

# STRATEGY TO INTEGRATE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE BALKANS PROGRAM

## CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CIDA)

Gender inequalities affect the ability of all individuals in a society to improve their lives. Societies that discriminate on the basis of gender, inevitably pay a significant price in slower economic growth, weaker governance, and a lower overall quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Gender equality is therefore an issue of development effectiveness.

### OVERVIEW

Gender equality issues in the Balkans differ widely from one country to the other and from one social group to the other. However, it is possible to draw general lines for the region. During the post WWII socialist period the Balkans enjoyed relative advances in terms of gender equality due to governments' efforts to promote political participation, secure universal access to basic health care and education, as well as an emphasis on employment both as a right and a duty for both sexes. To guarantee these rights, legislation was put in place across the Balkans providing for, among other things : free and compulsory education for all (e.g. up to grade eight in Serbia and Montenegro), equal voting, and election rights for women. These historical advances are reflected in the 2000 Gender related Development Index (GDI), with most Balkan countries being relatively well placed (see box). Major challenges to gender equality in the Balkans are however still present currently. We do not intend to explore in an exhaustive manner the challenges facing the region; we will rather illustrate our purpose with selected examples.

Gender Related Development Index: Country Ranking (of 173)	
◆	Slovenia 29
◆	Croatia 44
◆	Bulgaria 51
◆	Romania 57
◆	Macedonia 60 (est.)
◆	Serbia and Montenegro: 65 (est.)
◆	Albania 73
◆	Bosnia and Herzegovina 82 (est.)
◆	Moldova 87

(UNDP 2003)

### Rule of law

While gender rights have generally been subsumed under recently enacted human rights legislation across the region, the reality is that gender equality has enjoyed a *de jure* rather than *de facto* presence. As such, discrimination against women persists, is pervasive and is manifest in both the public and private spheres. Laws to shield Balkan women from acts of violence and discrimination are rarely enforced, and efforts to rectify gender inequalities in schools, at work, and at home are similarly not a governmental priority. This lack of enforcement is rooted in legal and political systems that have not sufficiently defined acts of gender discrimination or built an effective legal framework to successfully prosecute offenders. These systems are enduring social and religious customs that perpetuate deeply engrained patriarchal stereotypes in which it is difficult to perceive women as more than mothers and wives. Moreover, women who are targets of violence and discrimination are sometimes encouraged by their families and “society” to remain silent. They are fearful of reproach and are likely unaware of how to access legal recourse.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank Policy Research Report : *Engendering development – Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice.*

On the other hand, men are under-represented in judicial positions with women occupying the majority of the positions in the Balkan countries (except for Kosovo), and with Bulgarian judiciary system almost entirely feminized. There is also a large proportion of women enrolling in, and graduating from, law schools. A very small percentage of women, however, actually hold senior decision-making positions. These are reserved for men in all judicial levels (especially the Supreme Courts) in all the Balkans countries.

### **Education**

Although primary school attendance for boys and girls is high throughout the region, the World Bank has identified access in some communities as an issue. Primary education enrollment rates for Kosovar Albanian girls in rural communities are 30% lower than for boys. At the secondary level, a special case is Albania where the enrollment of boys decreased at a higher rate than girls enrollment in the last few years. Across the region, the transition appears to have increased the enrollment of women in higher education; men are generally under-represented, with the exception of Kosovo. Teaching materials are also a common problem evidenced throughout the region; the material (e.g. text books) reinforce gender stereotypes, thus inculcating gender biased views in the new generation.

### **Health**

Maternal mortality rates are approximately 3 to 4 times higher than in the European Union, and all countries of the region, except Serbia, have experienced a rise in the rates. Maternal health is dependent in large measure on the availability and quality of health care services. It is estimated that abortion related deaths constitute between a quarter and one third of deaths. The high rates of abortion can be accounted for, between other reasons, the lack of access to safe forms of contraception; e.g. more than half of married or in union couples in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) do not use contraception.

Men's health has deteriorated in the transition period because of alcoholism, smoking, drug abuse, cardiovascular diseases, and stress. Men's increase in risk-taking behaviours has gone hand in hand with the extreme drop in the employment rate. Suicide rates among males have also increased in the region. There are more males than females infected by HIV/AIDS in all Balkans countries with approximately 70% of the infected being men. The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has surged across the region (particularly the incidence of HIV/AIDS), but overall the rates remain low.

### **Decision making roles and labour market**

Women are noticeably under-represented in decision-making roles. In the political realm, women have seen their representation fall from relatively high levels during the socialist period. Despite adopted laws that ensure equal representation of women in, and their access to, active politics, there are significantly fewer women in the parliament, all levels of government, central public administration, and political parties. Very few political parties have undertaken concrete steps to include gender equality issues in their party programs; even women, when they hold leading political positions, rarely advocate for placing gender equality issues on the agenda.

The participation of women and men of the region in the labour market is high. BiH stands out among all countries in transition with respect to the ratio of female-to-male participation rates in the labour force: only 35 percent of females aged between 16 and 64 work outside the household. In Kosovo, the percentage is even lower as it is around 30 %. Unemployment of women has a direct impact on the women themselves but also on the wealth of the household. Women's

unemployment is linked, amongst other things, to the quality of the early child care system.<sup>2</sup> A weaker child care system makes the women less available for work outside of the household since she is traditionally responsible for the care of the children.

Despite the fact that gender gaps in earnings in the Balkans are quite small by international standards, their unexplained component is relatively large. Explained component include difference in jobs characteristics and gap in human capital (e.g. level of education, previous work experiences). An unexplained gap suggests a large degree of wage discrimination. This inequality is the effect of cultural factors and preferences and is also linked to the double burden women face (work within and outside the household).<sup>3</sup>

### **Violence and Crime**

There are indications that few attempts have been made by governments to adopt new legislation intended to clarify the definition of violence and protect women with legal remedies (e.g. court orders). Domestic violence generally goes unchallenged and there are few shelters made available to women in danger or any other kind of resources for women to access. In a survey on Kosovar women, 23% of respondents reported that they had been victims of domestic violence. The World Bank strongly suggests that domestic violence disproportionately affects women from poor households and is linked with other aspects of deprivation in a post-conflict environment. Education of women and their partners is the strongest violence-reducing factor as more educated women tend to be more active in terminating relationship in which they are subject to violence; they also have higher status in a relationship.

The breakdown in law and order and instability in the post-war period has been capitalized on by organized crime to increase their activity in trafficking humans. An estimated 200,000 women and girls are sent to or transited through the Balkans annually. UNICEF recently reported that approximately 10,000 women, largely from Moldova, Ukraine and Romania have been trafficked to BiH to work in the country's sex trade, being beaten, raped and forced into prostitution.

### **Minorities**

Women belonging to ethnic groups and national minorities experience further discrimination which leads to a double marginalization. During the war in Croatia, BiH and later Kosovo, women were exposed to a variety of abuses, most commonly sexual violence in the form of rape. Given the strong ethnic component of the conflict, rape against women was often used as a tool of war. Women who survived rape (estimates in BiH vary from 20,000 to 50,000) suffer severe physical and psychological damage as well as rejection in their own communities, which all hinder their post-war attempts to reintegrate into the social and economic life.

In minority communities of post-conflict societies, both minority women and men are adversely affected by discrimination in employment, access to health services and reconstruction priorities, despite the protection granted by human rights laws. Roma women are in a significantly worse situation than other ethnic groups across the Balkan states. Routinely suffering from lack of the basic human respect, they are least likely to be employed and most likely to be denied police protection when assaulted.

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<sup>2</sup> *BiH Poverty Assessment*, World Bank, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Gender in transition*, World Bank, 2002.

## **PAST PROGRAMMING**

Because of the responsive nature of CIDA's programming in the Balkans, less emphasis has been put on gender equality. However, the Balkans Program had activities related to gender equality in many projects in the past. The challenge for the future will be to integrate the theme in a more systematic manner.

The Local Initiatives Program, the Peacebuilding Response Program and the Governance Support Program are decentralized, quick funding mechanisms allowing Canada to respond to evolving priorities as identified in the field in the Eastern Adriatic Region. In the three programs, gender equality was identified as one of the priorities along with civil society policy role, good governance and basic human needs. Gender equality is considered as a cross-cutting theme, however numerous projects specifically dealing with this issue were funded in the past years in areas such as human trafficking, participation of women in the economic life, gender stereotypes, legal aid for minority women, domestic violence, and gender based violence more generally.

### **Rule of law**

The Canada-Soros Foundation Partnership consists of five peacebuilding and democratic development projects throughout the region. Gender equality activities under this initiative have focused on research, publications, monitoring of constitutions and legislation, awareness rising around gender equality issues and the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, and regional network meetings. One project has included legal and judicial reform activities specifically targeting minority women. The objective of another project, the South Eastern European Women's Legal Initiative (SEELINE), is to improve legal status of women and strive for the standardization of legal provisions on higher levels of protection. It has supported the creation of a network of women's NGOs and experts including women's NGO of high professional standing in 10 Southeastern Europe countries. The project has followed the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court in order to influence national legislation and make the tribunals' achievements regarding violence against women publicly known and visible. The project was also involved in the publication of books on women's legal protection in Southeastern Europe countries.

### **Education**

The Kosovo Educators Development Program has been promoting gender equality in its work with local partners such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Faculty of Education in Kosovo. The educators participated in a gender equality awareness workshop and the program has organized an Equal Opportunities Symposium to which 300 persons attended. In addition, the program has involved active promotion of the role for women academics in the new Faculty of Education. As a result of these activities a significant number of Kosovars in the education sector, including a large number of men, are ready to actively encourage greater opportunities for women.

### **Health**

Women of the region, usually responsible for the health and welfare of their families, benefit from an increased access to more effective and efficient health systems. Many projects of the Balkans Program have targeted women's needs. Some have also had an impact on women's rights, such as reproductive health rights.

The Family Medicine Nursing project in BiH aimed a largely female occupation in the country, the nursing profession. By promoting the development of nursing as a key and integral component of family medicine, this project had a positive impact on empowering women as professionals and decision-makers within the health system.

This initiative has worked to ensure nursing receives appropriate attention at the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education levels. The project has advanced the professionalization of nursing (specifically family medicine nursing) and has therefore advanced the status of nurses in the health care field. Beneficiaries participated in a gender analysis developed by the George Brown College to assess their experience of empowerment within the public health care reform and the development of family medicine. The gender empowerment analysis tool has helped the BiH nurses with information to support future strategic planning. Amongst other results, nurses and nursing teachers have reported a significant increase in personal self-esteem, sense of competency, and increased job satisfaction.

Gender equalities activities in the health sector were also undertaken under the Southern Europe HIV/AIDS Prevention, Youth Protection, and Strengthening Child Rights Program. This program aims to develop national and regional responses to HIV/AIDS and targets extremely vulnerable young people. The program has helped to understand gender roles in order to combat causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS (e.g. women have greater biological vulnerability to infection, lower status in society and in sexual relationships). The program has also promoted capacity building, human resources based advocacy, and interventions for gender equality integration into national AIDS plans. In addition, it has developed programs related to mother-to-child transmission with pregnant women as the main target group.

## STRATEGY TO INTEGRATE GENDER EQUALITY INTO PROGRAMMING

CIDA's Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Branch undertook in the spring of 2003 a review of its programming in an attempt to improve the integration of gender equality into programming. The study identified a number of challenges to mainstreaming gender equality in the Branch including the unfamiliarity with CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality and the uneven implementation of the policy. As a result of the review exercise *Gender Equality Guidelines for Partners and Canadian Executing Agencies (CEAs)* are being presently developed and a workshop is offered to CEE Branch staff. Building on the recommendations proposed and in the spirit of continual improvement a series of measures have been identified for enhancing the extent to which gender equality is addressed in the Balkans Program portfolio.

### **Objectives of the strategy:**

1. Strengthen the capacity of Balkans team to mainstream gender equality (GE) issues into programming; and
2. Ensure that GE is integrated in a systematic fashion as a cross-cutting issue in the Balkans Program.

### **Activities:**

- Undertake policy dialogue with other donors, international organizations, Canadian executing agencies and partner governments to ensure that GE issues figure prominently in project/program design and delivery; harmonize approaches.
- The annual work planning and reporting exercises will be used to set and report against GE targets at the division level.
- Identify a focal person within the Balkans division to share GE resources, including best practices, within the team. This person should participate in the CEE's GE working group.
- Retain the services of a gender specialist to provide technical support as needed to project officers, or create a list of local gender specialists that the team and executing agencies can contract when needed.
- Ensure that the terms of reference of monitors and evaluators include GE.
- Local Initiatives Programs will constitute a mechanism to address GE issues.
- All staff will participate in the CEE workshop on GE and will be sharing the *Gender Equality Guidelines for Partners and Canadian Executing Agencies (CEAs)* with partners.
- Provide staff with access to other training on GE and encourage peer review exercises to develop experience and expertise.
- Project officers will be strongly encouraged to:
  - Ensure that a gender analysis is conducted during the design phase, which in turn will translate into a gender strategy for the project/program.
  - Integrate gender sensitive results and indicators into logical framework analysis and performance measurement frameworks.
  - Allocate appropriate resources for GE approach (e.g. budget for gender equality consultant work).

***Expected Results:***

- Better understanding of issues of GE in the Balkans by the team members that will address those challenges in their work.
- Increased proportion of projects/programs with explicit gender dimensions and increased quality of those interventions.

***Indicators:***

- Proportion of projects/programs that contain an outcome result on GE and where good results are obtained.
- Proportion of projects/programs for which a gender strategy is developed and successfully implemented.

Note: In order to report on GE's integration at a division level, results concerning GE should be easily accessible. Executing agencies' reports should contain a section on GE. Project/Program Performance Reports (PPRs) should also contain information on GE. In addition, if there are activities related to GE in projects/programs, GE should be coded in the internal financial and monitoring system (SAP).

**GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS**

In June 2003, CIDA's Policy Committee adopted a *Framework for Assessing Gender Equality Results*. This document helps evaluate the progress in the implementation of CIDA's Gender Equality Policy. It defines three types of results to be achieved in projects or programs. Projects and programs are expected to contribute to at least one of the following:

- **Decision Making:** More equal participation of women with men as decision-makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies.
- **Rights:** Women and girls more able to realize their full human rights.
- **Development resources and benefits:** Reduced inequalities between women and men in access to and control over resources and benefits of development.

The Balkan's Program will base itself on these three types of results to develop targets in the area of gender equality. For illustrative purposes, the table below provides a menu of possible results to be pursued by projects/programs.

<b>RESULTS</b>	
<b>Rule of Law</b>	<p><b><i>Legal and Judicial Reform</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ established and functional enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and elimination of legal barriers to equality; availability of legal aid;</li> <li>♦ developed public consultation mechanisms that ensure expression of both women's and men's views;</li> <li>♦ strengthened networks among public institutions that support the formulation of gender-equitable policies;</li> <li>♦ greater representation of women in the high-level courts; more knowledgeable and gender-sensitive judges.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Police Forces</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ readiness of police and criminal justice system to accept complaints of domestic and sexual abuse;</li> <li>♦ strengthened legal training and discussion on the definition and interpretation of gender equality rights;</li> <li>♦ improved enforcement of laws concerning sex trafficking and exploitation of women.</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<p><b><i>Access to Health Care</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ increased access to quality health care;</li> <li>♦ greater availability of reproductive health care services.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>HIV/AIDS</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ acknowledgement of the issues that may hinder HIV/AIDS incidence, education and awareness, such as the status of females in society, privacy issues for both sexes, cultural issues, and gender differences in contracting the disease;</li> <li>♦ employment of different counseling strategies for women, men and youth; using age-appropriate and gender-sensitive health information on safe sex practices;</li> <li>♦ strengthened national capacities for gender analysis (e.g. using gender-sensitive indicators) and planning national strategies for discovering and addressing the root causes of HIV/AIDS.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Institutional Capacity</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ equal participation of men and women in institutional capacity building, training, and health care program delivery;</li> <li>♦ equal access of men and women to undergraduate and postgraduate training of physicians as well as the training for the existing family care doctors and nurses.</li> <li>♦ health policies acknowledge different health needs of females and males.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. equal access of men and women to the teacher training programs;</li> <li>2. improved and modernized school curricula, sensitive to gender equality issues;</li> <li>3. greater number of women in senior level university positions</li> </ol>



## ***MAIN SOURCES***

### **INTERNAL**

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CIDA, *Gender Sensitive Indicators*

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