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First Name Teuta

Middle Name

Last Name

Topi

Country

Albania

Organization/Institution

Ministry of agriculture, food and consumer protection

Primary E-mail

teutatopi@yahoo.com

Occupation

Specialist of the rural development in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer protection of Albania, First Lady of Albania during 2007-2012

Please choose the theme

2 Women's Empowerment

Please briefly describe your organisation

Ministry of agriculture, food and consumer protection of Albania

Statement Title

Empowerment of women in rural areas

Statement (600 words limit)

Empowerment of women in rural areas

Empowerment of women in rural areas remains a great challenge to Albania. In recent years, the country has made significant efforts to address these challenges through its nationwide commitments to gender equality. Adoption of the Law of Gender Equality and National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence and the establishment of the institutional framework on implementation of these policies are considered to be important steps forward. Irrespective of the progress made in the institutional, political, and legal framework, there are deficiencies and gender disparities, particularly among rural women.

When women are socially and economically empowered, they become a great power for change in their community. Existing inequalities between men and women make it difficult for women to accomplish their potential. Women's economic empowerment is an important instrument for supporting them in their struggle against abuse and discrimination in families and communities where they live.

The fight against gender inequality is a longstanding challenge. Among others, important measures to be undertaken include the increase of opportunities for education and employment, the fight against discrimination and stereotypes in society, the creation of opportunities for healthcare, the establishment of welfare infrastructure, and the promotion of women in decision-making structures and political domain in general.

According to 2011 Census data, Albania's resident population is 2,831,741 inhabitants, of which 1,421,810 (50.2%) are males and 1,409,931 (49.8%) are females. Some 764,824 females live in urban areas and 645,107 live in rural areas. In reliance of legal and institutional framework and recent studies and research, the major issues confronting women in rural areas may be summarized in these main directions: a) economic empowerment, b) employment, education, and healthcare; and, c) social solution.

Women in rural areas and economic empowerment: Women play a decisive role in agriculture in Albania, while agriculture is a fundamental sector for the economic empowerment of women. This sector employs more than half of women in Albania taking up 56.5% of the labor power in 2010. However, the working conditions of women are far from ideal, where only 6% of farms are owned by women and about 87% of women do not get paid for their work, since they are considered to work for their families. Women represent only 5% of beneficiaries or recipients of the extension service. Employment of women is crucial to their economic independence and to ensure more equality between women and men in society. Increase of level of employment in the country is a precondition to achievement of goals on full employment, improvement of economic stability and social development. Some of the reasons behind low employment of

women include lack of adequate qualifications, deficient educational level, insufficiency of kindergartens for children and/or the need to look after the elderly or disabled family members, and the traditional mentality of social role of women. Likewise, many women work in the informal sector deprived of the social insurance scheme.

Women in rural areas and education: education is fundamental to the development of a society, to the improvement of living conditions and to the promotion of the economic and social development at local and national level. When analyzing rural women's education in Albania, issues taking on special importance include existence of school in rural area, easy access of young girls and boys to school, main reasons affecting regular attendance (or no attendance at all) by girls in rural areas, and the gender stereotypes in the selection of studies between girls and boys, the elementary 9-year education is mandatory in Albania. The data indicate that attendance of 9 year education (in urban and rural areas taken together) is equally shared between the two areas.

Elementary 2010 2011 2012

Females 106,917 102,276 97,583

Total 224,781 215,660 206,617

Number of pupils enrolled in the elementary education.

Recent studies on education of women in rural areas show that 24% of girls and 15 % of boys do not attending studies upon completion of mandatory education. There are no data divided by gender for rural areas. Yet various studies and researchers lead to the conclusion that there is an increase in the "dropout of school" among girls in the rural areas.

The data shows that girls in rural areas have little or no access at all to vocational training schools. These facilities are located in urban areas, with only three of them providing studies on agribusiness are located in rural areas. In consideration of the fact that these schools are located in urban areas, the distance and the need for accommodation in dormitories make attendees of school by rural girls quite difficult. In addition, women and girls of rural areas are excluded from vocational training programs organized by the National Center of Professional Development, because these women and girls are not considered to be jobseekers, but as self – employed in agriculture.

Women in rural areas and healthcare: Healthcare problems are related not only with the good physical operation of the body, but also with the individual wellbeing and are closely with social and psychological factors. Therefore, an analysis on organization of the healthcare from the gender viewpoint is important. Ensuring that women benefit from healthcare services to the fullest extent and highest quality possible is a precondition to guaranteeing women's human rights. The gender issues with regard to women and healthcare may be categorized in two broad groups: 1) gender and healthcare problems and risks of morbidity; 2) women's access to current use of healthcare services. Primary healthcare in rural areas is provided by family doctors, nurses, and mid wives through healthcare centers and ambulances in villages. Rural women, which are considered to be self-employed in agriculture, may only have access to the healthcare system if they pay the required health insurance contributions. In addition, there is no pharmaceutical service in the rural areas.

Women in rural areas and social inclusion:

Inclusion of women in local governance – A balanced representation of women in political and public decision-making is an important condition for democracy and of vital importance to the quality of public management. The development objects cannot be achieved without an active participation of women in all levels of decision-making and management,. Local governance

plays a key role in the development of democracy. Women's; participation in all position of local governance may affect decision made at local level and ensure that these decisions are more gender-sensitive. Yet, women's representation in local governance administration, which may be considered as a first step to the increase of their participation in their political life, is quite limited in Albania. Women's low educational level, their economic condition an their responsibilities in family, among others, are factors that affect their low participation in politics and decision-making process.

Gender –based violence.

Violence on women is a violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. It is a recognized as an important social issue and a problem of public health, arising from unequal relationship of power between women and men. Failure to involve women in the decision-making processes on equal basis with men in society and family and their low social and economic status makes women more vulnerable to violence.

Prioritization of problems of women in rural areas in Albania

Research and data on the overall situation and specific problems of women in rural areas in Albania are quite limited.

a) The different researches confirm that the women's economic situation in rural areas is very problematic. Employment is direct linked with the economic empowerment and this is almost a luxury to women in rural areas. Opportunities for employment are very limited to women in these areas, and when they do exist, access to them is quite difficult due to a series of obstacles or restrictions that relate with problems to be presented below, particularly with education and qualifications as well as with the services of welfare. On the other hand, women are involved in other major profitable sectors, such as agriculture and (family-run) tourism and benefit to some extent from engaging in them.

b) Another issue of social inclusion and exclusion are elaborated into components of economic and social-cultural inclusion and empowerment. It's notice that participation and the space for a greater participation of women in decision-, making and in the public and private domain are assessed to be under the average. Comparatively, involvement of women results to be weaker in the public sphere.

c) The overall situation of women's health in rural areas is not deemed "good", not only with regard to health they enjoy, but also to the opportunities to take care of it. The research assesses that the poor quality of the healthcare service provided in rural areas as well as limited opportunities of women in these areas to access these services are the main reasons for this problematic situation of the rural women's health.

d) Related to the education in rural areas the physical infrastructure of school in rural is generally problematic, with worn buildings and very poor hygienic –sanitary conditions. Also as a consequence of the emigration from remote rural areas, residents of many small villages travel to larger villages to get education services. Lack of transport means frequently becomes a significant barrier to education (particularly for girls). The issue of distance and safety of travel to education facilities is even more serious in high school, since general and vocational high school enrolls pupils from wide range of villages.

e) The issue of domestic violence is seen quite significant regarding both its extent and impact. However, the options of intervention and its results were seen as inconsiderable, especially in relation to mentality, culture, and low access to private / family sphere.

For a good resolve of these problems it is need to take these measures:

- Increase access of women to land.

- Increase percentage of women –owned businesses.
- Promote rural women’s participate in labor market through.
  - Increase their educational level.
  - Offer opportunities to combine responsibilities at work and household.
  - Increase awareness on importance of women’s participation in the labor market.
  - Develop policies on employment of women at local level.