

OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-MKD_D_1.1

By 2025, people in North Macedonia have universal access to rights-based quality social services – healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection – rooted in systems resilient to emergencies (UNSDCF Outcome 2)

During the reporting year, significant progress was made in providing rights-based quality services to women survivors of violence. Over 280 women and their children, including women with disabilities, from rural areas, and from ethnic minorities, benefitted from specialized services provided in line with the standards of the Istanbul Convention, including psycho-social counselling, legal aid and legal representation, and social mentoring for economic empowerment. 249 survivors (women and girls) of violence in the South-East region of North Macedonia received services from two newly opened psycho-social counselling centres, led by partner CSOs (Skaj Plus Strumica and EHO Stip), technically supported by UN Women’s partner CSO HERA. Adoption of the municipal Local Action Plan for Gender-based Violence (GVB) in Strumica which includes financial allocations for the center ensured the sustainability of the services after UN Women’s technical guidance throughout the process. 13 women survivors of violence, who are also long-term unemployed and single mothers, had employment opportunities and enrolled into labour market in the private sector, public institutions or self-employed, through a 12-month social mentoring programme for economic empowerment organized by UN Women partner CSO PUBLIC. The women have reported enhanced self-confidence in seeking employment and an improved financial situation resulting in better quality of life and wellbeing.?

<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/interview/2022/10/interview-every-positive-change-in-each-woman-survivor-is-a-success-in-itself> 17 Roma women survivors of domestic violence benefitted from legal representation in their divorce cases, provided by UN Women partner CSO National Roma Centrum Association. 10 cases concluded with positive court decisions in favour of the women and their marriages were terminated by final court decisions. These women now enjoy the possibilities to live outside the violent environment, receive child support and state benefits.?

<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/interview/2022/10/interview-we-empower-roma-women-to-recognize-violence-and-seek-help> Considering the progress made to date, the original strategy and theory of change for this outcome is still applicable.

OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-MKD_D_1.2

By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law, evidence-based, anticipatory and gender responsive policies, greater social cohesion and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions (UNSDCF Outcome 4)

Although the outcome was not fully achieved in 2022, significant progress was made at normative level, through the adoption of key gender related laws and strategic documents by the Government of North Macedonia, engendered sectoral programmes, increased oversight, and strengthened alignment of the national strategic priorities with EU Gender Equality Acquis. Normative work and sectoral policies were strengthened. The overall policy and legislative frameworks relevant to advancing gender equality was strengthened. The Government adopted a new National Strategy on Gender Equality (GE) (2022-2027), which sets the strategic priorities for advancing gender equality. At the same time, as part of the ongoing

Public Financial Management (PFM) reform, for the first-time gender equality has been considered as a key budgetary principle through the adoption of a New Organic Budget Law, while gender tagging of budget programmes has been introduced as a concept in the newly developed PFM Reform Programme for 2022-2025. These normative developments are expected to significantly strengthen the implementation of gender equality commitments, systematic application of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and tracking of budget allocations for gender equality. Continued trend of sectoral application of GRB was evidenced, with 11 sectoral programmes at central and 67 at local level incorporating gender specific measures and budget allocations that address the needs of women and the most vulnerable, in line with the requirements set in the Ministry of Finance (MoF) Budget Circulars for central and local level. As a result, women and girls benefit from programmes and measures at central and local level focusing on improving their access to the labour market, socio-economic empowerment measures, social protection and care services and improved public healthcare. Additionally, 70 women agricultural producers benefited from an improved Rural and Agricultural Development Programme, which now stipulates gender sensitive criteria and substantive increase of the budget allocated for financial support for women in agriculture. As a result of these improvements, the amount for the financial subsidies for women small scale agricultural producers was doubled from 3.000 to 6.000 EUR directly influencing their livelihoods and reducing their vulnerability (<https://bit.ly/3wcBlz2>). Gender mainstreaming ensured in EU integrative processes. Gender mainstreaming became highly prioritized in the work of the Secretariat for European Affairs and relevant Sector Working Groups, as a leading and coordinating entity in EU integrative processes and key mechanism in those processes, respectively. With the successful engendering of action documents in 10 thematic priorities from the EU accession process, gender equality and gender considerations are ensured as part of the bedrock of future thematic interventions. Additionally, the Draft Law on Administrative Servants and the Draft Law on Public Sector Employees, alongside the 5-year programme of the State Statistical Office were engendered, strengthening the overall gender equality in key reform legislation and ensuring systematic collection of data on the situation and needs of women and men, in line with the SDG gender indicators. This will result in more available data to inform policies and programmes to address the different needs of women and men and advance gender equality. Institutional capacity development on Gender Responsive Budgeting made more sustainable. The Government launched the first Resource Center on Gender Responsive Policy Making and Budgeting, ensuring sustainable and effective mechanism for continued capacity development, knowledge sharing and exchange of good practices (<https://bit.ly/3weHqcZ>). This result builds on longstanding efforts to strengthen institutional capacities for implementation of Gender responsive budgeting. The Resource Center is the only knowledge hub in North Macedonia, where public administration benefits from a comprehensive training programme on GE and GRB, and have access to a digital library of tools and resources. North Macedonia is a regional best practice on auditing gender equality. The first Performance Audit on Gender Equality was undertaken by the State Audit Office (SAO) of North Macedonia as an important step forward in ensuring an independent oversight of public spending and strengthening the accountability of the institutions to advance gender equality. Moreover, it was shared and acknowledged as a regional good practice for implementation of Gender Equality and Gender Responsive Budgeting commitments. (<http://bit.ly/3D0RJFj>). Women's voice and agency in decision making were increased. Women from local communities have become active participants in the local decision-making processes and negotiated with municipalities for measures that address their needs and challenges. A total of 31 policy recommendations developed by women in local communities have been adopted and financed by the municipalities, with focus on engendering the local public infrastructure, establishment of public lighting in rural areas, public transportation, provision of services for elderly and childcare, and provision of counseling services for survivors of violence against women (<https://bit.ly/3Ym8SCx> , <https://bit.ly/3k2OZ3H>). These policy recommendations have been proposed by 583 women that were empowered to voice their needs and priorities to local authorities through outreach and empowerment actions implemented by 16 CSOs and local women's grassroots organizations across municipalities in North Macedonia. UN Women contributed significantly to these results through the extensive capacity building and mentorship support provided to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Finance, Secretariat for European Affairs, State Statistical Office and State Audit Office to fulfill the country's national and international commitments to gender equality. The Minister of Labour and

Social Policy and the Auditor General recognized the role of UN Women in supporting the continuous systematic application of GRB and enhancing the oversight and accountability of the Government towards GE at a two separate regional level conferences (<http://bit.ly/3Xo7LBc> ; <http://bit.ly/3QSg3yN>). Furthermore, UN Women supported the SSO in enhancing the capacities on collection, use, presentation, and dissemination of gender statistics and monitoring of gender related SDG indicators. In addition, extensive support has been provided to local women's grassroot organizations ensuring their active engagement in devising policy recommendations voiced by women in the communities. Considering the progress made to date, the original strategy and theory of change for this outcome is still applicable. However, the global socio-economic uncertainty and the continued setbacks of the ongoing reforms might slow down the progress in the implementation of GRB commitments and national alignment with the EU Gender Equality Acquis. Stronger focus should be put in supporting the government in advancing the normative work through multi-stakeholder engagement and strengthened ownership of interventions. If, as expected, this strategy is successful, then the results achieved will ensure that GRB is effectively applied at central and local level, and that the EU Gender Equality Acquis is effectively integrated throughout the Government's EU accession agenda.