a watchdog to the government.

3.3. Municipality of Prizren

The Focus Group Discussion in Prizren was carried out on April 20th, 2016, starting at 10:00 and a total of seven representatives of women's organizations of the confirmed ten, participated in it. Similarly to other two municipalities, the discussion in Prizren FGD also commenced with the participants' ideas on gender mainstreaming. To this end, participants considered that gender mainstreaming means the involvement of women in all areas, but most participants shared the view that it should be genuine and not arbitrary. The mainstreaming in the view of respondents must be realistic and not be expressed in terms of percentages to be achieved. Some participants suggest that gender mainstreaming can be more successful if men were to be raised awareness on gender equality because they are the ones who should include the opposite sex.

With regards to cultural challenges to ensure gender equality participants in the FGD note education of women. They consider it to be crucial for any kind of advancement of the position of women and basic pre-condition for genuine empowerment of women. Early marriages are also considered to be a serious challenge to overcome, as they are also directly linked to education of young women. Early marriages aside from prematurely interrupting education of young women, they also condition them to being subdued throughout life to their spouses, because of lack of opportunities for them in a future without completed education.

Division of property is also considered to be one of the most important issues to address in Prizren Municipality. While the participants in the FGD take note that women in Prizren town are more emancipated and have begun claiming rights to property, the topics largely remains taboo in rural areas. Fear of stigmatization by the broader community and isolation and complete loss of support by the family are the two primary mechanisms against which women are subdued and forced into relinquishing their property inheritance rights. Research in this field reveals that education does not affect inheritance levels as much as do mentality or tradition.

Women employment both in private and public sectors is also considered a serious socio-economic constraint in the Prizren region. Participants in the

FGD in Prizren testify to women discrimination in the labor market, both in public and private sectors. Lack of implementation of the Law on Gender Equality is perceived to be the biggest obstacle to overcome in the public sector as the basic document guaranteeing women representation in public institutions.

With regards to employment in the private sector, aside from double standards between men and women and the different expectations from them, participants in Prizren confirm gender-bias towards jobs and professions as being a major obstacle. This further worsens the situation for women in addition to suitability of work environment (i.e. not many men) and slims their chances of finding 'suitable employment'.

By law women are equal to men in Kosovo. But in practice, according to the participants in the FGD in Prizren, there is general lack of implementation of legislation. One of the main problems depicted in relation to the difference between paper and practice, is that of impunity for non-implementation. While every single public institution is in violation of Gender Equality Law, there is not a single case where a public official has been penalized for violations made against this law.

Similarly to Dragash and Malisheve, Prizren participants also display limited knowledge about the EU integration process, and possible ways of this process being used to streamline gender. Nevertheless, participants were able to note that some of the requirements/standards posed by the EU are respect of human rights, rights of the ethnic non majority communities, as well as incorporating gender component as a cross-cutting issue in every institutional policy.

The discussion around EU policies to streamline gender, revolved around the issue of quotas, and whether EU countries apply themselves quotas. While perceiving it as a policy that has been imposed by the European Union, participants are not certain what policies ensure gender mainstreaming at community level in the EU.

3.4. Municipality of Rahovec

The Focus Group Discussion in Rahovec was carried out on April 18th, 2016, starting at 11:30 and a total of ten representatives of women's organizations of the confirmed ten, participated in it. As per the Guidelines for FGDs, the discussion in Rahovec also began with soliciting participants' ideas and opinions about gender mainstreaming as a concept. To this end, the participants in this municipality interpret gender mainstreaming as inclusion of an individual (regardless of gender) in all spheres of life. Given that the population is divided approximately into 50% women and 50% men, they should be equally represented in all spheres of life. It should be noted that this was one of the most comprehensive definitions obtained in all FGDs, as the participant was also able to provide the foundation for such a gender-neutral approach.

When discussing cultural factors adversely affecting women, participants in the FGD in Rahovec suggest that as a society, we need to reflect and understand the real reasons behind women discrimination in our society. While moral-related arguments have no evidence-based foundation of any type, they largely rely on speculation and gender-based prejudice. These cultural factors adversely affect other aspects which condition the role of women in the society to be of secondary importance. To this end, participants state that the issue of education is the most important to address. As education also is the best way to combat backward mentality, it is also seen as direct contribution to women's employment and economic empowerment.

One aspect that is duly noted in the FGD in Rahovec is the general lack of support by women for women. Lack of general support of women towards women leaders, politicians, businesswomen, or any other leadership position, demonstrates significant bias (even among women) that women are not qualified to carry out certain functions/jobs. The need for solidarity and mutual support among women is seen as an important step towards women empowerment.

With regards to women in politics and elected offices, participants in the FGD stipulate that it is a two-way problem, as aside from the lack of support

by women for women, the elected women also rarely attempt to represent women interests. This has in the view of participants, further alienated their women constituencies.

In terms of structural social and economic obstacles that need to be overcome, the Rahovec respondents also take note of the inheritance discrimination as the first aspect that needs immediate attention. The discussion around the inheritance topic aside from the cultural plane, also revolved around the economic and legal aspects of the issue. To this end, legally, participants believe that legislation should be amended to remove opting out from inheritance as an option for women during property division. While no law can prohibit them later into giving their inheritance away as gifts to their male siblings, it would significantly improve the situation as it would reduce the pressure on women during property division and reduce irregularities with which inheritance division processes are often accompanied with.

From the social perspective, participants perceive the problem of inheritance to be located within the realm of family and gender-based division of roles and responsibility within the family and society at large. However, this socially conditioned situation has economic effect on women and provides for the biggest obstacle to women empowerment. It limits access to finance, economic security and directly affects roles of spouses in couples. Interventions to ensure greater incentives for fair division between male and female offsprings is ensuring financial security for elderly people, as only then can the parents share their wealth equally among all children without fearing who will take care of them in the old age.

The participants in Rahovec hold that the legal infrastructure in Kosovo regarding gender equality can be easily compared to that of the developed western countries, however the issues is with the implementation of these laws in practice remain concerning. Participants believe that the existing achievements in gender mainstreaming have always come as a result of external pressure and not as a genuinely recognized need to address these priorities.

Very little knowledge is displayed by the participants in Rahovec about the EU integration process and what opportunities this process brings about for mainstreaming gender. One of the aspects noted in the FGD in Rahovec is unfair hiring process in the public administration, which in most cases is done alongside political party lines. Such processes adversely affect women, whose role within political parties is fairly marginalized. Unfair hiring also hinders the ability of skillful women to successfully engage in high profile jobs in public administration.

Given the limited knowledge of the EU integration process in itself, is an obstacle as it prevents women and women organizations from effectively utilizing the process to advance the gender equality agenda. The process as such is designed for each country to adapt policies according to the reality on the ground with the objective of setting forth minimum compliance/standards for the entire union. If the primary duty stakeholders are not equipped with the necessary knowledge on the process, the chance of the process being utilized to the benefit of gender mainstreaming is rather limited.

3.5. Municipality of Suhareke

The Focus Group Discussion in Suhareke was carried out on April 19th, 2016, starting at 10:00 and a total of seven representatives of women's organizations of the confirmed ten, participated in it. The viewpoints and opinions shared by participants in the FGD in Suhareke are quite similar with the other municipalities of Prizren region. Participants provide for basic knowledge of gender mainstreaming but fail to grasp the essence of the approach and how it is applied in practice. To this end, the definition provided by participants to what gender mainstreaming stands for was higher level of women participation in all aspects of life and decision making positions.

The discussion on the cultural impediments for women empowerment and achieving gender equality resembled significantly with the discussion in the other municipalities. The first challenge to gender mainstreaming and full-fledged gender equality in the view of participants in Suhareke come from the backward mentality. While in Suhareke town, significant progress has been made with regards to empowerment of women, in rural areas, significant challenges remain. Participants in the FGD in Suhareke take note that mentality is very difficult obstacle to overcome as change in mindset requires significant time to be achieved. The value sets and norms that comprise the social standards of behavior are deeply rooted in the personality of people as most of them are formed very early in life. The creation of these begins in the family, but is further shaped by the education system and socialization outside of family. In both these environments backward mentality largely persists, hence making change even more difficult.

Education inequality is also considered to be an impediment to gender mainstreaming. Discrimination in education against girls particularly in rural areas, which often argued in terms of morale of the family, has caused that women suffer discrimination throughout life. As they cannot get jobs, they rely on the income from their families (spouses), thus their role is marginalized within the realm of the house.

Property inheritance issue surfaced as the biggest and first to note structural obstacles preventing gender mainstreaming. The current applica-

tion of the customary law (within the realm of written law) as opposed to gender-neutral division of property, continues the cycle of discrimination against women and the unfair treatment they receive from the society. The participants note the difficulties in implementing the existing law on inheritance in rural areas.

The rule of law is depicted as one of the key aspects / components of EU integration and the need for more intensified reforms aimed at facilitating more rapid accession process is apparent. The legal infrastructure is considered by participants to be very good with the vast majority of laws being aligned with the community laws of the EU. The reform process in the view of participants in the FGD should also entail design of more efficient implementation models.

Participants in the FGD in Suhareke appear to have some knowledge on gender mainstreaming tools and policies at EU level, but the knowledge is limited to awareness on equal treatment policy and not specific measures and sources for advancing the position of women.

Final remarks in the discussion were made with regards to the specific role that civil society plays in the EU integration process and how can this process be adapted to advance the gender equality agenda. The participants in the group claim that CSOs in Suhareke reflect the priorities of their constituencies and enjoy support from the population. CSOs have been supportive of initiatives of women claiming inheritance rights and protecting victims of domestic violence. However, the role of civil society should be much broader and encompass also watchdog activities and scrutinize the government in both central and local level.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion in the sections above and in line with the objectives set forth for this exercise the research team would like to draw the following conclusions and make the final remarks into addressing them. Below these conclusive remarks are elaborated upon for each of the topics covered.

Awareness raising of CSOs and general about gender mainstreaming is perceived to be necessary. The evolution from segregation approach into an integrated approach foreseen to streamline gender across sectors and topics is a shift that most participants in the FGDs are yet to take in their viewpoints. As primary duty bearers they should rely on own knowledge and understanding of gender mainstreaming to advance the situation of women in their respective communities. With regards to obstacles and challenges to gender equality, participants in the FGDs in the Prizren region depict inheritance rights as one of the top issue to address. It has direct impact on equality of women and men both socially and economically. To this end recommendations have been made to revise the legislation on inheritance, completely removing the option of opting out from inheritance, which is currently applied by the majority of women undergoing property division processes. Such legal change would have a direct impact on women empowerment as legally the act of giving is reversible, while the act of opting out/relinquishing the right to inheritance is not. Awareness among young couples but also among the judiciary representatives is needed to address this drawback.

Education is also considered to be a major obstacle to gender equality. With limited skills and competencies, women fail to find employment and often limited to housewife status only. Aside from economic empowerment, education is perceived to also bring social empowerment and have positive

impact on raised awareness on the importance of mainstreaming. The informal education received at home is also an important part of the socialization process, hence needing significant attention.

Gender bias on professions and double standards and norms on their suitability for men and women are the most problematic aspects to be addressed with regards to employment. This holds true particularly for the private sector, where women rarely seek employment. In the public sector on the other hand, more effective implementation of the Law on Gender Equality is the only scenario put forth for greater engagement of women.

Development of manuals and templates and facilitating a pilot exercise on gender-sensitive budgeting is needed to provide a success story that others will follow. This is generally agreed by all participants and such recommendation is based on the largely perceived lack of human resources on the part of institutions to carry out such processes on their own. Capacity development for CSOs and municipal officials about the EU integration process is also very much needed. These appears to be very limited knowledge on the part of participants in the FGDs, with specific emphasis on mechanisms available to mainstream gender through the integration process. Only after being equipped with adequate knowledge and skills on this topics can they exercise their role in the process effectively and achieve sustainable results with regards to gender equality and gender mainstreaming across sectors.

APPENDIX

Guideliness for FGDs

- 1) What do you understand with gender mainstreaming?
- 2) What are the cultural obstacles towards gender mainstreaming?
- 3) What are the structural social-economic obstacles for gender mainstreaming?
- 4) Which are the criteria for EU Accession?
- 5) Which are the phases for the EU Accession?
- 6) How has Kosovo regulated the legal infrastructure on gender equality?
- 7) How much are they being implemented?
- 8) Why has the process stagnated, what are the causes?
- 9) How has EU regulated the legal basis on gender equality?
- 10) Are you familiar with the EU legal basis on gender equality?
- 11) What is "Acquis"?
- 12) Are you familiar with the EU directives?
- 13) What role does/should the civil society have in the EU integration process?
- 14) Which are the mechanisms that EU uses to involve civil society in the gender mainstreaming process?



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