



GENDER ASSESSMENT
OF LOCAL LEVEL
SOCIAL POLICIES AND BUDGETS

The Case of Kumanovo, Strumica and Shtip

CARRIED OUT BY HERA WITH THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF UN WOMEN

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Skopje, 2013

List of abbreviations

ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
CSEE	Central and South Eastern Europe
CEO	Commission for Equal Opportunities
CSHCP	Committee for Social, Health and Child Protection
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Center for Social Work
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
LED	Local Economic Development
MTSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
SEE	South East Europe
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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INTRODUCTION

Since the independence in 1991, the system of social protection in the Republic of Macedonia has been faced with many challenges: increased number of social risks to be covered, increased demand for social welfare, reduced financial resources, as well as a lack of timely collected, unified and comparative social statistics as basis for the creation of targeted social policy. Some of these challenges are still pertinent and have been accompanied by new problems like increased impoverishment of the population, which is particularly visible among women. The reforms of the system for social protection initiated with the process of decentralization in 2004 implied transfer of some competences in the field of social protection to local governments. The process was challenged by the lack of financial, administrative and human capacities and hence requires new types of policy interventions.

This gender assessment attempts to analyze the implementation of the social policy at the local level in three municipalities by identifying to what extent those policies reflect the local needs of men and women, and whether the measures they propose will advance gender equality. Our objective is to enhance the debate on gender equality issues, and to enable individuals, organizations, policy makers and policy analysts to effectively participate in the development of approaches which would increase the gender responsiveness of social policies.

The assessment was proposed and developed in response to a UN Women request for proposals published in August 2012. The assessment entailed desk-review of policies, programme documents and budgets and a field research in the selected municipalities. Additionally, validation meetings were organized with stakeholders in each municipality in order to discuss the findings, elaborate recommendations and propose adequate prioritization within future interventions.

We hope that this analysis will serve as a guide to all actors, and especially those working on social protection and social inclusion at the local level, to improve the design and implementation of gender mainstreaming in these policies and thereby better serve the needs of citizens, both women and men.

METHODOLOGY

The development of a comprehensive and needs-based public policy depends on the availability of relevant data and policy research. In recognition of this, the UN Women office in Skopje technically supported this independent gender assessment of the social protection policies and budgets in three selected municipalities: Kumanovo, Shtip and Strumica. This activity reflects the regional and global priorities of UN Women, the objectives of the regional project “Introducing Gender Responsive Policies in South East Europe” (2011-2013) and the recent developments in national legislation and policy, namely the amendment of the Law on Equal Opportunities between women and men (2012) and the Government Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting (2012-2017), which make the availability of gender-based analysis a precondition for the creation of policies and budgets responsive to the needs of women and men.

This assessment aims to promote social policy as a means for advancing gender equality and equity on the local level. In that sense, it explores the following questions:

1. Do the social protection programs in the selected municipalities address the needs of women and men?
2. Do the social protection programs take into an account gender based disadvantages and vulnerabilities?
3. Can existing programs be reformulated and/or restructured in a way that would effectively respond to the needs of women and men or new programs would need to be written to achieve this goal?
4. Are there any good practices that can be promoted in other municipalities in order to mainstream gender equality in local social protection programs?

The assessment looks at two distinct aspects of gender and social policy: a) the importance of gender in understanding the structure and content of social policy and b) the use of gender in analysing inequalities that arise in the access to social protection and as an outcome of social policies.

The assessment was based on a mix-method research approach, but it was largely dependent on qualitative methods. The following are the most important methods used:

- Content analysis of municipal programs
- Gender Disaggregated Assessment of beneficiaries of municipal programs and services for social protection

- In depth interviews with stakeholders
- Focus groups with beneficiaries of social services in preschool child care

In addition to the primary data, we used desktop analysis and review of the legislation, as well as academic and scientific literature to inform the development of the methodology. Additionally, 65 request for free access to official data were sent to the three municipalities to obtain data relevant for the study.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Twenty-eight-in-depth interviews were held with the most prominent stakeholders that were divided into three main categories: local self government administration, public institutions at local level and CSOs. All interviews were held at a place chosen as convenient by the stakeholder, which in all but one case were the offices of the interviewee. Prior to the interview, they received an information sheet and a participation consent form that was signed by all. 8 of the 28 interviewees explicitly asked for total anonymity. 6 of the interviewed stakeholders were male and 22 females.

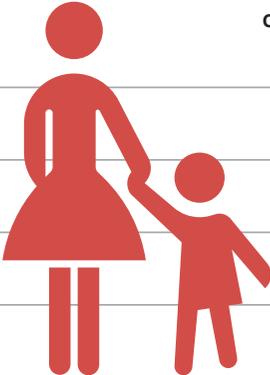
The interviews were held by one (interviewer) and were audio recorded, except in cases where the interviewee did not give consent for recording. All interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were conducted in a free answering format, but the topic of the conversations was determined by the interviewers. Notes were taken during and immediately after the interviews. The stakeholders who participated in the interviews included municipal council members from the Committees for Social Protection, Health and Education, Committees for Equal Opportunities, employees in the Sectors for Social Protection, Sectors for Finance and Budget and Sectors for Local Economic Development. Additionally, representatives from kindergartens from other two municipalities, and Centers for Social Work in all three municipalities were interviewed. Only two interviewees explicitly rejected to be interviewed: one employee in the Sector for Finance from one of the targeted municipalities, and one of the Kindergarten representatives.

FOCUS GROUPS

Between November 10th and November 18th, 2012, six focus groups were organized, two in each municipality. In each municipality one focus group was organized with women that have small children enrolled in kindergarten, and one group

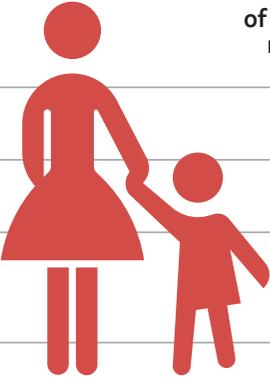
with women whose children do not attend preschool. The focus groups were held in the premises of the municipalities. Prior to the group interviews, participants were briefed and asked to sign an informed consent and permission form. Participants received incentives for their participation in the focus groups. All of the participants agreed to the terms of participation and signed the form. Sessions that lasted 90 minutes were held with each focus group, with two researchers moderating the discussion (one as facilitator and one as note keeper). All discussions were audio taped and notes were taken during the interviews. A total of 50 participants took part in the focus groups, all of which were women. Half of them had their children enrolled and going to preschool, and the other half were with children who did not attend preschool at the time the focus group was held. All the participants were contacted either via CSOs or via personal contacts. Beside the position on the labour market, the number and age of their children, enrolment in preschool, and place of residence, there were no other criteria for participation.

Focus groups – women with children enrolled in preschool



Municipality	Number of employed mothers	Number of unemployed mothers	Total
Shtip	6	2	8
Kumanovo	8	1	9
Strumica	8	0	8
Total	22	3	25

Focus groups – women with children not enrolled in preschool



Municipality	Number of employed mothers	Number of unemployed mothers	Total
Shtip	6	2	8
Kumanovo	2	6	8
Strumica	2 part time	5	7
Total	10	13	25

VALIDATION MEETINGS

After the research was completed, validation meetings were organized in all municipalities to present results, validate findings and discuss recommendations. All stakeholders were invited to participate at the validation meetings, and in particular the individuals that participated in the research (i.e. were interviewed). A copy of the research report was sent prior to the validation meetings, where the research team presented the draft study and received feedback. After the validation meeting, the draft study was revised to incorporate the conclusions from the meetings. A total of 25 persons participated at the validation meetings in Strumica, Shtip and Kumanovo, respectively.

WHAT IS GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING?

Gender mainstreaming is "... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated." (Council of Europe 1998, Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices, Strasbourg.)

The concept of gender mainstreaming in legislation and policy in Macedonia was first introduced with the adoption of the first Law on Equal Opportunities between women and men back in 2006. The introduction of gender responsive budgeting followed with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007-2012). However, gender responsive budgeting was institutionalised with the amendment of the Law on Equal Opportunities between women and men in 2012 and the adoption of the Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting.² These legal and strategic frameworks define measures for systematic inclusion of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men in the process of creating, implementing and monitoring national and local level policies and budgets³.

Parallel to that, several pilot activities assessing policies and budgets at the national and local level were carried out to raise awareness on the different outcomes of the same policies for women and men and to demonstrate the benefits that the application of gender responsive policy planning and budgeting processes could bring to the policy makers and beneficiaries alike.

Considering that the budget is the most important instrument at disposal of the Government, it represents a powerful tool to transform the society in a way that would address the needs and interests of different groups of beneficiaries, as well as advance human rights. "The government budget is subject to human rights not only because it is one state activity among many, but also because it is the financial framework for all government activities. Second, human rights principles must take precedence, because human rights are an end in themselves, while budgets merely a means to other ends. This does not mean ignoring financial prudence. It means that financial objectives must not be achieved in ways that violate human rights or that fail to fulfil them."⁴.

The new Strategy for GRB recognises this and consequently aims at the creation of a coordinated and transparent process of gender responsive budgeting. which would lead to gender-responsive policies that reduce the inequalities between men and women and promote equal opportunities, in accordance with their different needs.

"Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality." (Council of Europe, 2005)

The Strategy is focused on three strategic areas: 1) introducing a gender perspective in the programs and budgets of the budget beneficiaries at the central and local level; 2) improving the legal framework for the inclusion of gender responsive budgeting; and 3) strengthening the institutional mechanisms and capacity development that are required for incorporation of the gender perspective in the creation of policies, programs and related budgets.

Once a gender mainstreaming system with guidelines and norms is in place, the central and local government will be obliged to ensure that men and women are equally served by the public sector. This in practice would mean that all policies, programs and plans developed at the national and local level address the different needs and challenges of both women and men and ensure effective programs and better use of public funds.

The reality that commitments to women's rights and gender equality on paper do not always translate into real actions and the equal opportunities provided for women and men through legislation and policies do not always result in equal outcomes is rightfully reflected into the Strategy for Gender Equality (2013-2020) adopted in February 2013.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING ON THE LOCAL LEVEL?

The Law on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (2012) provides guidelines on incorporation of the principle of equal opportunities into the reorganization, improvement, development and assessment of the political processes on all levels of government and in all stages of policy making. At the local level, the local self governments units are obliged to establish Commission for Equal Opportunities (CEO) as a permanent advisory body with a decision of the Municipal Council, as well as provide the conditions for its functioning and to appoint a Coordinator for Equal Opportunities (from the local administration) as a focal point for gender equality.

The mandate of the CEO is to review development plans, legal acts and decisions and provide recommendations, propose actions and measures (prior to their approval) to the Municipal Council. The CEO looks into the impact those legislative and policy acts will potentially have on gender equality in the municipalities. In doing so, the CEO is obliged to cooperate with the associations of employers, trade-unions, nongovernmental organizations and citizens associations that are active in the field of equal opportunities. CEO tasks and obligations should be determined with the Statute of each Municipality. However, to date only few municipalities have incorporated provisions that regulate the work of their CEO in their statutes. Most of the municipalities have not adopted internal acts that will regulate the scope, responsibilities and duties of the CEO, They have neither established internal procedures and mechanisms that ensure that the Law on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men is applied in the decision making on the local level, nor have they defined how the work of the CEO relates to the work of the municipal administration and civil society organizations.

The Coordinators for Equal Opportunities should support the CEO and implementation of the responsibilities and obligations of the local governments emerging from the Law on Equal Opportunities. Considering the relationship between the Coordinator and the CEO are not clearly defined by the Law and taking into account their weak capacities⁵, this study will try to assess how that new mechanism for coordination between these structures can contribute to improving the institutional coordination, promoting measures and activities for advancement of the status of women.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

Gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of policy formulation. Policy planners cannot assume that women and men, girls and boys will automatically

benefit from a policy in an equal way. They need to ensure that policy development takes into an account and is responsive to gender specific needs of women and men, as well as that it anticipates and addresses potential inequalities. Effective policies, programs and projects that meet the needs of all citizens and benefit them equally, can only be achieved if gender mainstreaming is applied systematically in all stages of the planning process.

Planning

The major focus at the planning stage of any policy is situation analysis:

- Identification of problems and challenges to be faced; examining available sex disaggregated data and statistics.
- Definition of the aims of the policy; Are the aims of the policy the same for women and men, girls and boys?
- Definition of targets and development of gender indicators to measure the accomplishment of the targets.
- Who will be involved in the policy making; Are both genders involved in the policy making?

Decisions

Once the gender-relevant information is collected and analyzed, decisions need to be taken on:

- What problems and challenges for women and for men, girls and boys need to be addressed and prioritized (based on the initial planning stage).

Implementation

Even though adopting gender mainstreaming from the initial stage of the policy planning process allows the policy to be gender sensitive, there is no certainty that the policy will be “inequality-free”. There is a big difference between analyzing gender issues, supporting gender equality and implementing policies which actively promote gender equality. This is considered to be the practical stage and therefore new or unidentified issues may still arise. For this reason, it is important that the actors involved in the development and delivery of the policy are supported to and are able to promote equality.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Any policy implemented requires monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the aims and goals have been achieved and that areas where improvement is needed are adequately identified. Monitoring should therefore be a continuous process and focus on the impact of the policy on women and men, girls and boys. Monitoring should take place at two different levels: monitoring progress towards fulfill-

ing substantive goals and monitoring of the implementation process. Both require setting targets and developing indicators, as mentioned above, to measure progress towards meeting those targets. The indicators would be able to tell what contribution the policy has made to achieving gender equality.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance involves considering, planning for and meeting the needs and priorities of all citizens. Adopting gender-responsive planning processes would be an important step towards achieving this outcome and is the only way of being certain that government actions benefit women and men, girls and boys equally. Adopting and incorporating gender responsive budgeting allows the policies to be targeted to the specific beneficiaries and their needs, thus creating more effective programs and spending the public funds in a more purposeful manner.

Therefore, the implementation of the policies and strategies for gender equality contribute to the following:

- Improved accountability of governments and their representatives in terms of gender equality;
- Improved efficiency of policies and programs, while ensuring that those who need assistance have benefited from public spending;
- Improved management principles which include allocation of the resources and services to the population in a fair, equitable, efficient and responsible manner;
- Improved accountability and transparency of governments, by monitoring the allocation of funds and how they are spent.

GENDER AND SOCIAL POLICY

Gender equality and the incorporation of gender perspectives in social and economic policy is not only a matter of social justice, but it is also extremely important for tackling poverty and unemployment, ensuring the provision of equal opportunities and outcomes and quality life for all. For these reasons, it is necessary to recognize that the achievement of gender equality and tackling the persistent social inequalities, very often means working differently with women and men, as well as recognizing the various obstacles they are faced with, and the different needs, priorities and aspirations they have.⁶

Recent changes to the Macedonian social policy (e.g. cutbacks in social spending) and the global economic crises have potential to negatively impact the socio-economic well-being of citizens. It can be assumed that these changes would contribute to the increase of economic insecurity, but also to the emergence of new vulnerabilities among the population, which would further increase the risk for social exclusion. When coupled with unstable employment, precarious working conditions, and especially the high inactivity and unemployment rates in the country for the past decade, the risks become even higher. Majority of the citizens currently feel that social assistance and social transfers are better than under the Socialistic Yugoslavia, but they are not satisfied with their outcomes. Two-thirds believe that the gap between the rich and poor is too big, and over a third feel that the government should help the poorest citizens through welfare.⁷

In the area of social assistance (permanent and social), official data show a significant difference in the use of this right of women and men".
(Pg. 18, draft SGE, 2012)

Although attention has been paid to the general effects of these cutbacks, less attention has been given to how women have been affected, under the assumption that these policies are gender neutral and thus affect women and men in the same way. Analyses of the recent reforms in the field of social policy lack recognition that women and men live structurally different lives. In other words, the social worlds of women and men differ in many dimensions, most notably family and work expectations, responsibilities and opportunities⁸, and that understanding those dimensions is key for identifying their specific needs.

These differences reflect and reinforce ideological and structural arrangements in Macedonia that give rise to the substantive gender based differences in socio-economic security. Although there have been improvements over the years, a disproportionate number of women are among the poor and disadvantaged, often facing discriminatory practices that limit their access to resources, opportunities and social services. The transition has generated an unprecedented loss of jobs. Between 1989 and 1997, an estimated 14 million jobs held by women disappeared across the region, amounting to well over half the total number of jobs lost. In all of the countries in CSEE, the proportion of adult women participating in the labour force was lower in 1997 compared to 1985.⁹ Furthermore, global changes in the labour market, macroeconomics and demographic transition have disproportionately negative impacts on women, particularly on those outside the formal sector.¹⁰ This is a situation still faced by majority of women in Macedonia that are either inactive or unemployed. Even employed women have difficulty rising above the poverty line because they are more likely to work part-time, experience barriers to employment and earn lower wages than men do.

To obtain as complete picture as possible, this assessment targeted three municipalities that are different and sheds light on different challenges and possible strategies to achieve full equality between women and man. While different gender equality aspects will be analyzed in all municipalities, some of the issues applicable to women in all municipalities are identified below.

Most women experience motherhood at some point during their lives, a factor that can place them in a vulnerable socio-economic position. Namely, women's primary responsibility for their children and families often inhibits their ability to earn high incomes¹¹ or ability to engage in public life.

When marriages break down, women and children are at an increased economic risk. According to the 2002 Census, out of the total number of 38,988 households of single parent with one or more children, 31,074 (79,7%) were households of a single mother with one or more children, while 7,914 (20,3%) were households of a single father with one or more children. "Single parents often receive no spousal support, find themselves either ineligible for aid or receive an inadequate amount of social assistance".¹² However, these conclusions need to be taken into account with precaution, since there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data or research focusing on them.

What those phenomena make evident is that social policy that is not sensitive to the systemic nature of gender relations cannot adequately meet the needs of women, in particular mothers, with low incomes, and hence increases the gender gaps.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

Local social policies can be instrumental in advancing gender equality. Therefore, it is important that local authorities assess the different experiences of poverty and vulnerability faced by women and men. In this context, it is necessary that each social policy/program has an explicit objective to among other advance gender equality. This is also suggested in the Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020:

It inclusion of the gender dimension is essential in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the effects of social welfare policies, to meet the diverse needs and interests of users. Pg. 31

When social protection is designed to tackle poverty, there are basic design and implementation characteristics which the model should try to apply. Firstly, social protection measures should be designed to provide opportunities for positive change – for women and men – and minimize negative consequences. Secondly, links between the local

welfare system and other complementary programs and services must be established. Then, it is important that social policy programs balance support for women's practical needs – their roles and responsibilities as mothers and carers – with supporting women's strategic interests – their economic opportunities and empowerment. Providing opportunities for beneficiaries to participate in the governing structures of programs is also crucial, since it nurtures opportunities for developing women's leadership in the community. Supporting leadership development is linked to broader changes in women's empowerment and should help the advancement of gender equality. At the end, social policy instruments depend on the perception of poverty, and the vulnerability tackled. Therefore, it is very important to understand and look at the poverty levels and vulnerabilities from the perspective of both women and men.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

GENDER EQUALITY

In the Republic of Macedonia there is a comprehensive legal framework on gender equality. The legal position and status of women in the country are regulated by the Constitution as the highest legal act of the state. In Article 5 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2012) it is stated that one of the basic measures for establishing equal opportunities for women and men are the measures that introduce systematic inclusion of equal opportunities for women and men in the process of creating, implementing and monitoring the policies and budgets in the specific social areas, including the performance of the functions and the competencies of the entities within the public and private sector. The country has also adopted a Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting 2012-2017 and the Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020. These strategic frameworks are defining measures for systematic inclusion of equal opportunities for women and men, both on the national and local level (Article 11 and 14 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2012)).

SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

Social protection in the Republic of Macedonia is based on the fundamental values of humanism, social justice and solidarity, laid down by the Constitution of Republic of Macedonia. According to Article 4 of the Law on Social Protection, social protection is defined as "an organized activity undertaken by the state aimed at the

prevention and overcoming of the basic social risks to which the citizens, the families and other groups are exposed". The state's care for prevention of occurrences of social risks is realized through measures in taxation, employment, provision of scholarships, public housing, family, health and education policies, and other areas in accordance with the law. The realization of social protection in the Republic of Macedonia, in addition to the Law on Social Protection, is also based on: the Law on the Family; Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities; the Criminal Code and other laws and by-laws that govern the social protection rights and services.

The organization and implementation of social protection in the Republic of Macedonia falls within the scope of competence of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), through its Sector for Social Protection, centres for social work (CSW) and the social protection institutions. The social work centres, which are the core units for the implementation of social protection, have the status of an independent legal person, while the MLSP supervises their operation. The Law on Local Self-Government provides the legal basis for the development of cooperation between the local self government units and the social work centres at the level of activity, but not in the part concerning the implementation of measures that fall within the competences of the Sector for Social Protection within the MLSP. Presently, there are 30 CSW operating in the Republic of Macedonia, out of which 27 are inter-municipal and three are municipal centres. In accordance with the Law on Social Protection and the Law on Execution of the Budget of Republic of Macedonia The Government of Republic of Macedonia adopts each year a Programme for Realization of Social Protection, which applies the policies and commitments arising from the strategic priorities for the current year. The Programme governs in greater detail the areas of social work, the specific needs of the population and the manner of implementation of social protection. The Programme provides for social prevention services and measures, non-residential and residential social protection for the citizens that are exposed to basic social risks, as well as social welfare for the beneficiaries.

The units of local self-government, under the Law on Local Self-government (2002) have gained competencies related to social protection issues. This in practice mainly involves the establishment of child nurseries and homes for the elderly (ownership, financing, investments and maintenance), social care for the disabled (day care canthers), as well as other types of non-residential care activities directed at vulnerable groups. Although, the social protection as a competence has been transferred to some degree to the local level, the transition has been slow due to the lack of either local finances or the fact that social

protection has not been high on the priority list for local governments. This has resulted in having almost no new local social protection institutions. The reasons for this, and the problems faced by municipalities in their efforts to promote social protection will be the subject of this study.

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF KUMANOVO, SH TIP AND STRUMICA

Taking into an account the gender dimensions of social protection, this part looks at the social protection policies of the municipalities: Kumanovo, Shtip and Strumica from a gender perspective. The chapter is divided by municipality and provides an overview of the system of social protection at the local level, description of the existing social infrastructure, and institutional and organizational capacities of local authorities to mainstream gender within social protection programs. In an attempt to provide guidelines for local authorities on how to better plan their policies and support gender equality, the assessment wraps up with conclusions and recommendations.

SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KUMANOVO

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Municipality of Kumanovo is the second largest municipality in Macedonia, after the capital of Skopje. Total of 105.420 citizens live within the 45.367 families registered¹³. It is an ethnically mixed community with the majority of citizens being Macedonian (52.809), but also with large Albanian (27.290), Serbian (9.062) and Roma (4.256) minorities.

In 2011, in line with the Law on Social Protection 1.202 (2,6%) of the families received some type of children allowance and 543 received one off financial assistance for a newborn child¹⁴ from the central government, assisting a total of 2.696 children. However, there is no gender-desegregated data to assess whether these social transfers within the national welfare system have a different gender impact. Additionally, through the programs for assisting families with three or four children, a total of 826 mothers were assisted with monthly payment; and 108 mothers and 2 fathers with pensions.

“Maybe gender discrimination exists somewhere, but here this is not the case. Women fight for their position in Kumanovo. We have a high number of women councillors; there are 8 of us, from a total of 33 members in the Municipal Council.” CEO

Whether this is sufficient coverage it is difficult to assess, since there is no official data on the total number of citizens living in poverty in the Municipality of Kumanovo, or of the percentage of the population that requires certain types of social assistance. If we calculate based on some indicators that 20% of the population lives in poverty¹⁵, then it can be estimated that more than 21.000 citizens or around 9.000 families in the Municipality of Kumanovo need some kind of social assistance. This is nine times more than the current social transfers coming from the central government. This indicates that there is a gap between local needs and the current national welfare coverage that the municipality itself, through its local social protection policy and targeted assistance, could reduce.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the Municipality of Kumanovo, the following social institutions operate and form the local “social security net” for assisting local communities: kindergartens, a center for care of elderly people and institutions for care of children and adults with special needs. However, neither institutions for care of children and juveniles with educational and social difficulties nor institutions for professional training and employment are present.

Kindergartens: Currently there is one kindergarten, JOUDG “Angel Sajce”, with 6 buildings in the Municipality of Kumanovo, and a total of 45 groups. Two of the buildings do not have nurseries. In 2011 technical documentation was prepared for two additional buildings, but no funding has been secured so far. If we take into consideration the fact that the total capacity of the kindergartens (six buildings) in the municipality is 1.178 children¹⁶ and that there are 8.942 children at preschool age in Kumanovo¹⁷, it can be concluded that the existing capacities cover only about 13% of the children at preschool age. This is very low, and is actually two times lower than the national average (26% of children are enrolled in preschool) and significantly far from the EU target of 95%¹⁸. This situation would potentially have negative impact children from poorer families and their opportunities later in life since scientific literature has confirmed the benefits of early education, especially for children from marginalized and vulnerable communities, and those belonging to minorities.¹⁹

Centers for care of elderly people: The Municipality of Kumanovo is one of the rare towns outside Skopje that has a center for care of the elderly. In 2011, 175 elderly citizens were beneficiaries²⁰, almost two thirds of which were women (111) and one third men (64). The center serves the needs of the elderly from throughout the country²¹, and not only from the Municipality of Kumanovo, since homes for the elderly are scarce throughout the country.²²

Institutions for care of children and adults with special needs: The Municipality has one state center for care of children with special needs under 18 years of age, and one center managed by CSO Poraka Nasa that provides services to adults with psycho-social disabilities, since the state does not provide any facility or services for disabled person above the age of 18. Poraka Nasa, which is a CSO, receives support from the Municipality, has a total of 44 beneficiaries and around 850 members (persons with disabilities). The CSO works within the scope of support it can provide due to their small physical capacity. Despite initiatives, no support was secured to increase their capacity by expanding their premises. The rest of the members, according to the CSO representatives, are neglected by the state, owing to the fact that with an exception of some support provided by non-government organizations, there are no support systems or services available.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Committee for Equal Opportunities (CEO): The Committee for Equal Opportunities in Kumanovo has prepared a four year program 2009-2013 and an accompanying action plan that were adopted by the Municipal Council. However, if we analyze the program it can be concluded that due to its focus on combating discrimination based on various grounds and not only gender, the program is more of an anti-discrimination program, rather than a program that promotes gender equality. Furthermore, if we look at the activities implemented in 2011, we can conclude that gender equality has not been adequately prioritised since the only activities implemented in 2011 were educational workshops in primary schools which focused on interethnic tolerance. While the multiethnic composition of the municipality drives the activities of the Committee, it is worrisome that the focus on gender has been compromised, despite the fact it has been established to serve as the local gender equality machinery and driver of the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities.

“As Municipality they might say that they have consulted us, but our Committee was never invited for consultation on other policies, only where gender equality was precisely mentioned”, Representative, CEO in Kumanovo.

Further efforts are needed to ensure that the Committee actively participates in the preparation of social protection programs or other local policies. Currently, it does not provide advice, guidance nor does it monitor the implementation of policies. Thus, it has not been able to ensure that the gender perspectives are incorporated in the local policy making. This leads us to the conclusion that the CEO in Kumanovo needs further strengthening of their capacity to act as a strong and efficient gender equality mechanism. The Committee has not conducted any analysis in order to identify the challenges that women in Kumanovo are facing or to identify the vulnerable groups among them. Similarly, the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities (a civil servant appointed as a part of the gender equality machinery within the administration) in practice is no more active than the committee.

Having such discrepancies between what is established as an institutional mechanism for securing gender equality and their actual influence in local policy making puts into question not only the efficiency of those mechanisms, but also the prioritisation of gender equality by local authorities. It also shows that there is a lack of capacity and a need for investing in training on gender equality and gender-focused objectives for the administration. In this sense, linking authorities and non-governmental organizations (services and programs) could be way to increase the presence of gender issues on the local government agenda.

“People with psycho-social disabilities above age of 18th, are closed within their homes, since there is no system support provided”. CSO, Kumanovo

Committee for Social, Health and Child Protection (CSHCP): The Committee for Social, Health and Child protection does not have its own work program, but acts upon the decisions of the Municipal Council based on the needs of the Sector for Social Protection of the Municipality. As was the case with the previously mentioned institutions, it seems that there is no awareness about the role and the mechanisms available for their functioning. “From the very establishment of the Municipal Council until today, we have not drafted such a program, maybe it is a good idea, maybe in some future mandate it should be done”, stated a representative of the Committee on social, health and child protection.

“We are talking about a program that until recently had really small amount available, so there was no need for an action plan to be prepared”, Sector for Social Protection

The committee members consider this to be sufficient and leads to making the local authorities responsive to citizens needs. However, this may be problematic

because it is based on the assumption that all citizens know about this opportunity and have access to the municipality and if in need, shall request assistance. Basic literacy skills are assumed to be possessed by all citizens, which are further expected to be capable to go through this procedure independently. Such an approach, unfortunately, may only further discriminate against the most vulnerable, poor, illiterate, citizens and those living in the rural areas or belonging to certain ethnic minorities who do not possess those skills and capacities. It is also an epitome for how gender-blind policies (in this case the policy does not discriminate against men and women, since anyone can apply), can have gendered outcomes (only 7 women, compared to 26 men have received financial assistance from the Municipality in 2011). It is therefore important, that the Municipality takes into consideration the different cultural, educational and social traditions affecting men and women when designing policy instruments, in order to guarantee equal effects.

“Most often citizens themselves request financial help from the municipality, and this is the easiest way to target the most vulnerable groups that need social help”- Representative from CSHCP

“The mechanisms are established by the central authorities and there is not much to do on the local level”. - Equal Opportunities Coordinator

Sector for Social Protection: The Sector for Social Protection within the Municipality does not have an annual work plan and works on an ad-hoc basis. This was due to the small amounts allocated by the Municipality for the program. Even if the amounts are small, having an annual work plan can help in the coordination, but also stimulate the development of a more strategic approach which would target the policy priorities. Furthermore, the interviewed representative stated that “the local social protection activities derive from and are harmonized with the national social protection program”. This illuminated the lack of awareness of the possibility to develop unique local social agendas that would be reflecting the needs of the local communities, rather than mirroring the national policies. The situation suggests that the awareness and knowledge of the administration on how to address women’s and men’s specific needs in the local context requires further strengthening. When it comes to women’s position in the municipality, the notion that women can be discriminated “as a result of the financial dependence and unemployment” is present, but this is perceived as a topic for the Committee for Equal Opportunities. Furthermore, there is no communication or consultation between the Sector for Social Protection and the CEO to jointly address matters of joint concern in their work.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KUMANOVO

The Program for Social Protection in the Municipality of Kumanovo 2011-2013 was prepared based on the National Program for Development of the Social Protection 2011-2021 and is following the goals and priorities setup in this national policy. The local program basically incorporates whole fragments from the National Program and prioritizes the activities in accordance with the recommendations given to local authorities: decentralization; pluralism; deinstitutionalization; social prevention; and development of non-residence social protection services.

In 2011, a total of 99.065.244 MKD were secured for the support of the local social protection, out of which 824.600 MKD were from the core municipal budget. If we take into consideration the fact that the overall proposed budget in Kumanovo for 2011 was 1.404.679.250 MKD, the percentage secured for the social protection programs is around 7%. However, if we take into account only the core budget, the Municipality has allocated a modest 824.600,00 MKD. Compared to the over 8.200.000,00 MKD provided by the Municipality for the sports clubs and CSOs, it can be concluded that social protection is not considered to be a local priority, but rather perceived as an area for which the competences, funds and organizational capacities need to come from the national government.

	Budget	Self financing activities	Transfers	Donations	Total
 <p>Social transfers (transfers to individuals)</p>	700.000	0	0	0	700.000
 <p>Social protection (child care & elderly)</p>	124.600	35.932.390	61.897.734	410.520	98.365.244
Total MKD	824.600	35.932.390	61.897.734	410.520	99.065.244

Although the Program for Social Protection in the Municipality of Kumanovo (2011-2013) does not contain a situation analysis which would identify the most vulnerable groups. However, if we analyze the beneficiaries of the program we can identify some of the groups that are targeted with the program, as well as the social problems aimed to be addressed with the proposed interventions. Hence, the data provided here is based on content analysis of the local program for social protection and on the conducted personal interviews with representatives of institutions and local organizations by the authors and the research team.

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>People with disabilities</p>	<p>Improvement of the quality of life of people with disabilities;</p> <p>Improvement of the quality of services for people with disabilities by development of non-residence support services</p>	<p>Local self governance to support the daily center "Poraka Nasa" as a non-residence support service for persons above 18 years old;</p> <p>Renovation of the daily center "Poraka Nasa" premises, preparation of technical documentation;</p>
<p>Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities</p>		<p>Support the daily center for children with disabilities under 18;</p>
<p>The care for people with disabilities often is taken up by the women in the families, leaving them out of the labor market</p> <p>Dependency: risk of loss of parent/career</p> <p>Vulnerability to child abuse</p> <p>Risk of family separation</p> <p>Poor cognitive development or inadequate stimulation</p>		<p>Inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education (primary and secondary);</p> <p>Establish a Municipal resource center for people with disabilities.</p>
Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Social protection of elderly</p>	<p>Improvement of the quality of life of elderly people;</p> <p>Improvement of the care system for elderly people excluded from families and the community.</p>	<p>Support and renovate the center for care of the elderly;</p> <p>Develop in-house care for elderly people</p>

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Loss of income due to age discrimination

Discrimination against widows/ loss of access to late husband's family resources

Lack of inheritance rights of women in practice

Work in the informal sector

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Youth</p>	Education responding to the needs of the youth;	Education in primary schools on interethnic tolerance; Establishment of local prevention councils in primary and secondary schools.

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Lack of employment

Vulnerability to dropping-out from school due to lack of family income/ early marriage

Inability to benefit from school due to domestic responsibilities

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Women victims of domestic violenceconditions</p>	Injuries; Safety; Economic empowerment.	Opening a shelter for women victims of DV;

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Risk of alcohol abuse and anti-social behavior, particularly for boys in abusive families

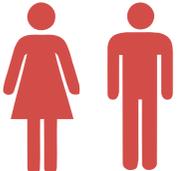
Lack of services to tackle gender-based violence

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>People living in sub-standard life conditions</p>	Health risks; Social exclusion risks.	Provide assistance in the form of recipients of one-off financial assistance;

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Limited access to medicine

Continuing work

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Roma people</p>	Social exclusion; Poverty; Health and housing; Documents and legal status issues	Monitor the implementation of the Roma Decade in the Municipality;

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Loss of partner support through temporary or cyclical migration

Risk of maternal mortality

Health problems due to poor nutrition, multiple childbirths, poor working conditions, lack of access to health services

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Alcohol and substance abusers</p>	Deviant behaviors; Support in rehabilitation.	Conduct a research on the situation and needs in the municipality.

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Support to female headed households or guardians to reduce incidence of child labor

Intra-house violence

Increased likelihood of age-related disability or chronic disease

While some target groups can be identified, it is not clear what is the scope of the local social needs in Kumanovo, and whether the proposed measures reflect the priorities of the targeted beneficiaries. For example, it is widely acknowledged that there are communities from Kumanovo that go on to do seasonal work outside the Municipality (in other regions in Macedonia), which has negatively impacted their children's enrolment in school, or that there is a trend of economic migration of men from the Kumanovo region to Afghanistan or Iraq, but there is no data on the number of emerging female headed households, their needs, or potential risks they face. Addressing such issues specific to the municipality within the local social protection should be a priority in the future.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY

One of the interests of this study was gender responsive budgeting and the analysis of the financial transfers made in the area of social protection. Therefore, the one-off assistance provided by the Municipality of Kumanovo during 2011 was analysed, as well as other transfers that go to private persons, i.e. transfers from the municipal budgets to NGOs and sports club. The idea was to assess how those transfers impact both men and women, and what are the entry points to improve the effectiveness of these measures.

In 2010, the Municipality prepared an internal Act (Rulebook on financial transfers to CSOs and citizens) that defines the categories of beneficiaries that are eligible for receiving financial assistance, individuals as well as organizations, and the criteria they must fulfill to obtain municipal support. This rulebook is based on the criteria defined in the National Program for Social Protection and regulates support in three categories: medical treatments, disasters and substandard living conditions (poverty). According to the representative of the Sector for Social Protection, this program is based on “previously defined needs from the everyday communication with these people that are coming to seek this assistance”.

However, if we look at the final outcome (shown below in the tables), we can identify that there is a significant difference between the female and male beneficiaries with regards to the right to financial assistance, with women being in a disadvantaged position overall. The gender difference that exists in practice suggests that the established criteria may not be responding adequately to the needs of women. The reasoning for the gender differences provided by the municipal authorities

Category	 Total numbers of beneficiaries	 Female	 Male	 Total amount MKD
Medical Treatments	0	0	0	0
Disasters	31	7	24	695.000
Substandard living conditions	2	0	2	16.111
Total	33	7	26	711.111

is that the aid is based on the requestor (meaning that whoever requests the financial assistance, gets it), rather than some gender-unequal policy. But, if we go deeper into the analysis different issues arise. Firstly, gender differences are bigger in the category for assistance in disasters and substandard living conditions, where the CSW makes an assessments of the grounds for the request and propose adequate measures to the local authorities. From the data, it can be suggested that the CSW proposes that the male heads of families should receive assistance. Furthermore, there seems to be a problem when women need to provide proof from the CSW about their economic status, since there are indications that discriminatory practices against women are prevalent. For example, it is indicated that there were refusals to accept requests submitted by women and that the CSW requested that the husband is present in order to make sure that they are not somewhere abroad working and therefore making the family ineligible for social benefits. This was not proved during the research, but the numbers indicate that additional research could identify the reasons behind the great gender discrepancies among the direct beneficiaries.

Support to CSOs	 Civil society organizations	 Sports organizations	 Total amount MKD
Budget	1.200.000	7.000.000	8.200.000
Self financing activities	0	0	0
Transfers	0	0	0
Donations	0	0	0
Total	1.200.000	7.000.000	8.200.000

We also compared transfers to CSOs and sports clubs, because those two types of organizations are the only ones which receive continuous support from the municipalities. The table above shows that there is imbalance between them. Namely, the Municipality has provided almost six times more funds for sports. There is neither justification nor reasoning for the imbalanced support between CSOs and sports clubs. However, in both cases there is no gender-segregated data (and no

data on the type of activities in general) about the members or beneficiaries of the supported CSOs, so there is no possibility for gender impact or beneficiary analysis of those transfers. It would therefore be important that the Municipality, while designing policies, gathers data on the number of potential beneficiaries of those grants in order to be able to make informed judgment about the gender aspects and the possible lack of neutrality of such measures.

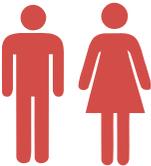
PROTECTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SH TIP

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Municipality of Shtip, according to the last census in 2002, has a total number of 47.796 citizens, within the 15.065 families.²³ Vast majority of the citizens are of Macedonian ethnic origin (41.670). Other smaller ethnic communities in the municipality are Turks (1.272), Roma (2.195), and Vlachs (2.074).

During 2011, 546 families (or 3,6%) have received some type of children allowances, while 246 families received one-off financial assistance for a newborn child²⁴. Again, there is no gender disaggregated data, so it cannot be assessed whether these social transfers had different gender impacts. Additionally, through the programs for assisting families with three or four children, a total of 172 mothers were assisted with monthly payments; as well as 23 mothers with pensions. There are no recipients of single parental allowances in the municipality.

The table below shows the structure of the recipients divided into juvenile and adults recipients of social welfare in 2011. As it can be seen, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data, so again we cannot discuss gender differentiated impacts. However, we can see that there are a total of 2.690 citizens that receive some kind of social assistance. It is difficult to assess whether this is sufficient, since there is no official data from the municipality on the total number of citizens living in poverty in Shtip. However, if we again take that 20% of all citizens live in poverty, we can conclude that there are at least 9.559 citizens that need some kind of social assistance. This is four times more than the current number of recipients, which suggests that the local authority needs to assist many more citizens than the central government is currently covering. However, there is no assessment made whether the amount of the assistance provided within the current welfare system is adequate, and whether the Municipality needs to provide additional assistance to the existing recipients of social welfare.

Recipients of social welfare, 2011	 Adults	 Juveniles	Total
Exhibiting antisocial behaviour	54	110	164
Intellectually and psychically disabled	419	317	736
Financially unprotected	611	0	611
Elderly persons	23	0	23
Other/ Lacking parental care	929	227	1156

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the Municipality of Shtip, there is a lack of institutions that should provide services to the local communities in the area of social protection. In particular, there are no institutions for the care of elderly persons, children and adults with special needs, children and juveniles with educational and social difficulties or institutions for professional training and employment. Namely, only preschool organizations exist.

Kindergartens: Currently there are two kindergartens operating in the Municipality of Shtip; JOUDG “Vera Ciriviri-Trena” and JOUDG “Astibo”. Additionally, within JOUDG “Vera Ciriviri-Trena”, a center for children with disabilities is operating under the jurisdiction of the Inter-Municipal CSW. There are initiatives as part of the project “Early child development” for inclusion of the children from rural areas in the preschool system. If we take into consideration the fact that the total capacity of the two kindergartens in the Municipality is 1. 140²⁵, while the actual number of children at preschool age is 3.549²⁶, this means that the existing capacities cover about a third of the population (32%) and that the Municipality of Shtip is above the national average.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Committee for Equal Opportunities: The Committee for Equal Opportunities in Shtip was formed in 2006 as a local body that operates within the Municipal Council. The Committee does not have a program for work, according to the interviewed Chair, although there is a Local Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010-2011. It seems that the Committee members are not very familiar with the activities that the municipality is implementing related to gender equality, which demonstrates one of the key limitations of the local gender equality mechanism. Based on the information received from the interviews with local institutions, the Department for Local Economic Development (LED) has the main role in creating policies and programs, while the Committee for Equal Opportunities is involved and consulted when local policies are developed and decisions are made.

“No, there is no gender discrimination in Shtip”, - CEO Representative

“I don` t think that there is gender discrimination in Shtip. It`s about quality and skills and education. If you are good....” - CSHCP representative

“There is no discrimination in the Municipality of Shtip, not in the city nor in the municipal building” - LED representative

Unfortunately, the CEO is not proactively pushing the gender equality agenda in order to expand its space for action and to fulfill its mandate. The local CEO relies heavily on the “instructions” from the MLSP and the national CEO, not understanding the need for addressing independently the local context priorities within the proposed plans. The CEO is most active in the education on sexual and reproductive health among youth.

Overall, it can be concluded that further strengthening is needed for the local gender equality mechanism to effectively contribute to addressing different gender needs, when programs and policies are created and implemented.

The Committee for Social, Health and Child Protection: “We work on requests from citizens that are under risk, such as severe illness, cancer, etc.. We have a Rulebook that defines the criteria for receiving financial support”²⁷. This statement of the member of the Committee for social, health and child protection summarizes the approach and activities of the Committee. The Committee does not have a plan or program for work, but acts on initiatives that come from the citizens or the LED. There is no Department for Social Protection within the municipality and these programs fall under the responsibility of the Department for Local Economic Development. There is no recognition of the different gender perspectives and needs which should be addressed.

In general, it can be observed that there is a lack of understanding of the role of the local social protection and welfare in the advancement of gender equality. While some social problems are gendered and disproportionately affect one of the genders (like domestic violence that mostly affects women, as well as help and assistance for alcohol abusers that mostly target men), it seems that this was neither a strategic decision, nor there is a connection made between social protection and gender equality. Therefore, further efforts are needed to strengthen their capacity and to secure that gender is mainstreamed into the local policies, including social protection.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SH TIP

The Municipality of Shtip, in line with the Law on Social Protection, has developed its Social Protection Program which was adopted by the Municipal Council²⁸. Unlike the other municipalities covered with this report, the Municipality of Shtip has chosen to adopt annual programs that are in line with the National Program for Social Protection. As a result, the program is taking into consideration the decentralized functions and transfer of responsibilities from the Centers for Social Work to local authorities. The activities are focused in two areas: 1) social and child protection; and 2) health protection.

Further categorization within the program has been made according to target groups and beneficiaries of the measures: socially deprived and excluded citizens, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, victims of human trafficking, victims of domestic violence and children on the streets. "Based on these target groups, the proposed program incorporates the following mix of methods, instruments, target groups and priorities: one time financial assistance; equal opportunities; early child development and children in the streets; social protection of elderly people; social protection of persons with disabilities; poverty reduction and social exclusion; club for persons rehabilitating from alcohol abuse; human trafficking victims; domestic violence; and juvenile delinquency".

Planned budget	Budget	Self financing activities	Transfers	Donations	Total
Social transfers	1.000.000	0	0	0	1.000.000
Social protection	0	23.500.000	57.398.850	410.520	81.309.370
Total amount MKD	1.000.000	23.500.000	57.398.850	410.520	82.309.370

Executed budget	Budget	Self financing activities	Transfers	Donations	Total
Social transfers	505.000	0	0	0	505.000
Social protection	0	18.176.941	55.795.296	243.637	74.215.974
Total amount MKD	505.000	18.176.941	55.795.296	243.637	74.720.874

In 2011, a total sum of 74.720.874 MKD was secured for the support of the local social protection program (from the initially projected 82.309.370 MKD). The biggest decrease in funding was actually in the amounts coming from the core municipal budget that were halved, from the planned 1.000.000 MKD to 505.000 MKD actually spent. If we take into consideration the fact that the overall proposed budget in Shtip for 2011 was 658.784.500 MKD, the percentage secured for the social protection programs is around 12%. However, if we take into account only the core budget the Municipality has spent a modest 505.000,00 MKD. Compared to the 12.000.000, 00 MKD provided by the Municipality for supporting local CSOs, it can be concluded that the social protection program has not been adequately prioritized by the Municipality. Furthermore, it is perceived as a policy in which the competence, funds and organizational capacity needs to come primarily from the national government, similarly to the Municipality of Kumanovo.

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
<p>Women</p>  <p>Women victims of domestic violence; Women victims of human trafficking</p>	<p>Equal opportunities; Gender discrimination; Poverty; Social exclusion; Support of women victims of domestic violence.</p>	<p>Analysis of the working conditions (time) in the textile industries; Education and training of teachers for early detection and dealing with cases of DV and trafficking.</p>

Examples of potential Risks / Vulnerabilities

Lack of support system for children during second shifts
Vulnerability of children to take-up responsibilities at home (especially girls)
Risk of family separation

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Children</p> <p>Children under risk, Roma children, Children from rural areas</p>	<p>Social exclusion; Improvement of the system of child care</p>	<p>Inclusion of Roma children into preschool education; Implementing the Program for Early Child Development;</p>

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Risk of not attending schools due to domestic responsibilities (girls) or income earning responsibilities (boys)

Insufficient food or poor diets increasing the likelihood of illness

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Elderly people</p>	<p>Social protection of the elderly; Improvement of the quality of life of the elderly people.</p>	<p>Support the center for care of the elderly (technical documentation in process)</p>

Примери на потенцијални ризици/ранливости

Lack of access to medicine

Lack of support system for elderly people living alone

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>People with disabilities</p>	<p>Improvement of the quality of life and support services for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Support the daily center for children with special needs; Inclusion of children with special needs in regular primary education; Support CSOs working with people with disabilities (Association of Blind People; CSO Poraka).</p>

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Lack of links to child-protection services, legal services, educational services and services for disabled people above the age of 18

Risk of unemployment due to care for a disabled family member (mostly women)

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Socially excluded groups</p>	High unemployment; Lack of market demanded skills; Poverty; Social exclusion.	Free courses for foreign languages and IT

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Lacking literacy skills to go through the procedure to get the support
 Multiple risks (lack of housing, access to health services, poor nutrition, etc.)

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Alcohol abusers</p>	Prevention of deviant behaviors; Support in the rehabilitation and re- socialization	Opening a Club for Alcohol Abusers Renovation of the premises for the club

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Risk of family separation
 Vulnerability to child abuse and intra-family violence

Target Groups	Social problems to be addressed	Measure
 <p>Juvenile delinquency</p>	Prevention of deviant behaviors among youth in the municipality	Establishment of a Council for Prevention of Youth Delinquency

Examples of potential Risks /Vulnerabilities

Risk of social exclusion
 Lack of support services
 Risk of stigma

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY

The Municipality of Shtip has an internal act that defines the criteria, conditions and procedures for direct transfers to associations, individuals, foundations and one-off financial assistance. Although it deals more with the cases in which such help can be requested, there are also terms and conditions that citizens need to fulfil that indirectly define the target groups. Basically, the act stipulates the circumstances in which an individual is eligible for assistance (for example sickness or health problems, fire, and natural disaster). However, as stated above, they do not refer to certain categories or groups of people, but rather prescribe eligibility criteria to make sure that the help is transferred to those most in need. Nonetheless, this act does not prioritize social protection, nor provide priority areas for assistance. The program allows for focused support in two categories: sickness and natural disasters, since these categories are fixed and predetermined in advance.

Proposed budget allocation in the 2011 budget was 600.000 MKD, while the spent amount according to the audited budget statement for 2011 is 505.000 MKD, although our review of the available documents and decisions of the Municipal Council has managed to track only a small portion of these transfers²⁹ shown in the table below. The Municipality of Shtip has an Internal Act that prescribes the criteria and conditions for requesting one-off financial assistance. Basically, the act stipulated the circumstances in which a person is eligible for help (for example sickness or health problems, fire, natural disaster). However, the conditions are not prescribed strictly, because it is stated that "priority will be given" to those that fulfil some criteria, among which being on a welfare is the most important. Similarly to the situation in Kumanovo, there is a great discrepancy between men and women beneficiaries of assistance aimed at mitigating disaster damage, since men are considered to be the heads of the households³⁰ and receive the assistance in the name of the family.

Category	 Total numbers of beneficiaries	 Female (applicants)	 Male (applicants)	 Total amount MKD
Sickness	5	2	3	102.000
Disasters	7	1	6	50.000
Total	12	3	9	152.000

If we analyze the financial support provided by the municipalities to the local CSOs, it can be concluded that this support is not targeted to produce results in the social policy (nor any other local policy for that matter). Whether some activities will be implemented in this area depends solely on the local organizations that submit proposals. Basically, CSOs are open to propose whatever activities they consider needed for the Municipality. While this allows for greater freedom among CSOs to choose priorities and provides for their institutional support, it does not ensure that the work of the supported CSOs will complement the efforts of the Municipality. In time, where there is a great demand and need for social protection, some level of targeting of the CSOs support could prove to be beneficial for the local communities.

Budget Transfers	Budget	Transfers	Donations	Total
Planned	13.800.000	0	0	13.800.000
Actual spending CSOs	12.059.089	0	0	12.059.089
Actual spending Sports clubs	11.295.150	0	0	11.295.150
Total amount MKD	23.354.239	0	0	23.354.239

If we look comparatively, CSOs are supported by the Municipality roughly identically as are sports association. Additionally, if we look at the transfers to CSOs and try to analyze them according to the project purpose,³¹ we can conclude that only a very small amount (145.000, 00 MKD) went to projects that complement the social protection interventions of the Municipality. These three projects, mainly target people with disabilities and focused mostly on awareness raising.³²

CSO Transfers (Social Protection)	Activity	Amount MKD
Association of Blind	International Day of the white stick	10.000
Association for education and socialization of children under risk	Project Winter Camp "Stars of the Earth 2012"	130.000
CSO PORAKA	Event for 3rd of December, International day of persons with disabilities	5.000

Men don't understand the role of the CEO, they don't think it is important, and they generally think it concerns only women". Representative CEO

SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STRUMICA

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Municipality of Strumica is located in the southeastern part of Macedonia. According to the last census in 2002, the Municipality has 54.676 inhabitants with 15.896 households. As per the ethnic composition, majority of the citizens are Macedonian (50.258) and there is a small Turkish minority (3.754).

In 2011, 626 (3,9%) of the families received some type of children allowance and 404 received one-off financial assistance for a newborn child³³, assisting a total of 1.369 children. However, there is no gender-desegregated data to assess whether those social transfers have different gender impacts. Additionally, through the programs for assisting families with three or four children, a total of 433 mothers are assisted with monthly payments.

The table below shows the structure of recipients (juvenile and adults) which were recipients of welfare in 2011. As it can be seen, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data, so again we cannot discuss different gender impacts. However, we can see that there are a total of 1.577 citizens that receive some kind of social assistance. Again, similarly to the other two municipalities we are not able to assess whether this is sufficient, because there is no official data about the prevalence of poverty in Strumica. But, if we again take that 20% of all citizens live in poverty, we can conclude that there are at least 10.935 citizens that need some kind of social assistance. This is over six times more than the current number of recipients, which suggests that the local authority needs to assist greater number citizens than the central government is currently covering.

Recipients of social welfare, 2011	Exhibiting antisocial behaviour	Intellectually and psychically disabled	Financially unprotected	Elderly persons	Other/ Lacking parental care
 Adults	0	213	15	1.117	24
 Juveniles	103	16	0	0	89
Total	103	229	15	1.117	113

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The existing social infrastructure in Strumica only covers care for children and persons with disabilities. However, it is noteworthy that private-public partnerships have been created to provide services to domestic violence survivors and drug users.

Kindergartens: In the Municipality of Strumica, the capacity of the kindergartens (one kindergarten with six buildings) is around 600 and the actual number of enrolled children is 930³⁴. On the other hand, the total number of children in the Municipality is 4.672, meaning that the existing capacity covers only about 20% of children at preschool age. This is lower than the national average of 26% of enrolment.

Institutions for care for persons with disabilities: one center, managed by the central government that has assisted 60 beneficiaries in 2011 is operating in Strumica. It covers persons below the age of 18.

CSO "Izbor" is operating as a social enterprise for people with different types of addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.) They are supported by the Municipality, the local church, donations and provide rehabilitation programs as well as economic integration of their beneficiaries. A total of 15 beneficiaries were involved in their programs during 2011. The Women's Organization of Strumica operates a shelter center for victims of domestic violence, financially supported by the Municipality.

INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Committee for Equal Opportunities: The Committee developed a Local Action Plan for Gender Equality (2010-2012) that focused on the implementation of five activities³⁵, out of which only two were relevant for gender equality: gender equality training in schools and promotion of gender equality among local citizens' councils. However, the last initiative was not implemented due to "changes in the structures within local communities". It was stressed that the Committee is not prioritized at the local level, and no male councilor is interested in participating in this Committee.

The Committee does not adopt an annual work plan, nor do they plan systematically their involvement in the development of policies at the local level. That can be considered as an obstacle for gender mainstreaming at the local level. However, it seems that the Coordinator for Gender Equality is much more involved,

which is a positive thing and may contribute to gender mainstreaming. However, developing additional competences in gender sensitive policy planning and inclusion of the Committee for Equal Opportunities would be critical for achieving gender equality in the long term.

Committee for Social, Health and Child Protection: The Committee for Social, Health and Child Protection (CSHCP) is responsible for the implementation of the Local Program for Social Protection. The Committee does not adopt an annual work plan, and only follows the action plan that is derived from the local program. There is no special Department for Social Protection and all activities are implemented under the auspices of the Local Economic Development (LED) unit and program. The budget for social protection also comes from the budget for the LED, as well as from other donations, CSOs, the church, etc. Gender equality is considered to be a priority for the CSHCP, and besides the cases of women victims of domestic violence, and women from rural areas as vulnerable groups, they have difficulties to recognize how gender inequalities are manifested.

“Women are discriminated more than men, in all aspects of societal life. Particularly this is true for single parents and divorced women that are faced with greater social risks that have negative consequences on the gender dimension of poverty”. UNDP Assessment, 2006

However, the principle of equality is one of the cornerstones of the Platform for Development of Strumica 2007-2015. There, it is stated that “in the Municipality of Strumica, all its citizens will be and feel equal, and in accordance with the rights and obligations for achieving a common good, within the scope of their possibilities”.³⁶ The increased participation of vulnerable groups in the process of planning of local policies is also prescribed as one of the cornerstone principles for future development of Strumica, which should result in policies that better serve the needs and priorities of the local communities.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN STRUMICA

The Program for Social Protection in the Municipality of Strumica was created in 2006 by the local self-government. In order to provide efficient and effective communication and coordination among all relevant stakeholders, based on an initiative from the Municipality, a Coordinative Body was formed with the main task to follow the implementation of the program for social protection and to identify the needs of the vulnerable groups. When defining priorities in the area of social protection the following criteria were taken into consideration: the number of

people within the target group; existence/nonexistence of services addressing the needs of that target group; expected results that could be achieved with the proposed activities; and municipal capacity for mobilizing all resources in addressing the specific issue. The program also recognizes that poverty has different gender impacts. Based on a research conducted for Negotino, Strumica and Gostivar by UNDP in 2006, it concludes that the following groups are most vulnerable in Strumica:

- "Ethnic minorities, especially Roma and Turks. They face various problems, but most importantly with regards to access to health protection, access to education, and good infrastructure.
- Rural areas are the most underdeveloped regions and have high rate of illiteracy, especially among the Turks in Strumica. This is the main cause for poverty and hunger in those regions.
- While the number of citizens living in poverty is increasing, their participation in public life is decreasing. This is especially true for ethnic minorities, especially Roma and Turks."

"Strumica is advanced in terms of gender equality. For example fathers participate in the maintenance of homes, upbringing of children. This is a trend in the urban areas", CSHP member

The total budget available for social protection in the Municipality of Strumica for 2011, as planned, was 54.093.710 MKD. Out of the planned amount, 46.549.619 MKD were actually realized.³⁷ If we take into consideration the fact that the planned Municipal budget for 2011 was 1.015.892.000 MKD, the percentage of funds allocated for social protection is around 5%.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY

Although the right to social protection is defined at the national level and locally managed by the CSW, the number of families living in poverty in the targeted municipalities is an important indicator of the state of exercising that right. The right to social protection measures (established by the local authorities) are often conditioned by the proof or statement issued by the CSW about the financial and material condition of the citizen and his/her family. This process may gear gender inequalities in the follow-up procedures. The main gender inequalities in the area of social protection derive from the practice of the CSW that issues the statement of financial and material conditions to citizens and usually the statement is issued to men since it is linked to the ownership rights³⁸. Since those statements then serve as basis for providing assistance (and women as dependents cannot receive

it), they negatively impact the access to some type of social aid for women (mostly when the aid is transferred and calculated per family (household) rather than individually). According to the statistics, large majority of beneficiaries are men.

“The cooperation is not satisfactory, CSOs come and request data, and we have communication, but we cannot say that we have a meaningful cooperation in all its forms and frequency.” CSW, Strumica

The Committee for Equal Opportunities is not consulted when designing and defining the criteria for individual financial support. The mayor is authorized to approve small financial assistance that is usually in the area of education, medical treatment, etc. The Council approves financial assistance in cases of socially deprived families and in cases of natural disasters, fire, flooding, etc. The amount provided is “not sufficient in most of the cases, but the Municipality is trying to provide as much as possible, to serve the needs of its citizens” (CEO representative). It is a good practice that a committee established by the Municipal Council and composed of council members is visiting the affected citizens and decides on their needs. This council is not a permanent body, but is established when the need arises. “No one has been rejected. All citizens that have requested and need help have been supported” – stated representative from the Committee for Social Protection. In 2011, through such social transfers, the municipality of Strumica has disbursed a total amount of 669.466 MKD.³⁹

“Men have entitlement to the benefits. It is usually the men, because of tradition, it is expected that men can better understand and communicate with the administration, can more easily get all the documents needed, and are more able to regularly (monthly) register and re-register. Only, in exceptional cases, when the men is dead, serving prison sentence, or divorced, women are entitled to the right” CSW representative, Strumica

Transfers to CSOs	Budget	Self financing	Donations	Transfers	Total MKD
Planned	13.586.000	0	2.000.000	0	15.586.000
Actual spending	11.827.171	0	Нема податоци	0	11.827.171
Transfers to CSO`s Program Sport and Receptions	Budget	Self financing	Donations	Transfers	Total MKD
Actual spending		0	0	0	6.211.760

Strumica has a strategic approach in supporting CSOs in its local community. First, some CSOs are supported to jointly implement certain aspects of the local programs (as service providers). For example, the Association of Women in Strumica implemented part of the activities defined with the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality, such as providing services and running the shelter for domestic violence victims. Additionally, CSOs are directly targeted and based on the proposed activities from CSOs; their support is included in the annual municipal budget. For example, such support is received by the pensioners' club. Furthermore, citizens through their consultation mechanisms (community forums⁴⁰) identified a need for a shelter center for domestic violence victims and were supported in that by the Municipality. The management of the shelter center was transferred to a CSO, which currently runs it. This is very important, since local CSOs receive institutional grants through which the Municipality is contributing to their sustainability and strategic work. However, some dissatisfaction with regards to institutional coordination was noted, i.e. the CSW was not fully satisfied with the cooperation they have with the shelter center.

The Municipality of Strumica announces an open call for awarding support to CSOs, which ensures a transparent and fair selection procedure.⁴¹

POSITIVE EXAMPLE – TARGETED AND SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT TO CSOs

In Strumica, CSO Izbor has been receiving support for the last 5 years from the Municipality. Their initiative to establish a social enterprise for people with different types of addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc.) was recognized as a priority by the community forums and received support from the Municipality and the donors. The initial support by the Municipality was 30.000 Euro in 2009, which was matched with 70.000 Euro from the Swiss Agency for Development. The funds were used for expansion of the facilities and today under the auspices of Izbor, people with addiction produce their own electricity, water, and solar heating and are planning to produce organic food. It is expected that by 2013 the production program (that is used for rehabilitation and re-socialization purposes) will be self-sustainable. The success of the project is due to the excellent cooperation between the civil society sector (Izbor – that initiated and implemented the activities), the local church (that provided the initial space for the organization), the local administration (that has provided long-term support for the organization) and the business sector (that helped to design and implement a business plan).

However, due to limited capacities, they are not in a position to host both men and women. Currently (as well as in the past), most of their beneficiaries have been men (86%). Basically, only two women are hosted, and they have a plan to further ex-

pand and form special women's department so they can host women addicts with children (juveniles). An additional obstacle for accessing the program is that they charge a fee from the beneficiaries. Basically, each beneficiary is obliged to pay almost half of the cost for his/her accommodation, which is currently set at 18.000,00 MKD per month. This means that the services provided by Izbor are not accessible to the economically weak, and they are aware of this problem. "The state needs to support such services and make them available for all people in need. Such support may be an incentive for other organizations to start similar activities," stated the representative from Izbor.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a lack of awareness of the inequalities between women and men and weak administrative capacity to tackle inequalities at the local level

The assessment has shown that there is a 'blindness' towards the perception of women as vulnerable groups, since local authorities often fail to recognise the gender discrimination within their communities. This can be an obstacle in the process of introducing gender impact analysis at the local level, since even the leading mechanisms for promotion of gender equality (CEO and Gender Equality Coordinators) lack data to better understand how gender inequalities are manifested in their municipalities and how they affect women and men.

The municipalities lack capacities to assess policies from a gender perspective, and as a result of this, no local policies have gender specific objectives or indicators. When it comes to social policy, all municipalities fail to use it as a means to advance gender equality. The situation is similar with other local policies, since the municipal authorities do not incorporate gender concerns as a principle (they don't mainstream gender equality), but see gender equality as separate (and not interconnected) policy. The lack of capacity has been reflected on many levels. Improving the understanding of the differences between men and women, including the reasons behind those inequalities would be crucial for evidence-based policy making.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

Local authorities should invest in building capacities for mainstreaming gender equality through gender equality trainings, identification of gender specific objectives, gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation system.

In this sense, the orientation package for new members of the Municipal Council could include information on gender inequalities, as well as methods for gender mainstreaming in local decision making.

Capacity development in the areas of gender mainstreams; gender analysis; budgeting process; and gender responsive budgeting, could be provided for council members and administration staff that are responsible for the implementation of the social policy and advancement of gender equality. In this sense, liaising with the non-governmental sector could be an important strategy. The Municipality can, for example, prioritize training activities in their call for supporting CSOs, thus investing in its own capacity building with the support of the CSOs. Through those activities and an effective system of gender mainstreaming, the gender equality mechanisms at the local level could be better prepared to secure that all programs and action plans incorporate gender objectives and gender indicators.

More specifically we propose:

- Gender equality training to be conducted regularly for new Municipal Council members, especially for those members appointed to the CEO and the CSHCP;
- Establishing a strong cooperation with women's organizations in the local communities to mitigate the lack of capacities and lack of awareness on inequalities. In this sense municipalities should, for example, establish an advisory council on women's issues where all stakeholders would be represented (women's NGOs, chambers, women entrepreneurs, trade unions, beneficiaries, representatives of vulnerable groups, etc.)
- Municipalities should produce reports on the status of women, whereby cooperation with their institutions, national organizations, CSOs, and the State Statistical Office would be essential.

Municipal social policies should address local needs and priorities of women and men. Therefore, it is essential that they reflect the local context, rather than the national priorities

In general, the observation is that the local strategies for social protection programs are not evidence-based⁴², meaning that they are not based on local findings about the problems faced by women and men in the municipalities. They also do not refer to the specific risks, needs and priorities of women and men. Furthermore, they do not state the scope of the problem, i.e. there are not even estimates about the number of people living in poverty in the targeted municipalities, as well as description of the background of those people. Similarly, the local policies lack objectives that need to improve the status of different targeted groups.

It is worrisome that local authorities lack awareness of the importance of evidence based analysis. It seems that social policy is perceived as a policy in which the competences, funds and organizational capacity need to come from the national government, and therefore local programs and priorities are not aligned with the national program for social protection.⁴³ Further efforts are needed in this direction to ensure that local policies really target the needs of women and men in the communities.

Beside the lack of awareness, there is also a lack of procedures, mechanisms and organizational capacities that can identify local needs and respond to them adequately. Additionally, the established procedures do not always secure the participation of vulnerable groups in the process of policy design. The analyzed available documents do not refer to any consultative or coordination process during their drafting and adoption. It is, also, not clear whether citizens were or were not consulted, and in particular whether there is a developed mechanism for consultation or participation of vulnerable groups in such processes.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

While the social policy in Macedonia is managed by the central government, the decentralization process allowed the municipalities to also implement their local policies. The idea of the decentralization is that the local authorities are closer to the citizens and can address local problems more adequately, since it is assumed that local authorities better understand local needs. Basically, it is expected that the local authorities, while designing local policies, will also try to influence the national policy making and advocate for inclusion of specific local problems in the national efforts, as well.

For example, there is an awareness that women in the textile industry are paid extremely low, and that their work conditions are neither in accordance with the legislative frameworks, nor their workers' rights are enforced. This is specific for the Municipality of Shtip, since the scope of the problem there is very large. It would be important for the Municipality to understand what kind of risks these women face, how their wellbeing is affected, how this is reflected in the family wellbeing and what support systems they need. While the Municipality carried out a simple research to map women's rights violations, there were no follow-up activities. The administration should be more persuasive in pushing for reforms in areas that are affecting large populations. For example, there was an indication in the research that textile companies provide a 13th salary to their employees, but that they re-

quest employees to return those to them in cash. This can be easily investigated by local authorities, while employers should be sanctioned and warned that violations of workers' rights will not be tolerated. Such measures will also contribute to the increase of trust between women and the local administration and might steer further cooperation.

More specifically, we propose:

- Conducting needs assessment analysis prior to defining local programs and plans as a mandatory process. Municipalities could partner with CSOs in order to overcome the lack of capacities and resources for performing such analysis;
- Municipalities should specifically protect vulnerable groups; women and men most in need; and people at higher risk of social exclusion. They need to make sure that those groups are included and adequately targeted. In this direction, municipalities could follow the guidelines of the MLSP pilot guidebook for needs assessment of vulnerable groups when creating local social policies. This can be an effective tool for the local authorities to follow and apply;
- Needs assessment analysis should include a gender component to identify specific needs and priorities for both women and men in the local communities, and should follow their life-cycle;
- Each municipality should ensure that special circumstances within the municipality are well represented and researched. For example, the Municipality of Shtip should make sure that women workers rights are well respected (by sending inspections to inspect indications of rights violations) and that supportive mechanisms exist for those women (kindergartens working in shifts and during weekends). The Municipality of Kumanovo should, for example take into account the multiple vulnerabilities faced by female headed households of economic migrant workers, while the Municipality of Strumica should impose special measures to include girls from the Turkish minority into the educational system. Those examples are some of the well known specific circumstances that were not specifically targeted with the current local social policies. It is expected that the needs assessment will illuminate additional local problems which could be addressed by the local authorities in their future policies.

While all municipalities adopt a strategic approach to social protection and have adopted local social policies they do not manage to use social policy as a tool to promote gender equality

Gender-specific vulnerabilities often intersect with other forms of social exclusion. Therefore, looking at gender inequalities is important when designing and implementing social protection programs to comprehensively tackle these complex and

multiple vulnerabilities, some of which are specific to gender and others exacerbated by other inequalities. Although all three municipalities have prepared and adopted programs for social protection, the analysis of the programs and plans suggests that gender has been integrated into social protection approaches in a manner that is only superficial. The social protection agenda is presented through categories of poor, excluded and vulnerable social groups, differentiated according to age, health status and relationship to formal labor markets. This kind of categorization without specific consideration of the intersection with gender risks leaving women out. The programs for social, health and child protection only include women as a target beneficiary group in one component, i.e. equal opportunities, while the other components largely ignore gender dimensions.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

Local policy needs to include gender specific indicators, if the municipality wants to maximize impacts and use social policy to support gender equality. Interventions need to be designed to harness opportunities for positive change – for women and men – and minimize negative consequences.

For example, while women's participation has been increasing, women remain highly unrepresented in the formal employment sector. They are overrepresented in the informal, low-wage, low-skilled jobs, often in sectors most vulnerable to the global economic crisis. This, on the other hand, poses a risk of not being covered by pension schemes or earning much less than men. The number of women pensioners is three times less than the number of men pensioners, which suggests that old women are at a higher risk to live in poverty. Furthermore, high levels of economic dependency are associated with increased levels of physical violence, early school drop-out of the children living in such families, and increased vulnerability of female-headed households. Such risks must be taken into consideration when designing programs to allow and plan for support of those vulnerable groups. Although, women's economic dependency is a reality for majority of women in all municipalities, such risk were not targeted in any of the social policies.

More specifically, we propose:

- Social programs and plans to incorporate gender objectives in all components in order to promote gender equality;
- Local authorities to conduct gender analysis, as a basis for defining priorities and conducting needs assessments;

- Involving local CSOs to participate in analysis and program design might mitigate the shortcoming of capacities within local authorities;
- Local authorities to consider how existing measures can be adapted to better suit the needs of men and women. For example, all municipalities provide financial assistance for medical treatments, but none provides assistance for access to medicine. Municipalities should consider extending the category for medical treatments to cover the access to medicine for the elderly or the poor with chronic illnesses.

Inter-sectoral cooperation and communication in developing plans and programs for social protection is insufficient

Social protection programs can be designed in a way which better supports gender equitable outcomes, but they are unlikely to ensure gender equality on their own. Therefore, success in this matter is dependent on good coordination and coherence with gender equality policies, as well as with local development strategies, since it helps to coordinate a broader response to the multiple risks and vulnerabilities the poor face. However, in all three municipalities there is an evident lack of awareness and knowledge about the correlation between gender equality and the incorporation of gender perspectives in the social policies as means of tackling poverty and unemployment. Gender equality is perceived solely as a responsibility of the Committee for Equal Opportunities. The Committee is not actively involved in the preparation of the social protection programs or any other local policy, nor it provides advice, guidance or monitors their implementation. Furthermore, budgeting is still perceived as a separate activity from policy planning, which is located solely in the finance sector. The Committee for Equal Opportunities, as well as the Committee for Health and Social Protection are not involved or consulted in the process. There is no clear linkage between social protection programs action plans and budget lines for social protection.

Additionally, cooperation between municipalities to jointly tackle social issues on the regional level will be beneficial. Such established cooperation and dialogue can serve as a forum for development of local policies and sharing of positive examples or ways for implementing and adopting particular measures.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

The Municipalities should strengthen the role and position of the gender equality mechanisms in local decision making and ensure they can exercise the responsibilities defined within the Law on Equal Opportunities. The Municipal Council should consider

adopting integral procedures for securing that policy initiatives and proposals incorporate gender indicators and beneficiary assessments. This document could support the role of the CEO, as defined in the Law on Equal Opportunities, by prescribing a mandatory review process of the local programs and plans by the Committee.

More specifically, we propose:

- Adoption of a gender mainstreaming guidebook to provide practical assistance in integrating gender analysis in a systematic way into all stages of the development programming cycle: design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects, policies and programmes;
- Members of the CEO should be involved in the working groups responsible for the preparation of the budget. In this sense, a draft version of the budget should be sent to the CEO for review and approval;
- Cooperation among the Sector for Social Protection, the Committee for Social, Health and Child protection, and the Committee for Equal Opportunities needs to be additionally strengthened. Adopting an internal policy that makes the opinion of the CEO mandatory when adopting local policy, should be one of the possibilities for providing incentives for cooperation. However, substantial involvement through joint meetings, shared activities or combined proposals should be supported;
- A joint working group can be established between the Sector for Social Protection, the Committee on Health, Social and Child Protection and the Committee for Equal Opportunities for the purpose of drafting a program and an action plan for social protection.

Lack of gender-disaggregated data jeopardizes the process of planning and decision making

The municipalities do not maintain a database or register concerning social protection and inclusion; neither do they classify the data in categories according to the beneficiaries of services, target groups, etc. A basis for public policy is the valid data that informs the policy problem and enables the understanding and identification of its causes. This is a serious challenge when discussing effective monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. Therefore, collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data at the individual, intra-household and community levels on gender-sensitive indicators needs to be a priority for the municipalities in the process of development of social programs. This is not only important for monitoring progress, but it also prevents the unintended effects from social protection programs on women and men and allows for a flexible and timely response by the local government based on the findings.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDER LENSES

It is very difficult to achieve program progress if one does not understand the existing situation. Having timely and valid data is crucial in this sense. While local authorities in the implementation of their competences could easily generate valuable data, there is no system in place to ensure this collection of data is systematic. Furthermore, where data is collected, most often it is not desegregated by gender, or is not reported in such a way. Introducing a solid system for data collection and analysis is a precondition for successful policy making in any field, and especially for cross cutting issues such as gender equality. The current gap in the data collection (as identified with this study) seriously jeopardizes the process of policy evaluations and pertains as a serious limitation to the process of gender mainstreaming at the local level.

More specifically, we propose:

- Municipalities should develop a gender disaggregated database covering all sectors and including data on beneficiaries at all levels (individual, household, community). First step in this direction can be to incorporate such data in the annual reports and programs submitted by the local institutions in their fields of work. Therefore, municipalities should ensure that this type of data is mandatory for any document submitted to the Municipal Council for adoption;
- Strengthening the cooperation with the State Statistical Office in order to receive municipal information can be a starting point for the development of a local database, as well as for publishing annual statistical publications on the situation of women and men in the local context.
- The municipalities should seek alternative methods of collection in order to get insight into some unreported phenomena (such as violence against women), as well as to cooperate with the non-governmental sector and the international community to validate the data and collect indicators for certain issues.

Absence of developed mechanism for consultation hinders participation of vulnerable groups and other stakeholders in the process of development of social policies

The analyzed available documents do not refer to any well developed, institutional consultative process of their drafting and adoption. The format of the existing consultation processes is unclear, with some good examples as previously mentioned, such as the community forums. As mentioned before, no developed and written procedure or guidance could be identified. It is also unclear how the selection of the target groups is done. What could be noticed from the interviews is that the Centers for Social Work seem to have a more influential role compared to all the

other local institutions. Communication with the citizens and potential beneficiaries is conducted solely through official requests and no efforts have been taken to identify beneficiaries' needs by any of the actors in the social protection system. However, consultation mechanisms exist in all municipalities (such as mesni zaednici, advisory councils, or community forums) that can easily be used to alleviate the gap between the authorities and the vulnerable groups.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDERED LENSES

It is very important that social protection programs are designed in an open, transparent and genuinely consultative way to mitigate the lack of knowledge about the local needs and priorities. This is especially true for the vulnerable groups that are most in need, but lack literacy and capacities to actively engage with the local authorities. Municipalities should expect that such groups will be even more closed for cooperation at the beginning and that serious efforts are needed to secure that their voices are being heard and taken into consideration. The local administration consequently needs to consider various methods for consulting beneficiaries.

More specifically, we propose:

- Satisfaction surveys among beneficiaries could be a resourceful tool for measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of service providers and services which are delivered, which can be easily implemented by the institutions providing services. Municipalities should gradually incorporate such surveys into the work of the institutions under their authority;
- Cooperating with staff that has experience and capacity to develop and analyze such tools (such as psychologists employed within schools), will also be crucial for utilizing local capacities and increasing cooperation and coordination;
- The municipalities could also practice conducting public surveys published on their web sites, when preparing the programs as a tool for communication with the citizens;
- Additionally, other existing mechanisms (such as mesni zaednici) or new media could be a possible way for targeting specific groups;
- Initiating a single registry or database to help beneficiaries targeted by one program get access to complementary services and programs (government, municipal, or non-government) can strengthen the relationship between beneficiaries and administration staff, which could further increase awareness within communities.

- Positive examples such as the establishment of the Youth Council in Kumanovo for addressing the needs of this group can be adopted and promoted in other sectors as well (women and health, rural women, etc.). In this sense, municipalities should consider establishing a standing advisory committee for gender equality.

Consistency between programs and budgets must be strengthened

The budget is the most comprehensive statement of the Municipality's social plans and priorities; it demonstrates how the funds are used and who benefits from them. Therefore, implementing commitments towards gender equality requires targeted measures to incorporate a gender perspective in the planning and budgeting frameworks and concrete investment for addressing gender gaps. Supporting gender responsive budgeting on the local level is crucial in this endeavour.

LOOKING THROUGH GENDERED LENSES

Local authorities should invest in building capacities for gender responsive budgeting. In order to share expenses this can be in the form of inter-municipal initiatives, i.e. several municipalities can have a gender budgeting officer, who may revise and comment on the draft budget, as well as provide training for local staff. Furthermore, representatives of the Committee for Equal Opportunities and the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities should cooperate with all municipal sectors when annual programs and budgets are prepared to support the incorporation of a gender perspective.

More specifically, we propose:

- The Municipal Council should adopt an internal policy that will make mandatory for the budget to be subject to review by the CEO, before it is sent for adoption;
- The capacities of CEO members, as well as of the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, need to be strengthened with additional trainings for gender responsive budgeting;
- Better cohesion between various budget programs might increase the impact the local policy makes and further promote gender equality. For example, when supporting CSOs and sport clubs, the Municipality should make sure that part of the funds target women sports clubs, or that supported sports clubs are obliged to establish women's clubs to decrease the gap between men and women in sports. In doing so, the municipalities should establish a target of at least 30% of the funds benefiting directly women;
- Additionally, instead of providing funds to CSOs without any strategic priorities, local CSOs can be motivated to work on social policies issues, or increase

local capacities for gender equality. Having in mind the amount of the budget going to CSOs and sport clubs, the municipalities should develop strategies for this assistance. Those strategies must include gender indicators.

Although all municipalities have adopted internal procedures on financial assistance, the process lacks gender perspective

Overall, the total amount of allocated funds from the social protection programs is relatively low, from 5 to 12% in the three municipalities, including transfers from the central governments. Additionally, a very limited amount is set as a fund for one-off financial assistance. The Municipalities have prepared and adopted Internal Rulebooks on financial transfers to CSOs and citizens that set up the criteria for beneficiaries. Basically, the one-off assistance is focused on: sickness and elementary disasters. It seems that only these two conditions are identified as source of vulnerability that are requiring financial support.

“My son goes to a kindergarten which is very close to our home, in the city center, about 3 minutes walking distance. That’s the main reason why we’ve decided to enrol him there. I have a small baby also and the distance is crucial to me.”

Again, there is no recognition of the intersection of gender with these or other risks. All three municipalities are transparent in the allocation of the financial assistance, i.e., every decision is published in the municipal official gazette and is publicly available. However, the funds are very modest (around 600.000 MKD) and do not cover the needs of even one fifth of the population that lives in poverty.

“I live in Karaorman, a place located 5km from Shtip. These are big villages, lots of young couples and small children, but there are no child care centers. I take my child to “Babi”, in the city, but I can afford to take him simply because my husband can take him in the morning when he goes to work.”

LOOKING THROUGH GENDERED LENSES

While it is positive that municipalities have programs for one-off assistance, they are very limited in terms of types of assistance and total funds available. Municipalities should understand that social protection coming from the national government does not cover the needs of the local men and women and that further efforts are needed to reduce this gap.

More specifically we propose:

- Municipalities should increase the budget allocated for social protection. Core allocation should not be lower than the budget allocated to support CSOs or sports clubs;

- Municipalities should redefine the criteria for financial assistance to respond more adequately to the local needs. Current criteria just follow the example set on the national level that are very rigorous and practically leaving a huge gap between the real needs and the support provided;
- Redefining and broadening the target groups according to needs assessment analysis (Municipality of Strumica has a good example of responding to local needs and providing financial assistance to poor families' through the program for subsidising the debts for the Public Utility Company. 814 families, 66 of them from rural communities, were granted this support in 2011. However, what is lacking again is awareness by the institutions about the inter-correlation of gender with other risks like poverty and unemployment.)
- Incorporating gender objectives in the internal rulebooks; Mandatory quota for women beneficiaries of one-off financial assistance - at least 30%;

"There is no room for us from the villages, this year they've accepted only 2 children. You must understand that nowadays the grandparents can't take care of the children even if they want to, they are working also. And even if I have someone who can look after my child, I want him to go to preschool. All children deserve to be able to go to kindergarten."

"Equal opportunities and conditions must be provided to children from rural communities also. My child must enjoy all rights regardless the fact that we live in a village."

- Broadening one-off assistance from solely for medical treatments to also include access to medicine, may leverage this discrepancy in earnings among the old population and will support access to health services for women.

"It's not that the fee is high, but our salaries are very small"

"My friend went to enrol her child from September, but they've asked her to pay from June so they will guarantee her place."

SPECIAL FOCUS: SATISFACTION WITH THE PROVISION OF CHILD CARE

One of the goals of the assessment of the social protection programs/policies within this study was to measure satisfaction with the delivery of preschool education, since kindergartens are one of the few decentralized areas in social protection policy and are closely linked to gender inequalities, both to the roles of women in the

family and as a precondition for women's economic activity. For that purpose, two focus groups were organized in each municipality. One consisted of women that have enrolled their children in preschool (both employed and unemployed) and the other consisted of women that have preschool age children that are not enrolled in kindergartens.

I. FOCUS GROUP – WOMEN WITH CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL

1. Satisfaction with child placement in preschool

“There must engage professionals to work with these children. There was a case when they included a child with special needs in the other groups, but he was not accepted, nor included in the activities, the other children made fun of him and finally the parents had to transfer him to another place.”

Location: In general, according to statements by women, location and distance from the house are key aspects that determine satisfaction with child placement in preschool. Considering this aspect, there is a difference between women living in central city areas and the ones coming from the suburban and rural communities, which is the case in all three municipalities. For women living in the central city areas, this allows for time saving and easy access to different means of transportation.

On the other hand, this is not the case for women coming from suburban or rural areas due to several reasons: a) the availability of child care centers in suburban areas is very limited (almost all child care centers gravitate towards central urban areas) or non-existent (only one of the three municipalities has provided child care centers in these communities); b) transportation means are also very limited for women living outside the cities, which in some cases increases their dependence on their the husbands.

Health issues: With regards to psychological conditions within child care facilities, all participants agreed that additional renovations are necessary because, according to them, not all standards are fulfilled. Most of the buildings are old and small compared to the number of children enrolled. Most of the mothers also feel that hygiene is far from the needed level. One particular issue that was brought up by women from Kumanovo was the location of one of the kindergartens next to an outpatient clinic serving as a methadone center. “Many times the children are witnesses of unpleasant scenes and moreover the yard is full of used needles that they can access very easily.”

Opening hours and enrolment: The official working hours during weekdays (05:30/06:00 – 17:30/18:00) of the kindergartens are satisfying for most of the wom-

en, but some of them report that in practice they are “forced in a way” to pick up the children by 16:30, when most of the parents are coming for the children. The weekend causes a headache for the majority of working mothers. Many of them are employed in the private sector, meaning that Saturday is a working day and they have to think of alternative solutions. As reported, this means finding available grandmothers, sisters, aunts or similar, but in any case means finding another female in the family that could take care of the child. Joint conclusion of all the participants in all three municipalities is that the existing capacities are far from enough and that the enrolment is a challenging experience for all of them in terms that you “have to know someone and have connections for your child to be accepted.” Again, this poses particular difficulties for women living in rural communities.

2. Parent’s experiences

Experiences with teachers/nurses: When talking about parent’s experiences related to quality of communication with teachers/nurses, the responses from the participants leads to the conclusion that “it all depends on their personality”. The experiences vary from highly positive to highly negative and this is the case in all municipalities and in all kindergartens,. This basically reveals that there is an absence of a system that defines, monitors and evaluates the work of the staff, which allows for the personal attitude to be a determinant of the quality of communication with the parents. This is true for all aspects of communication such as keeping the parents informed on progress and change, availability for parent’s questions, informative meetings. Another factor that is mentioned as influencing the quality of communication is the number of children in the groups. In a situation where there are up to 35 children in the groups, it seems that the parents consider as “logical” that the teachers cannot be devoted to every child and “understand their nervous behaviour”.

Special needs provision: Provision of services from professionals like psychologists and other staff working with children with special needs within kindergarten is obviously lacking in all municipalities. Only the Municipality of Kumanovo has taken steps for a professional working with children having speech problems to come to the kindergarten twice a week to work with those children. However, it must be mentioned that these parents are paying an additional fee for this service, as it is not included in the monthly fee for attending the kindergarten. In the other two municipalities, it is the parent’s responsibilities to take the child to a professional in the medical institutions and work with the child there. What is really striking is the fact that even when the municipalities have developed programs for inclusion of children with special needs in the kindergartens, like the Municipality of Shtip, no professional staff is engaged to work with them there. In the Municipality

of Strumica, there is only one team consisting of a special needs educator and a psychologist engaged in all 6 buildings.

Costs: In all three municipalities, beside the monthly fee that is paid, every additional activity is charged extra: English, gym, Rosica and other magazines, as well as work materials and hygiene products (toilet, soup, glasses, etc.). Having in mind all these additional activities, the monthly costs are a significant burden on the family budget. None of the municipalities has developed a mechanism for subsidising the costs for the children coming from vulnerable groups like single parents or similar, which is identified as a need by the women.

Satisfaction with the received education: The general impression is that the quality of the education received also varies among the kindergartens, depending on the commitment of the teachers to implement the planned programs. Higher satisfaction is reported in kindergartens following the program "Step by Step", due to the number of joint parents-children activities, as well as outdoor activities. The possibility to have joint workshops and parents-children activities seems to be very important to the parents. Again the size of the groups is perceived as the main obstacle to good education, simply because it is not possible for the teachers/nurses to devote enough time to every child individually based on the specific needs. Some of the parents feel that the quality of treatment the child is going to receive very much depends on "who's child he or she is". This was mostly reported in Kumanovo, where there seems to exist a certain hostility towards the children of persons working in Afghanistan. They call these women "the Afghanistan's" and they are perceived as "wealthy women that do not have to work and are just occupying the place of the children whose mothers do not to work for living." And when it comes to learning about gender equality, the experiences reported by the mothers lead to a conclusion that the kindergartens are in fact just reinforcing the gender stereotypes. "Last year they specifically requested new sportswear, strictly blue for boys and pink for girls"

II. FOCUS GROUP – WOMEN WITH CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL

1. Reasons behind non enrolment in kindergarten

When discussing reasons for children not being in preschool, three main obstacles can be identified, as reported by the women participants:

Financial barriers: One of the most frequent reasons mentioned by the women is the unemployment or low financial capacity of the families. In most of the cases only one family member is employed and the costs related to preschool are an additional burden. This particularly stands true for women that have more than one

child at preschool age. When discussing preschool costs, they refer mostly to the additional costs that, according to their knowledge, are higher than the official monthly fee, as well as to the related transportation costs. The statements in this focus group also confirm the importance of the location and distance of the kindergarten, because they are linked directly with time and transportation concerns. These statements refer to all three municipalities.⁴⁴ The women were not familiar with any possibilities for subsidising of the child care for some vulnerable groups like single parents or similar. One woman reported that she has provided confirmation from Center for Social Work that she is a single parent to the kindergarten, but had no answer at all to that request.

Enrolment Barriers: Lack of available capacities in the kindergartens and long waiting lists are other most important factors that hinder access to public preschool service. As much as, half of the women included in this focus group, in all three municipalities, have actually unsuccessfully tried to enrol their child in preschool. Even more, all women in the group from Kumanovo have made an attempt to enrol their children in the kindergarten. Some of them are still on the waiting list and some got a negative answer. This points to possible discrimination of disadvantaged categories/families that don't have access to preschool services.

Access barriers: Again, the availability of a kindergarten in the area of living will make a significant difference when deciding whether or not to enrol the child in preschool according to our participants. This seems to be even more important for women not working, because it gives them opportunity to organize themselves logistically and not to depend on their husbands or other members of the family (knowing that the primary responsibility to take and pick the child from kindergarten is left to the women). Another issue very frequently mentioned by the women are the conditions within the kindergartens, especially for children with health problems. A lot of examples were presented of children enrolled and then left home again due to health problems.

2. Who takes care of the children?

In the cases where the mother is working and the children are not enrolled in preschool, a family member is responsible for taking care of them; predominantly this refers to grandmothers or in some cases a woman neighbour that is unemployed and is babysitting for money. Husbands were not mentioned in this discussion at all. What needs to be mentioned is that despite all barriers and reasons that are influencing these women not to enrol their children in preschool, they all agree that preschool education is necessary for child development and that every child should have the opportunity to be in a kindergarten.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Municipalities should improve kindergartens infrastructure: Investments in additional kindergartens or adaptation of existing buildings (municipalities can adapt premises in primary schools that have small number of classes) to increase capacity that will cover all local communities; suburban areas and rural communities should be a particular objective. The physical conditions must be improved; and the fulfilment of standards must be strictly controlled.

Municipalities should develop mechanisms and programs for subsidising child care for vulnerable groups: Developing programs for subsidising child care costs for vulnerable groups: single parents, families under risk, beneficiaries of social assistance should be a priority in order to promote equal access to preschool services. Those measures should also cover other additional costs, not just direct expenses. Positive example is provided by the Municipality of Strumica that covers the costs for child care for children with disabilities.

Develop mechanisms for participatory program planning and evaluation of child care services: The annual programs for the work of the kindergartens should be designed through a consultation process with the parents, as well as made available and distributed to the parents at the beginning of the year. There should be a regular satisfaction survey of the parents in order for them to provide feedback to the kindergarten management on what is functional and what needs to be improved.

Special needs provision: Special needs provision should be part of every kindergarten; Professionals like a psychologist and special educators need to be employed, particularly where children with disabilities are enrolled.

Organization of the work of the kindergartens to respond to the needs: Kindergartens should work in shifts and on Saturdays to better respond to the needs of parents employed in the private sector.

ENDNOTES

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2 Article 11 and 14 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2012)

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6 European Fund for the Balkans, From Yugoslavia to the European Union: 20 Years after 1991 – The Tale of Two Generations, Survey Data, 2011, available at: http://balkanfund.org/spd/?page_id=148

7 Davies, L., Social Policy, Gender Inequality and Poverty, 2001

8 Open Society Institute, Open Minds: Opportunities for Gender Equality in Education, A Report on Central and Southeastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, 2003

9 For example, absence of a regular and stable income, low capital and skill levels and low access to markets and technology. For more, please consult Sabates-Wheeler, R., and Kabeer, N., Gender Equality and the Extension of Social Protection: Extension of Social Security, ILO, 2003

10 Reactor, Finding the Key to the Glass Door: Demystifying the Reasons for Women's Low Participation in the Labor Market, 2012

11 Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Gender-Budget Analysis of Social Policy and Active Employment Measures, 2010, available at: <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Rodova%20Analiza%20ANGLISKI%2001%20MART%202010.pdf>

12 According to the State Election Committee, latest 2009

13 Statistical review: Population and social statistics, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults, 2011-2012

14 Different calculations exist, that range from 20 to 40% of the population. Because poverty is not distributed equally across the country, we take the lowest estimate into account, made by rural poverty portal (http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/statistics/tags/macedonia#p_102_INSTANCE_7v2hEnB8W4ez)

15 Annual work program (2011) and Annual report (2010) of JODUG Angel Sajce

16 State statistical office latest estimates, 30.06.2012

17 EU Strategy 2020; benchmark within education is that by 2020, 95% of the children at age 4 are enrolled in preschool education

18 Barnett, W.S., The Future of Children, Vol. 5, No. 3, Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs (Winter, 1995), pp. 25-50, Published by: Princeton University; Dahlber et al., Beyond Quality in Preschool Education and Care: Postmodern Perspectives, Falmer Press, 1999

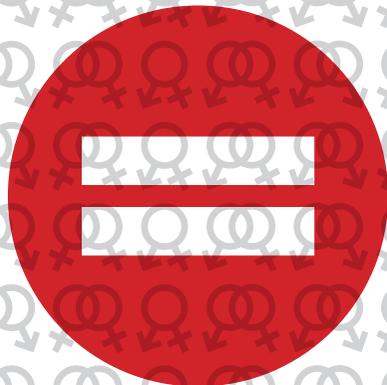
19 Data provided at interview, however the state statistical office reports total of 174 beneficiaries, Statistical review: Population and social statistics, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults, 2011-2012

20 In 2011 elder people from Kumanovo, Skopje, Shtip, Prilep, Strumica, Kriva Palanka, Rankovce,, and Sveti Nikole were accommodated.

21 Apart from Skopje, were both state and private homes for elderly exists, there are state run centers for care of elderly people only in Kumanovo, Bitola and Prilep, and one private in Negotino.

22 State Election Committee, information for the 2009 local elections

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- 23 Statistical review: Population and social statistics, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults, 2011-2012
- 24 Annual work program, OUJDG Astibo, Shtip, 2011-2012; Annual work program OUJDG Vera Ciriviri Trena, 2010-2011
- 25 State Statistical Office, estimates
- 26 Interview with Chair on Committee for Social, Health and Children Protection
- 27 Annual Program for Social Protection of Municipality of Shtip, 2011
- 28 Our research findings were also confirmed by the representative of the Finance sector within municipality also that stated that the actual spent amount is 152.000 MKD. We were not able to identify the spending of the remaining amount (up to 505.000 MKD) that was shown as a total amount in the final balance sheet. Which additional spending were reported under this budget line is not clear.
- 19 As noted in the decisions, that a certain person is a receiver of the assistance, in the name of his/her family.
- 30 At least from what can be assumed from the title of the project and the name of the organization, since no other details are provided for the supported CSOs initiatives
- 31 At least this can be concluded by the title of the funded projects. No access was provided to the full project documentations within the period of the research study.
- 32 Statistical review: Population and social statistics, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults, 2011-2012
- 33 Interview with the Director of the kindergarten "Detska Radost", Strumica
- 34 Interview with the President of the Committee for Equal Opportunity in Strumica. The activities included gender equality trainings in schools, gender equality in 'mesni zaednici', environment education-separation and recycling of waste, promotion of rights of people with disabilities, and inter-ethnic activities within schools.
- 35 Platform for Development of Municipality of Strumica, pg. 19
- 36 Annual report of Municipality of Strumica for 2011, Budget and budget execution for 2011
- 37 The ownership structure in Macedonian is largely imbalanced with women owning less than 5% of all real estate. This is due to traditions in inheritance, although by law women and men have equal inheritance rights.
- 38 In the documents available, we could not track the beneficiaries of the social transfers
- 39 More information about community forums can be found at www.fcu.org.mk
- 40 Having in mind that the Municipality of Strumica is ISSO certified public institution, the assumption is that the criteria are fair and are strictly followed by the municipal administration. We did not get access to the documents to directly assess this, but having in mind that CSOs have two representatives in the deciding board and no one complained, we considered the assumption to be true.
- 41 Except for the municipality of Strumica, that has used an UNDP supported needs assessment, carried out in 2006
- 42 The program documents, state that they are in line with the National program for development of social protection 2011-2021 and this leads to the conclusion that the municipalities are simply following national priorities as defined and transfer them to the local level.
- 43 Although the participants profile in Shtip included a majority of women that are actually employed, we must take into consideration that these are mostly employees in the textile industry with very low wages and, as reported, the only employee in family.



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