



CONEX Balkan Project Rapid Gender Analysis Report Western Balkan Region – Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia

CONEX is a regional project implemented in six Balkan countries. The project is designed to support marginalized groups of people in the targeted communities that have suffered the most during the Covid-19 crisis. The Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) provides essential information about gender issues and concerns that should be addressed and will not only be used to define concrete action points and possible adaptations of project design but also as a learning tool and advocacy platform with national NGO networks and local/national authorities. The RGA objectives are to: assess the ways and the extent to which women and other vulnerable groups are affected by social and economic deprivation due to consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, explore how the prevailing gender norms and roles relate to the project activities and objectives—especially access to information, ability to access services, employment and effects of gender-based violence (GBV)—and increase project staff’s gender analysis capacities.

The RGA gave particular attention to discussing the intersectionality of gender with other aspects of identity. The RGA draws insights from 53 events and focus group discussions with 195 people between May and October 2021. These were 66% female, 21% ethnic minority (Roma and Ashkali), over 29% persons from rural areas, and 11% persons with disabilities.

Key Findings:

- **Patriarchal norms, roles and behaviors are still prevalent in the region.** Women tend to be more responsible for day-to-day decisions related to the household and children, while men take the lead in decisions about the purchase of larger and more expensive items. And, in the more traditional and rural communities, men/husbands are the main decision-makers as heads of households.
- **Domestic work done by women and girls is not perceived as real work** and is taken for granted.
- **The pandemic and restrictions have disproportionately affected vulnerable groups** (unemployed women and men, members of minorities, persons with disabilities and their family members, elderly people) at all levels (livelihoods, mental health, social contacts). They felt even more excluded, isolated, and dependent on others.

- **The availability of employment opportunities has worsened during the pandemic especially for vulnerable groups**, but interest in self-employment is high among both women and men.
- **Public health and care services were limited or absent during the pandemic**, particularly the older population and people with disabilities.
- **During the pandemic, more cases of gender/domestic violence** against women and girls were reported. At the same time, a **very low capacity for providing timely and adequate psycho-social and other type of needed assistance was reported by the service providers.**

Recommendations:

- **“Be the change you want to see”**, sensitize staff and build capacity to ensure that those who implement CONEX contribute to a more just and equal society by “walking the talk”.
- **Ensure gender integration in the project cycle and consider the “Do No Harm” principle.**
- **Develop adequate complaint and feedback mechanisms** at the project and community level with implementing partners to build trust, encourage participation, and support transparency and accountability.
- **Train staff and apply where appropriate new methods and tools** such as: CARE’s CSC method Community Score Card; SAA tool Social Analysis and Action, and the EMB approach (Engaging Men and Boys).
- **Make sure that within the Cash & Voucher Assistance transaction is transferred to the woman's bank account**, as she is mainly responsible for daily expenses. And **ensure “do no harm”**.
- For the home care, psycho-social assistance, and referrals to (public) services **engage both the service users and service providers/relevant stakeholders as allies** in the design, planning and implementation of activities.
- Regarding home-based care and soft skills to vocational training and business development and grant implementation: strengthen not only women's knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the planned tasks, but **challenge patriarchal gender roles and norms related to task sharing/household decisions** and sensitize them to placing women at the center of interventions to **prevent possible exacerbation of domestic violence/GBV incidents due to changing power.**
- **Consider employing men in jobs traditionally perceived “female jobs”** to become role models and allies and be part of the solution rather than a “problem”.
- **Involve service providers/local authorities as allies.**
- When sharing knowledge and organizing learning events plan to **ensure that target groups are adequately represented** at all events. This will allow them to **have a voice in shaping the way they receive assistance (CSC).**

This brief summarizes the RGA, written by CARE Balkan <http://careevaluations.org/evaluation/conex-balkan-project-rapid-gender-analysis-report-western-balkan-region-albania-bosnia-herzegovina-kosovo-montenegro-north-macedonia-and-serbia/>, October 2021.