

**Context gender analysis on the existing situation  
in Albania**

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## **Introduction**

The Albanian government is now challenged by the EU accession process to fulfill its responsibilities as candidate country towards the strengthening of the CSOs and the improvement of environmental management, both at local and central level.

Compared to years ago, the CSOs sector in Albania has experienced a notable increase in the number of organizations and a greater engagement in networking and cooperation building. Targeted campaigns have shown that the CSOs started to being involved in environmental consultations with the aim of influencing the decision making process, through initiative i.e. *Save Divjaka National Park*, *#MosMaPrekValbonen*, and others. Some progress has also been recorded in the formalization of a more enabling and structured framework regulating the activity of the CSOs.

Intervention is still needed, however, to create a conducive environment in Albania to the sustainable development of CSOs. For the most part, this sector is reported as having a weak internal organizational structure and very limited human and financial resources. More specifically, the grass root CSOs operate detached from other organizations, with low visibility and low possibility of engagement in on-going processes of policy-making and policy implementing.

On the environmental side, destruction of natural parks, pollution of waterways and seas, contamination of soil, annihilation of forests and fast loss of biodiversity and ecosystems due to uncontrolled urbanization could be irreversible if continued with the actual pace. In this framework, CSOs are called to take action and to act as watchdogs to influence the policy-making and to lift the voices of the small and marginalized communities, who suffer the most from these environmental downturns.

The objective of the Green-AL project is to contribute to the promotion of *an inclusive, democratic and sustainable environmental governance in Albania, in line with EU accession requirements, by supporting the empowerment, factorization and higher sustainability of the ECSOs sector in Albania for fostering Climate Resilience.*

The Green-AL project is structured around two transversal components, 1. Incubation process for ECSOs and activists, and 2. Gender mainstreaming, and on four pillars/sub-granting schemes:

- a. Initiative grants;
- b. Partnership grants;
- c. Networking grants;
- d. Advocacy grants.

## **Purpose of the gender analysis**

The objective of the present gender analysis is to support the attentive implementation of the project “Green-Al: Empowering Grass-Root CSOs for Improved Innovative Environmental Protection in Albania”, by providing through the theoretical framework and the empirical data

collected by the project partners the realistic gender-based inputs to how the project can integrate a gender mainstreaming strategy into an environment-oriented project.

The underlying principle and the expected outcome of the present document is threefold:

1. Provide the project staff the necessary awareness on the gender-balance theme, as well as to ignite a cognitive process of possible strategies of gender mainstreaming within the contextualization of the project.
2. Facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the project team to the stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project, to trigger a sensitization process in the local communities.
3. Indicate how the planned activities can be enriched from a gender mainstreaming point of view without compromising the results logic and the participatory approach of the project.

The project Green-AL addresses grass-root organizations by promoting a bottom-up approach that touches all levels of the Albanian society, in all regions. The marginalized rural women are ultimately the back-bone of the agricultural communities that still exist in rural Albania. Thanks to them and by working with them, there is the possibility of contributing, through a participatory approach that raises the volume of their voices and makes them heard, to the development of green policies, the planning of eco-projects and of eco-governance strategies.

The findings of the assessment are intended to guide the project partners to adapt project activities and implementation methodology and ensure that the activities will directly contribute to the Green –Al Project ‘s gender policy objectives.

- i. To advance women’s equal participation with men as decision makers in shaping the sustainable
- ii. Development of their societies on environmental issues;
- iii. To support women and girls in the realization of their full potential and
- iv. To reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the possibilities and benefits of sustainable environmental development,

Specifically, the findings of the assessment were intended to help Green-AL project partners gain an understanding of gender relations, specifically in the environment challenges and livelihoods, examining control of resources and the division of labor between men and women, including domestic (household) and work market. The assessment findings are also intended to help local CSOs gain an understanding of current cultural practices which promote and/or hinder gender equality.

### **Albania gender profile and legal framework**

Gender equality has always been a “hot” topic in Albania, especially in terms of violence, discrimination related to job occupations (especially in rural areas) and due to the traditional patriarchal society present in different areas in the country. Having emerged in the early 1990s from a 50-year dictatorship as the poorest country in Europe is one of the main reasons why Albania suffers even today the consequences of that system. This inequality has affected Albanian

women massively in terms of economic and social aspects. By 2012, Albania's GDP was estimated to be 20% lower than it should be with full gender parity, as women face difficulty entering and staying in the job market, with many leaving employment permanently as soon as they marry and have children (The World Bank, 2020). However, from 1995 there have been many developments, but the most important in the area of gender equality, antidiscrimination and domestic violence are dated after 2006. The legal framework for the promotion of legal equality has been considerably improved by the ratification of a series of important international documents and by other amendments. Below are listed the legal instruments that are actually in force in the Republic of Albania for gender equality.

The criteria used in this selection has been that of determining which of these instruments are relevant to the project Green-AL.

More specifically, the main idea at the base of this list is that every step towards gender balance, both directly and indirectly, has the possibility to improve the quality of life of women, especially in rural areas, where the concepts of social, economic and environmental welfare are strictly linked and influence the daily life of communities, women and economic operators. If the project staff and the ECSOs involved in the project will be informed about rights and possibility for women, and for young women in particular, this will contribute in the long run in changing a rural concept where young women are not supported in expressing their ideas or in engaging in specific topics of interest outside their family. Following this, also women participation in environmental issues can be increased and improved, even at a younger age.

#### International and EU legal commitments

Albania became a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) via accession on May 11, 1994. On June 23, 2003, the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW was also signed, which includes an inquiry and complaints procedure into serious abuses of women. The CEDAW stipulates, amongst various rights, equal pay for equal work, equality in work possibilities (Art 11), equality in positions and access to private and public decision-making, including political positions (Art 7). The CEDAW also stipulates that a party state must make use of accelerating measures to increase gender equality (Art 4).

In 2011, Albania also signed the Istanbul Convention, ratified then in 2013, which requires the signatories to take action to prevent further gender-based violence to happen, to protect victims and witnesses of violence, to effectively prosecute aggressors and perpetrators of violence by enforcing laws and complete judicial proceedings, and to adopt coordinated policies.

At European level, the so-called Recast Directive (2006/54/EC) on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation requires the implementation of the prohibition of direct and indirect sex discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in pay, (access to) employment and in occupational social security schemes.

#### National laws and strategies

The gender equality law (9970/2008) stipulates that gender mainstreaming shall be the approach to ensure gender equality in society, by enforcing the protection against discrimination on grounds of sex and against any form of conduct which promotes discrimination on grounds of sex. It also determines measures to guarantee equal opportunities to men and women, building upon the law 7961/1995, that enforces gender equality in terms of salaries. The law also provides for special temporary measures for guaranteeing at least 30% representation of the under-represented gender in political and public decision-making positions and administration.

In 2010, two laws (10221 and 10237) were approved to enforce protection measure against discrimination related to gender and to bestow on the employer the obligation to ensure the protection of safety and health at work for all employees.

The four-year National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Equality approved in 2016 poses three main achievements to fulfill in the concerned period:

1. To economically empower both men and women, by increasing the participation of women in the formal labor market, reducing the gender gap, increasing women's access to quality social services, with specific focus is devoted to rural and vulnerable women.
2. To guarantee equal political participation of women in the decision-making process, by increasing the number of women in leading positions and women participation in policy-making processes at local government level.
3. To raise awareness of the society on gender equality advancing as a prerequisite for development.

As recently as 2019, a series of acts and measures have been put in place to safeguard the employability of all women, from rural areas, marginalized groups, disabled, victims of abuse, single-mothers, and to provide them with social security nets and supports (laws 15/2019, 57/2019, 380/2019, 866/2019). In Annex I, a table with the relevant national laws and strategies is included. The Employment Protection Law enacted in the same year aims to increase the percentage of women employed through the National Employment Agency and assists vulnerable women with subsidies for related childcare needs (The World Bank, Results Brief, 2020).

As mentioned before, these tools compose the standing legal framework and the activities of the project Green-AL will not limit their extent to the field of environmental awareness and protection, and the strengthening of the ECSOs, but will also reference to these laws, national plans and strategies during the capacity-building training, especially for what concerns internal managerial capacities and engagement of the members of the CSOs. It will integrate and promote notions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a crucial aspect of the work of grassroots ECSOs towards environmental sustainability. The project approach is set to be grounded upon the guiding facts that women in Albania are strongly related to the environment and most importantly they must be considered as a key factor in the process of changing the situation and solving the

problems. Women are actors contributing and having an impact on environment, besides being affected by it, and therefore the approach must change from seeing them as vulnerable aid seekers to putting them at the center of the design and implementation of strategies, as leaders of actions for environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, specific instructions will be delivered in the grant calls/guidelines to favor and reward those applicants that include women associations, women activists, and that present a gender-attentive work plan and strategy. Moreover, specific activities for tackling gender issues, with reference also to the last presented National Strategy for Social Protection, will be suggested to applicants, so to train ECSOs directly on the field in putting in practice the theoretical knowledge they will gain during the capacity building process. On a more general level, awareness will be raised in the attendees of seminars and meetings also towards the legal framework *per se*, a back-up instrument for possible interventions connecting environmental issues and the externalities that they create on the female portion of the population.

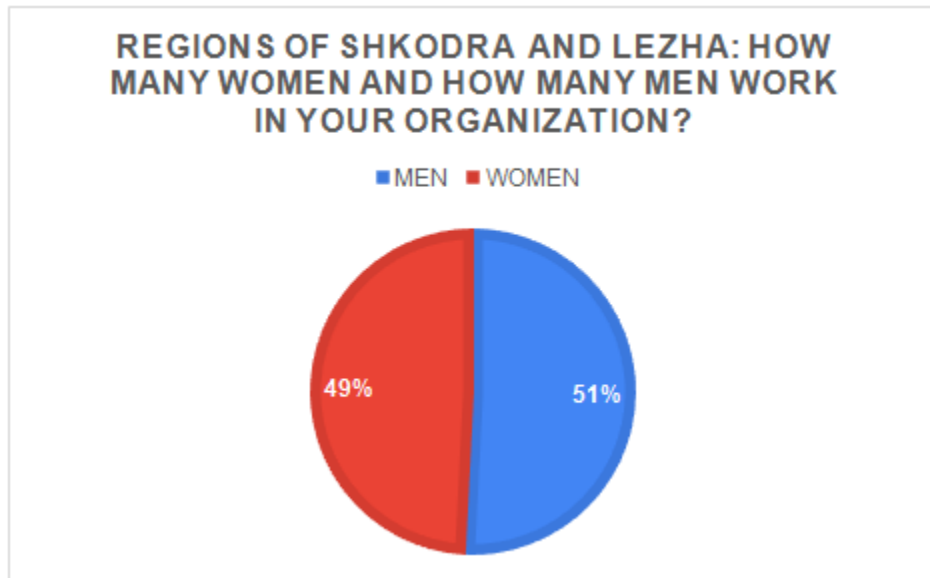
### **Women participation in decision-making**

In the 1920s, the Albanian parliament was composed of only men. While this situation lasted for several years, for the first time in 1945 finally 6 women were elected and took part in the parliament legislature thus representing 7.3% of the total representatives. A significant enhancement in increasing women participation in the parliament in Albania was made possible upon the inclusion of a 30 % quota in amendments made to the Electoral Code in 2008.

Representation of women in decision-making has increased at legislative and executive level, with 29.3% representation in Parliament, on the rise and very close to the required threshold of 30% . Also, Albania currently has 57% of women ministries (Babović & Miluka, 2020).

Regarding social power, women are well-represented in boards of research funding organizations, but are underrepresented in the boards of publicly owned organizations and highest decision-making bodies of sports organizations (in this case, men occupy 90% of the high-level positions) (Babović & Miluka, 2020). In the private sector, in 2019, women-owned and women-led enterprises were largely concentrated in Tirana (32.4%), followed by Lezha (28.9%) and further down, Shkoder with 22.5% of enterprises owned/administered by a woman. Data collection by the Green-AL project partners, show that in North-West Albania there is also perfect equality between men and women in local ECSOs and that women are mainly employed as directors or office staff (24% each), as experts (26%), and in 17% of cases are volunteers for the environment.

### **Graph 1. Gender balance in ECSOs in North-West Albania**

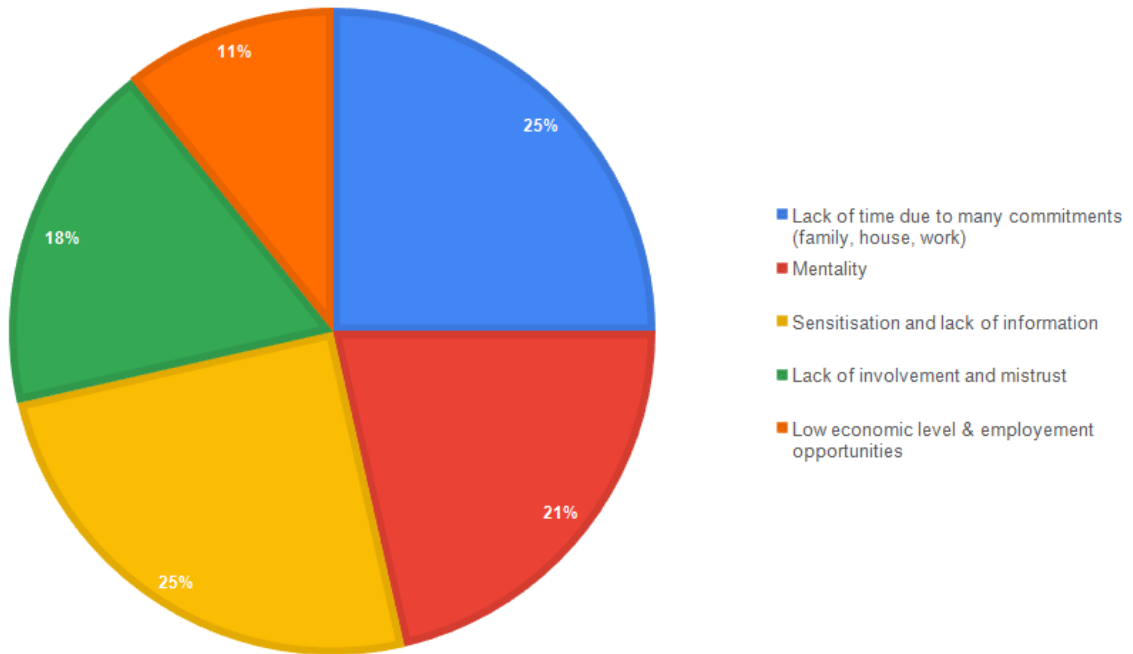


Uneducated women in rural areas are not involved in political and public life, just as much as they are, to a large extent, excluded from decision making in the family, due to social norms and because only men are recognized as the head of the household (Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Affairs of Albania, 2013). An example is given by North-West Albania, where despite the evidence collected shows that women do not/can not engage in environmental activities also because they lack time due to household commitments (see graph below). This result is also confirmed at national level and comprising all sectors of employment by the INSTAT 2020 report on Albania, which addresses householding and attending school as the two primary causes why women are out of the labour force.

Graph 2. Factors that influence women participation in environmental activities in North-West Albania



FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE, OR MAY HAVE A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT, IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES - REGIONS OF SHKODRA AND LEZHA



When it comes to the factors that influence women participation in environmental protection, actors contributing to the Needs Assessment mention: patriarchal mentality, gender stereotypes, lack of access to time due to women being the main care givers in families, lack of information, lack of economic independency; low level of quality education and scarce opportunity of accessing to quality vocational education.

This information is relevant to the Action, since Green-AI is conceived to be guided by the principle that the best solutions to environmental harm come from those most impacted. In this case, women are in the

frontline of environmental action, and should be supported in this capacity, especially through tackling the unfavorable factors mentioned above, and creating conditions for their meaningful participation in decision-making related to environmental sustainability.

This is the reason why the project consortium plans to encourage change in the behavior of the people who eat from the land, who drink the water, and who want to see a better life for their children and generations to come, a women actually do. As a result, the Action addresses directly grass-root organizations that are close to the communities, by promoting a bottom-up approach that touches all levels of the Albanian society, in all regions.

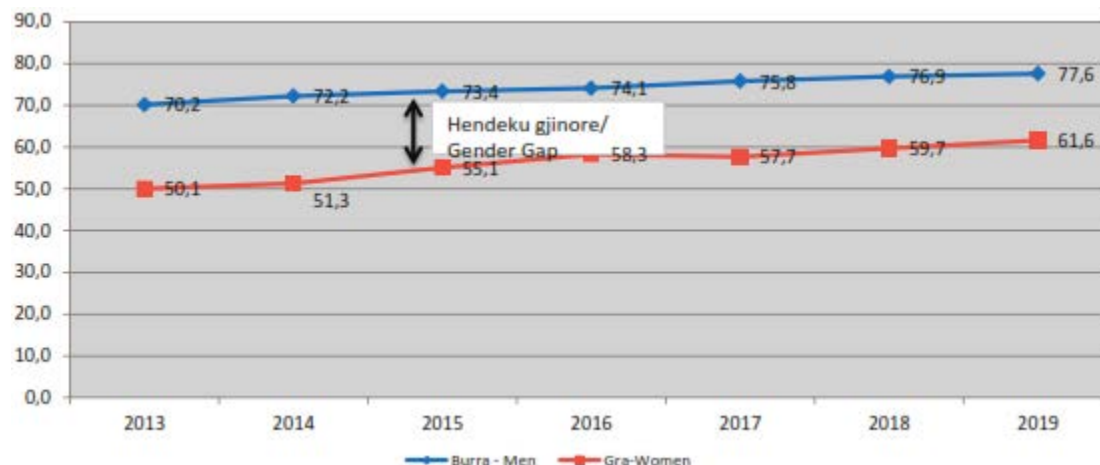
Women leadership and meaningful participation in environmental action will be a strong pillar of the sub-granting process. Through the opportunities created by the Incubation program and also the sub-grants, the Action will aim to set the path towards the stimulation of models and approaches that address the unequal and gendered impact of environmental damage, and produce long term solutions through valorizing and supporting women's role and activity in environmental sustainability. In this sense, proposals by grassroots ECSO-s that represent actions on promoting women decision-making in the sector through strengthening their civic engagement and networking skills focused on environment topics and advocating for more democratic and gender-responsive policy making processes in the field will be stimulated through guidelines. In this context, the trainings during Incubation will include sessions on community mobilization, and this also gives space for developing gender mainstreaming skills that apply to enhancing women civic engagement in the relevant field.

### Statistics on women and men by relevant sectors (related to the environment)

#### *Access to jobs*

At national level, in 2019, 77.6% of men in the employable age range (15-64) are employed, while 61,6% of women are, with the first group being paid almost the equivalent of 10.000 EUR more than the latter.

Figure 1. Labor force participation rate (15-64 years old)



Source: INSTAT, 2020

Not only the reasons in the paragraph above (school attendance and housekeeping) hinder women participation in the labour force, but it should be added also the lack of reliable public services for

children, i.e. kindergartens, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, the recurring social norms in small villages that are passed from one generation onto the other are patriarchal and pigeonhole women into this role, as graph 2 above shows that mentality is also one of the causes of women abstinence from the job market.

Considering that self-employed or unpaid workers in agriculture account for 87% of total female rural employment (Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Affairs of Albania, 2013), the project Green-AL will act on the most vulnerable women and give value to their set of knowledge on the surrounding environment in which they are constantly operating and on which they conduct their lives, with capacity building trainings to enhance and enlarge their sets of skills and environmental-related know-how and to support the women-led eco-transition of their lifestyles and working methodologies. It will also aim to facilitate the access to jobs for women by sub-granting proposals that plan on involving more women in leading roles, and not as mere participants or recipients.

**Table 1. Active enterprises by sex of owner/administrator and economic activity, in (%)**

Aktiviteti ekonomik	Viti/ Year						Economic activity
	2017		2018		2019		
	Burra Men	Gra Women	Burra Men	Gra Women	Burra Men	Gra Women	
Gjithsej	70,3	29,7	74,3	25,7	74,6	25,4	Total
<b>Prodhuesit e të mirave</b>	<b>83,9</b>	<b>16,1</b>	<b>88,2</b>	<b>11,8</b>	<b>88,1</b>	<b>11,9</b>	<b>Producers of goods</b>
Bujqësia, pyjet dhe peshkimi	86,1	13,9	89,9	10,1	89,4	10,6	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing
Industria	75,2	24,8	80,4	19,6	80,8	19,2	Industry
Ndërtimi	86,4	13,6	90,4	9,6	90,2	9,8	Construction
<b>Prodhuesit e shërbimeve</b>	<b>63,7</b>	<b>36,3</b>	<b>66,8</b>	<b>33,2</b>	<b>66,7</b>	<b>33,3</b>	<b>Producers of services</b>
Tregtia	60,8	39,2	64,6	35,4	65,2	34,8	Trade
Transporti dhe magazinimi	89,5	10,5	94,5	5,5	94,2	5,8	Transport & Storage
Akomodimi dhe shëbimi ushqimor	68,7	31,3	71,7	28,3	71,2	28,8	Accommodation and food service activities
Informacioni dhe komunikacioni	74,1	25,9	77,3	22,7	75,8	24,2	Information & Communication
Shërbime të tjera	58,6	41,4	60,8	39,2	60,2	39,8	Other Services

*\*Source: INSTAT 2020*

The project Green-AL will contribute to the facilitation of the access to jobs for women by sub-granting proposals that plan on supporting their professional and entrepreneurial capacities, which will result in enhanced opportunities for women to fully exercise their central role as a factor for positive change towards environmental sustainability. Since the environment is one of the most cross-cutting sectors, the opportunities to create added value that combines and therefore maximizes the ecological as well as the socio-economic impact are multiple.

Through the Incubation program and also the aforementioned Sub-Grant Schemes, the Action will aim to set the path towards the stimulation of models and approaches that address the unequal and gendered impact of environmental damage and produce long term solutions through valorizing and supporting women's specific role and activity in environmental sustainability.

### *Access to land and natural resources*

Land is perceived as being owned by families, but is registered in the name of only one person, usually the man, head of the household and who then enjoys de facto all rights and decision-making power over that land (FAO, 2016). According to dominant mentality and also defined in some laws, the head of household is the owner of the house or land and in 88% of households, a man is the head of household. Qualitative research of laws and practices in property rights confirms that women are strongly discriminated compared to men in terms of access to property: only 14 percent of women declare to have any ownership of agricultural land, which is half the rate declared by men (28 percent).

The “Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018” gathered some data on property rights by sex, which confirms the disparities between women and men in access to property, but it fails to highlight the deeply gendered issue of registration status where women may believe that they are socially and culturally included, while property tends to not be legally registered in their names.

In this sense, the project Green-AL, through the sub-grant schemes, carefully looks and acknowledges women’s role in environmental protection, especially by considering the long-lasting traditional methods of sustainable exploitation of natural resources, and by encouraging women’s ownerships through recognition processes and incubation activities. The high number of unused land in Albania is also to consider as a factor of environmental stress, causing loss of biodiversity and degradation. Often this neglectfulness is linked with the missing property rights and therefore is a topic which can be considered as cross-cutting also in the case of a project more specifically focused on the environment. CSOs in that sense can have, as example, an important advocacy role.

### *Access to Education*

In Albania, there are more highly educated women than men (66.4% vs. 33.6%) (INSTAT, 2020), but the segregation is still high with women concentrating in the areas of education, health and welfare, and are underrepresented in agricultural studies (FAO, 2016). The NSAPGE (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth of Albania, 2016), on the other hand, includes gender disaggregated indicators in education in rural areas that relate to the objective of women’s economic empowerment, suggests activities for the improvement of the education in pre-schools based on gender analysis and the involvement of boys and men in the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence. (Babović & Miluka, 2020).

The regions with the lowest percentages of people with at least a university degree are Dibra and Lezha. A deeper investigation reveals that there is a tendency among young girls not to attend secondary school regularly or drop out of it upon reaching a certain age (Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Affairs of Albania, 2013).

### **Table 4. Participation in education level/gross enrolment ratio**

	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	Djem	Vajza	Djem	Vajza	Djem	Vajza	Djem	Vajza	Djem	Vajza	Djem	Vajza
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Parashkollor/ Pre-Primary	80,3	79,8	82,3	82,3	83,3	83,3	81,8	81,3	81,6	78,9	80,3	76,3
9 vjeçare/Primary+Lower Secondary	103,3	101,0	104,0	101,9	102,8	100,8	101,6	99,2	102,1	99,2	102,6	97,2
I mesëm/Upper secondary	106,5	93,3	102,3	91,4	96,7	89,6	98,0	91,1	97,4	90,1	99,3	91,7
I lartë/Tertiary	55,2	75,0	52,0	70,9	47,2	68,2	45,4	68,6	43,8	66,4	48,7	71,8

Academic staff in tertiary education reports a majority of men professors (59.3%), but more women with Phd (59.8%). Docents and pedagogues without title are again mainly women (60.5%). Furthermore, university rectors, deputy rectors, members of university senate, deans, deputy deans and chiefs of university departments are all majority men, with an outstanding imbalance in the position of rector, where 90.9% of them are male (INSTAT, 2020).

Capacity building is at the core of the project’s strategy, transversally covering all years of implementation and all bloc of activities. The greatest challenge will be that of including marginalized and vulnerable women and girls in this process, to deliver the right and needed instrument and methodologies for becoming emancipated and leading their own economic and sustainable activities. The specific sub-granting scheme “Initiative Grants”, foreseen by the project Green-AL and predominantly addressing Grass-Root organizations, binds awarded CSOs to conduct open classes with elementary and high schools to raise awareness on specific environmental challenges and to support the involvement of young girls in such activities.

#### *Access to financial resources*

Land fragmentation makes it difficult for agricultural extension services by the government and the developmental delivery organizations to reach farmers, who could benefit from this mechanism of accessing knowledge and technology in all the steps of the agricultural value chain. The number of women beneficiaries of the extension services has increased up to 10% in 2015, but the extension services mainly address men’s needs, since men are regarded as “head of the households”, those who control and manage machinery, and those who can make decisions within and outside the household regarding market orientation. This male bias limits women’s access to any type of finances and to training and economic opportunities. In the few cases in which extension services provided direct support to some women farmer associations, the mobilization was carried out via a male-dominated channel of communication: from the provider, to the male head of the household, who contacts other males. In a few cases, they are required to bring their wives, who then are only as such, “wives of the farmer” (FAO, 2016).

#### *Access to time*

As previously highlighted, women carry nearly the largest part, if not the entire burden, of unpaid work of caring for children, the sick, and the elderly, cleaning and other domestic work, thus making it impossible for women to participate in social activities important for their quality of life (Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Affairs of Albania, 2013). Employed women devote about 4 hours to unpaid work compared to less than one hour for their men counterparts. Women, who are not employed, spend about 6 hours a day on unpaid work, compared to 1 hour spent by men who are not employed. (Babović & Miluka, 2020)

The “Law on Social Security in the Republic of Albania” dated 11.05.1993 and amended in 2017 has recognized the right of fathers to take paternity leave after a 63 days mandatory period for mothers. The Ministry of Education has started the possibility for students to remain at school for an additional 2 hours after the school ends to do their homework and other extracurricular activities, both to increase educational attainment for students coming from different backgrounds and to provide mothers and families additional childcare and create a more conducive environment for mothers in the labor market. (Babović & Miluka, 2020)

Through specific types of sub-granting schemes, it will be possible to engage school kids and youngsters in extra-curricular activities, which will temporarily substitute for the missing, or weak if existing, social protection and services.

#### *Access to health*

Despite life expectancy at birth is higher for women than men (80.5 years vs. 77.4 years), women on average live shorter healthy lives than men (51.9 years vs. 54.6 years), although women are exposed less to some of the key health risks (smoke and drinking) (Babović & Miluka, 2020). Smokers by age group concentrate in 30-34 years old, but 45.1% of men in this range smoke, while only 7.3% of women do (INSTAT, 2020). Similarly, men have a higher tendency to consume alcohol (31.8% vs. 23%) (INSTAT, 2020). Also women practice more physical activity and consume more fruits and vegetables (36.1% vs. 14%) (INSTAT, 2020).

Each year, since 2015 to 2020, slightly more men have died compared to women, in all ranges of age, except for over-80 years old (INSTAT, 2020).

Through three out of four sub-granting schemes foreseen by the project Green-AL, it will be possible to raise awareness towards common unhealthy behaviors that have a negative impact on both the environment and the population: advocacy campaigns and papers, initiatives thought to mobilize communities against damaging environmental and health-related issues, PPPs to provide the population with specific services or products to assess of combat polluting practices that negatively impact on the general health status.

#### *Access to human rights*

In 2019, men have filed more complaints for violation of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, the right to property, and the right to a fair trial, while women have file more complaints for violation of the right to benefit from the social care system, the right to a fair legal process and the right of the child (INSTAT, 2020).

### **Environmental and climate change**

No information exists on the extent to which gender equality goals have been mainstreamed into the national legal and policy framework on environment and climate change. Law No.10 431, dated 9.6.2011 “On Environmental Protection” does not include gender related provisions. During the first phase of the project Green-AL, a tailor-made questionnaire collected information also in this regard, to dig deeper on women’s role in natural resources management and how much women are aware of the effects produced by climate changes.

As example, in North-West Albania, a fairly common perception among representatives of ECSOs is that women are underrepresented in the environmental sector, due to family commitments, lack of information and sensitization, mentality, lack of involvement and low level of employment opportunities (graph 2). The same sample of people also recognizes that environmental concerns and problems equally impact women and men lives (65,4% of respondents). This perception is not reported in the South of Albania, where respondents acknowledge that women are affected disproportionately by the environmental issues and damages, making them more vulnerable.

#### *Air Quality/Industrial Pollution*

Sex and social-related differences bring to evidence different impacts of air pollution on women and men. The geographic distribution of pollution, the exposure to air pollution and type of pollution highlights many gender inequalities that are related to the division of labor, demographic change, urban development, and health and cognitive performance.

Recent data on the gender-specific impact of indoor air pollution in Albania is unavailable.

The Albanian Helsinki Committee in their monitoring report of cases addressed by citizens, who have claimed violation of their legitimate interests as a result of environmental pollution from the activities of private entities, offers data for the direct link between low birth weight and environmental pollution due to pollution of the Gjanica River in Albania. 14 percent of interviewed households in this area have recorded low birth weight, with an average weight of  $1.9 \text{ kg} \pm 0.4 \text{ kg}$ .

#### *Waste Management/Water Quality (supply and wastewater treatment)*

Waste management and water pollution are the two most pressing environmental issues, as results from the needs assessment conducted with local CSOs and activists in the environmental sector.

There are gender differences in different steps of the waste management cycle, defined by women's primary household responsibility, different perceptions on views of what is waste and what is not, on consumption behavior between men and women, etc.

Waste and wastewater treatment processes impact production, industrial pollution, household behavior etc., and as a consequence, men and women are differently affected. Women are more affected by the lack of wastewater treatment and by an inoperative sewerage system; when sanitation is not separated, women's contamination risk is greater than men's.

Agricultural production and arable land in Albania are the first affected by waste treatment processes such as incineration. As the Albanian Helsinki Committee shows, there is a decrease of agricultural production in the Verri village of Fier in Albania, due to the incinerator's vicinity to the arable land. This concern was addressed especially by the women of this area, who felt the consequences that the construction of the incinerator would bring in their daily lives.

The same report of civil society organizations for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania shows that consultative meetings organized on integrated management of recycled waste have been entirely formal meetings without substantial participation of either local women or local community-based NGOs.

### *Natural disasters impact*

Many studies from developing countries show that natural disasters affect mostly economies dependent on agricultural production. Although the GDP share of agriculture in Albania is not very high (18.2 percent in 2018), agriculture represents the sector of the economy in which 40 percent of the workforce is active, and it is a sector in which women have traditionally performed a substantial amount of unpaid work. A Gender Assessment on the impact of floods - conducted by UN Women in 2015 - showed that women faced increased domestic violence and disadvantaged treatment compared to men in the distribution of aid by municipalities.

Previous floods and the recent earthquake show that Albania is ill-prepared to adequately respond to natural disasters and to support the most vulnerable citizens, including rural women who lost their subsistence agriculture production, single mothers who went homeless, and women who face domestic violence. Specific training and workshops can be inserted in the capacity building strategy, to increase the preparedness of women in disaster management.

### *Chemicals*

Women and men are impacted differently by chemicals and through different routes. They have different risk exposure to different chemicals depending very much on the division of labor. For instance, men in Albania are much more exposed to toxic mining chemicals, whereas women are more exposed to chemicals used in textile and shoe production, and to toxic substances used in the household. Women and men have different experiences of dealing with sources of exposure, and different priorities, responsibilities and needs related to the reduction of toxic chemicals.

As in other environmental and cross-cutting issues, women face specific constraints and challenges in their efforts to improve their safety and living conditions, which are largely determined by inequality between women and men in decision-making, participation, and education.

*Success stories, like the women-led mobilization of the local community to protest with the collection of signatures along the Vjosa river advocating the interruption of the drillings, can be the source of inspiration to mobilize more young women towards the environmental challenges affecting Albania. The same effort of mobilization could be stimulated through the project Green-AL and the sub-granting schemes to raise awareness in other pressing environmental issues, like waste management, water and air pollution, and others.*

### **COVID-19's impact on gender issues**

GoA prepared a National Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP), issued in February 2020 (pre-COVID-19), and initially drafted a National Response Plan (post-COVID-19), which has not been finalized. The normative acts that were approved during the recent period primarily focus on health-related measures and restrictions, and are in general genderblind or gender-neutral.

The COVID outbreak negatively affects the wealth of women, depleting their spending power and their possibilities to retrieve food for their families, due to market closures and reduced opening hours of stores. Simultaneously, women's share of unpaid care and domestic work increased, as a result of school and day care closures. This shift accentuated gender discrepancies as the number of reported unpaid domestic activities (playing and teaching children, housework) increased for 27% of women (vs. 20% of men). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected workplace flexibility



and has disproportionately increased the burden of unpaid domestic and care work for women. The report shows that 40 percent of employees in Albania switched to a new working arrangement. As a result of the outbreak, every second employed woman (51 percent) has been working remotely (from home), compared to almost every fourth man (27 percent). Women have been taking on more household chores and care work, and every second woman reported an increase in performing at least two activities related to unpaid domestic work. 76 percent of women reported an increase in providing unpaid domestic work, and 72 percent of them reported that they experienced an increase in providing unpaid care work.

Loss of jobs has been higher for men (17% vs. 12%), probably due to higher employment of women in the service sector and which allowed an easier switch to home-based working (51% of women vs. 27% of men).

Regarding access to health, the COVID pandemic created more challenges for women when seeking and accessing health services and women reported more impact of the pandemic on their psychological health. More frequently than men, women experience limited access to basic health services. Accessing basic services such as health during the pandemic was compromised to a certain extent due to rapid increases in demand on health services and medical supply. Almost every fifth respondent mentioned major or some difficulties in seeking health services for any purpose.

Five percent of women experienced some difficulties in accessing gynecological and obstetric care services. Both women and men faced difficulties in finding the necessary medical supply for personal protection against COVID-19 infection: (i) women reported more frequently challenges to buying medical supplies, (51 percent compared to 43 percent men); (ii) young women 18-24 reported a higher prevalence of facing major/some difficulty in accessing health services and medical supplies.

The psychological and mental health of women is being affected at higher rates compared to men. 69 percent of women reported experiencing psychological and mental health issues, versus 57 percent of men. Women in the active working age group 35-44 years are experiencing even higher psychological distress at a prevalence of 72 percent compared to 58 percent among men in the same age group. Women who reported to have “felt/ heard an increase of domestic violence” also reported a higher impact of the pandemic on their psychological and mental health compared to men in both urban and rural areas.

**Gender mainstreaming throughout the project (Logframe based) (What will we will do in the project)?**

1. In order to increase knowledge between the relation of environment and gender mainstreaming, **8 (2 per region) out of 20 total initiative grants** will be given to organizations led by women;
2. During the incubation process, **12 out of 40 activities/info-sessions** will be related to gender mainstreaming in the environmental realm;
3. To strengthen relations between ESCOs with women associations, partnership grants will include activities and information from ESCOs data on women needs when it comes to the environmental protection realm;
4. 4 Thematic Reports will be published for each region, in which cross-cutting environmental and gender issues will be reflected;

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**ANNEX I: List of the main national changes in the field of gender equality (1995 – 2019)**

Year	Law / Strategy	Comments
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law no. 7961, 12.7.1995 “The Code of Labour of the Republic of Albania” [changed]</li> </ul>	This law reflects gender equality in terms of salary: men and women must be paid equally based on the work done.
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law no. 8454, 04.02.1999 “For the Ombudsman”</li> </ul>	Law on the protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of the individual from illegal and irregular actions or omissions of public administration bodies, as well as third parties by the Ombudsman.
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law no.9970, 24.07.2008 “On Gender Equality in the Society”.</li> </ul>	1- The purpose of the lawno.9970 is: a) to provide effective protection against discrimination on grounds of sex and against any form of conduct which promotes discrimination on grounds of sex; b) to determine measures to guarantee equal opportunities between women and men.
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law no. 10221, 04.02.2010 “On the Protection from Discrimination”.</li> <li>● Law no.10237, 18.02.2010 “On Health Security at Work”.</li> </ul>	1-Law 10221 This law regulates the implementation and observance of the principle of equality in relation to gender, as well as other important elements  2- Law 10237 provides for the taking of measures for the protection of safety and health at work, which is guided by the principle of equal gender treatment and the obligations of the employer to take special measures for the protection of safety and health at work of employees, pregnant women, those who have just given birth and those who are breastfeeding, are not considered discriminatory because of their gender.

2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Employment Promotion Program “For unemployed jobseekers in difficulty” no.48, 11.01.2012, amended with no. 192, 02.04.2014.</li> <li>● Employment Promotion Program through Job Training. no. 47, 16.01.2008, amended by no.193, 02.04.2014</li> </ul>	<p>-Beneficiaries of this program are unemployed jobseekers man and woman, who will receive on-the-job training. The relevant employment office finances the cost-based fee, in the amount of 19,000 (nineteen thousand) ALL for each month of training for each person.</p>
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amendments introduced to the Electoral Code with the Law 74/2012 to ensure 50 % women at local councils at the new LGU</li> </ul>	<p>This amendment stipulates that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The obligation to respect the principle of gender equality belongs to electoral subjects, electoral administration and the court.</li> <li>-Electoral law promotes gender equality for elected bodies and election administration;</li> <li>-Sanctions for non-compliance with gender equality.</li> </ul>
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020</li> </ul>	<p>Among the other, the relevant strategic goals posed by this strategy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. To empower economically both men and women, by increasing the participation of women in the formal labor market, reducing the gender gap, increasing women’s access to quality social services. A specific focus is devoted to rural and vulnerable women.</li> <li>5. To guarantee equal political participation of women in the decisional-making process, by increasing the number of women in leading positions and women participation in policy-making processes at local government level.</li> <li>6. To raise awareness of the society on gender equality advancing as a prerequisite for development.</li> </ol>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law no. 57/2019 “On social assistance in the Republic of Albania”</li> </ul>	<p>1-Law 57/2019 regulates the manner of providing economic assistance, disability payments</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Law No. 15/2019 “On the promotion of employment</li>   <li>● “On the approval of the political document” Reform of the disability assessment in the social protection system and the action plan 2019-2024 for its implementation “, no. 380, dated 05.06.2015</li>   <li>● “On the approval of the National Strategy for Social Protection 2020-2023 and the action plan in its implementation”, no. 866, dated 24.12.2019</li> </ul>	<p>and baby bonuses, to guarantee social protection for all citizens.</p> <p>2- Law 15/2019 defines as special groups who are disadvantaged jobseekers in the labor market the victims of gender-based violence and victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>3-In order to implement and fulfill the recommendations of the Monitoring Committee of this convention, a special attention in the planning and implementation of the activities of the Plan will be given to vulnerable groups that may face multiple discrimination such as women with disabilities who due to cultural prejudices and gender stereotypes, often face multiple discrimination.</p> <p>4-The National Strategy for Social Protection 2020-2023 and the action plan in its implementation provides as goal no. 5 achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.</p>
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\*Source: INSTAT 2020