



Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, First Regular Session 2017

“Operational Response at Country Level: Republic of Moldova”

Summary: *UN-Women’s operational response in the Republic of Moldova may be of interest to the Board because of the history of engagement and for the innovative approaches applied in the work, supporting Moldova to develop and showcase solutions to intractable problems in the area of women’s empowerment, as well as the impact achieved together with women and other partners. This note aims to: (i) provide information on the key directions of UN-Women’s country level operational response in Moldova and how the entity’s role is evolving over time to be more “fit-for-purpose” in the new development landscape of Agenda 2030; (ii) provide examples of results we are contributing to, particularly in terms of “leaving-no-one behind”; and (iii) highlight new opportunities for sustainable change that directly contribute to women’s empowerment in Moldova.*

UN-Women’s country level operational response in Moldova

Together with Government and national counterparts, the organization has fully embraced the call for exploring innovative ideas to find sustainable and transformative solutions as envisaged by Agenda 2030. The operational support is designed in a way that it allows to proactively embark on new opportunities and assist our partners to deal with the emerging challenges within the scope of the set priorities in an innovative manner. UN-Women closely cooperates with the government, civil society, and private sector to advance social, economic and political rights and opportunities for women and girls, placing special focus on those from marginalized groups. These include, but not limited to rural women, Romani women, women with disabilities, young women, women living with or affected by HIV, women survivors of violence and trafficking, women migrants, elderly women and women in the Transnistrian region and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. We work with them to challenge the stereotypical image of women. We apply new tools to ensure women’s proactive engagement in designing, prototyping and implementing the state policies and plans. Thus, UN-Women’s operation in Moldova focuses on bringing about concrete change in the lives of women and the society as a whole through the following three key areas.

1. Eliminating Violence Against Women. Violence against women (VAW) is an endemic problem in Moldova that is deeply rooted in cultural norms and entrenched behaviors. According to a national study¹, 63% of women above 15 years old experience some form of violence² from a husband/partner during their lifetime. Rural women, elderly women, Romani women, women with disabilities, HIV-positive women reported the highest prevalence rate of multiple forms of violence. In response to this, we have tested a new survivor-focused approach. During the first 4 months of implementing this approach it has resulted in over 1000 women in various communities of Moldova taking the first, critical step of seeking support services in order to get out of the vicious circle of intimate partner violence. This represents a ten-fold increase as compared to the numbers prior to implementing the new approach in the targeted localities. This result is achieved through the joint efforts of open-minded central and local public authorities and civil society partners convened by UN-Women. UN-Women employs such adaptive solutions by empowering survivors of violence from various backgrounds to speak up and advocate for concrete actions with their peers as well as with authorities and the

¹ “Violence against Women in the Family” study by the Moldova National Bureau of Statistics, 2011.

² Types of violence: psychological, physical, sexual, and economic

media. This approach has led to changing perceptions of survivors by the authorities, media and other women, so they are acknowledged and involved as the key experts in eliminating VAW in legislative, policy, institutional and community level initiatives. Moreover, UN-Women have mobilized other actors of society including youth, religious leaders, former perpetrators, judicial staff, police, members of the artistic community, so that under the leadership of the survivors of violence, the ‘whole of society’ can produce long-overdue results for women. Apart from these, UN-Women has continued the conventional technical interventions/solutions, such as support to government authorities and civil society partners to implement provisions of the Domestic Violence Law (2008) and strengthening the legislative framework by further aligning it to international norms and standards. UN-Women’s next Strategic Note for 2018-2022 in Moldova will build on these results and further inform support to the country in this area of work at all levels.

2. Women in Politics and Leadership. Low levels of women’s participation in politics continue to represent a challenge. While women’s involvement in decision-making is increasingly supported by society³, Moldova did not reach its national 2015 Millennium Development Goal targets in this area⁴. Currently, women represent 22% of Parliamentarians, 21% of Cabinet Ministers, 20.6% of mayors, 30% of local councilors and 18.5% of district councilors.⁵ Thus, women’s opportunities to hold elected office are still low, with women from marginalized groups virtually absent from decision-making positions. In response to these challenges, UN-Women is leading a comprehensive UN joint programme on promoting women in politics, implemented together with UNDP and two civil society organizations. Partnerships are forged with legislators, institutions and community leaders to empower them to increasingly work with women, especially those who are marginalized from the decision-making, thus enabling the women to lead the required changes. This is being done through community level mentoring and role modeling, exchange of good practices and establishment of self-support networks, especially among women elected for the first time in Parliament and local councils or appointed as mayors. As a result of UN-Women’s support, seven Romani women ran for local elections and two were elected as local councilors for the first time ever in Moldova. Also for the first time ever, groundbreaking legislation on 40% gender quotas for party list candidates and cabinet nominees was adopted. This legislation includes other historical milestones such as 14-day paternity leave, the prohibition of sexism and other important provisions that the country needs for realizing gender equality. An International Association of Women in Electoral Management was established under the leadership of the Central Electoral Commission of Moldova as well as other electoral management bodies, namely from Romania, Albania, Georgia, Canada, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo,⁶ with prominent international electoral stakeholders and associations⁷ providing their support to the Association’s establishment. Recognizing the role of the media as an influential partner to advance the gender equality agenda, UN Women engaged over 40 print, online and broadcast media in a gender self-assessment initiative. These and other results have contributed to women having greater visibility and voice and becoming more effective legislators and leaders in the country. UN-Women will work further to strengthen the networks between women from all levels and continue legislative and policy work in order to ensure women’s fair access to politics and real influence in a sustainable manner.

3. Women’s Economic Empowerment. The achievement of women’s rights in the economic domain needs further support. The employment rate of women is 37%, as compared to 43% in the case of men.⁸ For some

³ Șanse egale în procesul electoral. Studiu de caz: alegerile locale generale din 14 și 28 iunie 2015, CDP, Chisinau, 2015, p. 20 <http://progen.md/?pag=n&opa=view&id=330&tip=publicatii&start=&l=>

⁴ MDG 3 target 1 for Moldova: 25% women mayors, 40% women local councilors and 25% women in district councils. Source: <https://webapps01.un.org/nvp/mdgs.action?id=3&countryId=1882>

⁵ Sources: www.parliament.md, <http://gov.md/ro/profiles/team>, http://cicde.md/media/files/files/infografic_undp_ro-en_5872904.pdf.

⁶ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

⁷ This include: International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), European Centre for Electoral Systems (ECES) and Association of Arab EMBS) and development partners (UNDP, UN-Women, Council of Europe

⁸ National Bureau of Statistics, 2014

groups, however, the employment rate is even lower. For example, only 15% of Roma women over 15 years old are employed, compared to 34% of non-Roma women and to 25% of Roma men. Most unpaid work is performed by women (about 66% of women's total working time or around 5 hours a day).⁹ In response to this and other conditions of women in Moldova, UN-Women has initiated a number of strategic actions. For over two years, more than 100 girls, including Romani girls, girls with disabilities, girls who experienced violence and girls who are left behind by their migrant parents, benefited from an initiative on information and communication technologies (ICTs) as one of the promising employment and self-employment opportunities. This is a part of a holistic initiative, which includes also the development and rollout of a '4E' (Education, Employment, Equality and Entrepreneurship) Partnership Strategy and advocacy for sustainable financing for girls' education in ICT. The GirlsGoIT initiative has already created a spillover effect, going beyond its original scope, with girls creating a chain reaction among their peers by leading local clubs. This successful initiative has been replicated in Africa and Europe and UN Women's implementing partner, the non-governmental organization TEKEDU, received the 2016 Google Rise Award for supporting young women through technology. UN Women also works closely with policy makers to adopt state programmes that empower women in technology and entrepreneurship. The first state strategy for women's entrepreneurship was jointly created with women in business and currently being considered by the Government. Additionally, the government launched a process of re-engineering public services (as part of the Public Services Modernization Reform agenda) by taking over a successful public services provision model through one-stop shop piloted by UN-Women.

UN-Women's Role and Partnership

UN-Women's presence has evolved from being a project-based office in 2010 to a Country Office with full delegated authority as of 2015, with an annual budget of USD 0.7 million at the start and USD 2.3 million currently. During these years, UN-Women's role has also evolved gradually, both from the technical and strategic standpoints. At the start, our mind was set around 'working for women', which later evolved into 'working with women'. In the immediate future, we are seeing our path towards increasingly acting as a 'facilitator' for the creation of an environment, whereby 'women-to-women' serve as a vehicle for sustainable change towards greater equality in partnership with men and boys. UN-Women's Civil Society Advisory Group has been a dedicated and active partner over the past three years, advocating for the rights of marginalized groups, at policy and legislative levels. UN-Women's successful engagement in Moldova today is owed in large part to the openness and cooperation of the Parliament, government and judicial authorities. The proactive support and partnership of the Swedish Government, which is financing the Country Office Strategic Note for five years (in the amount of USD 2.5 million), enables UN-Women in Moldova to operate with confidence and to experiment and share 'what works' in challenging development areas. The cooperation of other development partners, such as Austria, Germany, the United States and Switzerland among others, has helped to open new avenues of collaboration for greater equality in the country. UN-Women as part of the 12 resident agencies in Moldova is actively promoting the Delivering as One modality, and acting as a lead agency of Operations Management Team, one of the four UNDAF Results Group, UN Gender Theme Group, UN SDG Theme Group and others.

⁹ Time Use in the Republic of Moldova, Analytical Briefs by National Bureau of statistics, 2015