

The woman that set the baseline for mainstreaming gender and climate change



Everywhere in the world, gender roles determine and create social expectations, opportunities and rights of women and men. The Republic of North Macedonia is no exception. The policy of gender equality and the empowerment of women is one of the fundamental principles of democracy and the social order of the state. Therefore, working towards the goal of achieving true gender equality and tackling existing inequalities and stereotypes about the role of women in society often means working with women and men differently, and recognizing that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different obstacles, have different aspirations and contribute to development in different ways.

*Ms. Elena Grozdanova, MSc
UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change Focal point
State Counselor for Equal Opportunities
Ministry of Labour and Social policy*

Although climate change affects both women and men, due to different positions in society, the consequences of climate change can have different effects, with women being much more affected by these changes.

As a direct participant in the creation of gender policies in the country, I was the initiator and active participant in the adoption of various gender related strategic policies in the Republic of North Macedonia. But despite the fact that strategic gender policies are successfully created, sustainable and functional, there was a threat that due to insufficient capacity we would not have the opportunity to integrate protection and promotion of the environment and climate change. Although I first encountered this question in 1995 during the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the preparation of an Action Plan (PDPA), where one of the strategic goals was the role of women in creating environmental and climate change policies, until 5 years ago there was no activity intersecting and overlapping gender and climate change.

The initiative and support from UNDP was an "initial trigger" to overcome this problem, and is already yielding positive results. I want to express my great satisfaction that our country recognized the importance of this issue and became one of the first in the region to start such activities. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, through the Sector for Equal Opportunities, accepted the challenge to provide an adequate response to the conditions brought by climate change. We started from scratch, and in just 5 years we can say that we are nearing the end of the first goal: gender policies that consider climate change and climate change policies that include the gender perspective thus improving the implementation of the envisaged climate actions.



But it was not easy to achieve all that. It is very difficult to explain the role of gender in climate actions or policies, and I was the one explaining all this, due to my many years of experience and being the one of the first focal points for gender and climate change under the UN Framework Convention on Climate change in the Balkans. I made a significant effort to ensure the sustainability of the whole process, to go through institutions instead of individuals.

Involving women in raising public awareness and educating urban and rural women to deal with the effects of climate change, the role of women in health care, in enabling sustainable development of communities, are just pieces of the puzzle. Education is very important, and in order to ensure this manuals were prepared according to which trainings are currently underway attended by employees of state and public institutions, but also by women from urban and rural areas. They are taught preventive and practical actions such as saving water and energy, reducing and selecting waste, etc.

Improving the cooperation of the local government and the civil society for implementation of climate actions is the next step, in order for all institutions, civil and international organizations to coordinate climate actions and ensure maximum involvement of girls and women in creating and adopting policies for successfully tackling climate change. This is an opportunity to build a good partnership platform.

The financial support for the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and our country from the Global Support Program, gives us an opportunity to emphasize once again our commitment and to support activities related to promoting the role of women in developing and implementing policies in all areas of social life and among other things, also in environment and climate change.