SAVE THE DATE

Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism and Entrepreneurship

The Municipality of Tirana

and

UN Women in Albania

cordially invite you to a Panel Discussion:

“Application of Gender Responsive Budgeting to the Economic Empowerment of Women”

Date: Monday, 13 March 2017
Time: 4:45 PM-6:00 PM
Venue: Conference Room B - Conference Building
UN Headquarters, New York
CONCEPT NOTE

ALBANIA – SIDE EVENT IN CSW61

Application of Gender Responsive Budgeting to the Economic Empowerment of Women

Conference room date/time: Date: Monday, 13 March 2017, 4:45 PM-6:00 PM, Conference Room B - Conference Building- UN Headquarters, New York

Short Title: Women Economic Empowerment

Long Title: Application of GRB to the Economic Empowerment of Women


Background:
The focus on women economic empowerment has increased dramatically these last four years and is strongly being led by a series of national stakeholders at the central and local level. Also, thanks to the efforts and dedicated support of UN Women in Albania funded by the Government of Sweden, this issue is now transformed into a priority for the Government of Albania and an integrated part of the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020. One of the strategic objectives of the strategy is dedicated to economic empowerment of women with a costed action plan. Recently adopted territorial reform has a specific objective at empowerment of local government, citizens and communities. The reform enables municipalities to render quality services and further social and economic development, by increasing local entrepreneurship capacities of women and men, providing a smooth environment for sustainable local development and social cohesion.

Ministry Social Welfare and Youth is the primary government entity that leads Government work on advancing gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) in the country. The Minister of Social Welfare and Youth is the Head of the National Mechanism on Gender Equality (GE). Government priorities are streamlined in the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI). Gender equality commitments and women representation are materialized in the National Strategy for GE and its Action Plan (2016-2020) pursuing also two strategic objectives on women economic empowerment and women in decision-making. Likewise, the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020 seeks to adjust gender imbalances by promoting both social and economic inclusion of women.

In the last four years the Albanian Government has put strong emphasis on the engendering of financial mechanisms and aligning them with policy directives and national plans. The Ministry of Finance (MoF), a close partner of UN Women in the GRB Regional Project “Promoting Gender Responsive Policies in SEE and the Republic of Moldova” financially supported by and Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Development Cooperation, has advanced the application of gender equality principles in the public finance management. Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is integrated in Public Finance Management Strategy (2014-2020) and applied across sector programs at central and local levels. The Ministry of Finance lead the GRB work in the country, resulting in historical changes of the Organic Budget law – making gender equality a key principle of the law. GRB is embedded in the Medium-term Budget Programme (MTBP), thus providing effective budget support to sector priorities through a gender perspective, to guarantee that policy objectives are backed up with gender sensitive state budget support. About USD 90 mld of public expenditure are budgeted into 24 MTBP sector programme in 2017.

At the central level a good example is the application of GRB to pursue policy work initiated by MEDTTE and transformed into concrete budgetary allocation through the sector MTBP. In 2014 a National Action Plan (NAP) for Women Entrepreneurs (2014 -2020) including an allocation of $250,000 fund (based on Council of Ministers Decision no. 592, 10/10/14) to support women entrepreneurs was adopted by the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism and Entrepreneurship. As a result, Albanian women entrepreneurs have significant increased access to finance to start up and grow their businesses. The National Plan provides improved legal and institutional environment for women entrepreneurs, a precondition to business success.
At the local level Women Economic Empowerment has been a focus area for the local government as well. At the same time Tirana Municipality has taken up participatory approaches on planning and budgeting. GRB approach was taken on board easily while planning and supporting a women dedicated entrepreneurship fund. Such fund in order to be efficient and implementable required both policy and planning synergies, what brought the Municipality to develop further criteria and quality guidance to promote entrepreneurship and a favourite climate for women. Tirana Municipality established in 2016 a “Competitive Fund for Women Entrepreneurs” of 6 Million Albanian Lek with strong elements focused on rural women enterprises and start-ups. The Fund which consists of public funds has mimicked and learned from the central fund to support women businesses established by the Ministry of Economy-another synergy between GRB and economic empowerment policies. The competitive fund is designed to support the creation and scaling of viable businesses led by women. Grant assistance was coupled with mentoring assistance as well and only in 2016-22 women entrepreneurs were supported through the fund. In 2017, the Municipality plans to double its investment in the fund, and other municipalities are seeking to replicate the approach.

The private sector has also been vivid in its support and engagement in the women empowerment principles. For the first time in Albania 11 private companies signed the Women’s Empowerment Principles under the leadership of Tirana Municipality. The companies committed to undertake concrete actions on gender equality, such as: zero tolerance policies towards discrimination and VAW in the workplace, training for their employees and women entrepreneurs on the use of indicators to measure the professional development of women staff. The progress achieved during these 4 years is clearly notable and the issue of women economic empowerment is now easily perceived as a priority, what makes it naturally acceptable to be among priorities of this year, as well. Good political will, policies, affirmative actions and concrete financial commitment through state budget is key for ensuring sustainability and building good models of women’s empowerment. Therefore, Albania can be considered a best practice among the Balkan countries in this regard and is committed to share such experience beyond the region taking advantage of this side event with the following objectives:

**Objectives:**

- **Sharing country’ best practices, models and knowledge:** To give visibility to the Albanian models and practices of women economic empowerment and inspiring similar initiatives around the world, by sharing best practices, campaign and knowledge products of the country.
- **Increasing government’ accountability and further boosting their level of commitment:** To increase the accountability of Government institutions and other involved actors to publically engage and commit to advance women’s economic development;
- **Enhancing partners’ collaboration:** To invite more partners, donor community, and interested actors to support and collaborate through joint initiatives and future actions.

**Proposed scenario:**

The side event will last 75 minutes and will focus on:

- National Commitment to Gender Equality, policy orientations, national policy directives towards GE;
- Provide an overview of Gender Responsive Budgeting and its sectorial approach and concrete application.
- Demonstrate Women Economic Empowerment by looking at two successful examples, that reflect the synergy model between GRB and WEE.
**Proposed Panellists and Agenda:**

**Panel:**

- Ms. Besiana Kadare, Ambassador, Albanian Mission to the United Nations
- Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladottir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia
- Ms. Merita Xhafaj, General Director of Social Policies, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
- Mr. Gentian Opre, Director of Budget Analysis and Programming Department
- Ms. Adela Karapici – Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development Trade and Entrepreneurship
- Ms. Brunilda Paskali – Deputy Mayor, Tirana Municipality

**Moderator:** TBC

**Monday, 13 March 2017, 4:45 PM - 6:00 PM**

04:45-4:55 **Opening and welcome speech, side event’s aim and objectives**
Ms. Besiana Kadare, Ambassador, Albanian Mission to the United Nations
Ms. Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladottir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia

04:55-05:05 **National Gender Equality Policies**
Ms. Merita Xhafaj, General Director of Social Policies, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

05:05-05:15 **Mainstreaming Gender through the introduction of Gender Responsive Budgeting in Albania's Public Finance Management**.
Mr. Gentian Opre, Director of Budget Analysis and Programming Department within the Ministry of Finance of Albania

05:15-05:25 **Economic Empowerment of Women**
Ms. Adela Karapici, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development Trade and Entrepreneurship

05:25-05:35 **Empowering Women at Local Level**
Ms. Brunilda Paskali, Deputy Mayor, Tirana Municipality

05:35-06:15 **Plenary session**
Questions and Answers/ Discussion and Sharing