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Gender Budget Watchdog Network
for a gender equal region

GRB CHAMPIONS

WOMEN'S CENTRE UŽICE A CHANGE MAKER

FOR RURAL WOMEN

Prepared by:

Name of the organization: **Women's center Uzice**Name of country: **Serbia**Sector: **Agriculture**

GRB tools used:

- gender analysis of the local budget;
- expenditure incidence analysis of agricultural support program;
- cost - effectiveness analysis of the subsidies in agriculture;

UŽICE - THE ORGANIC FOOD CENTRE OF SERBIA

The City of Uzice belongs to the group of more developed municipalities and cities in Serbia. Still, as in other parts of Serbia, there are increasing migrations from rural to urban settlements which contributes to the unfavorable demographic picture of the population of this area. The reason for this is partly in the poor economic conditions and the lack of infrastructure, services and facilities important for the quality of everyday life. Inadequate communal and traffic infrastructure are at the very top of priority problems to be solved.

What is more the educational structure of the population according to the 2011 census is extremely unfavorable, where 52% of those without education and the majority among those with primary or lower education are women, while they are less represented in the population with secondary (45%) education. This results with 57% of the unemployed in Uzice in August 2021 to be women.

Agricultural production is developed and together with tourism this is the key economic activity in this part of Serbia. The most developed and most represented branches are: cattle breeding (cattle breeding and sheep breeding); fruit growing (plums, apples and small berries - over 90% of raspberry production is exported); farming (potatoes). The area of Zlatibor district is

very suitable for the development of agricultural production of high-quality products, food industry and the production of so-called, healthy ("natural" - organic) food.

The most developed activities in the agro-industry are: slaughter industry, meat processing and production of cured meat products (prosciutto, bacon, sausage, etc.), milk and dairy products (cheese and cream), natural brandies with protected geographical origin, medicinal herbs and forest fruits (mushrooms), wild strawberries, blueberries, junipers, etc.), and there are also facilities for the production of juices, fruit syrups, jams, marmalades, compotes, sweets and vegetable products. Zlatibor district is one of the districts in Serbia with the most developed tourism, but also with the greatest potential for tourism development. There are exceptional potentials for the development of various types of tourism in the region (ecological, mountain, excursion, sports and recreational, health, congress, rural, hunting, etc.).

THE GRB INITIATIVE

Ženski Centar Užice (ŽCU) worked on improving the position of rural women. In 2006 UNIFEM supported CSOs in a work on gender budget initiatives in AP Vojvodina and other parts of Serbia.

At the invitation of the Autonomous Women's Center (AWC) from Belgrade, the ŽCU, together with five other women's civil society organizations (CSOs) from Serbia, participated in the project "For Poverty Reduction: Civil Society and Responsible Government". During the implementation of the project, the members of the organization underwent several months of training on budget processes and gender analysis of budget programs and collected and analyzed data on budget allocations in their local community. The women's organizations, including ŽCU recognized GRB as an important advocacy tool but also a tool that should increase government accountability to women's organizations and citizens.

The ŽCU GRB initiative recognized vulnerability of rural women as also other researches conducted in AP Vojvodina ¹ and Serbia ² determined that rural women are in an unfavorable position and gender issues and gender related stereotypes have a big impact on the lives of rural women. The City of Užice also had a Local Gender Action Plan which recognized the position of rural women as a priority area as well as National Strategy on Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia.

ŽCU wanted to resolve the gender gap in the economy, especially agriculture and the economic position of rural women. Considering that the City of Užice has policy on development and support of agriculture, ŽCU wanted to examine to what extent implemented programs take into account rural women needs and contribute to the gender equality policies objectives.

The ŽCU conducted the first gender analysis of the local budget back in 2009 and continued to advocate for local and national

policies that will support empowerment of rural women. Further on, ŽCU conducted expenditure incidence analysis from the program for the support of agriculture in the City of Užice and cost - effectiveness analysis of the subsidies in agriculture aiming to determine the distribution of budget funds to rural women and responsiveness to their needs. Findings showed that 25% of agriculture households are owned by women, but they received in total 2.13% of subsidies.

The biggest amount has been planned for livestock and only 45% of the budget has been used. Women did not use livestock subsidies at all while 18% of all subsidies for farming were used by women. ŽCU prepared their recommendations as a policy document ³ and sent it to decision makers requesting decision makers to include women's activities in the subsidy schemes, such as greenhouse vegetable production and in that way to increase accessibility of funds to women.

SUCCESS OF THE GRB INITIATIVE

The key impact of this initiative is that it has shed light on and drawn attention to inequalities in the distribution of funds for agricultural production. This initiative, together with subsequent activities to mark Rural Women's Day and various projects supporting rural women's associations, has also contributed to affirmative action measures in the distribution of agricultural subsidies. The initiative is also important for popularization of gender responsive budgeting - gender budget analysis.

To demonstrate the change potential of the recommendations given, ŽCU in cooperation with UN Women, provided financial support for 12 women working in agriculture in Zlatiborski district and contributed to the economic empowerment and networking of women from rural areas in this part of Serbia. They campaigned for participation of women in local community councils, supported participation of women's association in the first women's cooperative Zdravica, contributed to women's empowerment, networking and education and overall visibility and social inclusion of rural women from this part of Serbia. ŽCU continued to monitor the budget expenditures for agriculture in 2010 and 2011.

The results of constant monitoring and lobbying of in this area are:

- more women have been informed about the possibilities and conditions of using subsidies in agriculture, which can be seen from the increased number of women's applications.
- increased transparency of applications and distribution of heifers (competition and results of applications published on the website of the city of Užice);
- recognition of the potential of women from rural areas by the development institutions of the Zlatibor district (e.g. the

Regional Chamber of Commerce of Užice, ARRA "Zlatibor" and the Local Employment Council of Užice) when creating development plans.

After the three years of monitoring and advocacy, the City of Užice passed the **Decision on the distribution of funds from the budget line of subsidies in agriculture**, which, among other activities in this budget line, will finance the activity of vegetable production - by subsidizing machinery and equipment for greenhouse production.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Key success factor is, first of all, that ŽCU is a grassroots organization led by women from rural areas who are walking in the shoes of their target group. ŽCU is a recognized and well-known women's organization in the local community and they have big influence in the target groups and they were also members of local commission for gender equality.

Another important factor is the training ŽCU received in gender responsive budgeting and increased capacities for gender budget analysis.

Before the analysis starts the cooperation with the representative of Agriculture Council has been established, as well as with association of the agricultural producers in Užice.

MAIN OBSTACLES

Main obstacle was the lack of sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive data about expenditure.

¹ Blagojevic, M, Položaj žena na selu u Vojvodini, Zavod za ravnopravnost polova, 2009. ² Beker, K, Gujanicic, R, Izveštaj o položaju žena u Srbiji, UN Women, 2019

³ The findings are summarised in the publication "For Poverty Reduction: Gender Equality and Responsible Government" which highlighted general conclusions and recommendations: http://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/publikacije-dp/Za_smanjenje_siromastva-rodna_ravnopravnost_i_odgovorna_vlada.pdf