

GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE: UNIFEM EXPERIENCES



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Gender-responsive budgeting in South Eastern Europe: UNIFEM Experiences
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Special thanks are due to the Austrian Development Agency for its continuous financial support and encouragement for the implementation of the gender-responsive budgeting project, and for the production of this publication. We are also grateful to the other donors who have generously supported the project: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in FYR Macedonia.

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FOREWORD

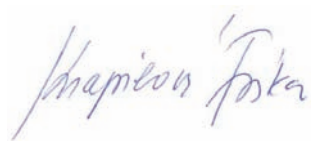
In the region of South Eastern Europe, a number of laws and plans aimed at the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment have been adopted over the past several years. Despite progress made with establishing institutional, policy and legal frameworks, gender gaps continue to exist. Those are particularly notable in the areas of employment and social protection, and in terms of qualitative and quantitative participation of women in decision-making processes. In addition, many policies do not adequately take into account multiple factors leading to discrimination, and the intersection of gender with other identities, such as ethnicity or place of living, which often lead to particular vulnerability and social exclusion.

That commitments to women's rights and gender equality on paper do not always get translated into real actions and results was the starting point for UNIFEM in initiating a project on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in four countries in the region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia and Serbia. GRB means moving gender equality issues from the periphery to the center of decision-making processes, and ensuring that the general gender equality goals set get translated into meaningful actions with adequate resources. Therefore, UNIFEM and its partners saw GRB as a potentially useful tool in addressing the existing "implementation gap".

This publication summarizes the learning that has emerged from the implementation of the project in the four countries in the period 2007-2010. It attempts to capture both the diversity of different interventions that took place in each of the countries and some of the common elements, challenges and opportunities. It illustrates that even though no common "recipes" exist, working on GRB in environments where it is a relatively new notion often entails a range of similar steps. These include efforts to identify the key entry points, form strategic partnerships, establish important prerequisites, and develop and apply new analytical tools.

The project showed that these cannot take place without the commitment and drive of gender advocates from different domains, who are willing to push the boundaries of what has been achieved and search for new effective means to advance the gender equality agenda in their respective fora. This publication is thus a tribute to their pioneering efforts in the field of gender-responsive budgeting.

At the same time, we believe that the publication will provide useful insights and inspiration to those who want to take forward GRB in South Eastern Europe and in other regions where it is in initial stages of implementation. UNIFEM remains committed to continue supporting national efforts to advance this new and effective tool for gender equality.



Erika Kvapilova
Regional Programme Director
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INTRODUCTION

This publication captures lessons learned in the course of the UNIFEM project on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in South Eastern Europe (SEE). The project *“Gender-responsive budgeting in South Eastern Europe: Advancing Gender Equality and Democratic Governance through Increased Transparency and Accountability”* was implemented in four countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia, and Serbia¹ – in the period August 2006 to June 2010. It was realized with funding from the Austrian Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in FYR Macedonia.

Gender-responsive budgeting work is about ensuring that government budgets and the policies and programs that underlie them address the needs and interests of women and men, girls and boys. Sometimes defined as *“application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process”*, GRB means incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.² Gender budget work should therefore provide information that allows for better decision-making on how policies and priorities should be implemented and financed in order to achieve the goal of gender equality in different areas of life.

During the nearly four-year period of project implementation, a variety of approaches were used to promote GRB in each of the four countries, and across different government levels and institutions. The experiences demonstrate the richness of GRB as a tool, and that there are no cast-in-stone “recipes” for its implementation. They also demonstrate the challenges experienced in introducing a new tool in environments where sometimes even the basic preconditions for gender mainstreaming are missing.

This publication seeks to provide practical insights for those who want to embark on the often challenging, but – as we found – ultimately rewarding path of advocating for and implementing gender-responsive budgeting. The publication targets two groups in particular: gender advocates and development practitioners. The first group – gender advocates – is defined broadly and can include civil society activists, government representatives, academics, etc., all of whom have a stake in promoting the gender equality agenda in their countries and want to engage with GRB as a means for that. The second group – development practitioners – is defined to include representatives of development agencies, international organizations, and multilateral and bilateral donors, who are in a position to support and promote GRB either separately or as part of a broader development agenda.

The publication will be most useful to advocates and practitioners who work in countries where GRB is still relatively new and in initial stages of implementation. The experiences and lessons presented here are based on pilot interventions in the four SEE countries, where GRB is still a long way from being fully understood, implemented and institutionalized. Therefore, the publication’s main foci are on the first steps undertaken when introducing gender-responsive budgeting to a particular locality, sector or institution and on how to embed, in these early stages, the elements that would allow moving beyond piloting into more sustainable practices.

¹ In the period May 2007-May 2008, the project also included work in the Republic of Moldova funded from the Austrian Development Cooperation. The work on GRB was continued in Moldova in the following years with support external to this project.

² Council of Europe (CoE). 2005. *Gender budgeting: final report of specialists on gender budgeting (EG-S-GB)*. Retrieved June 2010, from [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/gender-mainstreaming/EG-S-GB\(2004\)RAPFIN_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/gender-mainstreaming/EG-S-GB(2004)RAPFIN_en.pdf)

The publication assumes a basic understanding of gender and GRB, and therefore does not include description of theoretical concepts and tools, which can be found elsewhere in the GRB literature.³ It instead illustrates how some of these concepts can be applied in practice, based on the experiences in the four SEE countries. It includes two main chapters:

- 1) Initiating gender-responsive budgeting in South Eastern Europe: the chapter focuses on the first steps that were undertaken in order to identify the entry points, establish strategic partnerships, and set up realistic goals; and
- 2) Implementing gender-responsive budgeting in South Eastern Europe: the chapter is divided into sub-sections devoted to various aspects of GRB implementation as experienced in the project and illustrated through case studies: how gender relates to “novel” forms of budgeting (program and participatory); how GRB has been piloted at the sector/program level; and how civil society organizations have driven various applications of the tool.

The publication includes case studies of a selected number of interventions that have been implemented in the four countries, and is not exhaustive of *all* initiatives and activities that have taken place in the framework of the project. For example, work with Members of Parliament that took place in some countries is not described at length. However, the experiences and lessons included reflect the general approaches taken in the project, and draw on other activities that are not presented in detail. Finally, the case studies are a summary of what has generally been a lengthy process of research, awareness raising, advocacy and capacity development led by national partners and UNIFEM. A full description of some of these processes is contained in other publications produced under the specific interventions and referenced as sources here.

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