

## OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-ALB\_D\_1.1

**By 2026, government institutions ensure increased and more equitable investment in people to remove barriers and create opportunities for those at risk of exclusion (UNSDCF Outcome A).**

Progress was made in 2023 to achieve this outcome. Albanian women and girls have improved access to social and community services as a result of efforts at the central and local level. UN Women worked closely with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, targeted Local Government Units, the faculty of Social Work and CSOs to develop strategies, increase capacities of local officials, costing social services, actively engaging women especially the most vulnerable ones, in voicing their needs and priorities, and preparing a new generation of social workers who are sensitive and value gender equality and diversity. Key contributions of UN Women and other stakeholders to achieve this outcome include: Five Local government institutions address and respond to the needs and concerns of the most marginalized women and girls. This was achieved thanks to budgeting and planning processes that increasingly consider the unique needs of women and girls. Local government units and civil society organizations, including at the grassroots levels enhanced their capacities to achieve these results, through UN Women's continuous trainings and support. Through these efforts, over 700 women and girls from five municipalities, including from remote areas and diverse groups of women in Vau i Dejes Fushe Arrez, Dropull, Delvine and Gjirokaster, raised key issues during participatory budgeting sessions facilitated by partner CSOs. 60% of issues raised by women were effectively addressed and incorporated into local budgets. Another added value and key contribution of UN Women was costing services, further enhancing the efficacy of the initiative. Local Government Units accessed recommendations to enhance women's participation and access to social services, and are being held more accountable, through five CSO budget Watchdog Reports "All-inclusive social services for women and girls"; UN Women leveraged its strategic collaboration with the PRISMA network, the leading participatory budgeting network comprised of 50 grassroots organizations to produce the reports. In addition to preparing the reports, the Network proposed concrete suggestions for improving key pieces of legislation affecting women's access to social services, such as the social services and public procurement legal framework. UN Women played a pivotal role in achieving these results by offering financial support, training, capacity building, and technical expertise to the PRISMA Network. UN Women also supported knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices from the region through dedicated study visits. The final draft of the Social Protection Strategy (2023-2030) is gender responsive and makes a clear commitment to gender equality aligning with international and national gender equality standards. The strategy identifies and addresses gender disparities, intersectional discrimination and specific vulnerabilities faced by women, which are carefully reflected into its overarching vision, outcomes, and action plan. The collaborative efforts between UN Women, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and UNICEF played a pivotal role throughout the entire process of drafting the strategy and yielded the integration of gender considerations and budgetary allocations into the strategy. Students are equipped to deliver inclusive services that value and uphold the values of gender equality and diversity, with the support of the Department of Social Work and Policy at the University of Tirana. Through targeted initiatives, 42 master's program students affiliated with the department are well equipped to navigate and contribute to social welfare through inclusive lens. This was the result of a well-structured workplan developed jointly by the department of Social Work and Policy and UN Women. Technical support was delivered through organization of bootcamps, joint workshops, open auditorium sessions with students and targeting diversity through social inclusion Overall, the lessons learned underscore the critical importance of

institutional ownership in achieving results and, most importantly, sustainability. This highlights a profound systemic inclusion of GRB by municipalities, demonstrating their commitment and determination to address the diverse needs of vulnerable women. Additionally, collaboration with networks of organizations proves crucial in having a diverse range of expertise and fostering effective collaboration. The theory of change for this outcome remains valid, based on the progress achieved. UN Women forged synergies among various Country Office programs to establish a systematic approach that fosters the inclusion of marginalized women across diverse thematic areas. The participation of UN Women in UN Joint Programme such as the Leave No One Behind uniquely positioned the CO to achieve these results. This approach will lead to tangible benefits for more women at risk of exclusion and will ensure their increased access to social protection services. The outcome was generously supported thanks to the contribution of SDC through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

#### OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-ALB\_D\_1.2

**By 2026, all persons benefit from, and contribute to, innovative and integrated policy solutions that accelerate sustainable, productive and inclusive development, enhanced climate change adaptation and mitigation and transition to a green and blue economy (UNSDCF Outcome B).**

Significant progress was made in 2023 to achieve this outcome. Businesswomen, entrepreneurs, and artisans experienced a more enabling environment to contribute to a sustainable, productive, and inclusive development. UN Women contributed to this result by leveraging a stronger engagement with the private sector, and in collaboration with other stakeholders at the central and local level. Decision-makers and stakeholders in Albania spotlighted women entrepreneurship, initiating a dialogue on the importance of promoting women's economic empowerment. During the first Satellite EXPO on Women Entrepreneurship, a spin-off of the Regional EXPO organized by the CO, 151 Albanian women entrepreneurs accessed regional networks. Approximately 40 of these entrepreneurs further accessed opportunities for business growth and networking during the Tirana Satellite Expo, organized by UN Women, in close partnership with public institutions, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Chamber of Commerce, and private sector companies (many of which are signatories of the Women Empowerment Principles). This initiative marked the culmination of years of methodical work to expand the CO's pool of WEPs companies and foster closer collaboration with the private sector. The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Business Climate increased their engagement with UN Women, taking the lead during the entrepreneurship week in 2023. Rural women entrepreneurs will manage two incubators established in the LGUs of Elbasan and Kolonja. Two groups of more than 30 women from rural areas of Elbasan and Kolonje increased their capacities in areas including entrepreneurship, doing business, product sales and marketing and farming practices. These improved skills will enable rural women in the two municipalities to operate two traditional product incubators, expected to be operational in early 2024. In addition, rural women will have a stronger voice in decisions effecting their community development through active participation in the Local Action Groups, which are being established in Elbasan and Kolonje. UN Women partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO and municipalities for the establishment of the incubators and promoting the establishment of the LAGs. UN Women ensured an increased women's presence and importance in the handicraft value chain in two municipalities of Albania. Local government partners increased their commitment towards promoting women's economic empowerment, providing dedicated space for the development of handicraft value chains. Through close collaboration with municipalities of Kruja and Kavaja, affected by the deadly 2019 earthquake, women artisans now have a physical space, which can be used free of charge, and a dedicated webpage to sell handicraft products. Over 20 women increased capacities in development of joint marketing, branding and joint promotion of products, market presentation of the VC and formalization of their businesses. UN Women played a vital role by following a systematic approach towards establishment of services and structures to support the development of the value chain. In turn, local government units

positively responded by providing spaces for artisans’ professional growth, like artisan centers and offering a dedicated webpage for women artisans in Kruja municipality. The theory of change for this outcome is still valid based on progress achieved so far. UN Women has strategically expanded its collaboration with private sector companies to advance its women empowerment agenda. The results in this outcome have been generously supported by the Government of Italy and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Tirana, the Government of Sweden through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and thanks to leveraging minimal Core funds within the CO for the expansion of the partnership with the private sector.

#### OUTCOME XM-DAC-41146-ALB\_D\_1.3

**By 2026, all persons contribute to, gender-responsive governance that strengthens equality and non-discrimination, promotes women’s empowerment and human rights, and reduces violence against women and children (UNSDCF C2).**

Progress was made under this outcome. Governance in Albania is more gender responsive at central and local level UN Agencies, civil society and national human rights institutions issued key recommendations on the improvement of the anti-discrimination and gender equality legal and policy frameworks, which were taken into consideration by international human rights mechanisms to ensure that upcoming legal and policy updates are aligned with international standards. Further, the Government of Albania expressed a strong commitment to implement the CEDAW Concluding Observations (2023). All line ministries increased their budgetary allocations towards gender equality, which currently amounts to 9.6% in the 2023-2025 MTPB, compared to 9% of the previous year.. 53 out of 128 budgetary programmes are engendered, and Albania is amongst the few countries globally where a system is in place to track budget allocations dedicated to gender equality. All budget instructions include GRB amongst their criteria, and a gender budget statement was attached to project budget. The Gender Sensitive Citizens’ Budget helped ensure the transparency of the budget for all citizens. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) has taken on a more active role, advocating for gender key performance indicators in the MTPB. This achievement is a direct outcome of the partnership between UN Women, Ministry of Finance and Economy and Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Additionally, 280 public officials from 11 line ministries and 20 Gender Equality Employees enhanced their capacities on gender mainstreaming, the integration of GRB in MTPB 2023-2025, and gender statistics, through coaching and mentoring provided through this partnership. Members of Parliament have leveraged the findings emerging from the parallel audit focused on rural women’s access to the labour market and unpaid care work to inform their deliberations and decisions. Albania has a stronger institutional framework to promote the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda thanks to the adoption of the second National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. A coalition of over 30 CSOs engaged in promoting the gender, peace and security agenda in Albania further contributed to the monitoring of the plan. The plan contributes to the SDGs, the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 and the EU Gender Action Plan III. It covers persisting issues pending since the first National Action Plan (2018-2020) and emerging issues such as digital violence and cybercrime. UN Women CO supported the development of the NAP and the coalition. Albania has enhanced visibility of GEWE issues and awareness due to an increase in gender-sensitive media reporting, with 55 gender sensitive media reports issued covering gender responsive budgeting, women’s political participation and violence against women. Over 40 journalists increased their capacities with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively report on the gender dimensions of budgets and their impact on different segments of society, contributing to this result. UN Women conducted these capacity building sessions with the media throughout the year and across thematic areas, including GRB, EAW and WPP, and through media forums. 10 new municipalities implemented GRB in 2023, and 10 gender sensitive initiatives are now included in the annual budget of municipalities. 30 new gender responsive indicators have been included in the local budget of municipalities following systematic training and mentoring in GRB at local level by UN Women. 249 LGU staff,

municipal councils and local gender machinery built their capacity on the application of GRB principles. Three additional Municipalities (Kavaja, Lezha and Vau i Dejës) signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, enhancing their commitment to promoting gender equality at the local level. Overall, 33% of Albanian municipalities have signed the Charter (18). UN Women provided tailored support to build their capacities on the European Charter for Equality and also for signing. The 2023 UNCT System Wide Action Plan (SWAP) Scorecard annual report revealed that UN Albania sustained overall positive performance. The UN Women led Gender Thematic and Results Group (GTRG), arguably the most active coordination group in the UNCT, continued to work through an intense workplan and delivered important results, such as a) the first comprehensive gender equality induction package for UN personnel, b) a legal review and set of recommendations on better alignment between the Criminal Code, Family Code and Civil Code of Albania with international standards, which have already been used for advocacy purposes, c) substantive engagement with key stakeholders on CEDAW state reporting which led (63% of CEDAW Concluding Observations being aligned with UNCT recommendations. Public dialogue around gender-based violence expanded as a result of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women, coordinated by UN Women through the GTRG. Several activities took place to promote activism for the elimination of violence against women. The campaign was an opportunity to reinforce the UN-wide commitment to eliminate violence against women, which also figures as a UNSDCF output. Partnerships were essential to ensure progress in this outcome, including with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the gender machinery, the Albanian School of Public Administration, public oversight institutions, the Albanian Institute of Statistics, civil society, media, and academic institutions. The engagement of the civil society continues to remain essential for the CO to effectively deliver its activities and have a sustained impact at local and national level, notably with the members of the Monitoring Network Against Gender Based Violence, which has played a critical role in mobilizing CSOs for joint advocacy on EAW. The partnerships with UN Agencies, especially in the context of the UN Coordination mandate and the multiple UN JPs that the CO leads or participates in has been essential, to ensure achievement of joint results as expressed in the UNSDCF. The number of cases of violence against women handled by the Coordinated Referral Mechanism increased this year to 621, compared to 550 in 2022. As of October 2023, 4,338 cases of violence were reported by the police with 2,327 Protection orders issued (approx. 53% of cases). UN Women has engaged in key ongoing legal processes that are expected to bear fruits in coming year including the development of the new Criminal Code for Albania, supporting the Ministry of Justice to align the new code with international standards on EAW, and the development of a standard socio-economic reintegration plan. Several recommendations on EAW shared by UN Women and its partners were included in the CEDAW Concluding Observations. The CO and partners also strongly engaged in the GREVIO reporting process and supported developing the State report. These efforts will overall lay the groundwork for legal and policy improvements on EAW in the upcoming years. These results were achieved with support from Sida (including through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund), the European Union and the Peacebuilding Fund. Considering progress made so far, the TOC for this outcome comprises the majority of UN Women's Albania work and remains fully relevant.