GIZ Gender Competition 2024

From needs to policies: Social Mapping boosts gender equality at local level

Promoting gender equality

Patriarchal gender roles, norms, and behaviours in the Western Balkans (WB) are still deeply rooted in traditions and maintained by slow societal changes hampered by difficult economic, post-conflict and political contexts. The strongest challenges to gender equality are traditional values, perceptions, attitudes and social norms among both men and women. These solidify gender inequalities, which manifest through larger-scale feminisation of poverty, women's insecurities in the labour market, a growing share of unpaid care work, gender pay and pension gaps, and uneven progress in tackling gender-based harassment and violence.

Women within disadvantaged groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, single mothers, elderly, youth, people from the LGBTIQA+ communities, people with disabilities) often face multiple and intersecting discrimination due to their gender and the disenfranchisement of the group they belong to. The situation is especially severe in rural areas and manifests in a lack of access to basic health and social services, unequal education and employment opportunities as well as significantly higher risks of impoverishment.

The regional project on "Social Inclusion of Disadvantages Groups in the Western Balkans" (SoRi) aims to improve the social situation of disadvantaged groups in Albania (ALB), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo (KOS), North Macedonia (MKD), and Serbia (SRB) by strengthening the capacities of relevant state and non-state actors to enhance the social and economic inclusion of disadvantaged groups in line with the "Leave No One Behind" principle (LNOB) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to support the cooperation between those stakeholders and promote regional cooperation. **While strengthening gender equality is an integral objective of the project, the principle of intersectionality guides all its activities.** The project focuses on disadvantaged groups and identifies multiple, intersecting discrimination as well as adequate measures to combat discrimination and inequalities. It therefore contributes to the achievement of SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities and the overarching LNOB principle.

One of the project's main lines of action is Social Mapping - a method used by municipalities, social workers and other professionals to 1) collect data on the needs of disadvantaged groups and 2) identify the availability and accessibility of socio-economic resources at municipal level (e.g., social services, day care centres, schools, public spaces, etc.). By comparing the data gained from both perspectives, professionals can identify the gaps between the needs and existing social services and propose appropriate solutions. Previously, municipalities relied on non-standardised processes to analyse the needs of disadvantaged groups, which oftentimes resulted in poorly adapted and non-replicable social services. **Social Mapping provides a standardised and universal roadmap that municipalities and other actors can follow and easily adapt to their local contexts to assess the needs of disadvantaged groups coherently and holistically.** The methodology creates comparability and replicability. Understanding the root causes of the exclusion of disadvantaged groups, against the intersectionality framework, is at the heart of Social Mapping. To provide recommendations tailored to the community context, this tool must be applied individually to each municipality and disadvantaged group. Social Mapping is in line with the LNOB principle and the questionnaires within the methodology target intersectionality specifically.

Social Mapping was first implemented in 2015 as a rudimentary methodology. Ever since, it has been revised and improved. Thus far, **22 municipalities in the WB were supported in conducting Social Mappings** and collect quantitative and qualitative data on disadvantaged groups. Half of these municipalities then re-aligned their social protection strategies (three-year planning document) according to the recommendations provided by the mappings and the 2030 Agenda. The remaining half have used the mappings as a basis for introducing new and/or improving existing social services in their annual programmes. So far, **Social Mapping led to the introduction of 21 new services and the improvement of 9 existing services for disadvantaged groups, among them children and adults with disabilities, elderly population groups, Roma communities and women.**

The municipalities that applied Social Mapping focused on various disadvantaged groups, **some prioritised women as the main target group**. The municipality of Shtip, MKD, for example, focused on Roma women victims of violence. Although domestic violence is a serious problem for women in general regardless of their ethnicity, place of residence, education, income, etc., the situation is especially severe for Roma women, as they often depend economically on their partner. The lack of safe houses at local level exacerbates the situation and increases the risk of re-victimisation. Moreover, Roma women experience multiple discrimination, including by public institutions, mainly the police, when reporting incidences of violence. **Based on the recommendations provided by Social Mapping, the municipality of Shtip introduced housing allowances and free legal support. To give women victims of domestic violence an economic perspective and include them in the labour market, the municipality trained them to be personal assistants for people with disabilities (PwD).**

Other municipalities decided to focus the Social Mapping on children with disabilities, as they depend on specialised services and are more exposed to violence, abuse and neglect than other children. It is crucial that children with disabilities receive specialised services and support in their communities to reduce social isolation and segregation. In the municipality of Patos, ALB, the mapping identified the need for a day-care centre which today benefits about 40 children with disabilities. **As women still perform the majority of unpaid care work in the WB countries, the day-care centre also relieves mothers of children with disabilities and allows them to pursue employment and engage more actively in public life, strengthening women's resources, rights and representation as a result.** In the municipality of Bitola, MKD, the mappings revealed the need to introduce and improve specialised services to support the educational development of children with disabilities. The municipality introduced a variety of educational services, including specialised caregivers in kindergartens to tend to the needs of children with disabilities, as well as personal and educational assistants to support them in everyday school life.

Another successful example of Social Mapping is the highly participatory consultation process preceding the introduction of a multi-sectoral National Strategy for the Rights of People with Disabilities initiated by the government of North Macedonia. The strategy is based on data gathered through Social Mappings and the demands of PwD voiced throughout the consultation process. **The Social Mapping data displayed the different needs of women and girls with disabilities and other subgroups, which were mirrored by the contributions of PwD in the consultation process.** The strategy provides recommendations to meet the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities regarding access to healthcare services (e.g., sexual and reproductive rights, availability of gynaecological exams) and to reduce the elevated risk of gender-based violence (e.g., educating police, health and social workers, availability of safe houses, access to SOS lines). This case illustrates how data can speak convincingly on behalf of disadvantaged groups by using a participatory, bottom-up approach.

The Social Mapping methodology is currently being adapted to be gender-responsive and in line with the German strategy on Feminist Development Policy (FDP) (the adaptation is expected to be finalised in early 2024). This will allow municipalities to gather gender-disaggregated data and design gender-responsive social services, which are the basis for evidence-based policymaking and the improvement of existing and the introduction of new innovative, gender-transformative social inclusion measures.

The expected impacts include:

short-term	- Awareness-raising at local level for the need of gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data on disadvantaged groups - Understanding multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities and discrimination based on intersectional data on disadvantaged groups including women and girls - Utilising data to advocate for the rights of disadvantaged groups and the allocation of resources to local governments and municipalities - Provision of evidence-based recommendations as a basis for targeted policy measures and the introduction of new or improvement of existing social services at municipal level
medium-term	- Adjustments of policies and strategies on social protection at municipal level with the aim to improve targeting specific disadvantaged groups including women and girls

	Introduction of concrete measures to improve the situation and livelihood of disadvantaged groups including women and girls	
long-term	- Improving the situation and livelihoods of disadvantaged groups including women and girls in the long run - Reduction of inequalities and discrimination of disadvantaged groups including women and girls	

Implementing feminist core principles

The Social Mapping methodology has always been in line with the overarching LNOB principle of the 2030 Agenda and has been designed to detect intersectionality. **Currently, the aim is to fully align the methodology with the FDP and the 3Rs (rights, resources and representation)**[1].

Social Mapping is a human rights-based approach that focuses primarily on the human rights principle of equality and non-discrimination and targets the root causes for inequalities and disadvantages. The methodology aims to dismantle these structural impediments to equality and non-discrimination in a transformative manner. By targeting disadvantaged groups that suffer from multiple, intersecting discrimination, Social Mapping follows an intersectional approach that "puts the perspectives of the marginalised [...] group front and centre and takes into account the interaction of diverse inequalities resulting from different power systems"[2].

The alignment of Social Mapping with the FDP amplifies the methodology's gender-transformative and intersectional potential. Social Mapping provides concrete recommendations for evidence-based policymaking and innovative social services that meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and promote gender equality and non-discrimination at municipal level.

Gender as a quality feature of our work

Selected municipalities in all five project countries have used Social Mapping to assess coherently, transparently, and holistically the needs of disadvantaged groups within their jurisdictions. The recommendations of the Social Mapping have been and are still being used to generate evidence-based, innovative social approaches which in turn translate into concrete, transformative and intersectional social services that meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. As the above-mentioned examples demonstrate, the methodology has been used to map the needs of women and other disadvantaged groups and concrete measures to improve their situation and the social services directed toward them have been implemented.

The success and replicability of the methodology have been recognised by other GIZ projects in the region. In that sense, the regional project "Support to Economic Diversification in Rural Areas" (SEDRA) has applied the methodology to assess the needs of female farmers in rural contexts in the WB. Social Mapping was also used in the regional project "Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking in the Western Balkans" (PaCT) to identify potential victims of human trafficking and to raise awareness among girls at risk of human trafficking, as well as in the bilateral project "Developing sustainable municipal waste services" to identify the needs of Roma who mainly work as informal resource collectors and find it challenging to position themselves as stakeholders in the formal waste management system. Additionally, two bilateral projects in Serbia ("Public Finance Reform – 2030 Agenda" and "Promoting Social Inclusion in Serbia") are planning to apply Social Mapping as part of their ongoing support at local level in the context of social protection planning processes and the localization of the SDGs.

Social Mapping was also very positively received outside of GIZ and will be implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities in 20 municipalities in Serbia as part of an EU funded project

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[1] Please note that the alignment of the Social Mapping methodology with the German strategy for FDP is expected to be finalised beginning of 2024.
[2] Feminist Development Policy - For Just and Strong Societies Worldwide (bmz.de)

supporting the introduction of sustainable social protection services and inclusive policies at local level. Furthermore, SoRi's main partner, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeast Europe[3] (NALAS), recognising the potential of Social Mapping and answering to the need of municipalities for evidence-based policymaking and data collection, has exported the methodology to municipalities in Mongolia and plans to further export it, for example, to Romania and Moldova upon their request.

Cooperation

SoRi is working together with NALAS and the Local Government Associations (LGAs) to support selected municipalities in the project countries in the application of Social Mapping and the implementation of social services based on the recommendations provided by the Social Mapping. Due to its regional scope and influence, NALAS has proven to be an invaluable partner in scaling up Social Mapping within and beyond the region. This has undoubtedly been a key success factor in making the methodology widely known and available. NALAS' E-Academy features an E-Learning course on Social Mapping that ensures both the sustainability of the methodology beyond SoRi and the access to Social Mapping as a methodology in all Southeast European countries. The course educates and capacitates municipal professionals, anchoring the knowledge on Social Mapping in the municipalities as a result. Another key success factor was the close cooperation between the public sector and civil society organisations (CSOs) at local level. Stakeholders from both groups cooperated in every step of the Social Mapping process to evaluate the needs of the target group and develop meaningful social inclusion measures. This led to firm cooperation between municipalities and CSOs which continued after the Social Mapping and now ensures good governance and more gender-sensitive, participatory and non-discriminatory policymaking at local level.

The initial challenge Social Mapping addressed was the lack of awareness of the needs of the target groups at local level. While municipalities in some countries had already included social inclusion measures in their policies, others, due to insufficient resources and data, had not. Social Mapping allowed these municipalities to gather holistic data on the identified target groups which could then be incorporated into local policies and translated into social inclusion measures. Another major challenge in the application of Social Mapping has been the lack of access to the target groups. Many disadvantaged groups are reluctant to speak about their experiences of exclusion and discrimination and their overall social situation. Forming coalitions between grassroot CSOs with preestablished access to these disadvantaged groups and more established CSOs with greater resources has proven to be a successful approach to gain access to these communities/groups and empower them to voice their needs.

This entry has been developed and submitted by the Regional Project "Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups in the Western Balkans" (SoRi), GIZ Skopje, North Macedonia
Marleen Schneider, Junior Advisor (marleen.schneider@giz.de)
Natalija Spasovska, Advisor (natalija.spasovska@giz.de)
Tina Miteva, Advisor (tina.miteva@giz.de)
Tatjana Arnaudova, Administration Professional, Gender Focal Point GIZ North Macedonia (tatjana.arnaudova@giz.de)
Biljana Dijanisieva, Advisor (biljana.dijanisieva@giz.de)
Svetlana Zdravkovska, Commission Manager (svetlana.zdrakovska@giz.de)

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[3] NALAS is a network of associations of local authorities in Southeast Europe. The network brings together 13 associations which represent roughly 9000 local authorities.