Gender Equality in Europe and Central Asia

What are the challenges?

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are at the heart of UNDP's development mandate. Gender equality is a matter of human rights and is critical to achieving sustainable development. Advancing gender equality can empower women as agents of change and leaders in development processes that shape their lives.

In the Europe and Central Asia region, UNDP integrates gender equality principles in key programmatic areas: sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, as well as resilience building.

Sustainable development

The equal participation, rights and opportunities of women are essential in eradicating poverty and promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth. Women, particularly poor and rural women whose lives are closely linked with natural resources, have valuable knowledge and experience. They can be leaders in shaping national environment policies. UNDP works with national partners to:

- Reduce or eliminate barriers to women's economic empowerment, including by addressing women's unpaid care work and promoting decent work and equal access to credit for women.
- Increase the gender responsiveness of social protection strategies and measures.
- Support efforts to increase women's access to ownership and sustainable management of ecosystem goods and services, including through climate finance.

Democratic governance and peacebuilding

For governance to be inclusive and effective, women must participate in processes and institutions, and benefit equally from services. UNDP works with national partners to:

- Promote women’s equal representation in parliaments, local institutions, public administrations and the judiciary.
- Strengthen women’s legal rights and access to justice.
- Enhance national capacities to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence, and to provide services and access to justice for victims.

MATTERS OF FACT

- Violence against women. Approximately 29 percent of women in the ECA region have suffered from sexual or/and intimate partner violence in their lifetime. In Serbia, over 54 percent of women have experienced family violence. In Turkey, 39 percent of married women have experienced physical violence.
- Women's unemployment and poverty increased. Women's employment rates across the region are considerably lower than those of men. The gender wage gap persists ranging from 7 to 53 percent.
- Women's underrepresentation in decision-making. The proportion of women in National Parliaments remains below the global average of 22 percent in ten countries in the region.

Designer at her workshop, set up with the support of a UNDP self-employment programme in Kosovo* (Photo: UNDP Kosovo)
Climate and disaster resilience

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are integral to building individual, institutional and societal resilience. UNDP works with national partners to:

- Ensure that women participate and benefit equally from conflict prevention and peace building initiatives.
- Integrate gender perspectives in disaster risk reduction plans and initiatives.
- Ensure that women benefit equally from local development, employment creation and services.

UNDP in Action

- In Georgia, UNDP helped to establish the first women-led organic farming cooperatives in the country. The cooperatives have increased farmers’ incomes by 10 percent and now serve as models to women to start agro-businesses elsewhere in the country.

- In Moldova, UNDP supported an initiative to use biomass for energy production and mobilised the support of more than 1,000 women local leaders to significantly supplement municipal financing for biomass projects in their respective communities.

- In Turkey, UNDP in partnership with UN Women and ILO supported new research proving that public investment in social care services would not only create more and better jobs for women and men, but would address gender and socioeconomic inequalities while supporting better child development.

- In Kosovo*, as a result of UNDP advocacy, the performance indicators of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare now include the percentage of women receiving services for labour market integration.

- In Kyrgyzstan, UNDP with other UN partners supported the development of a gender sensitivity rating for political parties in an effort to raise public awareness about their level of commitment to gender equality.

- In Armenia, a joint EU-UNDP initiative helped women to participate more actively in local governance by providing them with trainings, consultations and networking events. Out of 135 women candidates supported, 82 were elected as heads of community and local council members.

- In Albania, UNDP supported the expansion of tracking and reporting mechanisms on violence against women and children with 27 out of 61 municipalities now having such mechanisms in place.

- In Tajikistan, UNDP supported the integration of gender-responsive approaches in disaster recovery interventions. Women-headed households were prioritised in 2015, with more than 14,000 women in disaster-hit areas reached through livelihoods initiatives.

Inside UNDP

To achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, UNDP implements essential measures to bring about a cultural transformation in the way country offices and Regional Hubs conduct their business. To increase capacity and accountability for gender mainstreaming, UNDP implements the Gender Equality Seal, a corporate certification process that recognizes good performance by UNDP offices in the delivery of gender equality results. Four country offices in the region have been awarded a Gender Equality Seal certification for their performance.

- Montenegro was awarded Gold certification.
- Moldova were awarded Silver certification.
- Belarus and Kosovo were awarded Bronze certification.

*References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).