

Recommendations for the Mainstreaming of Gender in Waste Management and Waste Management Projects in Albania

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Disclaimer

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The status of Women in Waste Management in Albania

Waste Management in Albania

Albania processed approximately one million tons of household waste in 2019.¹ The waste management practices in Albania are dominated by a linear collect-and-dispose system which sees waste collected by municipalities and disposed of in landfills with varying degree of treatment. As municipalities are legally responsible for waste management systems, but have low levels of capacity and funding, only about 75% of waste is estimated to be collected while the rest is disposed of informally.²

Gendered Waste Management in Albania

Waste management is not a gender-neutral concept. Due to societal norms and gender stereotypes, which prescribe the roles and expectations society has for women and men, a gender analysis is necessary when addressing waste management.

The push to modernize and formalize the waste management sector is important and necessary for Albania to reach both EU requirements and sustainability. However, women were less likely to be hired for formal waste management jobs which they had previously done informally either because of discrimination or because they lacked the requisite educational or technical requirements such as being able to read or drive.

Very little data is available about the involvement of women in the waste management sector in Albania. To understand the gendered dimension of waste in the cities of Prrenjas, Pogradec and Devoll in the South of Albania, focus groups were conducted in May 2021.

This study offers insight into the influence of norms, values, laws, stereotypes and gender roles on waste management, discusses opportunities for improving the inclusion of women in waste management, and the creation of small business opportunities in waste management, with an emphasis on women.

Based on the study, two additional sets of recommendations were created, the first ones focusing on gender mainstreaming in projects in the field of waste management, aimed for the private sector and other implementers, whereas the second set of recommendations focus on the promotion of economic activities for women in the field of waste management.

Common to the three municipalities of Pogradec, Prrenjas and Devoll, is that all municipalities have public tenders which are then outsourced to private companies. All responsibilities for cleaning public spaces, bins, urban waste management or environmental improvements have passed to private companies paid for by municipal funds. All cleaning companies in these three cities are local and not national. The companies have hired local staff, alleviating the problem of the unemployment in the region.

Topline results of these investigation show mixed results with respect to gender

1 GIZ "Albania is modernising its solid waste management systems"

2 ISWM - Sector Study Report

and waste management in Albania. While urban waste collection activities were performed mainly by women, whereas processing activities were performed mainly by men, but when men and women did have the same job women were paid 10-15% less.

Further, while women were often hired by private cleaning companies for general urban maintenance, few were in managerial positions, or given the opportunity for advancement.

At the household level 65% of decisions about natural resources (land, water, waste management) were taken equally by men and women.

At the enterprise level, the Urban Strategies for Waste Management in Tourist Cities found men slightly dominated women in managerial, professional, and technical positions of waste management companies, but completely dominated in process, plant, and machine operative positions.

Case 1: Pogradec

The city of Pogradec is a touristic city frequently visited tourist attraction for nationals and foreigners. The quality of cleaning the city has improved, but there is still a lack of garbage bins in other parts of the city except the main boulevard and its center. The taxation of municipalities for cleaning has increased, thus citizens expect better quality service.

Women should receive more support from men and seeing the cleaning and recycling challenge not only as a community challenge, but also as a closer, family challenge. They demand more participation and commitment from men in cleaning up the common territory. All members of the community should support and be involved in the existing community initiative for the maintenance of common green areas such as small public squares with greenery and benches between houses or the cleaning and community care for school districts within the neighborhood.

Women demand differentiated containers for the collection of urban household waste in all parts of the city, including a special container for used clothes. Separation of household waste could be done at home by receiving separation bag to separately collect useful materials, which would then be picked up by the waste company in exchange for payment. This would increase the motivation of individuals for recycling and provide some income for unemployed women, while protecting the environment.

An element of community hygiene, which the municipality is paying attention to, is public toilets. There are some public toilets located near the center of Pogradec, funded and managed by the municipality.

Private urban cleaning companies, which are at the moment predominantly male businesses, have shown a preference for hiring more women. Meanwhile, the persons in charge for controlling the quality of work done mainly by women remain in the majority men. This model does not allow women to take on supervisory responsibilities and direct work within the company, but also excludes them from the opportunity to have higher salaries and to be identified as female managers. Another issue is the gender pay gap in private cleaning companies, where women are paid 10-15% less compared to men for

the same job in the same sector.

A positive initiative in Pogradec is the decoration of the city in line with the motto "Decorate your balcony". Its aim is not only the decoration of private homes and the city, but also to promote the joint care of families (husband / wife / children) in this activity. There are common efforts from both man and women to adorn the balconies and to show a new approach and care for the beauty of the city.

Case 2: Prrenjas

Waste is collected, burnt and buried in an uninhabited area outside Prrenjas. There is no white-water supply in all villages and there is absence of sewerage in most of the villages, creating pollution and bad odor.

More funding should be available for afforestation / greening of the common areas, as well as more government attention to recycling projects. There's a lack of public toilets in the town of Prrenjas.

Usually, women in urban and rural areas are responsible in the family to judge if something (food, clothes, etc.) is worthless and will be thrown away in the trash and bins in the city. Composting in suitable areas should be promoted more.

Women could start small businesses (self-employment 1-2 people) in house cleaning, carpet washing, maintenance of public spaces etc, should they be incentivised with a start-up loan. Community-based assistance for stimulating women small businesses is needed. This would contribute to the economic empowerment of women in the municipality.

Case 3: Devoll

In Devoll, a low awareness on the environment and waste is found. Therefore, increased attention should be paid to educating students in schools by encouraging them to undertake environmental initiatives.

Small business ideas for women should be supported, such as recycling of used clothes, sewing or weaving. A network of such small businesses could offer support in marketing, legal and fiscal affairs. The women need financial incentive policies for entrepreneurial initiatives, with small donations from the local government or NGOs for "startup business" to be given the opportunity of a basic start-up capital to enter the business. There is a need for gardens and green spaces in public areas within the city, to be used as recreation or meetings places with their children and friends.

The same problems about gender imbalance, namely low numbers of employed women in private business or the public sector, were noted as in Pogradec, but in addition their low participation in environmental actions was observed in Bilisht. This is mainly the consequence of the fact that the city is small and sensitivities towards women's activism in social and environmental problems are limited.

The city has problems with white water as the sewers are outdated, which has

often led to the mixing of white water with sewage. Meanwhile, the situation with water supply in the villages is improving.

Common challenges

A common concern for the three cities remains recycling and its challenges in potential public-private partnerships or any attempt by private businesses in this regard. There is a need to provide responsible recycling companies to directly improve the quality of life of the community. This would require funds for implementation of investments and knowledge..

Common to all citizens in these cities is the concern for the environment, urban waste, waste management, but also sensitivity to gender balance and gender discrimination, reflected in different male / female payment for the same job, but also misbalanced opportunities in the management of the jobs.

Women need their equal rights in society, management of private companies and in the state public ones. Whereas there are difference between the municipalities, gender roles persist in all three areas, making women to a large degree responsible for household chores regarding waste management, as well as predominate in voluntary community waste management activities, but much less represented, especially at decision-making positions, in formal positions on waste management, may it be in business or at local authorities.

Based on the study conducted in the municipalities of Prrenjas, Pogradec and Devoll, the following two sets of recommendations are proposed for decision-makers. The first set is proposing general recommendations for ensuring gender mainstreaming in waste management, whilst the second set focuses on the promotion of economic activities for women.

Recommendations for better inclusion of women in waste management

- Raising awareness on the benefits of women's inclusion in community based issues (waste management) as equal labor
- Raise awareness on the benefits of women's financial empowerment
- Affirmative action policies to increase women's formal participation in community and business start-up projects.
- Facilitation of women's inclusion in formal labor through:
 - Lenience in employee registration taxation
 - Amnesty for back payment of taxes during informal labor
- Strengthening women's leadership and organization within the waste management value chain. Ensuring women represent half of the workers in waste management (municipality, private company etc.)
- Enable a continuous involvement of women and men in the community, in local or central decision-making that affect the environment and the quality of life of the inhabitants (ex. against investors of the hydropower plant not caring for the water sources, or damage to the forest by its

misuse, .

- Support single voice of women and men in defense of the community rights.
- Increase women's participation in decision making with regards to waste management, recycling practices and penalties, environmental protection, and circular economic practices.
- Use a well-defined strategy with annual objectives regarding the afforestation and expansion of the green space of the respective cities, including voices and needs of both genders. These strategies should not be limited to allocating financial resources to planting more young seedlings, but to a larger degree to finding alternative ways and forms of heating and moving away from wood heating. Solutions could be subsidizing the price of oil for domestic oil heating / boilers or gasification of the region / country as the TAP pipeline passes through the entire Devoll / Bilisht area, clear gender sensitive objectives for projects and policies in this area.
- Stimulate communication and provide opportunities for better waste management.
- Training on waste separation, recycling and reuse
 - Separation at source of materials, which will serve as raw material for recycling.
 - Addition of containers for waste, but also bins in public areas, which will serve not only for a cleaner environment, but also to increase the sensitivity of citizens
 - Accompanied by an awareness campaign, mainly affecting children, families are educated with the concept of recycling, but also become more attentive to a clean environment to improve the lack of Albanian culture for recycling (weekly removal of sorted waste (green bags) in which families will throw only the materials that are recycled (paper, glass, plastic, and aluminum) and their collection will be carried out only 1 day a week by the door-to-door cleaning firm
 - Introduce financial stimuli for women performing recycling at home
 - Designate special places with containers for used clothes, which can be managed by a social business, or by the Directorates of Social Care near the municipalities to create a contingency plan in case of natural disasters, but also to come to assistance to persons in need.
 - Installation of green bins for differentiated collection of valuable materials, this also in implementation of law No. 10 463, dated 22.9.2011 ON INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT thus prevent and minimize waste and reduce negative impacts from poor waste management.
 - Promotion of home composting, an approach to reduce the amount of waste that needs to be collected and transported to a landfill, recommended mainly in rural areas and raise awareness about the advantages of having own garden.
 - This requires basic advice on the technical aspects of organic matter

handling and can be implemented at minimal cost.

- Collection of green waste, carried out by the Services Enterprise at the municipalities once or twice a month, creating organic waste valuable for agriculture in accordance with circular economy principles
- Placement of green bins in public areas to preserve the environment and increase the sensitivity of citizens.
 - They should be placed in well-lit areas of the city continuously and throughout the night.
 - They should be accessible at any time of the day and night by men and women without risks to their personal security, enabling freedom of movement for all.
 - Initially, placement of the bins should be a priority in school areas, promoting environmental awareness and recycling practices in school children.
 - Municipality sponsored awareness raising projects in schools or various environmental associations on waste management and equal involvement of men / women in household chores, recycling, and shared responsibility towards the environment.
 - Reproduce the civic initiative piloted in Devoll, Pogradec and Prrenjas, including the promotion of gender-balanced involvement in waste management.
- Implementation of a direct toll-free “Green Line” to report any misdemeanor in terms of environmental pollution, simultaneously raising awareness in the community on examples of wrongdoing.
 - Put in place fines and penalties for reversible and irreversible damages to the environment for private and public sector violators.
- Construction policies to which businesses operating locally must adhere:
 - Conducting environmental reports when undertaking new projects in the area to evaluate its impact
 - Consultations with gender balanced groups of local residents on the potential drawbacks of implementing new projects (e.g. impact on natural resources vital to the community)
 - Develop a long-term strategy with clear annual objectives within local governments for the afforestation and expansion of the green space in respective cities.
 - The strategy must include gender-balanced community representation.
 - The strategy must envision new strategies for heating, refraining from burning local wood for heating.
- Construction and maintenance of public toilets.
 - In large municipalities it can be a service managed by a third party, providing cleaning, toilet paper and running water, for a fee, while in small municipalities it requires the commitment of Public Enterprises near the municipalities, but with extra care, to ensure good hygienic

conditions.

- Mandatory provision of toilets in supermarkets and large wholesale retailers to be used by customers conditioned in the municipality issued construction permits.

Recommendations for promotion of economic activities for women

Promoting women's economic activities is as necessary as it is delicate. It is important to promote the benefits that come from engaging women in the private and public sector, through women's organizations and businesses supported by local governments and civil society organizations. The following recommendations relate to promoting women's participation in economic activities:

- Granting small loans to women in order to start up their business related to recycling, waste management.
 - Modest funds (1,000 - 1,500 EUR / application) provided from municipal budgets to encourage and promote the opening of new businesses by women. It would be reasonable if they supported already existing activities, such as repairing or recycling of clothes, but also cleaning. They should also support the registration of such businesses.
 - Due to differences in willingness to pay versus ability to pay between genders, micro lending programs geared towards women have been proven sustainable.³ Collaboration between financial institutions and interested parties could be paramount in introducing gender sensitive competition in the market of waste management.
- Establishment of Local Advisory Services with experts in waste management and local resource loops consulting.
- Increasing capacities of current municipal level financial and social advisory services.
 - Women are more willing to take on social responsibilities and at the same time take greater initiative and care in the face of environmental problems.
 - Women in general, due to their stereotypical gender roles, are much more involved in cleaning, doing the laundry, waste management and recycling are more environmentally-friendly consumers creating what is called the "eco gender gap".
 - The role of the authorities and society is in bridging this eco gender gap and increasing accountability to its resources.
 - For example, the authorities could support mass advertising campaigns for the use of products, which should be

³ Caroline O. N. Moser, Gender and Third World Development, Training Module 4: Towards gender-aware housing policy and practice, IDS, Sussex, n.d

environmentally friendly, as well as healthy and safe for use.

Checklist for project managers

Specific gender equity projects and policy changes can, and should, be undertaken in the waste management sector. However, to push for full gender equity and inclusion, gender should be considered in all waste management and environmental projects, regardless of whether gender equity is a primary goal of the project. To assist in ensuring that any waste management and environmental projects are gender inclusive, the following checklist can be used.

1. Project Identification Stage:

- I. Understand context:
 - ✓ Consider gender specific outcomes of potential project
 - ✓ Generate discussions / meetings with all affected / interested parties while balancing gender representation
 - ✓ Institutional and political framework and social norms in place that inhibit / allow gender representation
- II. Information collection
 - ✓ Collect / Generate gender disaggregated data
- III. Stakeholder meetings and Partner Mapping
 - ✓ Map potential partners with information about gender and gender specific impacts
 - ✓ Conduct meetings with interested parties while ensuring active participation through the provision of practical services such as childcare and other potential barriers for women (offspring caring and rearing is considered women's job in various communities)
 - ✓ Community input should be solicited with gender specific focus groups or surveys.
 - ✓ Collaborate with gender and environmental experts including NGOs and community-based women's organizations
 - ✓ Include gender specific objectives for the project
- IV. Staffing
 - ✓ Explicit job descriptions
 - ✓ Adherence to gender equality values within the organization
 - ✓ Assign one employee as "gender balance officer" (the gender expert can fulfill this role in case of continued collaboration)
 - ✓ Create room in the budget for affirmative action hires

- ✓ Assess gender awareness and sensitivity for project partners and contractors and provide training for staff and partners at all levels.

2. Project Development Stage:

I. Indicators:

- ✓ Include gender specific indicators in assessment of the project
 - i. % of staff female
 - ii. % of high-level staff female
 - iii. Maternity / paternity leaves, to name some

II. Accessibility

- ✓ Female and male employees have equal access to project services as well as activities enabled by organizations
- ✓ Meetings should be scheduled in a time and place accessible to all parties involved in the project
- ✓ Communication with project beneficiaries should be based on gender sensitive and inclusive language

3. Evaluation phase

I. Staffing

- ✓ The assessment team is balanced

II. Reporting

- ✓ Project impacts and outcomes should be presented in a gender disaggregated format, based on gender disaggregated data that will track gender equality results.
- ✓ Monitor access, participation and benefits among men and women and plan for activities that will redress potential gender inequalities in the implementation of the project.
- ✓ Monitoring, follow up studies and evaluation interviews should be conducted with a gender balanced group and allow for women only feedback sessions. Partners and families of project participants should be considered to gauge project impact.

III. Follow Up

- ✓ Gender-aware next steps or lessons learned should be identified and documented for future projects.
- ✓ Specific attention should be paid to gender in knowledge transfer activities to ensure project knowledge is transferred to those who will be able to use it.

