



# Enlarging Educational Activities Women

**Enlarging Economic Education Activities of Women  
in Berovo, Struga and Gevgelija:  
An Assessment**



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# Enlarging Economic Education Activities of Women in Berovo, Struga and Gevgelija: An Assessment

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## **CIRa capacity statement**

CIRa is an independent, non-governmental organization established in September 2003. The mission of the Center for Institutional Development is to strengthen the capacities of civil society and local communities in order to achieve tangible community changes. CIRa strives to achieve these goals through strengthening capacities of local stakeholders, promoting public participation and assisting the mobilization of local resources to solve issues on the community level.

CIRa's strongest asset is its approach to capacity building, based on a participative and client-tailored methodology. The approach encompasses several elements: situational analyses and assessments, technical assistance and content/focal area based support, guidance and coaching, organizational strengthening and institutional development.

CIRa personnel have provided numerous trainings and consulting services for development programs at work in Macedonia and the South Eastern Europe (SEE) region. These organizations include: FOSIM, OSCE, Project HOPE, Handicap International, DAI, ARC, IPK, Acted, ECMI, DRC, etc. CIRa has produced manuals and handouts for more than 25 different training modules. CIRa offices have a functional and fully equipped training and conference facility with the ability to host up to 20 participants in a central location in Skopje.

The 25 comprehensive training modules offered by CIRa relate to all aspects of good management and leadership. They can be adapted for any audience - CSO, governmental institution, private business or to individuals.

CIRa staff has significant experience in forming teams of trainers from groups of inexperienced yet active individuals in the development of the NGO sector, and has been regularly providing Training of Trainers programs for NGOs, international organizations and institutions.

CIRa is also committed to providing support and technical assistance to CSOs and other entities through:

### **□ Civil Society Development**

- Starting in July 2005, CIRa has been responsible for three components under USAID funded "The Macedonian Activity for Civil Society Strengthening" (MACSS) program. The overall goal of MACSS is to elevate the civil society sector to new levels of legitimacy, accountability, and viability as a vehicle for helping citizens effectively utilize the CSO sector to voice their priorities, constructively address them, and hold the government accountable to the resulting decisions.
- CIRa is committed to initiating, researching and lobbying for a legislative environment that is supportive to the CSO sector. These activities include: advocacy and lobbying aimed at promoting local philanthropy, tax incentives for individuals and businesses willing to donate to CSOs, promotion of socially

responsible businesses, promotion of volunteerism, building an indigenous support infrastructure for CSOs and other mechanisms that contribute to the creation of a vibrant and sustainable CSO sector in Macedonia.

#### ❑ **Organizational assessments and research**

CIRa has prepared:

- The Report for USAID 2004 CSO Sustainability Index for Macedonia.
- Initial Macedonian Agricultural Advisory Support Program's Baseline study of five Pilot Municipalities in Macedonia
- Organizational assessments of Student and Youth Organizations in Macedonia for Open Society Foundation in Macedonia. The report outlines capacity building needs of 12 student and youth organizations in Macedonia.
- Assessment of training needs of CSOs working on HIV/AIDS issues in B&H, SCG and Macedonia for Project Hope.

#### ❑ **Training and capacity building**

- Over 200 training events in 25 various training areas for 350 CSOs for USAid's DemNet Program
- A series of 12 trainings for NGOs supporting people with disabilities for Handicap International /Macedonia. Themes included project cycle management, strategic planning, PR and media, advocacy and lobbying, outreach, leadership, facilitation skills etc.
- Training for youth groups on youth policy and advocacy, community activism and mobilizing local resources. Capacity building of the Volunteers Centers in 4 communities in Macedonia, OSCE funded
- Various training courses for NGO support centers in 8 undeveloped municipalities in Macedonia, Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia
- Training courses for the programs and staff of international organizations in Macedonia including: DRC, Project Hope, OSCE, IPK etc

#### ❑ **Community development**

- Community development projects that assist the creation of informal citizens groups including members of community CSOs and representatives of local institutions (municipality, schools, employment etc.). The project activities include preparing and implementing Community Action Plans (CAP) with the intent of affecting the development of municipalities. In the last two years, ISC/CIRa assisted the implementation of community development projects and provided training for three Roma communities (Trizla in Prilep, Bair in Bitola and Delcevo).
- Introduction and creation of several Local Environmental Action Plans.
- Support for the USAID's Local Government Reform Project (LGRP) and the recent Make Decentralization Work Project (DAI) by: facilitating sessions for municipal representatives, creating of a Code of Ethics in four municipalities,

developing Citizens Charters in two municipalities, and developing outreach plans for Citizen Information Centers in several municipalities.

❑ **Roma Programs**

- From July 2005 to March 2006, CIRa was responsible for managing USAID funded "Human Capacity Development Program among Roma NGOs and Roma Business Community" that assisted approximately 30 Roma NGOs across Macedonia. The participating NGOs received services such as: human resource development by standard/tailored trainings, workshops, adult education and English as a Foreign Language courses. The NGOs with the best results have the opportunity to apply for small grants supporting future activities. Selected NGO participants will be invited to attend a specially designed study tour abroad.
- In the last two years, ISC/CIRa assisted the implementation of community development projects and provided training for three Roma communities (Trizla in Prilep, Bair in Bitola and Delcevo).
- In 2003 and 2004 CIRa implemented a pilot project with two Roma communities in Skopje "Klanica" and "Zlokukani." The project analyzed the socio-economic conditions of the "scavenger" community. Methods of scavenging were also analyzed in hopes of the improvement of such methods.

❑ **Technical assistance and coaching in:**

- *Gender and marginalized issues* - initiating and advancing appropriate community based services for vulnerable groups such as disabled, children, elderly, women, HIV/AIDS victims, minorities, victims of violence, juvenile offenders and others. To achieve this, CIRa's approach is to equip national and local CSOs with skills and abilities to provide required services, supplement government provided services and strengthen cooperation among local communities, CSOs and local municipal authorities in providing these services.
- *Fighting human trafficking* - Technical assistance and guidance for CSOs, institutions and communities dealing with the problem of human trafficking.
- *Involvement of Youth* - Support to CSOs, institutions and communities in the area of *youth* in the following areas: creation of Youth Policy on local and national levels, youth employment strategies, and cooperation of youths with local businesses, local municipal authorities and national institutions.
- *Information Technology* - Promoting use of information and communication technologies for more effective CSO management and project implementation.

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## **Methodology**

This assessment focused on three geographical areas: the municipalities Berovo, Struga, and Gevgelija. In these communities, UNDP is undertaking economic development activities based out of local UNDP offices called Local Development Agencies (LDAs). Initially, documents and questionnaires collected by UNDP were reviewed to lay the foundation of the analysis. Background research and publications were also consulted. According to the findings of these results, additional areas of research were identified and additional qualitative assessments were developed.

In addition to formal research, site visits were conducted in the targeted municipalities. Interviews were held with community stakeholders (women, staff of the LDAs, local government officials, local businesses, local NGOs etc.).

Research was focused on the areas in which local women were engaged in the economy such as successful entrepreneurs, women-led businesses, women's NGOs etc. The assessment examined the current gender policies, programs, and action plans of the three local governments and institutions, civil society organizations, private businesses and the LDAs. Analyses included finding out how these areas of the economy are moving forward in practice. The assessment focuses on the gender mechanisms currently in place in the three local communities. The level of implementation of these mechanisms is analyzed and progress or problematic areas are noted.

Additional information was gathered from EU publications and other key gender research institutions to reference best practice models for gender inclusion and platforms of action for policy reform. Local stakeholders were consulted as well as members of the central government and national institutions.

The data, based on both quantitative and qualitative findings, were analyzed. The conclusions are laid out in this assessment.

## **Executive summary**

The assessed locations (Berovo, Gevgelija and Struga) are characterized by political instability, weak institutions, and difficulty in their effort to transform their respective economies. The transition to a market economy has been delayed in these communities due to political change and the slow process of privatization.

These changes are not gender-neutral. Women have absorbed the shock of the adjustment by taking over new roles of responsibility in the family including change in career and single employment. Many women have increased their workload and begun settling for underpaid and illegitimate positions of employment due to lay-offs and budget cuts in basic public services such as education, social services, and health care.

In terms of the economy, gender equality presents to other issues: the existence of a gender bias in informal markets; and the increased pressure on women's time which has negative effects on women's health and welfare.

It is assumed that there are some common traits among women in the three respective municipalities. Identifying these common issues and interests will help to increase economic, social and political status of women living in Macedonia.

The needs of women and difficulties they face fall within three main areas:

- Women's political participation
- Economic opportunities for women
- Women's activism

*Women's political participation and decision-making roles:* women are still under-represented in both national and local level politics. However, the situation is steadily improving due to recently adopted legislation. In Berovo, women are politically represented as well as hold some of the highest offices at the local level (court, schools, local unit of the Ministry for labor and Social policy, health fund, revenue office etc). However, despite adopting international standards of equal opportunity for women, the standards are not respected de facto. The principles of gender mainstreaming are widely acknowledged among stakeholders but practical implementation lags behind.

The law on equal opportunity, currently being debated in the government, is a positive step forward. Strengthening gender equality at the local level requires local governments to establish or reinforce commissions for gender equality.

One of the major issues in gender equality is the lack of formal *economic opportunities for women*. The majority of women in the three municipalities are either formally unemployed or informally over-employed. Statistics obtained from the local employment agencies in all three municipalities as well as from the Report of the Republic of Macedonia on Millennium Development goals published June 2005, show that women are less employed than men. Conversely, data obtained from interviews in the field show that women either participate in family businesses for which they do not get paid or are employed in (mostly) textile factories for long hours and minimum wages. This information adds to the theory of the feminization of poverty observed in the region. It is essential for women to be involved in local economic development planning. Women seeking to become involved in the economy need to begin cooperatives as basic means for initiating economic activity. This is especially true for women producers of old crafts and traditional skills. Women also need special benefits or incentives for them to start their own businesses.

The local government alongside institutions and organizations (LDAs, NGOs etc.) need to encourage and enable an environment for women to become involved in economic development.

*Women's activism* is a multidimensional sphere that is linked to both political and economic participation. Activism includes not only the presence of political or economic



power but also the use of that power to promote gender equality ideas, to motivate other women to participate and to fight for a variety of themes such as health, education, social insurance, and housing. Activism should raise the awareness of women about their rights as well as support their ability to claim these rights under existing institutions. Activism should also include encouraging the media to project more positive images of women and to promote the value of gender equality for society as a whole. Members of the press should be more sensitive to gender equality issues. Activism is a challenging dynamic and needs serious attention of women in politics, business and especially of women participating in the civil society sector.

In other spheres, women need to be encouraged to take a more active part in professional associations to secure decision-making roles and effect change. Women need to create partnerships and lobby local and national governments for both new and improved legislation to affect change in these areas. In addition to legislative change, women need to activate local governments to find a place of economic opportunity for them. Activism addresses the impediments that women face as women with respect to employment. The change evoked by activism should encourage and support women's entrepreneurship, including providing training and access to credit. Local and national women's NGOs need to have strong membership that voices the real needs of women in their community. NGOs need to develop a clear list of priorities and actions to address issues and resolve problems. Organizational spokespeople need to make use of the mechanisms and tools available (gender equality committees, neighborhood self-government units (NUs), gender equality offices, consumer councils, finance committees, referenda etc.) in order to achieve their goals. Regarding Berovo, Struga and Gevgelija specifically, the NGO sector should advise women seeking economic activity to lean towards the area of processing (a more economically viable option) instead of selling raw or fresh materials.

The Local Development Agencies set up by UNDP in Berovo, Struga and Gevgelija need to actively promote participation and leadership of women in the local associations.

Co-operation within the Association of Municipalities has been determined with internal regulations or established in other formal ways (such as caucuses, agreements for cooperation etc.) making it possible to consider them a tool to lobby for particular (gender, economic) issues. Both local and national governments need to consolidate and prioritize legislation concerning women's economic participation and take concrete action with respect to creating viable conditions for such participation.

## **The Existing Environment in Macedonia Regarding Women's Economic Participation**

### ***Legislation and mechanisms on gender-specific participation***

The fundamental principle underlying the concept of gender equality is the equitable treatment of individual human beings. A state can be said to recognize the rule of law only when a number of conditions are being met. Firstly, individual citizens should be

aware of their rights; laws need to be made public. In addition, awareness-raising activities need to be undertaken and people educated on their rights and responsibilities. Secondly, everyone is equal under the law. All citizens should be treated fairly and should know what standard of treatment to expect.

Within this context, major legislation changes have taken place within the last 10 - 15 years following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Macedonia's Constitution represents great legislative effort to create a legal framework for the protection and respect of citizens' democratic rights. The Macedonian Constitution lays out the general provisions that all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of sex, race, and skin color, national and social origin as well as political and religious beliefs, and social and financial positions. Additional laws complement the Constitution and lay out citizens' rights in specific areas.

Strangely, reality shows a low level of women's political participation; however, the situation is steadily improving as a result of a number of civil society organizations' efforts. This is an example of where coalition building among the civil society sector, political parties and other relevant organizations has proved worthwhile.

These coalitions were the major force that initiated and lobbied for changes in the Laws on Local and Parliamentary Elections in Macedonia to increase women's participation. The Laws on Parliamentary and Local Elections state that the proposed list of candidates includes at least 30% gender balance. Advocates realized that the provision could still be devastating for women if they were not adequately distributed on the lists. Civil society groups succeeded in getting amendments of some of these Laws to state candidate lists had a 30% gender balance in both the upper and lower parts of the list. Resulting, the number of women in municipal city councils has been significantly increased, making it possible for them to voice the needs (especially economic related issues) of the female members of the community.

The Government's decision to establish a Department for promotion of gender equality within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy as part of activities within the Gender Task Force framework was a positive step forward. In 2005, the Department drafted an "Equal opportunities law", recently adopted by Parliament, which calls for the establishment of gender commissions at the local level within local governments.

Such commissions have been established in 16 communities throughout Macedonia. They are usually comprised of members (most often female) of the municipal city councils. Struga and Berovo, two communities covered in this report, have established commissions. Interviews with local government representatives in Berovo confirmed that while the gender committee exists, it is not yet active. In Struga, the commission was restructured in March 2004 with representatives from the newly elected municipal city council. The committee has developed an action plan covering a six month-period; however, all their plans are linked to the project activities funded by an outside source. The program is initiated by the Association of Women's Organizations of Macedonia funded by OSCE's program for support of the institutionalization of Gender Equality Commissions (GECs). OSCE supports these commissions in order for them to achieve

several goals: to intervene in local decision-making, to achieve equal treatment of women and men, to train on gender mainstreaming, to initiate projects to fight domestic violence and human trafficking, and to offer free medical care for unemployed women. In practice, the commissions are connected to services that do not lay within their mission and the main purpose of their existence. The authors of this report see the gender committees having a more profound impact on political and influential bodies and the decision-making processes. The commissions should persuade the local government to design concrete measures to improve the status of women in all spheres of their life. This can, of course, include a monitoring role for gender-based programs in the community; however, committees should not be implementing direct project activities. These committees need to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all local-government activities.

### **The Impact of Decentralization**

One of the major changes taking place in the country presently is the process of transferring competencies from the central government to the local level. In Macedonia, the Ministry of Local government was established in 1998, with the mandate to design, implement and co-ordinate reform of the local government system.

Based on a real need for local government reform, in November 1999 the Macedonian Government adopted the Strategy for Local Self-government Reform. However, until 2001, no significant steps were taken regarding the Strategy. In January 2002, the Macedonian Parliament adopted the Law on Local Self-government providing a solid legal framework for establishing a new system for local governments. In order further the process of decentralization, an Operational Program for Decentralization of Power was approved in February 2003 focusing on creating normative preconditions for the transfer of competencies from central to local level.

Despite the fact that the laws on local self-government in Macedonia do not specifically mention gender-specific issues, they formalize direct participation of citizens in decision-making at the local level. The provisions of these laws oblige municipalities to inform citizens about decisions being made as well as to respect citizens' rights to provide input on those decisions.

Citizens' opinions can be submitted individually and collectively, as well as directly or via the representatives for which they vote during local elections. Laws stipulate that the municipalities have to develop mechanisms for informing citizens in several areas: procedure for filing appeals and requests regarding the operation of municipal bodies, methods of organizing public hearings, and methods of surveying and collecting citizens' input.

The Mayor obliged to not only listen to citizens' input, but s/he must also reply to their appeals and requests within a certain period of time (90 days). In addition, the municipal city council may set up standing or temporary committees, for the purpose of reviewing issues and defining proposals. Examples of such committees are the intercommunity relations committee for ethnically mixed communities or the

consumer's protection council (required under the Macedonian Law on Local Self-government).

Yet despite these efforts, gender mainstreaming into local government has been neglected and no specific tools have been introduced to solve this problem apart from the gender commissions. On the other hand, this can be seen as an opportunity since the legislation allows freedom on behalf of local governments to be creative in capturing women's needs and including their opinions when making decisions.

### **Fiscal Decentralization and Gender Mainstreaming**

It should be noted that an essential part of the decentralization process in Macedonia is fiscal decentralization. It began the first stages of implementation on July 1st, 2005. Implementation involves the shift of responsibilities for expenditure and revenue to the local government level. Consequently, for the first time after adopting the Law on Local Self-government in January 2002, the municipalities will not only have the traditional competencies devolved but will also have the right to independently dispose of their own revenues.

This process will very likely be difficult and time-consuming due to inherited debts in many of the units of local self-government. Conversely it provides a basis for introducing gender mainstreaming and supporting gender budgeting at the local level. As outlined before, the regulations in Macedonia provide basic mechanisms for citizens to voice concerns, but little regarding specific mechanisms to improve the position of women at the local level. The equal opportunities law, when adopted, might improve the situation; however, until then, it will remain dependant on the will of the governing bodies to make it a priority in their community.

At present, strong pressure from women's groups, bodies and advisory committees can influence local governments to take some action. Local governments can identify priorities according to gender specific needs, support initiatives regarding women's empowerment and allocate resources to specific services oriented to female population.

### ***Major constraints for the economic development on a local level***

Women's unemployment is a key problem in all three targeted municipalities. Unemployment rates are generally higher among women than among men. The share of women in the inactive population is 62.1%, while the share of men is 37.9% (source: Report of Republic of Macedonia on Millennium Development goals, June 2005). A majority of employed women are in the lowest paid sectors while many women work undocumented in the informal sector.

The high unemployment rates are a result of the difficult economic situation that affects both men and women. The closure and bankruptcy of larger factories (e.g. textile, furniture, shoes, etc.), which used to employ the majority of women in these communities, is one of the biggest factors. Furthermore, the women that do have formal opportunities to work are often working in sub-standard conditions and face

exploitation. They are often paid very poorly for long hours of strenuous work without any benefits, mostly in local textile factories.

Adding to the issue of under-employment are the still very strongly held traditional values in some of communities. Traditionally, women are seen as mothers and nurturers rather than as workers. Interviews confirm that this is especially true among women farmers who despite undertaking arduous tasks are not involved at any stage of the decision-making. In addition, women often times are not preferred for inheritance of land and other assets which gives them a lower starting point for engaging in economic activities.

It is also important to note that female unemployment has an additional impact on the status of women in general: restricted to domestic roles, women's financial status and consequently social status is reduced. Women do not share the respect and role of power in the family and/or community.

Another unresolved issue in Macedonia is the transfer of state property to the units of local government. The newly acquired property could be an additional source of income for the municipal budgets. When there is more money there are more jobs. In this area, the municipalities are obliged to ensure appropriate and equitable representation of citizens in all areas of municipal employment.

Most importantly, Local Economic Development is now a municipal competence. Accordingly, the municipality takes on the responsibility of creating favorable conditions and a positive climate for improving the local economy. Once the transfer of the state property is reassigned to the local self-government units, ideally, the local government will then offer the locations to the local marketplace in support of small and medium enterprise development. These enterprises will then strengthen the local economy.

The process of decentralization has devolved the competences related to local economic development to local authorities. Local governments can take on the key role in designing and implementing employment plans. These plans can include active labor market measures, development of local infrastructure, promotion and support of entrepreneurship, and focus on the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Overall, it can be concluded that the economic and, consequently, social status of women is declining due to a number of factors:

- High levels of bankruptcy leading to the dismissal of workers;
- The horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the labor market;
- The shift of the labor force, particularly of women, from a formal economy to informal economy;
- The exclusion of women from the privatization process, very few women own their own enterprise (women tend to be employees rather than employers);
- Women own less land and other assets.

## **EU Accession Process and Its Impact on Gender Empowerment in Other Countries**

The approach to gender issues taken by women in Berovo, Gevgelija and Struga appears to be based on a set of responses chosen according to specific actions or situations. It seems that faced with the difficulties of traditional patriarchal values in the family and society, women tend to opt for a more subtle and phased approach.

In contrast to the radical movement that made its mark on feminism in countries like the United States of America, this approach resembles the socialist feminist movement in Scandinavian countries. In this regard, it is helpful to use Sweden/Finland's approach for comparative model.

### ***The Scandinavian model***

Looking at the number of political positions occupied by women in Scandinavia clearly shows that these countries have already achieved substantial progress with regard to equal opportunities. In April 2000 for example, Sweden became the world's first country with women holding a majority of its government seats (11 of 20 cabinet posts); women also make up 44% of the members of its national parliament, and about 45% of regional and local government bodies, city and community councils without any quota prescribed by law.

In the course of the late 1980s, a main principle regarding gender policy was broadly accepted as the position of the political majority in Sweden. The principle was based on the idea that gender-equity policy cannot be pursued separate from other fields of political activity. That is must be intertwined and connected with all parts of society and has to permeate throughout all political levels and structures. Top-level political decision-makers and administrators supported this concept. Since 1994 the Swedish Prime Minister has included gender-mainstreaming and equal opportunity issues into his/her yearly statement on the policy of the government. Results of such actions were officially documented. Monitoring and evaluation instruments were and are still applied to record the success of the measures taken by the government on behalf of gender equity.

In Scandinavian countries decision makers of all levels were and are involved in gender-equity policy as well as contributing to the implementation of the political guidelines established on gender equity. In this context the top-down approach was reinforced by strong grassroots women's organizations such as the women's organization "Martha" from Finland which has existed since 1899. The initial goals of these organizations were to make women, the fosterers of coming generations, aware of the political situation in the country. They strove to increase women's self-confidence and their knowledge and skills in housekeeping and raising a family. Later their activities became focused on issues such as quality of life, welfare and sustainable development. These organizations began influencing decision-makers and authorities through activism. They served, and are still serving today, as a channel between the authorities and local citizens.

### **Assessing and monitoring the situation**

A tool called the 3R-Method (representation, resources, realization) was developed to enhance analysis of society. Data is compiled and presented in a way that answers each of the three areas. The most important question to be answered in the context of “representation” is: what is the respective (absolute and relative) proportion of women and men participating in decision-making and other processes on all societal levels? Secondly, “resources” provide conclusions about how resources (financial means, time, and space) are distributed among men and women. Finally, there is monitoring of “realization” including whether the distribution of representation and resources among women and men corresponds with the principles and goals of gender-equity policy. If the representation and resources do not correspond, an analysis is conducted of what needs to be changed, and how can it be changed.

Methods for encouraging equity: 76% of all Swedish women are gainfully employed, while Europe-wide this figure was only 59% in 1999. This fact does not imply that women have the same income and career opportunities than their male colleagues have. How is Sweden dealing with this challenge? The country has conventional gender equity policies such as supporting women in the IT sector, setting up loan and mentoring programs for women working on enterprise initiatives, and programs designed to attract women to occupations dominated by men. This kind of approach could be transferred in Macedonia. While it is important for an analysis of the current conditions in Macedonia be made as well as recording the impact of the Law of Equal Opportunity, methods for encouraging equity need to be set up soon to support women’s economic participation. The loan and mentoring programs would make a positive effect on Macedonia.

Sweden also supports gender mainstreaming through legal means. A variety of measures have been taken with the goal of raising public awareness on gender-equity. For example, employers with ten or more employees are obliged to submit a report every year on the structure and distribution of wages being paid. By publishing figures differentiated by gender, field of occupation, and function/type of professional activity, it is possible to make clear comparisons of women and men working in the same profession or in similar capacities.

One of the benefits in this requirement is to prevent, detect and eliminate wage discrimination against women. The results must be summarized and presented by the employer in a yearly action plan, which also includes a calculation of the costs for elimination of discrimination cases and a time-table estimating the length of time for the company to pay men and women equally for equal work. If an employer does not meet these standards, the office of the Gender-Equity Ombudsman can ask the Gender-Equity Committee (comprised of lawyers, industry representatives, and labor-market and gender-equity experts) to dictate specific measures that must be implemented with threat of punishment.

In addition to government control, female employees can sue an employer violating the rules prohibiting discriminative practices through the civil courts. If the case is found valid, the company is forced to pay damages. Additional programs targeting wage discrimination have also been established (Wage determination and Workplace rating) as well as a draft law under discussion containing tougher regulations on wage discrimination. Another innovative step in this area is the creation of a Gender-Equity Label for enterprises and institutions complying with certain gender-equity standards.

To conclude, in Scandinavian countries women are now in a relatively strong political position regarding their election to decision-making positions. However, they are still under-represented in most other sectors that influence political matters such as big business and key institutions in the economic sector. Women remain significantly less represented than men in executive leadership positions, political and other associations, and in the private sector.

This has led the government in Sweden, and a number of private institutions and enterprises, establish an Academy for Economic Leadership to stimulate an equal distribution of power and responsibility in the private sector between men and women. The institute will attempt to do this by encouraging management executives, particularly female ones, to develop their roles. Furthermore, the government has set up a commission to investigate the distribution of financial resources between women and men as well as the relationship between gender and economic power.

### **Best Practice Models and EU standards**

While Sweden does provide an excellent example of substantial progress in gender equity in politics and employment, it is not likely to be beneficial to attempt to apply the exact experiences to developing/transition countries. Instead, each country should be encouraged to identify the best program of tools and actions to address these problems within context in accordance to the country's cultural, social, and political situation. This approach will be most likely to achieve changes in the short, medium and long term.

To achieve sustainable results, the most difficult challenge is build on reform processes that are already under way. It is essential to carefully develop and modify them with solutions appropriate to contextual factors. Tailored reforms with domestic support have the best chance of bringing about change.

However, the fact that there are multiple paths that gender-equity reform and policy can follow does not imply that any path is acceptable. The European Union has a gender policy originating from both internal and external commitments to gender equality. Hence, the EU gender policy has drawn upon the commitments made at the UN Conferences on Women and Development held in 1975, 1985, and 1995.

EU gender policy evolved from internal commitments to gender equality, starting with a directive on equal pay in 1975, as well as from cases brought before the European Court of Justice. In 1995, the European Commission accepted a resolution on gender issues in development cooperation, which was turned into a Council Regulation in 1998. This



regulation notes that policies, including Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), should take women's and men's roles into account.

The legal basis for this regulation is found in Articles 2 and 3 of the EC Treaty ("The promotion of equality between men and women is a task of the European Community" and "In all its activities the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women"), as well as Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ("Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.").

In 1996, the European Commission initiated a gender mainstreaming approach to address disparities between women and men within the European Union. This mainstreaming approach should lead to incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all EU policies and activities. Mainstreaming efforts were developed in a Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality during the period 2001-2005. This strategy explicitly seeks to mainstream gender equality in internal EU policies as well as in external relations of the EU with third countries.

Gender mainstreaming represents the latest stage in broadening EU gender policies. Earlier equal treatment and EU equality strategies basically treated women the same as men, helping women adjust to the (gender blind) male norm. In contrast, mainstreaming is based upon the recognition of gender differences between men and women. Thus, for EU policy makers, mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality of women, but mobilizing policies and procedures for the purpose actively dealing with such issues at the planning stage. This would foresee the effect the policies and procedures would have on men and women.

Gender mainstreaming in the EU has necessitated the introduction of soft (i.e. legally non-binding) policy instruments, such as the collection of sex disaggregated data, gender impact assessments, benchmarking and gender auditing of EU programs. It is important to stress that within the EU, mainstreaming is intended to complement, and not to replace, positive action measures for women and equal treatment legislation. Thus, the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001- 2005) brings together different EU initiatives and programs designed to promote gender equality with an across-the-board mainstreaming approach. The Framework Strategy program focuses upon five objectives that provide the frame of reference for policy development to which all EU gender equality initiatives are now linked. They are as follows:

- ❖ equality in economic life (labor market policies);
- ❖ equal representation and participation in decision-making (parity democracy);
- ❖ equality in social life (social protection, health);
- ❖ equality in civil life (human rights, gender-related violence, trafficking); and,
- ❖ changing gender roles and overcoming stereotypes (in education, culture, media, etc.).

International standards can provide guidance for countries wishing to develop their own gender policies. Additionally, the international community can also provide

incentives through funding policies. Donors can support reform efforts by formulating minimum requirements for gender-equity policy and reform programs that they will support financially.

Whatever range of incentives and facilitation for reform, the sustainability of any reform initiative is crucial. To achieve lasting results, it is vital that reform strategies be built on a broad foundation. The previous example shows that reform has to be aimed at decision-makers on all levels (local governments, administrations, community leaders) ensuring that women are involved in the policy-making process.

### ***Proposed Areas for Practical Improvement***

The Member States of the European Union and the European Commission have identified the issue of female entrepreneurship as a priority. All Member States have recognized the importance of promoting entrepreneurship in general and have, in recent years, implemented specific actions or measures to support female entrepreneurship.

Although many of these factors such as culture and social status differ within and between Member States, many of the problems faced by female entrepreneurs are similar. Importance should be placed on making women aware of their possibilities as well as to assist them in establishing necessary business contacts.

Women appear to have a different approach towards running enterprises than men. Agencies should use female mentors, trainers and advisers whenever possible to increase the relevant services for women and to provide role models.

In addition, access to credit should be key developing support for businesses. Limited access to finance is a constraint faced by many entrepreneurs, both female and male.

There are various ways to tackle general, country specific problems faced by female entrepreneurs. Many of the obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs are common all over Europe. Best practices are not necessarily country-specific. Networking might enrich the pool of possible actions in other countries as well promote new change at home.

## **An Assessment of Current Conditions Regarding Women's Inclusion Policy and Practice at the Local Level in Berovo, Gevgelija and Struga**

The three municipalities under investigation provide a wide range of locally specific factors for assessing women's inclusion. The three municipalities are very different from one another and provide various areas in which development in the field of inclusion should take place for women to become active members of local economic development.

### ***Demographics of Population, Unemployment and Natural Resources in the Municipalities***

The municipality of **Berovo** is located in the Eastern part of Macedonia at the periphery of the Malesh Mountains. The mountains in this region are rich with beech, pine and oak trees and the town sits at an altitude of 800m. Berovo covers a territory of 595 square kilometers and consists of nine inhabitances including the town of Berovo with a population of 13 941. (State Statistics Office - 2002) The gender structure is 50,4% male and 49,6% female. According to nationality, the majority of the population is Macedonian (95, 65%) with a small percentage of Roma (3,29%).

Of the total number of inhabitants, 5,589 people create the active workforce. 3891 of those in the active workforce category are employed while 1,698 are unemployed. The official unemployment rate is 30,4%; however, it is quite concerning to look at the unemployment rate among youth (15-24years of age) which is a shocking 67.3%. Men are employed at 43% while only 27% of women are employed. These figures are dynamic and accurately reflect the situation at the time when the statistics were gathered. In addition, 83,7% of those that are unemployed have been so for longer than one year and fall into the long-term unemployed category. Of the total of 1,217 unemployed women, the majority has either high school or lower level education. This figure is lower than that of the unemployed men (1701). Around 10% of unemployed individuals (both men and women) hold a university degree. The municipality is lacking people in the pharmaceutical and traditional craft (such as blacksmiths and bakers) professions. The majority of employed men and women are in public sectors (state administration), textile and wood production.

Part of the population in Berovo is involved in forestry and wood production as well as in the retail of firewood. In the field of carpentry, as primary wood manufacturing, in Berovo exists only one company producing final products. The majority of women engaged in textile production are working on the loan-system of Greek "investment". In addition, the dairy industry employs some individuals from Berovo; however, the majority of workers are employed in public administration. Dairy products are a result of home-based production and are usually manufactured in small villages around the town of Berovo such as Smojmirovo. Regardless of these areas of activity, the high unemployment rate is forcing the population to look for alternative ways of making a living.

According to the people interviewed, the wood, forests and forest fruits are some of the natural resources that should be utilized. In addition Berovo has land on which small-scale, mostly organic, agriculture is being produced. Potatoes, beans, plums and some fruits are being cultivated. People gather forest plants (such as mushrooms), fruits (berries) and herbs to sell in markets. While these activities are not shown in official employment records, they provide families with a significant income. The large amount of potatoes grown in the area has inspired a number of those interviewed to consider a processing factory for chips and other products made from potatoes. A feasibility study should be done to investigate this opportunity. It is specific for this area that almost every family is directly or indirectly involved in agricultural production, for its own needs or for selling.

Production of milk, cheese and other dairy products is also a strong area for increased opportunities. Berovo used to be an area of cattle herding which contributed to the dairy production.

Some of the traditional crafts are still being produced in the area. Crafts include wood carving (an association of woodcarvers exists); hand crafts (knitting, embroidery, weaving, making carpets), dolls in traditional costumes, and juices, jams and marmalades from the fruits found in the area. Those interviewed highlighted the possibility of increasing income by reviving the arts of woodcarving and craft making (blacksmiths, saddle-maker, mills, producing wooden barrels etc.).

Apiculture and the production of honey is another alternative way of making a living in Berovo. There are several certified growers.

The municipality of **Gevgelija**, by contrast with Berovo, has an altitude of only 64m. It is located in the southern-most part of the country and covers an area of 317 km<sup>2</sup>. It consists of 16 settlements, only 9 of which are continuously inhabited. The municipality of Gevgelija has 22,988 citizens (6,362 households) with a majority of Macedonians. 25% of the population is younger than 18 years of age. Out of 22,988 citizens, 2,000 have university level education, and 9,000 have completed high school. There are 2,777 unemployed of which 1,742 of them are women.

Gevgelija is known for its climate. It is located where the Mediterranean and Continental climate meet, providing warm days throughout the year. Average temperatures in January are around 3 degrees Celsius; while in July, temperatures are around 25 degrees. Gevgelija boasts 240 sunny days per year with more rain than snow during the winter.

The excellent climate conditions and fertile soil make the land suitable for growing various plants such as peanuts, figs, pomegranates, olives and other fruits. This region is also famous for high quality agricultural products as well as organic vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, onions, leeks, cabbage, squash, etc. Almost 70% of the production is targeted for export. The favorable climatic conditions add to the potential of exponentially increasing the primary yield of this area.

Wine plantations, which cover over 2,700 hectares, are dominated by both sweet grapes as well as grapes that produce wine. Annual grape production exceeds 40,000 tons, of which 25,000 tons are used for table wines exported to the markets of Serbia and Montenegro, Austria, Poland and Germany. In the fifties, the Wine Basement "Vinojug"-Gevgelija was opened. Today, "Vinojug" could be used for primary processing and storage of final products. The vineyards in "Vinojug" could be used for the production of high quality wines as well as table wines.

As in Berovo, the textile industry (based on the loan system) is one of the most developed economic branches in this municipality. This is due to Gevgelija's vicinity with the Greek boarder inviting Greek investment. Outside of textile factories, there are

other companies that process a number of things: coffee, tobacco, bread, baked goods and pastry production.

The third municipality, **Struga** has an altitude of 698m and is located in the southwest part of the country, at the foot of the mountain Jablanica. It encompasses eighteen settlements and covers a territory of 136 km<sup>2</sup>. Struga lies on the shores of the Ohrid Lake holding 1/3 of its coastline. The town itself is level and flat but mountains (Jablanica, Karaorman) surround it. The municipality of Struga has about 65,000 inhabitants; town itself has about 16,000. The gender breakdown shows that there are slightly more women than men (32 947 vs. 32862 respectively). Around 59% of the inhabitants are in the active workforce; however, 9,389 men and 3,699 women are unemployed.

#### Employment overview according to age

Employment Bureau – Struga	Total		Until 30 yrs.		Until 30-40 yrs.		from 40-50yrs.		over 50 yrs.	
	All	women	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women	All	women
	8572	3458	3388	1470	2565	1073	1677	696	942	219

The table shows that the largest number of unemployed persons are located in the age group up to 30 years which is the biggest anomaly since they are in full working capacity. The lowest number of unemployed, and consequently least unemployed women are in the age group of over 50 years.

The municipality is rich in agricultural land with 12,752 hectares of farmland and 6,140 hectares of arable land. There are pastures as well as forests. Nevertheless, the lake is considered the biggest natural resource. The lake is characterized by unique eco-system, rich with endemic species of flora and fauna. The uniqueness of the lake is found in its geographic isolation and age. Only a few lakes in the world have similar qualities. UNESCO proclaimed the lake part of the World Cultural Heritage in 1980 and the lake is now protected.

With regards to the climate, Struga and its surroundings have moderate continental climate with parts of Mediterranean climate. The number of sunny hours is around 2400 and the water in the Ohrid lake is the warmest in August. On average there are around 80 summer days during which the temperature is above 25C. The average annual temperature is 11, 5C while during the summer it is 20.5 C.

During the winter season the median monthly temperatures are above zero, which provides for opportunities for pleasant stay during this part of the year.

Additionally, the Struga basin is rich with coal. Large amounts can be found in the village of Priskupstina where exploitation of the surface is taking place. Other minerals and stones used for paving and construction can be found near Vevcani.

Most companies that are still operational in Struga are trade and construction companies. Agriculture consists of corn and wheat fields in the pastures, potato and apple production. Progress is notified seen in the fact that there are several women that

are managing several textile production units, construction companies as well as those which are on high-level positions in several production units and trade companies.

However, women have an opportunity to find their niche. This mostly refers to the sector of tourism within which it should be noted that women are those that are most often subletting around 3500 beds within the private accommodation which represents 1/3 of the total number of the beds in the municipality that are sublet.

Producing such items as health food or adapting facilities for raising and processing fish, production and processing of mushrooms are also open possibilities.

### **Priorities for Empowerment of the Municipalities**

The last local elections in **Berovo** brought an increase in the number of women serving in public institutions. Presently, there are 18 women directors of state institutions such as schools, courts, pension and social fund. Women's political representation has been progressing in recent times. Many anticipate that women will become more influential in general society. The local government in Berovo has attempted to include women as advisors and to discuss future cooperation. The process needs to be formalized and more regularly practiced to have an affect.

Another challenge connected to Berovo's local government is the area of local economic development. While the local government is preparing a strategy for sustainable development and introducing business possibilities for the municipality, the initiative to begin these actions is lacking. The government could help this effort, for example, by providing interested parties with information obtaining a license for collecting plants from the Ministry of Agriculture.

The local government's goal for the next three to five years is to develop a strategic plan for Local Economic Development. This will encourage business opportunities in the municipality. One priority is to develop tourist support facilities by the Berovo Lake.

Tourism is seen as the next big area for growth in Berovo. The mountain lake provides possibilities for both winter and summer leisure. A large hotel is being built close to the lake and many families have started offering private accommodation in their homes. Yet, tourism is thwarted by the lack of tourist infrastructure and marketing in tourist agencies. The municipality would need to promote itself as a place for holidays. Opportunities in the area of tourism are expected to increase when the border crossing with Bulgaria (Klepalo area) is opened. More visitors could access the area from Bulgaria and Greece.

Berovo's local government plans to finalize a Detailed Urban Plan, creating an industrial zone as well as tourist zone. Plans are also in the works for improving road infrastructure due to the opening of the border crossing with Bulgaria. The newly planned industrial zone will be used for agricultural products and is an important aspect of future economic development. One possible challenge would be obtaining an international certification for the famous Berovo cheese to increase export possibilities.

An urban plan has been developed for two tourist locations. The local government sees the production of ecological products and improvement of communal infrastructure (roads) as priorities. The opening of a border crossing planned for 2006 is also an important project that is seen as a prospect for increasing the economic possibilities for the municipality.

The difficulties facing the local government are ambiguous. The legal processes of decentralization, the lacks of technical equipment, and a bureaucratic organizational structure have created many obstacles to the so-called one-stop shop system.

In addition, Berovo needs conditions to develop a social/cultural life. There is great need for cultural institutions such as a cinema or theatre, and facilities for children's after-school activities such as sports center. There are kindergartens (even in the villages) but most of the support for working mothers is provided by the network of family elders. This area has a traditional family structure similar to other small towns in Macedonia.

**Gevgelija** municipality's priorities are in strategic planning for development. Priorities include increasing the agricultural production and mapping areas of foreign investments. The Committee for Local Economic Development in Gevgelija has already been established with the mission of following economic trends and working with the needs of the citizens. Due to the large amount of agricultural land, the majority of inhabitants substance farm to sustain their family. Since much of the land is still state-owned, the municipality has issues with land ownership.

Outside of agricultural and wine producing activities, tourism is also considered a developing sector. The boarder crossing with Greece and the nearby mountain resort of Kozuf are possible areas for growth.

In **Struga**, the local government employs 55 people only 17 of who are women. Out of the 27 council members, 4 are women. The local government has set infrastructure, urbanization and local economic development as priorities for development. The local government is aware of the need for more gender balance in projects related to Local Economic Development and plans to open a business incubator and tourist bureau.

The municipality of Struga was among the first municipalities to establish an office for local economic development. As a result, the office has a developed local economic development strategy. The strategy was created with a participatory process based on the local community representatives. The team was created in March 2002 and finished the strategic plan in December of 2002. An action plan was created for the period of 2002-2006. The goals of the activities focus on four important issues:

- Develop the municipality as a tourist resort with a representative tourist offer;
- Decrease unemployment and support small and medium enterprises;
- Develop traffic and municipal infrastructure to improve quality of life;

- Improve the production and marketing of agricultural products.

In addition, an action plan was developed to support the four goals. However, there is no planned development specifically focused on women's activities. One reference is made in the area of tourism development by establishing a center of production for handcrafts and souvenirs.

### **Gender Mechanisms in the Local Government: Possibilities to Influence Decision-Making**

The majority of women interviewed are not informed about existing gender mechanisms within the local government. They do not know how to voice their needs through the local government. Local governments in some areas invite representatives from different sectors to discuss their needs and open the door for future cooperation; however, there is little follow-through.

Women's participation in public life is generally high. In **Berovo**, the majority of directors of public institutions such as school, kindergarten, social protection fund, court, pension fund and others are women. The general impression in Berovo is that women are participating in political life but not in the business sector. The active inclusion of women in the local government was ensured with the establishment of a gender commission within the local government in June 2005. However, it seems that this committee has yet to become active. The local government will need to be proactive about including women in the local economy. The municipality needs the support of the Ministry of Local Self-government and local women's NGOs regarding the work of the gender commission. While the number of women in leading public institutions has increased (as stated above), there needs to be concrete mechanisms in place to ensure active participation in resolving issues impacting women's lives. These specific mechanisms are laid out in detail in part 6 and 7 of this assessment.

The local government in **Gevgelija** has nineteen city council members, only four of who are women. The municipality desperately needs to establish mechanisms for increasing women's participation in the local government decision-making process. In addition the municipality needs to be more cooperative with the NGO sector on specific issues. Yet, in contrast to Berovo, the municipality of Gevgelija has begun the process of e-government and is increasing its transparency and outreach.

Of the three municipalities, **Struga** has a more functional gender equality commission within the local government. Its advisory board has five members (three women and two men) and has been in existence since March 2005. The committee was established by the initiative of the Association of women's organizations supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (i.e. the Department for gender equality). A MOU was signed between the three parties. The Mayor has promised to secure free working space for the commission and to consider the decisions and recommendations it provides.

The committee has developed an action plan that aims to sensitize council members, local government staff, women's NGOs and political parties to the position of women in



society. A re-assessment of current legal regulations as well as the simplification of administrative procedures for free legal advice for women are included in the program. Additionally, the program aims to increase the number of women in government and managing institutions at the local level, empower women in the economic environment, support marginalized women, provide control and improvement for women's working conditions, secure equal opportunities for education and implement a gender analysis of the documents of the municipality.

Activities to support these goals do not always reflect the goals of the envisioned gender commission. Activities envisioned for the commission include a wide range of activities: organizing campaigns for environmental protection, dealing with domestic violence via establishing of an SOS line, providing school equipment. Most of the activities outlined for the commission that refer directly to women's issues are arranged as seminars and public discussions. These activities fall within the mandate of NGOs rather than a local government committee. The committee could undertake lobbying activities that include stakeholders as non-voting members used to voice the needs of women in the community. OSCE had been involved in financially supporting the committee's activities which implies a possible conflict of interests for some of the commission members. Financial support for the initiatives of the commission is welcome rather than for coordination efforts.

Nevertheless, most of those interviewed in Struga were aware of the gender commission and the work of the local women's NGOs.

### ***Role of local NGOs***

The civil society sector in **Berovo** is quite concerning. In the municipality of Berovo are registered a total of 67 NGOs divided mainly in 5 sectors: agriculture, tourism, environment, culture and sports and handicrafts. There are only a few active associations. There is only one women's NGO that was established almost a year ago under the initiative of the Local Development Agency. It has around fifty women members but no executed activities. The main goals of the organization are the improvement of women's position in society, social care for women and the prevention of domestic violence. The organization faces many challenges. They lack working space and have difficulty motivating women to become members. The leadership must create an organizational strategic plan and decide which activities will be initiated. At the moment, the organization is lobbying to become part of the national Association of women's organizations in Macedonia.

On the other hand, the association of women weavers in Berovo is a successful example of a professional association serving its members' needs. It was established by a donor organization; however, in the past 4 years it has grown into a 40-member organization with a clear goal and focused activities. The women use locally produced wool to weave carpets, clothing and make decorations. Connections with donors have enabled them to visit handicraft fairs abroad and to utilize the advice of specialized consultants. The members of the association sustain activities through the revenues from their products. They are in the process of deciding to continue as an association or register themselves as a

business. The challenge of this decision involves certain duties and taxes that must be respected if a business were formed. An office for communication with traders would need to be opened as well as purchasing equipment, improving member coordination scattered in several villages and securing a market for the products. They have had difficulties collecting payment on the products sold currently on consignment.

In **Gevgelija** there are approximately 75 registered NGOs established for a variety of reasons. There are 4-6 women's organizations whose main goals are in education, assistance for women in the areas of economic strength and improving family relations. The organizations face similar difficulties as those in Berovo and Struga. They lack funding, expertise and membership commitment.

It is apparent that women are not represented in professional associations such as associations of wine-producers and farmers. These organizations are similar to the women's NGOs; they do not maximize on their potential. There are many potential areas of service they could provide to members of the associations. They could provide advice on specific problems the members' experience. In addition, they could charge for services such as informational seminars on development in the field, as well as act as mediators between the producers and traders by setting up an exchange market.

In **Struga** there are 74 registered NGOs of which 7 are women's NGOs and are quite active. There are several women's based NGOs that work in the field of encouraging women's political representation at a local level. These activities resulted in the election of some of the few female municipal city council members. The organizations have worked extensively in the area of human rights education, gender equality in the local schools, domestic violence prevention, anti-trafficking programs, economic education of women that have been laid off, etc.

While there seems to be underlying tension between various ethnic groups in Struga, women's NGOs have pledged to collaborate across ethnic divisions. They have been successful in the establishing networks and implementing joint projects. Some have developed a number of local branch offices in the rural areas. In addition, women's NGOs are motivated to begin programs in the area of increasing women's socio-economic strength as well as to undertake micro-crediting financing for women farmers.

### **Key Findings on Women's Economic Participation and Challenges**

According to those interviewed, a larger percentage of women are employed due to positions in the textile industry. Growth has been seen in this area in the municipalities of Berovo and Gevgelija. Foreign manufacturers looking for cheaper production costs encourage small-scale units producing textiles on the loan-system basis. This area of economic growth is supported by a large number of qualified employees. Berovo and Struga, for example, have a secondary school with lessons in textile production. In addition, women are found leading companies processing fruits, herbs and producing dairy products.

Women active in the field of business are more likely to employ other women especially in textile businesses. They frequently have little or no long-term planning and have not developed plans for investment or enlargement unless required by foreign partners. Under such conditions, the businesses have little freedom of production or direction. Survey respondents stated that enlarging production and adding new equipment would take place only if their foreign partners required them to do so. On the other hand, such businesses do not encourage or increase in women's participation in politics, economy or the public life. The business is established to maintain subsistence living in most cases and does not increase the employees' wealth or position in society. Some textile production units use the labor of women working from home. These kinds of products include knitting or embroidery for different additions to clothes. The women working from home pose difficulties for their employers due to their lack of experience with deadlines and mass production. They are paid per item and are not registered employees. Most of these women see the activity as an addition to their regular household chores and not as a business opportunity. They are not association members and have not interest in becoming so.

Another major problem identified by women regarding local business is the disabling procedures. Banks are not flexible with loans. For example, during the conflict in Macedonia in 2001, banks requested interest rates be paid regularly even though all production had been stopped. In addition, banks require high security for the loans and have a selective process for accepting coverage. In order for loans to be enabling, women entrepreneurs would require bank loans with an interest rates ranging from 0.4% to 4% annually.

Registration is another obstacle for new businesses. These procedures take place in the court in Shtip located 85km away from Beroovo. Similarly, Bitola is the regional center where businesses in Struga must register. Women also must pay lawyers significant sums of money register their business.

The state organization, formerly called the "employment bureau", has been operating as an employment center for the past year. It is responsible for undertaking active measures to increase employment. Measures include research of the labor market and developing a "working club". Agencies also face many difficulties. First and foremost is the lack of financial capital to assist persons interested in starting their own business. They need to have the fund necessary or refer citizens to credit lines for SME funds. The employment bureau needs to be restructured to offer continuous employment training for citizens to gain important job skills. The bureau should also simplify the selection and hiring process. Their mandate includes performing labor market research and training unemployed persons.

Additionally, those interviewed from the private sector pointed out that state organizations and bodies distributing credits are doing so in nontransparent fashion.

Existing women entrepreneurs (especially those in the food processing field) face difficulties regarding the collection of payments, secure placement of the products and insecure relations between them and wholesale buyers. Loans are needed to enlarge

existing business. Businesses producing jams and vinegar, processing fruit and vegetables, and preparing dry herbs have potential for growth. Relations with mediators such as supermarkets are strained since they often buy on consignment and usually pay after 90 to 120 days. Producers additionally have many expenses associated with sanitary inspection and the content analysis of the product. Those interested in producing from home (cakes and other homemade foods) have difficulties paying for the required inspections.

Women that produce marmalade, rolls, fresh juice and local specialties as well as those that knit, embroider and produce traditional crafts lack funds and marketing for their products. The problem is linked to a lack of information about business fairs, markets, etc.

It is difficult to motivate women to organize themselves jointly to lobby for increased appearance in the labor market. Trainings (seminars) on entrepreneurship for future businesses are greatly needed. Women need to start joint efforts to improve their conditions.

The best models for transferring knowledge related to women's participation are "success stories". Agricultural associations have been identified as positive examples while state institutions have set negative example. Unfortunately, women are not members of the successful agricultural associations. Development plans are impossible without attitude changes by state institutions. Access to capital via a favorable credit policy is a must. The negative trends in other sectors have a negative impact motivation for change in the agricultural sector. However, some traders note that the traditional methods of the farmers are an impediment to development.

An idea proposed during the interviews was to build an exhibition space. The space would be set up as a traditional home displaying handcrafts, rugs, cakes and pies as a tourist site. The idea would need to be combined with a more extensive tourism development plan.

In **Gevgelija** the possibilities for women's economic participation are similar and lie in the area of agriculture, wine-production and growing, gardening and horticulture. The climate is good for growing strawberries, figs, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. Processing could also take place in the area.

Agriculture in Macedonia has been faced with a number of challenges since the dissolution of the bigger and more-protected market of the former-Yugoslavia. The main challenges producers face are restricted markets, increased competitiveness and low prices. Prices of the raw materials are high; however, producers lack strategy and planning. The role of the farmers in this changed environment is an expanded one. Agriculture often plays the role of additional activity without being too much market-oriented. The education level of most farmers (primary school) also poses a problem when negotiating with buyers or communicating with banks.

Farming and agriculture is usually a family business including women. There are differences in the position of women and men farmers but they are not dramatic. Women participate together with men on an equal basis in fulfilling agricultural chores. In some areas (such as Beroovo) there are more patriarchal relations regarding the participation of women in the process of decision-making. In Gevgelija, women are perceived to have a larger role in the farm management process compared to past generations; however, not significantly larger. Women have double obligations in the home and on the farm, therefore making it difficult to maintain larger roles in the field. In addition, agriculture and farming tend to be alternative activities for most people in the three communities. Women are equally involved in the toil but not always in the decision-making process. Generally speaking, women farmers are more willing to learn and can be bearers of change. They do not hold strong views about habits and prejudices in the sector or the way things are done within it. Taking this into consideration, women could be good in generating modernization.

Around 90% of the vineyard owners in Gevgelija have this as an alternative economic activity. However, profit can be made only from larger areas of land. If the Ministry of Agriculture decides to give up land under concession, the number of “real” producers can be increased since it is necessary to work on a minimum of 10 hectares of land to have a registered business. Most vineyards grow table and wine grapes. Often times the product is sold to wineries or abroad, illegally. The largest problem in developing the table wine industry is marketing. There is a need for creating a stock- exchange for grapes placement.

In Gevgelija complaints were raised about high interest rates on available bank loans. Additionally, banks allow a two-year grace period when at least 3-4 years are required for growing grapes. New breeds with quality seeds are not being introduced because they are too expensive. Value added tax (VAT) is another burden for farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture and the local government should develop policy for the wine industry. The grape industry should be included in strategic plans for the municipality. In Gevgelija, over 2240 hectares are currently vineyards with more land needing revitalization. However, existing grapes are not competitive within the EU markets.

In the agricultural sector, unemployed female landowners should be motivated to begin cultivating their land. An NGO from Gevgelija has obtained a European certificate and are interested in working with female agriculturalists to be certified as well. Motivating women to begin agricultural activities is not the only area of change, traditional methods of production need to be replaced methods and marketing according to EU standards. Activities could be expanded from preserving fruits and vegetables to drying them. The sunny climate allows possibilities for utilizing solar energy.

Women from Beroovo identify difficulty finding a market for their products while women in Gevgelija find the prices of their products very low. Generally restricted financial capacity for investment, small markets, expensive fertilizers, and low prices seem to be the problems faced by all women farmers.

In **Struga** women could develop a market of wool duvets and pillows as well as knitting sweaters. Organic food and fertilizer production could also be developed in Struga and sold elsewhere. The fertilizer could be produced on the farms and to help feed cattle in the region.

In the context of Struga it is important to emphasize the sector of tourism and with it the other accompanying commercial branches which are directly linked to tourism and in which women can find their place. Connected to this are also the opportunities for opening crafts-and-arts studios in which women would fabricate traditional objects and souvenirs in function off enriching the tourist offer. That is why the development and cultivation of traditional skills of knitting and weaving and traditional food production are important parts of the tourist offer. The production of organic food is an option for the women in all three municipalities and consequently also for Struga.

In Gevgelija, women expressed interest in growing flowers with fertilizer. Growing flowers can be linked to growing mushrooms (bukovki) because the mushrooms refuse is used as fertilizer in horticulture. Growing Californian worms could also expand the fertilizer market. Difficulties in agriculture include high prices of oil for industrial production. Industries pay the same as regular consumers. Experience from foreign countries shows that the Ministry of Agriculture or the local government must secure better conditions for oil prices for local producers. It could alleviate a large financial burden.

An important issue to note in the effort to increase women's economic activity is the need for a support system the increased activities. Establishing service centers to provide networking and advisory opportunities or other necessary services (baby-sitters, seasonal agricultural workers, child tutors, caretakers for elderly etc.) is greatly needed.

## **Recommendations for Sub-Project Strategy**

Generally speaking, women appear to have a different approach towards running enterprises than men. Agencies working in this area should use female mentors, trainers and advisers whenever possible to increase the effectiveness of the services as well as provide role models.

Programs for increasing economic development involving women should be designed for both groups and individuals. Group-based programs give women the chance to make contacts, network, and learn from the experiences of others. Individual-based programs allow women to receive highly individualized advice focused on real problems in the field. Actions to support enterprise development should focus on sectors that can provide women with an adequate income, thereby increasing women's financial self-sufficiency. Strategies to move women into higher value markets in traditional or new sectors are important.

Training programs should apply a modular approach including both a set of basic courses such as budgeting, marketing, accounting and negotiation as well as provide the opportunity to select from a set of additional courses. The variety would make the training flexible and give clients the independence to choose the skills on which they want to focus. Program should also include entrepreneurial development training in order to support new ideas for starting and managing one's own business. Business skills alone may not be sufficient for women, who often lack confidence and belief in their own abilities as entrepreneurs. Post-start-up support could be offered to trainees after having applied skills learned in earlier trainings. The training may be offered through mentoring. The mentoring process addresses specific problems faced by women entrepreneurs. Additionally, pre-start-up mentoring can help women choose the best career path. Is starting a business really the right choice? Women entrepreneurs should not be the only focus of business support and personal development programs. Starting such training at a young age to encourage girls to become entrepreneurs and to develop their self-confidence is also important.

Finally, access to credit should be a key element in developing business support. Currently, limited access to finance is a constraint faced by many entrepreneurs, both female and male. Institutions should employ different methods of providing access to finances. These methods could be supported by loan guarantors or partnerships with formal financial institutions and could reduce the costs of providing credit to micro enterprises and women entrepreneurs in particular.

The approach chosen - an institution that offers a broad range of services for (potential) female entrepreneurs, targeted support programs and specific events - depends more on the range and type of problems that need to be addressed than on the specific municipality.

The issue of women's unemployment could be addressed by encouraging women-led SMEs. NGOs could be made part of an advisory board for economic issues within local government, and the NGOs alongside the board could promote credit lines and alleviate administrative obstacles for SME establishment and licensing women-led businesses. Free-of-charge services for developing business plans and strategies for securing funding could also be provided. These services could be designed to encourage (micro) regional co-operation in this field.

Raising the awareness of local government authorities is one way of dealing with the poor conditions women experience in the workforce. This can be done via women advisors who are members of such institutions. The women representatives should insist that an investigation be made into the working conditions in the questionable businesses. Simultaneously, women's NGOs and local government groups should lobby the central government for legislative improvement on women's employment.

The following are some **essential** recommendations regarding the **Local Governments** in all three communities:

- Strengthen the institutional mechanisms of gender equality at local level through the gender equality commissions in the units of local self-government. The commissions should have a clearly defined mandate, help to strengthen capacities, both internal and external members and extensive cooperation with local NGOs. The gender commissions will collect relevant information from stakeholders in the community. They will serve as an advising team, proposing concrete measures regarding support of various women's initiatives rather than a direct implementer of projects and activities. In all three communities the gender commissions have access via the local employment agencies to sex-disaggregated data for analyzing the impact of economic, trade, social, pension, health, education etc. policies. The information can help formulate indicators to measure gendered impact for reporting, monitoring and policy change.
- Gender commissions can undertake lobbying and monitoring activities regarding women's empowerment. The gender commission in **Struga** can undertake these recommended actions; however, the commissions in **Berovo** and **Gevgelija** are either non-functional or do not exist. In these cases, a commission should be established and developed according to above-mentioned recommendations.
- Gender commissions (especially in **Struga**) should actively promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality issues in all standard practices and regulations of the municipality. These mechanisms will help involve women in decision-making, problem-solving and would also allow municipalities to gain a clearer picture of the needs of women and difficulties in meeting these needs in the community.
- The information collected by the gender commissions can be used by the local and central government to prepare national legislation on gender equality and other such legislation (employment legislation, electoral regulations, etc.). A portion of the municipal budget should be used to fund women's activities and should be appropriated with gender-sensitive decision-making. If Municipalities used a more gendered approach to decision making, they will have a better picture of the needs of the community.

In addition to the essential recommendations, more **detailed** recommendations for the **Local Governments** are as follows:

- Involve women in planning for local economic development. When organizing planning sessions for LED ensure there are females present to give their perspective. Take into consideration the economic activities where women are already active in the community. In **Gevgelija** and **Struga** provide links for women involved in production of fruits and vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, melons, etc.) to enable knowledge of exchange experiences, ideas and information relevant to the production. Also, discuss problems and point out procedures for requesting assistance from the LG. For the planning process in **Berovo** bring together women involved in gathering fruits, herbs and vegetables (berries, mushrooms, apples, herbs, spices etc.) in order to explore possibilities to assist these women. One type of assistance that could be provided is to help them attain licenses for collecting herbs and spices as well as to coordinate the process of collection.
- As different community priorities are set up in the local economic development plan on the basis of participatory decision making, the local governments should place



their efforts to speed initiatives that are contributing to economic progress of the community (free of charge / simplified registration for SMEs, simplifying other bureaucratic procedures, provision of access to information, mediation in cooperation across borders and between twining municipalities, etc).

- The LG in all three communities to provide possibilities to register by alleviating / releasing from duties / taxes those who want to produce items related to developing of old crafts and traditional skills. This especially is relevant in **Berovo** where this type of activities currently exists and has shown success in the market. The support provided from the local government need not necessarily be in the form of funds, but can also include provision of free space for production or exhibition, access to market information, establishment of links with similar businesses in the region and across the borders, etc.
- With increased knowledge of economic development, LG can specifically target women-led SMEs (especially existing initiatives - knitting, sewing, weaving, producing home-made foods, flowers, fertilizers etc.). They can be assisted by simplified legal procedures (one-stop shops) and localizing registration procedures. Additional alleviation could be provided by decreasing taxes or fees for raw materials for industrial production (oil for example).
- In **Struga** and **Gevgelija** the LED department needs to be strengthened and could be transformed into a mediator for registration of SMEs, for assisting SME market access and association support. One possible idea is to establish a business club to provide information for existing and new businesses, possibilities for labor market exchange and possible markets/placement. The basis of this need should be laid out in the strategic plan of the municipality. If the municipality already has developed a strategic plan a good idea would be to re-visit it in light of new changes that might have occurred in the meantime. In **Berovo** the LG needs to develop a plan for improving the existing LED department in which one woman is employed.
- In **all three municipalities** cooperate with the Local Employment Agencies in order to make use as well as support their proactive measures and use their budget for trainings in certain areas (producing Californian worms, mushrooms; new standards in wine producing; honey production etc.).
- In **all three communities** initiate and provide support for the creation of cooperatives as means for women to become economically active. Women, especially those involved in the production of traditional foods and clothing, are usually housewives and/or retired and may not have the skills or will to start their own business. It is easier for these women to form cooperatives that start member-owned businesses with membership open to those who use the services. They can be democratically controlled and operated on a nonprofit basis. They return profits to members on the basis of patronage. We recommend the producers type of cooperative. Producer cooperatives are owned by people who produce similar types of products - by farmers who grow crops, raise cattle, milk cows, or by craftsmen and artisans. By joining together, they leverage greater bargaining power with buyers. They also combine resources to more effectively market and brand their products, improving the incomes of their members. The model could be immediately set up in **Berovo** where a successful association of women weavers "Serafim" exists. There are many areas in which women could begin cooperative: homemade food producers, honey producers and fruits and vegetable collectors. In **Struga** and

**Gevgelija** first a critical mass of women who produce early vegetable products, fruits and dairy products need to be recognized, a link between them established, similar goals identified and then the cooperative can be established.

- In **all three municipalities** support LDAs to undertake activities for enabling labor market access for women producers and/or to supply resources such as fund(s) for SME development.

#### **For Local NGOs:**

##### General recommendations:

- Gather gender-related statistics. Government officials want reliable information to make decisions. They cannot rely on complaints. Research is essential to back up the reality. Conduct research, gather data and analyze the information received to provide the necessary justification for advocacy proposals.
- Work with municipalities and advise them to devise gender budgets, and gender-sensitive decision-making on financial spending, in order to address the needs that women face.
- Work with municipalities to develop policies that enable equal access in education, health and the work force. This could be done by working with gender equality commissions in the municipalities.
- Build partnerships and coalitions both across borders and with national NGOs working on similar issues. This is a good way to increase trust between other NGOs while advocating for common goals. It also provides a venue for the exchange of ideas. In the process of women's empowerment, partnership with men is also an essential factor.
- Make a clear list of priorities of women's needs in the community, go step-by-step and be realistic in demands. In a market economy a bank is a business and cannot create special loans for women: they will have to evaluate the risk, collateral and loans just as for any other person or business. In such situations, investigate alternatives that might be realistic, such as locally run small savings and micro-credit units and ensure all applications are treated equally.
- Use the media to get the message across; this will help to educate the public, and thereby both gain public support for issues raised and raise awareness of advocacy proposals.

##### Specific recommendations:

- Women's NGOs active in **Berovo** and **Gevgelija** need to increase membership and become more familiar with volunteer management. The most successful NGOs are usually those that have broad support from the people they represent. NGOs will be more successful in their advocacy if they can demonstrate to local officials that they have the support of a large number of people but to do so, NGOs will need to reach out to their communities, and ensure they accurately represent their members' views and win their trust.
- In addition, in **Berovo** the local women's organization needs to revise its mission and goals. The members need to identify specific activities to undertake and design projects to be implemented. In addition, the organization needs to undertake activities that are relevant in the community. After this groundwork, the

organization can decide if the network of women's NGOs is the path for them (for example SOZM).

- NGOs in **all three municipalities** (especially **Struga's** strong and experienced women's NGO) need to include in their mission and in their action plans the economic empowerment of women. Increased political participation of women, improved education and social care (protection) for women tend to be the most often cited goals of the local women's organizations. Even though most of the interviewed NGO representatives point out the need of economic independence of women to achieve true emancipation, they rarely include economic sustainability of women in their programs. In a market economy, banks are businesses and cannot create special loans for women. Banks must evaluate the risk, collateral and loan amount equally. In view of this, alternative methods of financing should be developed such as small savings and micro-credit units.
- In **all three municipalities** and especially in **Berovo and Gevgelija**, make a clear list of priorities of women's needs in the community and use it for developing your own programs. Go step-by-step and be realistic in demands.

#### For LDAs:

- The need for the services already being provided by the LDAs in **all three municipalities** is paramount. Activities in the future should remain on improving local economic development. In this sense LDAs could be institutionalized within the units of local government as LED departments. LDA staff has the needed experience in making assessments, collecting information, providing links with external experts as well as grant-management skills. Local governments could utilize their expertise. This is especially the case in **Berovo** where the LG needs support for local economic development. Another possibility (especially for **Struga** and **Gevgelija**) is for LDAs to establish themselves as independent development support agencies providing services in the area of market access for businesses. In such cases the LG would be obliged to use the resources provided by these agencies as well as to channel their funds through the agencies for providing services which they cannot implement themselves (for example grants management). Whichever role they choose, LDAs can assist other local institutions and entities (such as the Agency for development of agriculture) provide support to women's economic activities.
- Whether they establish themselves as departments of LG or as development support agencies, in **all three municipalities** the LDAs need to devise special plans to increase women's economic participation. This could be done by assisting them in business registration, providing small-grants for start-ups, and enabling market access. Women farmers/producers/agriculturalists can be assisted by acquiring certain skills such as farm management skills, developing (farm) budgets, and designing business plans. LDAs could also help to increase women's motivation for legal economic activities by promoting "success stories" of other women's economic experience in various areas. The LDAs should support and promote the process of associating women within cooperatives for joint production and market presentation.
- LDAs in **all three municipalities** should play a major role in meeting capacity-building needs of women's associations and businesses. Two spheres need to be

covered: one part to relate to technologies and processes (market oriented activities, business planning, farm budgets, new technologies of production, new products) and another to organizational development and institution strengthening (human resources, management, negotiation skills, English and IT). LDAs could also provide tailored trainings for different types of agricultural activities to raise the level of knowledge of women in the area. Training could educate women producers (for example mushroom and plants collectors or milk producers etc.) on quality standards and quality levels needed to sell their products in certain markets. In addition marketing or market placement skills are needed as well as financial services. LDA's need not necessarily be the providers of these trainings but rather serve as mediators in the process.

- In all three municipalities LDAs should work on motivating women and directing them towards preparing processed foods instead of selling raw materials. For example drying mushrooms, apples, figs, other fruits and vegetables, smoking fish or to conserve them will bring in more money than selling them fresh. In addition, women could be encouraged to produce souvenirs from wood or wool rather than sell it in bulk. This would allow for bigger profit and will make them less reliable on factors they cannot always control such as weather conditions or providing appropriate storage of fresh products.
- Since women tend to have less prejudices regarding traditional production and can be the bearers for change and modernization LDAs should try to involve women in the economy by promoting new products and new technologies as well as ideas. For example in **Gevgelija**, LDAs could assess possible areas of expansion and support women to produce not only standard early-vegetables but less familiar products such as asparagus, snails, flowers as well as revive the traditional art silk production. In **Berovo**, LDAs could inspire women to produce honey and honey products, local traditional foods and wool clothing, accessories, carpets and ornaments, dried organic products, as well as new types of dairy products. In **Struga**, women begin to preserve (smoke, drying ...etc.) fish, produce (weave, knit) traditional style accessories and clothing, to farm their own land according to new technologies and produce dairy products. Women in Struga can offer tourist services in the form of bed & breakfast in private houses.
- In **all three municipalities** women need to be encouraged to take a more active part in associations (especially professional ones) such as the association of farmers, of women farmers, of wine producers etc. and to secure decision-making roles. The LDAs need to actively promote participation of women and women leadership with regards to these associations.

## Training design

Regarding the aforementioned recommendations, CIRa proposes the following training and capacity building plan:

Proposed Training Modules:	Target Audience:	Expected Outputs:
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Basic/Advanced Gender Training (Human rights approach, division of roles and responsibilities between men and women, new trends of gender equality at home, at work, in the society)	LG's personnel, members of gender commissions, NGO representatives, business representatives in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To induce bigger involvement of women at the labor market;</li> <li>- To increase acceptance of women's businesses in the community</li> </ul>
Mentoring for Women-Led Start-up Businesses	LDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To help women strengthen entrepreneurial ideas and initiatives;</li> <li>- To provide direction, guidance and mentoring in the process of establishing a business</li> </ul>
Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Budgeting	LG management teams, NGO leaders, School Principals, and other institutional Directors and representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To initiate gender specific support in the community;</li> <li>- To promote necessary commitment from management teams in the community regarding gender</li> </ul>
Establishment of Community Protocols on Women's Empowerment	LG, gender commissions, institutions, NGO representatives, business groups;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To promote commitment for women's empowerment;</li> <li>- To design protocols for women's empowerment in several areas – health status, social life, economic status etc.</li> <li>- To identify leaders in the community responsible for implementing the protocols</li> </ul>
Action Planning for Community Coordinated Approach to Gender Entrepreneurship	LGs, gender commissions, Employment Agencies, NGO representatives, other relevant institutions (local branches of ministries, employment agencies, agriculture agencies, etc.), and local businesses, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To introduce a participative methodology in order to create a community coordinated approach for stimulating women's entrepreneurship;</li> <li>- To improve the implementation and sustainability measures in women's enterprises on a local level</li> </ul>
Advocacy and Lobbying for Preparation of State Legislation on Gender Equality	Gender commissions, NGO representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To advocate and lobby for improvement of regulations in the area of gender equity;</li> <li>- To inform community members of the difficulties faced by women</li> </ul>

Starting and Managing New Business (SMEs)	Individuals and women's groups showing interest in starting a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To help women's groups and individuals start and manage a new business;</li> <li>- To strengthen the entrepreneurial attitude among women in the local communities</li> </ul>
Mediation / Negotiation Skills to Access Funds	LGs, LDAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To gain skills to attract funds for community development (loans, credit, grants etc);</li> <li>- LDAs to act as guarantor for loans to women-led SMEs;</li> <li>- LDAs or LGs in the role of mediator to establish a community foundation</li> </ul>
Establish and Develop Cooperatives	LDAs, LGs, women's groups with similar mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To introduce the concept of cooperatives and present their strengths and benefits;</li> <li>-To assist in development of a common approach to the marketplace</li> </ul>
SME Business Leadership and Management (advanced course)	Individuals and women's groups focused on developing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To present skills in business management;</li> <li>- To provide tools and methods to resolve common leadership and management problems</li> </ul>
Women Self-Esteem and Self Confidence at the Labor Market	Individuals and women's groups focused on developing businesses (focusing on those that are interested in starting their own business or have already started a business)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To increase women's self-esteem and self-confidence in the working environment;</li> <li>- To encourage/broaden women's business initiatives in the community</li> </ul>
Negotiation Empowerment	Local women's business groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To increase women's confidence in the negotiating process;</li> <li>- To gain practical skills for negotiation</li> </ul>
Access to the Market	Local women's business groups, LDAs, LGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To introduce new ideas in market access;</li> <li>- To build tools and techniques to be successful in the domestic and/or international marketplace;</li> <li>- To train LDAs to act as mediators</li> </ul>

		in the process of market access
Business Development Plans for SMEs	Local women's business groups, LDAs, LD person/ department in the LGs	- To design business-specific production plan including: design of the company structure, market definition, financing and competition
Marketing Management	Local women's business groups, LDAs, LD person/ departments in the LGs	- To introduce the need of the marketing strategy; - To design specific marketing plan
Organizational Case Study Presentations of Successful Women Business Stories	Local women's business groups, other members in the business community	- To increase the involvement of women in the labor market; - To increase acceptance of women's businesses at the local level
Development of Skills (Interpersonal Skills, Business Communication Skills, Negotiation, techniques for holding successful meetings, etc.)	Local women's business groups	- To improve communication between businesses and employees; - To develop critical interpersonal and professional skills required in a dynamic workplace
Training in Information Technology	Local women's business groups	- To improve opportunities for creating international business contacts, networking; - To obtain relevant business information about the international market
Strategic Planning, PCM Cycle, Monitoring and Evaluation	Gender committees, NGOs	- To enable gender commissions and NGO representatives to set priorities, identify aims and objectives, develop activity plans, identify partners for implementation, monitor and evaluate impact and outputs

In addition to the training and capacity building plan provided above, specific skills and information need to be introduced in the area of production technologies and standards. Women starting their own businesses will have specific fields of interest defined by each municipality.

Production technologies relate to production, processing and packaging as well as achieving EU standards for each area to broaden competitive capacity into the European market.

<b>Technology/processing</b>	<b>Berovo</b>	<b>Gevgelija</b>	<b>Struga</b>
Licensing and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For gathering fruits, herbs and vegetables (berries, mushrooms, apples, herbs, spices etc.);</li> <li>- For traditional food (in view of future development of tourism);</li> <li>- for production of souvenirs and handicrafts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For producing fruits and vegetables (mushrooms, asparagus, kiwi, pomegranate, etc.);</li> <li>- For traditional food (in view of future development of tourism)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For traditional food (considering development of tourism as a priority in the municipality);</li> <li>- tourist guides;</li> <li>- pensions (bed &amp; breakfasts).</li> </ul>
Processing in agriculture / cattle breeding / wine production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruits, herbs and vegetables (berries, mushrooms, apples, herbs, spices etc.);</li> <li>- Dairy products;</li> <li>- Potato processing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruits and vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, melons, etc.);</li> <li>- Organic fertilizers;</li> <li>- Horticulture;</li> <li>- Wine production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fruits and vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, berries, apples etc.);</li> <li>- Meat production;</li> <li>- Organic fertilizers;</li> <li>- Horticulture;</li> <li>- Fish processing (conserving, etc.)</li> </ul>
Processing in textile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textile production to overcome loan system and create conditions for new and unique clothing lines;</li> <li>- Production of fine wool products (use of already existing traditionally produced, weaved, knitted Malesevoja motifs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textile production to overcome loan system and create conditions for new and unique clothing lines;</li> <li>- Reviving traditional silk production and processing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textile production to overcome loan system and create conditions for new and unique production lines (curtains, furniture material, etc.);</li> <li>- Production of fine wool products (pillows, clothes, etc.)</li> </ul>
Packaging	To design and pack half-processed or final products in an appealing way;	To design and pack half-processed or final products in an appealing way;	To design and pack half-processed or final products in an appealing way;
EU standards	Fruits, herbs and vegetables as well as dairy products to meet EU standards /obtaining certificates;	Fruits and vegetables and wine to meet EU standards/ obtaining certificates;	Meat and dairy products to meet EU standards /obtaining certificates;

It is important to bear in mind that the proposed capacity building trainings and technology development plan is based on the sample interviewed (not always



statistically representative). It is important that the next step be identifying the target group within the municipalities and developing a more specific plan for women in the respective municipalities. Additional areas of development may be needed.

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