



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

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Submission from the National Federation of Farmers (NFF) to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for the 71st session concerning the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The organization making this submission, the National Federation of Farmers (NFF), is a leading NGO in Macedonia representing interests of rural women, farmers and their access to fundamental rights and freedoms in rural areas, in particular for women. NFF supports agriculture development, defined as main rural activity towards achievement of its vision: Profitable Agriculture, Stable Village. This document is based on quantitative and qualitative data gathered as part of desk research, including official statistics, NFF lobbying and advocacy reports, policy reviews, multi-effect analysis, field research as well as other relevant available documents in this field produced by other NGO's in the country.

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

Article 1

The gender equality principle established by the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women should be taken into consideration in development of all policies and measures relevant to attainment of equality in all sectors, with access to data necessary to monitor implementation and progress.

Current state-of-affairs indicates that *collection of gender-desegregated data* is systematically pursued only in certain sectors (social policy, employment, education and population statistics).¹ Data on rural women is not gathered in all sectors.

The National Gender Equality Strategy 2013 – 2020 emphasises that women from rural areas are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of women, but there are no specific action plans in place aimed to improve their status. Under the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018 - 2020, women from rural areas are referred to only in the section on promotion of state employment measures.

Moreover, Operational Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2014-2020 does not include specific goals and indicators for wider gender-based policies for rural women. Current measure related to subsidizing up to 70% of minimum gross salary is intended only for active female members of agricultural households under the age of 40 years, married to members of agricultural households, unemployed mothers of at least one child who actively support their households, and live in settlements with less than 200 residents.² This measure is discriminatory and contributes to furthering stereotypes about the status of rural women, thereby hindering attainment of gender equality.

In its Gender Budget Statement, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) does not provide gender-desegregated data for applicants/beneficiaries of IPARD Programme I and II, while gender-desegregated data is available for the period 2009-2016, but only for approved and supported applicants. MAFWE reports that the share of women in the overall number of applicants has increased and stood at 18.4% in 2016 and 2017.³ Utilization of IPARD funds is marked by very low participation of women. Eligibility criteria stipulated in relevant bylaws for selection of beneficiaries under state measures on rural development that support women are void of any incentives, as insignificant 30 points may be assigned in the overall evaluation for agricultural households managed by women.⁴

¹ The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report, European Commission, Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, p.31. Available at: <https://www.sobranie.mk/content/republic-of-macedonia-report%2017.4.18.pdf>

² National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2014-2020, Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette no. 197 from 29.12.2014

³ 2018 Gender Budget Statement the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, obtained by NFF on 20.9.2018

⁴ Rulebook on Closer Criteria for Selection of Beneficiaries Under Rural Development Measures, Official Gazette no. 124/2011; 80/2013; 35/2016; 101/2017; 162/2018



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

Article 2

Rural women face stigma and discrimination and are at great risk of violence because of gender-based social norms and attitudes in rural areas. Adequate and support services that would enable efficient and effective protection against violence are not available at local level in rural areas and there is evident lack of available services for assistance and protection of violence victims. Rural women face violence in all spaces and spheres, including at household and community level. Violence against women prevents them to exercise and enjoy their rights. In our country, the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was ratified and entered in July 2018. Thereby, the state must fulfil minimum standards, i.e. one shelter per 10.000 women in each region and one psychological counselling centre per 50.000 women. According to these standards, our country should have 20 shelters, but in reality, there are only 4 shelters (Skopje, Sveti Nikole, Bitola, Kochani) for victims from all regions.⁵

The Law on Free Legal Aid (LFLA) has grossly failed to attain its overall goal, i.e. to ensure access to justice for all citizens. Lack of promotion and information dissemination about existence of LFLA mainly affects rural areas. Regional Offices of the Ministry of Justice, which provide preliminary legal aid, are located in urban areas and do not have mobile teams that would visit rural areas. Lack of property appraisal in cases when it is established that free legal aid applicants are in possession of some property is yet another obstacle in terms of access to justice in general,⁶ affecting rural women as well. Moreover, data on free legal aid applicants are not desegregated by gender or place of residence, i.e. urban or rural. These data are presented only per regional office of the Ministry of Justice.⁷ At the moment, LFLA is undergoing revision and particular attention should be paid to access to free legal aid for rural women.

There is broad failure to acknowledge women's work, especially work related to provision of care; women do not own and control resources generated from land or their labour; women do not enjoy fair income or safe and secure work conditions.

Article 4

As legally binding instrument, the Convention is insufficiently known and applied by public authorities to accelerate equality among men and women in rural areas and to ensure access to fundamental rights for rural women. According to the Law on Balanced Regional Development, at least 1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should be invested in promotion of balanced regional development to bridge developmental gaps among regions in the country. Given that 44%

⁵ Mapping available services for women victims of violence in the Republic of Macedonia, National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Skopje, 2016, p.7, p.8. Available at: <http://www.glasprotivnasilstvo.org.mk/download/2676/>

⁶ Report on Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid in 2016 and 2017, FOSM, p.42, p.53. Available at: <http://www.soros.org.mk/CMS/Files/Documents/Monitoring-report-2017-eng.pdf>

⁷ 2017 Report on Free Legal Aid, Ministry of Justice, Skopje, March 2018, p.9. Available at: <http://www.pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%98%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%982017.pdf>

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

of the total population lives in rural areas, equal shares of GDP should be distributed to both urban and rural areas, and at least half of these funds should target women.

The Law on Equal Opportunities of Men and Women stipulates an obligation for public institutions to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men and to integrate gender in their respective policies, strategies and budgets, by means of specific measures aimed to reduce gender inequality.

Article 7

According to its gender structure of employees, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy is among institutions with the highest share of male employees, whereby from the total number of employees (1,002 in 2016) 721 or 71.96% are male and 281 or 28.04% are female. MAWFE does not have a special department or person appointed to work on gender equality issues. Gender differences are also visible at local self-government units, where 62% of employees are male and 38% are female.⁸ The methodology on gender-sensitive budgeting is applied only by the public administration at national level.

Composition of the State Electoral Commission meets the requirement on 30% gender representation in the election administration; however, this requirement is not always complied with at lower level, as shown at the local elections held in 2017. Lists of candidates were admitted for registration and approved in spite of their failure to comply with the legal requirement on gender balance. Issues related to women's participation in public life were not addressed during the election campaign.⁹ Among all mayor candidates, only 16 were women (6%), while 14% of political party lists for municipal councillors were led by women. Municipal Election Commissions registered 9 lists with fewer than 40% women candidates.¹⁰ Only 6 female mayors were elected, of which 4 in rural areas. The number of women involved in public life and politics is insufficient to represent rural women in decision-making processes.

Article 11

Data show that women in rural areas spend most of their time, i.e. 4 hours and 22 minutes per day, on household unpaid activities, while they spend 1 hour and 18 minutes per day on activities that allow them to earn financial profit.¹¹ The state report does not include data and information on legal and social status of unpaid women working in family businesses, which is contrary to the Convention. Data are not available and statistics is not collected on women working without payment, social security and social benefits in enterprises, small businesses and farms owned by family members, whereby they are deprived of social benefits and payments.

⁸ 2016 Annual Report on Public Sector Employees, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Skopje, March 2017, p.33, p.44, p.48. Available at: http://www.mio.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/reports/Godisen_izvestaj_2016_Registar_na_vraboteni_vo_JS.pdf

⁹ Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, International Election Observation Mission to FYROM, OSCE, 15.10.2017. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/350136?download=true>

¹⁰ Observation of Municipal Elections in FYROM, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe, p. 10, October 2017

¹¹ Survey on Time Use 2014-2015, State Statistical Office (SSO), Skopje, December 2015, p.26. Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.15.20.pdf>

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

3 out of 4 women in rural areas are unpaid. Highest rates of unemployment are observed among young rural women, of which 59% are aged 20-29 years and 43% are aged 25-29 years. Around 64% of rural women are not active on the labour market due to household work and care for children. 47% of unemployed rural women are engaged in unpaid work on family farms and handcrafting,¹² and provision of care. Women do not own and control resources generated from land or their labour and they do not enjoy fair income or safe and secure work conditions.

Article 12

There are no official data on availability and utilization of health services and facilities by rural women, in particular reproductive health services and breast cancer screenings, and there is no official strategy or program on preventive health care measures targeting rural women.

Rural women visit gynaecologists once every 5 years or even rarely. Specialist health services are distant from rural areas. Lack of information, lack of gynaecologists and outreach nurses in rural areas, poor public infrastructure, travel costs, tradition and customs prevent rural women to benefit from preventive health care and services, especially those related to reproductive and sexual health.¹³ Barriers include requirements that defer women from accessing health care, such as high fees for health services, distance of health facilities and absence of convenient and affordable public transportation.¹⁴ Macedonia is marked by very high infant mortality rates (9.2 infant deaths per 1000 newborns in 2017, according to the State Statistical Office), with high rates in rural areas (99 deaths in rural areas and 102 in urban areas).¹⁵

Article 13

In general, rural women do not appear as social welfare beneficiaries due to the fact that social allowance is low and they incur travel and document costs which, in most cases, they cannot afford.¹⁶ In spite of the fact that the state has adopted legislation whereby collection and exchange of documents and data is pursued ex officio from 2013, social welfare institutions still demand applicants to secure all documents necessary, including certificates from the Public Revenue Office or similar documents.

Article 14

The State Report does not provide sufficient information on implementation of Article 14 to elaborate on obligations assumed in relation to rural women's access to macroeconomic policy measures, provision of decent rural employment, formal and informal education, land and housing issues, and response to the emerging climate changes.

Women living in rural areas have been identified as one of the most vulnerable groups in the country. Agriculture is an important economic branch in the Republic of Macedonia, accounting

¹² Perspectives of Women in Rural Areas, Federation of Farmers, April 2015, p.5

¹³ Perspectives of Women in Rural Areas, Federation of Farmers, April 2015, p.7

¹⁴ Perspectives of Women in Rural Areas, Federation of Farmers, April 2015, p.7

¹⁵ Live Births, Deaths and Migration in Urban and Rural Areas, Per Region, State Statistical Office, Skopje, 2017.

Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2018/2.1.18.25.pdf> and

http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=2

¹⁶ Analysis of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas: More Obstacles Than Opportunities, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 2018, p.69

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

for 15% of the Gross Domestic Product. Moreover, 180,000 families sustain themselves from agriculture and 45% of the total population in Macedonia lives in rural areas, which account for 87% of the country's total area.¹⁷

Rural families live relatively far from public schools, and girls travel to schools in the nearest towns, which implies additional burden to family budgets. School drop-out rates are much higher among girls in rural areas due to early marriages, in spite of the fact that secondary education is mandatory.¹⁸

Employment rates among women are higher in urban than in rural areas; women in rural areas have much lower level of education compared to women in urban areas who complete higher education. 56.68% of urban women at working age attend learning activities outside their regular education, while their share in rural areas is lower, as 37.31% of rural women at working age attend learning activities outside their regular education.¹⁹

There is no promotion of any measures by the State for rural women to actively participate in households and communities and to ensure equal rights to education and all types of vocational training. Moreover, rural women need education on mitigating effects from climate change, i.e. information that allows development of policies on climate change management. We are unaware of state-supported training intended for rural women in disciplines such as economy, agriculture, water resource management, cooperatives, etc..

As regards property inheritance, dominant tradition in communities allows only men to appear as heirs. This is particularly prominent in rural areas where agriculture is dominant activity. Women rarely appear as title holders of any property, most commonly after they are widowed. Majority of them do not perceive these practices and traditions as discriminatory. They accept them as normal and adhere to them without any complaints. It is thought that women would take inherited property to another house when they are married, while in this way the property still remains within the family. Tradition requires that even if they are offered portion of inheritance property, they should decline.²⁰

Data show that women have very limited access to land, which is perceived as major obstacle and prevents their access to the Programmes on Rural Development Support, given that they cannot apply for rural development measures without having any land and property on their name. In 2016, the State Audit Office observed that there is no rulebook/internal act on record-keeping for agriculture land under lease.²¹

¹⁷ Data from the National Federation of Farmers. Available at: <https://www.nff.org.mk/en/%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0%D1%82/>

¹⁸ Analysis of the Situation of Women in Rural Areas: More Obstacles Than Opportunities, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 2018, p.29, p.30.

¹⁹ 2013 Survey on Labour Force, State Statistical Office, Skopje, 2014, p.94, p.111 Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.14.04.pdf>

²⁰ Multidimensional Poverty Analysis, National Federation of Farmers of Macedonia, Skopje, 2017

²¹ Final Report of the Chartered State Auditor, State Audit Office, Skopje, 31.3.2016, p.60. Available at http://www.dzr.mk/Uploads/51_RU_Upravuvanje_zemjodelsko_ze%D0%BCjiste_izdavanje_zakup_naplata_zaku_pnina_KOMPLET_2015.pdf

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

Official public data are not available on the number of women who have submitted applications for legalization of buildings on agricultural land or buildings in urban and semi-urban areas pursuant to the Law on Agricultural Land and the Law on Treatment of Illegally Constructed Buildings. Applicant data need to be desegregated by gender and by area (rural and urban), thereby allowing monitoring of progress and implementation of legal provisions in terms of sustainable living conditions.

State Audit Office's report on performance of rural development measures notes that the ministry has not performed any follow-up and monitoring, in spite of its competences and obligations to monitor implementation of measures aimed to improve development and livelihood in rural areas, and recommended the state to conduct needs assessments and define priorities.²²

Data on internal migration (within borders of the same region) show that rural-to-urban is the dominant form of migration, accounting for 34.0%.²³ Barriers faced by rural women and problems affecting agricultural production, especially climate change and low profitability, contribute to increased migration from rural to urban areas.

Recommendations

- To ensure and report that 1% of GDP disbursed for balanced regional development include equal gender distribution;
- To introduce inclusive financial measures intended for female members of agricultural households that acknowledge unpaid work performed by women;
- To develop, implement and report on gender-sensitive agricultural policies that promote full equality, including access to education, employment, finances, health and social services, and equal gender participation in decision-making process;
- To promote change to social and cultural patterns of behaviour, in order to eradicate prejudices, traditions and practices, prevent all forms of violence against rural women, make due consideration of their needs and specific circumstances;
- To report on risks affecting rural women, extent and nature of violence and abuse they are subjected to, their needs and access to services, and effectiveness of measures aimed to address violence against them;
- To ensure access to justice for rural women, publish gender- and area-desegregated applicant data (urban or rural) on availability and utilization of state-sponsored free legal aid. To unify property appraisal for free legal aid and streamline the procedure for rural women to have access to justice. To open more local offices, as joint efforts by the Ministry of Justice and CSOs, thereby enabling wide range of legal advice services, information, timely legal support and proceedings, responsive and timely engagement of free-of-charge attorneys-at-law representing eligible rural women;

²² Final Report State Auditor, State Audit Office, Skopje, p.20, p.51. Available at: http://www.dzr.mk/Uploads/42_Razvoj_ruralni_sredini_2015.pdf

²³ Multidimensional Poverty Analysis, National Federation of Farmers of Macedonia, Skopje, 2017



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

- The state should take steps to address structural discrimination that prevents women to participate in public and political life, especially rural women;
- To increase co-funding under rural development support measures for women, similar to what was done for young farmers (55% of the value of approved investment), in cases when households are managed by women;
- To report on legal and social status of unpaid women who work in family farms, small businesses and rural households;
- To adopt new model of social insurance for women in rural areas, based on valuing women labour for unpaid activities, and new mechanisms on family pension inheritance;
- To take adequate legislative, administrative, economic, budgetary and other measures to ensure that rural women enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and to report on measures taken to eliminate barriers faced by women when accessing health services and facilities;
- To ensure practical implementation of the law in terms of ex officio collection and exchange of data and documents in cases when rural women appear as applicants for social allowance or free legal aid;
- To establish programmes on lifelong learning for rural women, support development of rural cooperatives and social enterprises managed by women. The Draft Law on Farm Advisory System must therefore include training and lifelong learning for rural women on regular basis;
- To support effective implementation of measures aimed to promote access to land and real estate for rural women by motivating and stimulating rural women. We recommend the state to seriously address this problem and implement different mechanisms to overcome all obstacles they are facing in this regard.