Sustainable Development and Gender Equality in Europe and CIS

What are the challenges?

Gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of women’s rights are critical to achieving sustainable human development, which is focused on improving the lives of people. Despite the progress achieved in Europe and the CIS, women continue to face serious inequalities vis-à-vis men, particularly in terms of employment opportunities, income and access to and control over resources. Social and economic exclusion have been two major underlying causes of the decrease in economic growth in the region in recent years.

A wage gap persists, with women being paid less than men for doing the same work. In a number of countries women are prohibited from taking jobs in profitable industries such as mining, construction and metalwork, which restricts their earning and career opportunities. ‘Glass ceilings and walls’ prevent women from advancing their careers. In comparison to men, women perform the bulk of unpaid and time-consuming care work.

Although there are no explicit legal restrictions limiting women’s access to formal credit in the region, in countries like Albania, it is still rare for women to develop businesses through access to financial credit. In Moldova, poverty prevents women from taking loans as they have insufficient collateral to secure credit.

MATTERS OF FACT

- The gender wage gap persists, ranging from 7 to 53 percent.
- For instance, in Turkey, women’s labour force participation is 30.7 percent compared to 70.6 percent of men. Women make up 72.1 percent of unpaid family workers, but only 9.3 percent of high-level executives.
- Several countries, such as Georgia, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, lack laws that mandates equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value.
- Agriculture’s share of gross domestic product remains high in some countries: 28 percent in Uzbekistan and 27.1 percent in Kyrgyzstan. Yet, women’s ownership of land is often restricted by customary and religious rules, as well as gender biases in statutory law. In Kyrgyzstan, women own only 13 percent of total agricultural holdings.
UNDP Responses

With the equal engagement of women and men, success can be achieved in eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns as well as managing natural resources sustainably. UNDP works with national partners to:

- **Eliminate visible and invisible barriers to women’s economic empowerment and ensure equality in labour markets.**

- **Transform gender-biased norms limiting women’s earning opportunities.**

- **Increase the gender responsiveness of social protection measures such as unemployment, health and disability benefits and employment guarantee schemes.**

- **Integrate gender considerations and expand women’s participation in the formulation and implementation of development strategies.**

- **Ensure that women can access, own and participate in the management of ecosystem goods and services, including climate finance.**

- **Support governments to ensure that women can access affordable and clean energy.**

UNDP in Action

- **In Albania**, UNDP initiatives supported women entrepreneurs, who received training in medicine and forest fruit processing. A centre for processing fruits products was established as a result.

- **In Kazakhstan**, the ‘Eco-Damu 2014-2024’ microcredit programme is supporting women’s access to resources, especially for women living in communities within designated biodiversity protection areas. Support for 38 women-led enterprises is now being approved.

- **In Kosovo**, 332 out of 951 people who took part in UNDP job skills courses (including vocational, administrative, business, service delivery, literacy and numeracy training) were women. They learned new skills or improved existing ones.

- In **Moldova**, 100 women who underwent entrepreneurship training organized by UNDP (including 50 from the breakaway Transnistrian region) have established their own businesses. The network of UNDP career advisory centres supported the direct employment of 178 women, which amounted to 69 percent of the employment opportunities secured in 2013-2014.

- In **Montenegro**, 60 out of 138 women who underwent a UNDP tailored educational programme have developed plans for business start-ups. In addition, the programme introduced a credit line backed by the state development fund, aimed specifically at women entrepreneurs.

- In **Tajikistan**, during a ‘Do It Yourself’ UNDP workshop pilot, women and men learned how to build homemade solar water heating systems, which gave them access to affordable and clean energy.

- In **Turkey**, in southeast Anatolia, UNDP supported the adoption of innovative approaches in business development, such as the use of online sales or outlet channels. In Eskişehir, 13 women established a cooperative that adopted an online sales platform, generating a rise in both retail and online sales.

*Reference to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.*

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