

## Center for Research and Policy Making

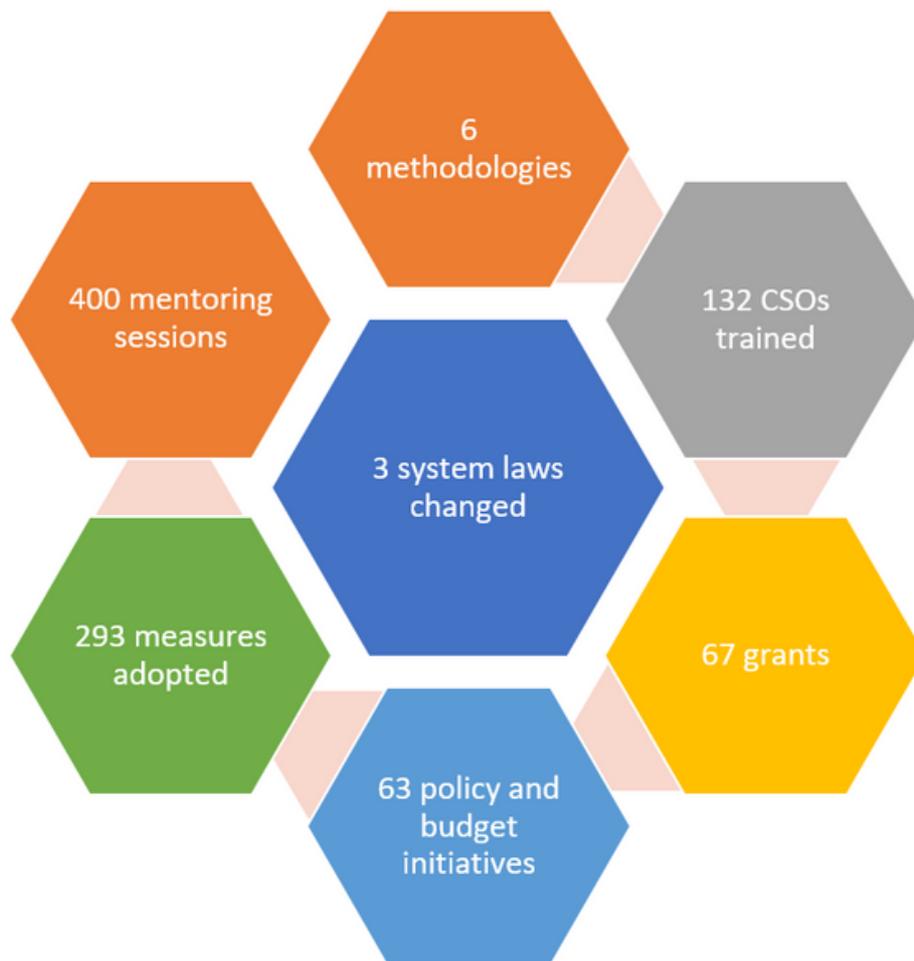
**The organization** – The Center for research and policy making – CRPM is based in Skopje, Macedonia. The organization is primarily a think tank – a research-focused organization that integrates cutting edge social science research in its projects and products. CRPM also acts as a do tank as it performs a well thought off communication strategy for each of its policy proposals and appries policy changes since 2004. As a do tank CRPM manages policy processes. At the beginning it just facilitated policy dialogues in polarized society; nowadays the organization pilots policy solutions than transfers to institutions for further implementation.

**The approach** – Since its establishment, CRPM works on the budget as a policy document. As a member of the International Budget Partnership CRPM was an Open Budget Index research organization that has developed a budget watchdog methodology since 2007. This methodology included application of gender budget analysis tools such as gender policy analysis, gender cost benefit, gender cost effectiveness analysis and gender expenditure analysis. With UN Women in 2016 the organization upgraded the approach introducing capacity building program on gender budget watchdogging for CSOs, developed a grants scheme through which the CSOs receive grants to apply the gender budget watchdog methodology and receive continuous mentoring which ensures quality of products that are used for holding (local and central) government accountable and further advocacy for better budget allocations that will impact on enhanced gender equality.

**Approach analysis, strengths and weaknesses** – CRPM particularly has chosen this approach as the CSOs in Macedonia and the Western Balkan region lack budget literacy; institutions do not gather or publish sex disaggregated data, while as a result of the orientation towards EU integration all governments in the region have committed to gender equality and have relatively well-developed policy frameworks for achieving it. In most countries of the region gender responsive budgeting is systematically included in the public finance management system. With this approach the CSOs get necessary knowledge and skills on gender responsive budgeting and continuous mentoring support from gender budgeting experts to apply them and hold governments accountable for gender balanced use of public finances. To address the absence of sex disaggregated data, CRPM designed a grant scheme that provides for financial support to gather primary data and produce rigorous analysis, help build arguments on ways to better distribute public money for achieving gender equality goals. Hence, the central and local governments were at the beginning not responding as they felt criticized at. It was when the approach started to include not only monitoring of budget implementation information, but also policy solutions that improve budget distribution to respond to the different needs of women and men, the government officials became more attracted to the recommendations provided by CSOs. The approach was further strengthened by networking between CSOs. The Gender Budget Watchdog Network was established by 88 CSOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Moldova and Serbia providing platform for them to exchange, speak in one voice and create tipping point for policy change regionally.

### Results, findings and/or engagement efforts

Through GBWN, CRPM has expanded this approach in 7 countries of the western Balkan region and Moldova. In the period 2019–2022 the Gender Budget Watchdog Network has produced 6 methodologies, trained 132 CSOs, provided 67 grants that led to 63 gender budget initiatives encompassing 293 measures that were adopted across the region with the help of two dozen mentors that held 400 mentoring sessions. CRPM only, accounts to this approach changes of 3 system laws in Macedonia: the Budget law regulating gender responsive budgeting, the Criminal code aligning with the Istanbul convention; and the VAT tax law providing decrease from 18% to 5% VAT for menstrual hygiene products. The GBWN network accounts for many more policy results.



**Lessons learned** - The case of CRPM and the Gender Budget Watchdog Network shows that being a constructive critic, that does not just identify problems, but offers solutions can be an effective policy engagement strategy. One that is powerful when policy solutions of one CSOs are echoed by other CSOs from the network. The GBWN also shows that networking helps not just exchange of experiences, knowledge and approaches; but promotion of these in geographic locations outside of your organization's policy influence.

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