



Funded by  
the European Union

Co-funded by Swedish  
Development Cooperation



Sweden  
Sverige

# FINAL EVALUATION

## Empowering CSOs in Combatting Discrimination and Furthering Women's Labour Rights

*This evaluation is supported and guided by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and its partners, and presented by the Evaluation Team, composed of Mirela Jonuzaj (Team leader), Edlira Ngjerci Shima, and Maida Cehajic-Campara. The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the KWN or its partners, nor of the European Commission or of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, which financed this evaluation.*



Gender Alliance for Development Center  
Qendra Aleanca Gjimore për Zhvillim



KVINNA  
KVINNA

REACH-OR  
research in action



WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER  
CENTAR ZA ŽENSKA PRAVA

## Table of Contents

Acronyms .....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Description of the intervention .....	5
1.2. Evaluation Methodology .....	6
2. Findings: Answers to the Evaluation Questions .....	7
2.1. Overall assessment of the intervention .....	7
2.2. Evaluation criteria and questions.....	7
2.2. Relevance .....	7
2.3. Effectiveness .....	10
2.4. Efficiency .....	18
2.5 Impact.....	22
2.6 Sustainability.....	24
2.7. Coherence.....	26
2.8. Other issues .....	27
3. Conclusions .....	28
3.1 Major conclusions by order of importance .....	28
3.2 Major conclusions by evaluation criteria .....	29
3.3 Lessons learned.....	31
4. Recommendations.....	32
4.1 Recommendations per evaluation criteria and audience.....	32
5. Annexes to the report.....	34

## Acronyms

---

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CDP	Capacity Development Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of EC
EC	European Commission
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EUD	EU Delegation
EUO	European Union Office
GADC	Gender Alliance for Development Centre
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBD	Gender-based discrimination
GBV	Gender based Violence
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPs	Implementing Partners
KII	Key informant interviews
KWN	Kosovo Women's Network
KWF	Kosovo Women's Fund
NGEM	National Gender Equality Mechanism
OACA	Organisational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreements
SAQ	Self-Assessment Questionnaire
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SG	Sub Grantee
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TOR	Terms of References
TU	Trade Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WB	Western Balkan
WCSO	Women Civil Society Organisation

## Executive Summary

---

This report presents an independent assessment of achieved results and recommendations to inform the future planning of the Coalition towards addressing Gender-based Discrimination (GBD) and furthering women's labour rights. The evaluation looked at the performance of the Action, its enabling factors, and those hampering a proper delivery of results. The evaluation applied an approach that is utilisation-focused and participatory.

Thirty-three stakeholders have been consulted representing implementing partners, sub grantees (SG), governmental and non-governmental entities linked with the Action aiming at capturing their perspectives and experiences. The evaluation also applied a *human rights and gender responsive* approach, which inspired the process from formulation of interview questions and the lens applied for analysis of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Overall, the Action is assessed as highly relevant, successfully implemented with a sound level of effectiveness and efficiency. Its contribution to public policy reforms, EU policies, regional advocacy and its direct support to experienced GBD is well documented and sustainable. The needs identified and addressed by the Action are strategic to both the EU accession process and to ensuring equal treatment and respect of human rights throughout the region.

The Action has highly contributed to its implementing partners (IPs) and SG in organisational and capacity development. It has produced positive results at different levels: (i) Regional advocacy; (ii) National Policy (system); (iii) Organisational development and stability; (iv) Service provision for end beneficiaries. A very effective sub-granting approach was applied in implementing the Action. Altogether, the Action reached six WB countries, 20 direct beneficiary CSOs (6 IPs and 14 SG), and involved a total of 183 CSOs in national and regional advocacy activities.

The Action has addressed GBD and labour in WB countries which was an under-researched topic in the past. It enabled women's rights organisations to address GBD in addition to their continuous fight against gender-based violence (GBV). The topic of GBD in labour relations has been put into public discourse. The Action has directly influenced recognition of GBD in labour as a specific form of discrimination and more reported cases are evidenced. Women are more sensitized and empowered to report discrimination cases. In addition, awareness of the importance of preventing discrimination against women in labour has improved.

Regional cooperation is assessed as a very successful model for further strengthening and expanding towards achievement of set goals and objectives. CSOs remain the most progressive force and natural alliance for donors for bringing changes and achieving positive developments in the region. Best practices, knowledge gained, learning and research methodologies should be further developed and replicated in future similar programming.

The Action has built wide and sustainable national partnerships and introduced key stakeholders to GBD at work by raising their awareness and highlighting the importance of collaboration between involved actors. The Action has positively enhanced the attention of key stakeholders<sup>1</sup> to the issue through participation in advocacy events, direct cooperation on improvement of legal policies and awareness events. Lasting policies and practices for reporting, referring and addressing cases of discrimination established through the Action's support are now endorsed with a high likelihood to be sustained and applied beyond the life of the Action.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ombudsperson's Institutions, Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare/Social Policy, Ministries of Justice, Trade Unions, Labour Inspectorates, National Gender Equality Mechanisms, several CSO partners and legal aid providers.

The evaluation team (ET) encourages the EU and Sida to continue supporting such regional Networks/Coalitions which directly support grassroots CSOs that serve directly, more efficiently and in a sustained way the most in need groups. Constant support to CSOs to further increase awareness and enhance attention to labour rights and GBD is recommended as a key factor for sustaining the attention of governments. The evaluation highly recommends that the EU and Sida further support CSOs' capacity building through similar grants, expanding the space for civil society to be empowered and further capacitated. Subsequent similar projects are encouraged to ensure involvement of several key new actors and stakeholders, reach more beneficiaries and scale up advocacy to European structures. Further investment by all actors (CSOs, Coalition and EU) should be fostered, structured, strengthened and sustained on labour rights and GBD. In addition, the evaluation recommends to continue to ensure a harmonised criteria-reporting approach to GBD and labour rights within EU country progress reports across the WB countries.

## **1. Introduction**

---

### **1.1. Description of the intervention**

The Action was implemented from 22 March 2018 to 31 May 2022. The project implementation modality consisted of six partners, operating in each of the six countries, and one of them - KWN, acting as Coordinator (lead beneficiary). The project budget was €1,098,775.09 and 90% of the total cost is an EU contribution, with the rest provided by Sida.

The Action has addressed GBD and labour in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, hereafter referred to as WB countries. GBD represents a barrier for several women in securing jobs, as well as undermines women's labour rights. WB countries have introduced at different levels some anti-discrimination legislation and related institutional efforts have been ongoing<sup>2</sup>. The Action has conducted two research editions<sup>3</sup> with comparative analyses of relevant legal frameworks in WB countries, including findings on the prevalence and nature of labour related GBD and how institutions have treated such cases, as well as targeted recommendations. The baseline research identified issues that the Action then sought to address such as GBD at work, practical tools in treating discrimination cases, public awareness on GBD, reporting mechanisms, etc. The Action used the research recommendations to inform evidence-based advocacy to hold relevant institutions accountable to implementing anti-discrimination legislation.

The Action has provided direct support for local CSOs in WB countries to enhance their capacities in dealing with women's rights and to perform advocacy and awareness activities for women's rights, citizen engagement, media involvement, research, policy analysis and networking. The Action has provided tailored capacity building to CSOs selected, following an open process that involved a call for proposals. It has also directly supported several advocacy initiatives and participation in decision-making processes. The Action's support has enabled a meaningful partnership between CSOs addressing GBD and labour in the region and an enhanced cooperation among CSOs (networking at national and regional level) and important relevant stakeholders, including policymakers, Ombudspersons and trade unions (TU).

The Evaluation Report provides a foundation for the Coalition of Women's Rights Organisations' discussions on ongoing, planned continued and future work towards addressing GBD and furthering women's labour rights.

---

<sup>2</sup> Definitions relating to discrimination generally are compliant with the EU gender equality acquis.

<sup>3</sup> Gender-based discrimination at work in the WB – Kosovo Women's Network, First Edition (2019) and second edition (2022)

## 1.2. Evaluation Methodology

Data was collected through a review of available documentation, key informant interviews (KII), self-assessment questionnaires (SAQ) and an online survey targeting stakeholders, IPs and SG supported by the Action. *The desk review* was structured around the evaluation criteria and contributed to answer the evaluation questions, as well as to focus and frame KII. The desk review was primarily based on documents shared by KWN enlisted in *Annex 8*.

Following a mapping of actors with knowledge of the Coalition and Action, the ET identified *a purposeful heterogeneous sample of interviewees* on the basis of input provided by KWN and IPs. The methodology also allowed for chain-referral sampling. All interviews were semi-structured and adapted to the respondent's expected area of experience and knowledge. The interviews aimed at capturing the interviewees' most significant experiences, reflections, and ideas. The informants were interviewed based on voluntary participation and confidentiality was highlighted as the main principle of the process. In total, 33 key informants (4 men, 29 women) were interviewed mostly online in six WB countries. Input from Brussels and the Regional Office of Kvinna till Kvinna was also received (see Annex 7).

An *Online Survey* was sent to 16 organizations and individuals in six WB countries, identified by stakeholder mapping provided by KWN. Only those not interviewed were invited to participate. The survey consisted of 10 closed questions aiming at gauging respondents' perceptions on the Action's relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. Eight responses were received, giving a meaningful and representative response rate of 50% (see Annex 3). All graphs in this report present the online survey findings.

A *SAQ* was drafted for IPs and all six were invited to provide their assessment related to: the Action's challenges; positive and negative aspects of the sub-granting scheme for CSOs; cooperation between the SG and different stakeholders; sustainability; lessons learned; and cooperation and coordination of the Action by KWN (see Annex 3).

A *SAQ* was also drafted for SG. Five (62%) of eight SG invited to participate responded, with their assessment of the Action's key challenges, achievements, capacity building component, sustainability, and accountability and responsiveness of public institutions (see Annex 3).

The ET applied an intuitive approach to data analysis, drawing on the Team members' contemplation, experiences and understanding of the context. Our analysis also included elements of an intersubjective approach through which KWN and IPs were engaged in verification of findings and conclusions. The ET did not treat data analysis as an activity distinct from data collection. Rather, analysis of collected data was an ongoing activity conducted in parallel with the desk review, KII, SAQ and survey. The ongoing analysis informed the data collection and helped ensure that it remained relevant for addressing the evaluation questions for each criterion. Triangulation was key to enhancing the reliability and validity of findings. We triangulated the methods of gathering data, sources, stakeholder perspectives, and across ET members. The ET had separate online debriefing and verification sessions with KWN and IPs at the end of the data collection phase. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, it was agreed with KWN in the inception phase that no interviews would be carried out with women direct end beneficiaries. Case stories were collected to better understand the context and support provided from IPs and SG.

KWN and IPs were involved during all stages of the evaluation process, input for Inception report, data collection/interviews, validation of findings, as well as review of the draft evaluation report. Due to holiday season and availability of informants and other partners, the data collection process required more time than planned. A new timeline was agreed and consulted with KWN.

## 2. Findings: Answers to the Evaluation Questions

---

### 2.1. Overall assessment of the intervention

Overall, the Action is assessed as highly relevant, successfully implemented with a sound level of effectiveness and efficiency. The Action is considered as very important to women's rights groups/CSOs as it further increased their capacities to use anti-discrimination legislation, research, monitoring (specifically GBD and labour rights), advocacy, citizen engagement and networking. The Action has facilitated learning and supported an exchange of experience. It has highly contributed to organisational and capacity development of IPs and SG by producing positive results and achieving all targeted indicators.

### 2.2. Evaluation criteria and questions<sup>4</sup>

The evaluation used the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence, as well as "other issues" focusing on how gender, environment and climate change were addressed by the Action. The ToR listed thirteen evaluation questions (EQ) categorised under the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, and "Other issues". In addition to questions indicated in the ToR, the ET developed sub-questions (Annex 4), which helped guide the approach of the evaluation questions as follows:

- **Effectiveness:** To what extent has the Intervention attained, or is expected to attain, its outcome level results. Are there any differential results across groups? To what extent has the intervention generated, significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, effects? Which factors or Interventions within the partners' control could have contributed to more effective advocacy at national and regional level, if any?
- **Efficiency:** How efficient was the Intervention in its use of resources to achieve its aims, particularly in comparison interventions of a similar nature led by international organisations or UN agencies?
- **Impact:** To what extent has the Intervention initiated a change process that suggests potential long-term impact? What early signs exist of lasting impact resulting from the Intervention, including specifically signs of contributions to SDGs and EU GAP III implementation?
- **Sustainability:** To what extent are the outcomes achieved likely to continue? How could partners further strengthen sustainability?
- **Coherence:** How compatible and complimentary was the Intervention with other Interventions in the sector and how could coherence have been improved? What is the EU added value, beyond Member States' interventions only?
- **Relevance:** To what extent has the Intervention addressed relevant needs and priorities in the current countries' context? How relevant is the Intervention to its target groups? Have new, more relevant needs emerged? If so, to what extent has the Intervention addressed them?
- **Other issues:** To what extent and how has the Intervention contributed to gender equality? To what extent and how has the Intervention contributed to Environment & Climate Change?

### 2.2. Relevance<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> For more details refer to Annex 4, Evaluation Matrix.

<sup>5</sup> Under the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the relevance criterion concerns "The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change".

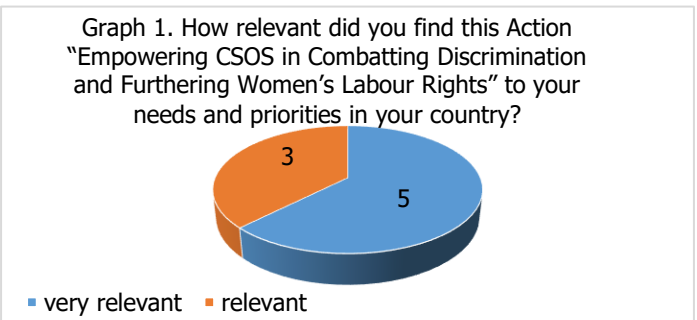
**Q1. How relevant has the Intervention been to the needs and priorities of the key stakeholders and final beneficiaries, including anything specifically important outside the initially intended relevance?**

*To what extent has the Intervention addressed relevant needs and priorities in the current countries and regional context?*

Despite relatively clear legal country frameworks, their implementation remains weak and incomplete. Discrimination in the labour market, access to finance, ownership of property and access to justice is constantly faced by women in the region. GBD as indicated in research reports produced by the Action (baseline and end line reports<sup>6</sup>) represents a barrier for several women in securing jobs, as well as undermines women’s labour rights. The ET assesses that the Action is highly relevant both from a need’s perspective and in line with the WB governments’ stated priorities.

The Action has addressed relevant needs in WB countries by conducting analysis of country context, with relevant findings and recommendations for direct services, legislative improvement and changes, development of policies and practices, capacity building to address GBD at work and violation of women labour rights, and regional advocacy activities at country, regional and European levels.

There is strong consensus amongst those interviewed that the Coalition’s focus on anti-discrimination in general and GBD within the framework of labour relations in particular has been and remains highly relevant (Graph 1).

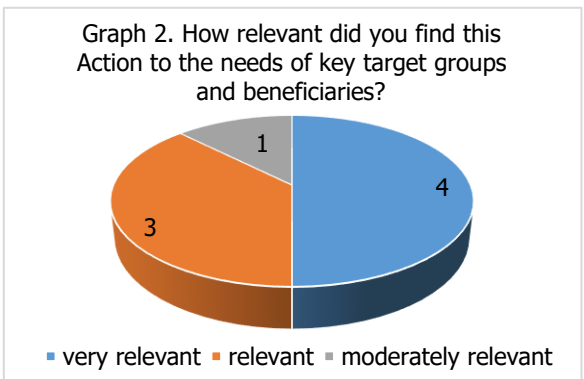


GBD remains rarely reported; there are very few discrimination cases reported or addressed by courts, and there is little existing or accessible case law related to discrimination. The Action is relevant because it addressed all these gaps.

*How relevant is the programme to its target groups? How relevant was the capacity building to target group needs and gaps?*

The ET assesses the Action as highly relevant to the needs and priorities of the target groups, key stakeholders and final beneficiaries in the current countries’ context, particularly to CSOs operating in the field of women’s rights and anti-discrimination on labour market and the target groups – women, both employed and unemployed, subject of labour GBD and sexual harassment at work.

Interviews with all actors confirmed that existing discrimination practices undermine women’s rights and labour force participation, constraining decision-making at home and in public. Increasing awareness about gender roles, rights, and how to report discrimination; increasing women’s confidence to report discrimination; and encouragement of officials to prevent discrimination and improve reporting mechanisms are all considered very relevant



<sup>6</sup> Gender-based discrimination at work in the WB – Kosovo Women’s Network, First Edition (2019) and second edition (2022)



actions toward addressing GBD at work. As States are not meeting their obligations as duty-bearers, there is consensus amongst those interviewed that it was too relevant for the Coalition to provide direct support to women claiming their rights related to GBD at work.

This is particularly assessed as very important as there are very few actors willing to fund direct support to women in this area. However, interviewees have also stressed that it is essential for the Coalition to continue to advocate for states to live up to their responsibilities.

The delivery of direct legal support to women to claiming their rights has been important from an advocacy perspective. Combined with prevention activities and campaigns (awareness-raising, information dissemination, and frontline worker capacity building), the assistance has allowed the Coalition to sharpen its advocacy messages and ensure that they are grounded in available evidence and practical experiences. The Action's activities (i.e. several social media posts involved men specifically) in addressing the needs of men for information on gender roles and power relations, were relevant.

Government stakeholders interviewed, stated that the support provided to further increase their capacities in using anti-discrimination legislation was very relevant to their specific needs particularly related to capacities, knowledge, resources (including time) and political support which hampers their ability to further implement anti-discrimination legislation. Stakeholders (mainly SG and IPs) said legal aid providers had the opportunity to better understand violations of women's labour rights, particularly related to GBD within the framework of labour rights, as well as increased their technical capacities on how to support and provide legal expertise to specific cases of labour rights violations, such as GBD and sexual harassment at work. The received information and technical skills were fully in line with their needs. Labour Inspectorate professionals involved in the project confirmed that the Action contributed to improving their understanding on GBD, increasing in this way their opportunity to install effective policies and procedures for preventing, reporting, and treating discrimination at work. All this knowledge was completely in line with their needs in this field.

Fighting discrimination in labour is also highly relevant for the existing Coalition of CSOs, both from a need's perspective and the existing Coalition's strategy perspective. The leading partner and IPs are among the most active CSOs in their respective countries, with sufficient record of accomplishment in implementing different projects and being an active part of the process for fighting discrimination in labour. The ET identified and assessed a high ownership of the interventions by most stakeholders, CSOs and public bodies, which are deeply involved and dedicated to the cause of fighting for women's rights and anti-discrimination in labour.

*Have new, more relevant needs emerged? If so, to what extent has the intervention addressed them?*

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has negatively impacted labour rights, particularly women's labour rights, including in the WB. Women suffered disproportionate job and income losses, poor working conditions, and insecurity in the labour market. That situation was particularly serious in the widespread informal economy. Particularly affected were women who needed to stay home and were laid off from work (pregnant women, the chronically ill, and mothers of children under 10 due to closed preschools and schools). They received a salary lower than the minimum guaranteed by law, faced dismissals and lacked health insurance. In this situation, the need for legal aid increased. The Action has identified and addressed these cases, by referring them to the relevant institutions, monitoring how institutions addressed cases and/or providing direct legal support.

## 2.3. Effectiveness<sup>7</sup>

### Q1 To what extent has the Intervention achieved its objectives and any other unexpected results?

*To what extent has the intervention attained, or is expected to attain, its outcome level results. Are there any differential results across groups?*

**Outcome 1:** Impact improved of CSOs in holding relevant institutions accountable to implementing anti-discrimination legislation related to women’s labour rights and empowering women to claim their rights.

Interviews with stakeholders and the review of the Action’s interim reports confirmed that the regional initiative has been very effective in terms of the advocacy work, both at national and regional level. **17 changes** are evidenced as a result of CSOs’ advocacy initiatives supported by the Action. Most relate to legal and policy documents drafted and approved in all WB countries<sup>8</sup>. **199 anti-discrimination cases** were brought to relevant institutions and monitored towards proper address with the support of this Action (see Annex 9, Table 1). Overall, **183 CSOs**<sup>9</sup> (70% led by women, primarily based in cities but working in rural areas) engaged in advocacy initiatives, decision-making processes and reforms related to women’s labour rights.

Use of Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment tool (OACA) and Capacity Development Plan (CDP) developed for each IP and SG has reported progress achieved by 5 (five) IP and 14 SG for their organisational and capacity development. The average percentage of CDP’s implemented during this Action is 90%.

**Outcome 2:** Existing coalition of CSOs strengthened at regional and EU level

The ET assesses that the Action has successfully managed to further consolidate the existing Coalition of CSOs and strengthened its capacities in monitoring, watchdog initiatives, citizen engagement and evidence-based advocacy. The use of OACA tool<sup>10</sup> for IP and SG reports an increase of the index score to 4.0 for partners and 3.75 for sub-grantees (demonstrating strengthened Coalition due to CSOs improved capacities).

No. of meetings on joint advocacy	
Country	# of meetings
Albania	28
BiH	54
Kosovo	31
Montenegro	19
North Macedonia	11
Serbia	11
Regional meetings	14

A total of **171 Meetings** were held among CSOs and other stakeholders to plan and undertake joint advocacy towards implementing anti-discrimination legislation, including EU level meetings with Gender Adviser EEAS, Gender Adviser DG NEAR, Acting Director Western

<sup>7</sup> OECD/DAC Network on Evaluation Criteria (2019) Under the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the effectiveness criterion concerns “The extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results”

<sup>8</sup> Resolution on Women’s Rights in the Western Balkans, adopted on 24 January 2019; Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of Northern Macedonia adopted in March 2018; Labour Law in Kosovo - KWN’s advocacy together with the Women’s Economic Forum (WEF), contributed to suspending voting on the draft Labor Law after its second hearing in the Assembly; New Labour Law in Montenegro that incorporated 14 EU Directives, including the Directive on the Rights of Pregnant Workers and part of the Work-Life Balance Directive, adopted in Montenegro on December 2019; Law No. 124/2020, including additions and amendments to the Law No. 10221, dated 04.02.2010 ‘On Protection against Discrimination’ that were adopted by the Albanian Parliament in October 2020; Law on Maternity leave in Kosovo, KWN’s advocacy together with the WEF contributed to blocking this law which had proposed to treat maternity leave within a separate law, potentially contributing to enhanced discrimination; Law on Prohibition of Harassment in the Workplace in Republika Srpska, adopted on 30 September 2021; Law on Protection Against Discrimination in Serbia was revised, while A 11’s recommendation to include Article 27 on Discrimination in the field of housing was adopted.

<sup>9</sup> Final Progress Report

<sup>10</sup> Baseline and end line data collection was conducted by the Action

Balkans DG NEAR, and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). A well-coordinated and planned Regional Strategy guided all advocacy actions undertaken by the Action, and was 145% implemented<sup>11</sup>. The latest update of the Regional Strategy collected input from all IPs and SG working on advocacy at the country level. Seven successful joint advocacy initiatives related to labour rights were undertaken on regional and EU level, including the joint advocacy efforts (see Annex 9, table 2).

**Outcome 3.** Enabling environment improved for CSOs to hold relevant institutions accountable

Interviews with IPs and SG confirmed the effectiveness of the Action in enabling an improved environment for CSOs to hold relevant institutions responsible. **30** legislative and policy amendments related to the gender equality acquis were put forward as result of the Action. Interviews with relevant institutions highlighted the importance of the Action to enable implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. Further, **23** initiatives were undertaken by relevant institutions (e.g., National Gender Equality Mechanisms, NGEMs, Ombudspersons, Labour Inspectorates, etc.), particularly affiliates, that supported CSOs' efforts to enable implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. For instance:

- ✓ Labour Inspectorate in Albania took immediate actions to investigate reported labour violations affecting women, following Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC) reports, as well as to ensure GADC was informed regarding actions taken.
- ✓ In BiH, the Agency for Gender Equality prepared the Recommendation to Employers on Gender Equality in Work and Employment, based on Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka (HCA) recommendations and interventions; they revised the recommendations and sent them to employers, labour inspectorates and other relevant institutions for work and gender equality.
- ✓ In Kosovo, the European Union Office (EUO) offered support for recommendations to include parental leave within the Labour Law and to block the law in its current form. Several members of the Kosovo Assembly offered support for KWN recommendations for the draft Labour Law; and blocked the law in its present form, following KWN and Women's Economic Forum (WEF) advocacy.
- ✓ In Serbia, The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality issued an Opinion #295-20, with recommendations regarding the decision to terminate an employee in a case of GBD in labour. The Commissioner cited the Action's baseline research report for Serbia in their recommendation, drawing on the conclusion that discrimination based on family status disproportionately affects women. This Opinion was published by the Commissioner in 2020.

Research on the implementation of anti-discrimination law, particularly related to women's labour rights, is considered by IPs as very helpful to document existing anti-discrimination cases and ensure a better understanding of discrimination against women at work and opportunities for its address among citizens, institutions and other stakeholders. The case law that exists has been identified in the research reports. Strategic litigation practices were also considered very effective in responding to cases involving GBD and violations of labour and employment rights, such as: related to unpaid overtime work and sexual harassment at work; unlawful termination of employment; violation rights related to payment of health and social contributions; unlawful termination of employment; unpaid salaries: and GBV at work, etc.

**14** research reports (7 baseline and 7 end line) were published in 2019 and 2022, including two in each country and two regional reports. These were the first such gender analyses published on this topic. Media coverage and awareness raising meetings also were successfully used to improve GBD understanding: **558** instances of media coverage and **299** awareness meetings.

The ET assess that the existing Coalition of CSOs has effectively managed to fulfil all outputs, outcomes and overall objective of the Action. The Action has fully attained its outcome level results and there are

<sup>11</sup> Final Progress Report.

not any differential results across groups. The Coalition exceeded their targets on most indicators compared to the initially designed Action, as shown in the table below.

Results chain	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Level of achievement
<b>Oc1.</b> Impact improved of CSOs, [...] in holding relevant institutions accountable to implementing anti-discrimination legislation related to women's labour rights and empowering women to claim their rights.	<b>Ind. 1:</b> # of changes <sup>12</sup> that occur as a result of diverse CSOs' advocacy	0 through the Action (2017)	16	Exceeded - 106%; total 17 changes.
	<b>Ind. 2:</b> # of anti-discrimination cases brought to relevant institutions and monitored towards proper address	0 through this Action (2017)	90	Exceeded - 217%; total 199 cases
<b>Oc2.</b> Existing coalition of CSOs strengthened at regional and EU level.	<b>Ind. 1.</b> % of joint Advocacy Strategy Implemented	0% (2017)	75%	Exceeded - 145%
	<b>Ind. 2:</b> Increased index score on the OACA for partners and grant recipients, respectively (demonstrating strengthened coalition due to CSOs advocacy capacities)	3.6 for IPs 3.4 for SG	4.0 for IPs, 3.75 for SG	Achieved - 100%; 4.0 for IPs, 3.75 for SG
<b>Oc3.</b> Enabling environment improved for CSOs to hold relevant institutions accountable.	<b>Ind. 1</b> # of legislative and policy amendments put forward as a result of this action, related to the gender equality law acquis	0 (2017)	18 total	Exceeded – 166.6%; 30 legislatives and policy amendments
	<b>Ind. 2</b> # of actions by relevant institutions (e.g., NGEMs Ombudspersons, Inspectorates, etc.), particularly affiliates, that support CSOs' efforts to enable implementation of anti-discrimination legislation	0 (2017)	11 total	Exceeded - 209%; 23 actions in total
<b>Op 1.1.</b> CSOs' participation in decision-making processes and reforms related to women's labour rights increased and improved.	<b>Ind. 1</b> # of diverse CSOs participating in different advocacy initiatives, decision-making processes and reforms related to women's labour rights, disaggregated by CSOs location, mission/focus, and gender of CSOs leader	6 (2017)	180 total	Exceeded – 101.6% 183 CSOs in total
	<b>Ind. 2</b> % of CDPs implemented, showing improvement in organizational and advocacy capacity	0%	90% IPs and SG	Achieved – 100%; 90% for IPs and SG
<b>Op 2.1.</b> Existing coalition of CSOs further consolidated and	<b>Ind. 1;</b> Improved, shared regional advocacy strategy	Partially planned, unwritten regional	Written evidence-based, well-	Achieved - Regional advocacy strategy

<sup>12</sup>"Changes" refer to any difference in approach, policy, and/or treatment of discrimination cases, following CSO' advocacy, which evidence the impact of CSO' advocacy.

Results chain	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Level of achievement
capacities strengthened in monitoring, watchdog initiatives, citizen engagement and evidence-based advocacy.	<b>Ind. 2;</b> # of joint advocacy initiatives on regional and EU level undertaken (related to labour rights)	advocacy strategy  0 (2017)	coordinated and planned regional advocacy strategy (2020, and updated annually)  4	designed, evidence-based, well-coordinated and planned improved and updated annually.  Exceeded - 250%; 10 joint advocacy initiatives
<b>Op 2.2.</b> Cooperative relations between CSOs and other stakeholders improved in furthering implementation of anti-discrimination legislation.	<b>Ind. 1.</b> # of meetings held among CSOs and other stakeholders to plan and undertake joint advocacy towards implementing anti-discrimination legislation  <b>Ind. 2</b> # of joint advocacy initiatives undertaken involving cooperation among CSOs and other stakeholders.	0 (2017)  0 (2017)	144  71	Exceeded - 118.7% 171 meetings  Achieved - 100%; 71 joint initiatives in total
<b>Op 3.1.</b> Availability of case law improved, due to research and strategic litigation.	<b>Ind. 1</b> Existing anti-discrimination cases that are documented in research reports and made publicly available	Little information currently available.	Published existing case law made available in baseline and final reports	Achieved-
<b>Op 3.2.</b> Understanding of discrimination against women at work and opportunities for its address improved among citizens, institutions and other stakeholders.	<b>Ind. 1</b> # of evidence-based research reports published, by country and as region, on the implementation of anti-discrimination law, particularly related to women's labour rights.  <b>Ind. 2</b> # of times media cover issues relating to discrimination against women at work and discrimination cases (proxy for awareness)  <b>Ind. 3</b> # of awareness-raising meetings held with stakeholders	0 through this Action (2017)  0 through this Action (2017)  0 (2017)	14  300 total  220 total	Achieved - 100%; 14 reports published  Exceeded - 186%; 558 times  Exceeded - 135.9%; 299 awareness events

The ET assesses that overall, the Coalition fully achieved all targeted indicators.

*To what extent has the intervention generated, significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, effects?*

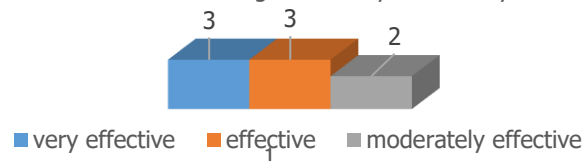
The following positive intended effects have been identified based on interviews and the survey:

- a) The Action is evaluated as very effective in improving cooperation between CSOs and relevant stakeholders in furthering implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in WB countries (Graph 3).
- b) The Action is evaluated as very effective in contributing to a better understanding of GBD against women in labour and holding institutions accountable (Graph 4).
- c) The Action is evaluated as very effective in developing best practices towards addressing discrimination and furthering women's labour rights (Graph 5).
- d) The Action has contributed to building a regional network of CSOs working on women's labour rights and addressing GBD (Graph 6).
- e) Interviews with KWN and IPs confirmed that the flexibility to adapt and revise activities by the Management team, based on donor approval, including alternative responses to unexpected developments (e.g., COVID-19) is assessed as a strong point for strengthening the effectiveness of the Action by responding to the country and regional context based on development and analysis.

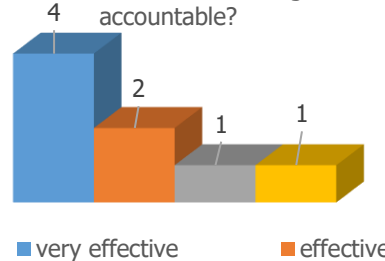
For instance:

- Given delays related to some activities as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the need to adapt some activities to this reality, the partners requested a no-cost extension;
- Partners agreed to adapt the already ongoing social media campaign to the crisis; they have worked with the designer to share messages related to COVID-19 and workers' rights, including contact information to report rights abuses and receive free legal aid. In each country, unique posts were created in local languages with tailored information to inform citizens about their rights and where they could seek help for rights violations; additional legal aid was provided as needed.

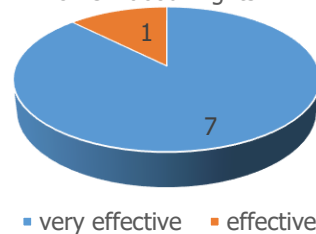
Graph 3. How effective was the action in improving cooperation between CSOs and relevant stakeholders in furthering implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in your country?



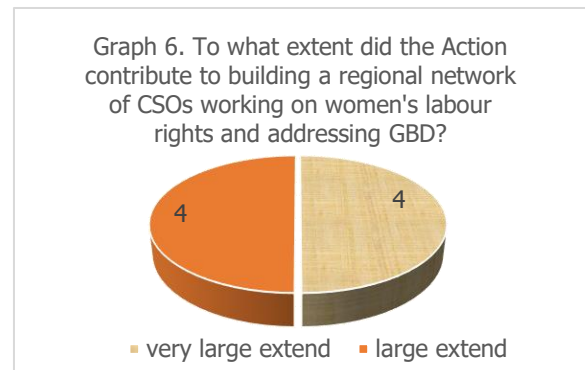
Graph 4. How effective was the Action in contributing to a better understanding of GBD against women in labour and holding institutions accountable?



Graph 5. How effective was the Action in developing best practices towards addressing discrimination and furthering women labour rights?



f) The established partnerships between KWN, IPs and SG in the frame of the Action is assessed very appropriate and effective. The majority of key informants and partners across countries spoke positively about working in partnership with KWN. KWN has frequently been in contact with IPs and SG in order to ensure the funds were effectively and efficiently used for the purpose originally intended. KWN established a fruitful collaboration with IPs, understanding clearly the added-value of each partner and expectations from the partnership. Effective communication flow, full trust and mutual respect among all parties were built. KWN and IPs have worked cooperatively to build upon mutual interests and share experiences and resources to work toward common objectives. All IPs have particularly highlighted the effectiveness in coordination of the Action by KWN. Key strategies for effective coordination identified by IPs include the overarching strategy of developing IPs into strategic partners, continuous learning and efficient, regular, interactive and positive communication, and that partners were equally involved in all decision-making processes. All parties have worked together to identify appropriate solutions to challenges, particularly those related to COVID-19 pandemic. Positive relations have particularly facilitated the research, its launching, and the follow-up joint advocacy. Periodic regional meetings and knowledge sharing across countries has been cited as effective means to improve the regional cooperation by significantly contributing to learning and using evidence of results and successes for implementing the Action.



Very effective partnership was also set with the related institutions at country level.

*"...Through this project, and thanks to KWN and Kvinna till Kvinna, we benefited from the given opportunity to meet and collaborate with a large number of relevant organizations from the region, which greatly helped to better understand the issue of discrimination against women in the labour market, but also contributed to the connection between organizations and created an opportunity for new cooperation."* - SG.

g) A very effective sub-granting approach is applied by KWN, reaching six WB countries. Following the effective approach used by KWN in implementing three prior EU-funded Actions via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the Civil Society Facility (CSF), the Kosovo Women's Fund (KWF) successful sub-granting approach has been scaled up through this Action, reaching five other WB countries. The Action financed 14 initiatives in the sector of Women Rights & Gender Equality. Expertise from KWN staff has enabled a better environment for WB CSOs to receive customized assistance, mentoring, and support with innovative ideas and practicalities.

The sub-granting scheme is considered a very important tool for furthering CSOs capacities as well as via a learning by doing approach.

SAQ and interviews with SG confirmed that the project has been very effective in furthering learning and networking among the CSOs beneficiaries and more specifically establishing connections and relations with relevant local and central government stakeholders as well as forging ties among respective CSO partners. They have particularly highlighted the importance of capacity building elements provided (mentoring, training, technical assistance, counselling orientation, guidance for project operations etc.).

*"...This project has greatly enhanced our advocacy capacity, through trainings, forums and presentations shared with us... We gained additional practical knowledge and the opportunity to learn from the Kosovo Women's Network, as an organization dealing with advocacy in the field of protection against discrimination." - SG.*

*"...We have increased our knowledge and skills for reporting, as well as skills for properly identifying and managing problems. .... we have established regular communication with our donor. We have also organized and improved our administrative functioning, through the examples of the Kosovo Women's Network, as well as through the regular attendance of trainings and workshops held by them, on topics of lobbying and advocacy, writing project applications, policy briefs, financial reports, communication and visibility, which were very useful for the representatives of our organization for further successful work." - SG.*

*"...Small and grassroots organisation with limited capacities for administration received grants and continued their work with communities, and often hard to reach, marginalised groups. The networks that are built through the sub-granting scheme enabled organisations to build advocacy alliances and synergies. Smaller organisations benefited from the shared experience, learning by doing approach and capacity building activities (especially related to administration and organisational management), whereas bigger organisations can get a more direct reach to different communities through the grassroots organisation activities, and thus inform their advocacy efforts using a bottom-up approach." - IP*

Overall, the approach of sub-granting efficiently reaches diverse CSOs that may otherwise not have access to EU funds given the size of funds and their financial histories, language, and ability to apply, among other issues.

They still need support for capacity improvements (through formal and non-formal training) of CSOs, in areas such as project management, reporting, advocacy, networking, communication and marketing, financial management, GBD, etc. The feedback from SAQ highlighted the financial instability and lack of current available funding opportunities for some SG to obtain grants from other sources for continuing, enhancing and further developing their initiatives. Such insecure funding can negatively affect the expected long-term outcomes beyond the current funding from this Action.

h) The Action has managed to develop a very effective internal Monitoring and Evaluation system, by providing regular and updated information and keeping a very clear tracking database. Online monitoring tools have been developed and applied, and forms and deliverables are available. Very effective mentoring and coaching provided on a daily basis is reported by all IPs and SG.

The ET has identified the following unintended positive effects:

a) As stated, the pandemic has had substantial negative impacts on labour rights, particularly for women.

*"...the pandemic significantly affected the position of women workers and expanded the violation of their labour rights. The need for legal aid has increased in relation to the circumstances." - SG*

*"...The project was implemented in a period when the pandemic caused by COVID-19 virus was happening and thus the discrimination against women workers was especially visible, especially in the private sector (textile industry). Particularly affected were women who needed to stay home and were laid off from work (pregnant women, the chronically ill, and mothers of children under 10 due to closed preschools and schools). They received a salary lower than the minimum guaranteed by law, faced dismissals and lack of health insurance. 17 complaints were sent to the State Labour Inspectorate due*



*to allegations of discrimination / violation of labour rights, and cooperation with the same institution was at a high level, as well as their responsiveness to our complaints.” - SG*

The COVID-19 pandemic thus provided the opportunity for the Coalition to focus on employers’ violations of labour and privacy rights and to follow specific cases. This enabled the Coalition’s further advocacy towards preventing women from disproportionately losing jobs and incomes during the emergency, ensuring decent working conditions, ensuring access to safety nets, etc.

- b) Interviews with IPs and SG, and SAQ found that the Action helped them strengthen employers’ internal mechanisms to respond to sexual harassment, and to adopt relevant policies, regulations and procedures so that workers are protected and know who to turn to for help and support.

*“...We continuously worked on strengthening the implementation of the newly adopted Law on the Prohibition of Harassment in the Workplace, with a special focus on sexual harassment and protection of workers in the field of labour. The work is reflected in strengthening the internal mechanisms of work organizations to respond to sexual harassment, adopt relevant policies, regulations and procedures so that workers are protected and know who to turn to for help and support”. - SG*

- c) Building on the strong relationships, cooperation and learning from this Action, several partners are now also engaged in a new EU regional Action to further gender equality in the EU Accession process, led by Reactor (also: KWN, Women’s Rights Centre [WRC], Kvinna till Kvinna, and GADC indirectly as a member of AWEN). Lessons learned from networking, cooperation, and research produced under this Action is informing this new regional Action’s cooperation as well as EU related advocacy.
- d) Synergies with other actions. In Serbia, a synergy was also fostered with a Sida-funded programme on GBV, providing occasions for SG to receive capacity development, training, workshops, and networking opportunities. The Kvinna till Kvinna Coordinator for this Action is also involved with another Sida-funded regional programme, in partnership with Swedish Police, titled “Advanced International Training Programme - Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence - Strengthening Agents of Change”. Using the network and its capacities, Kvinna till Kvinna complemented this Action and provided opportunities for capacity development and support for sub-grantee A11, Initiative for Economic and Social Rights, which is implementing advocacy activities from the Regional Advocacy Strategy in Serbia. Other similar examples apply for all IPs who complemented Action activities with other projects targeting labour rights and discrimination.
- e) The online communication applied for legal aid and research proved to be innovative, anonymous and preferred especially from end beneficiaries. It also provided the opportunity for the Action to reach more individuals than targeted.

The ET did not identify any intended and unintended negative effects.

## **Q2. Which factors or Interventions within the partners’ control could have contributed to more effective advocacy at national and regional level, if any?**

The ET has identified the following factors or actions within the partners’ control that could have contributed to more effective advocacy at national and regional level:

- a) Planning of human resources- As per the interviews conducted with KWN and other IPs, more dedicated resources would be needed to support advocacy actions. Having a dedicated Advocacy Specialist would definitely have contributed to more pro-active advocacy at national and regional levels. Interviews found that limitations in the overall maximum budget, particularly when spread over four years and six countries, limited

- overall budgets, including funds available for the ideal number of human resources under this Action. These were the main reasons for not planning a dedicated advocacy specialist.
- b) Enhanced partnerships with the business sector and TU for implementing national policies and legislation-Although the existing Coalition of CSOs has closely collaborated with the business sector and TU throughout this Action, making them official partners (i.e. through Memorandum of Understanding, Award Grant Contract) would contribute to more effective advocacy.
  - c) In depth analysis and follow up of the country advocacy strategies- The strategy was considered a living document and it has been continuously updated based on the situation and discussions with key stakeholders. However, an in-depth analysis on the effectiveness and impact of advocacy actions, as well as a tailored follow-up on advocacy actions conducted at the national level should have happened.
  - d) Involvement of more women beneficiaries in advocacy initiatives at national and regional level, particularly victims of GBD in labour- The Action could include them in the design phase of specific advocacy initiatives as well as in implementation. Using case studies on GBD and violations of labour rights would have contributed to a more effective advocacy.
  - e) Bringing together women who ask for support with women who have not, to share experiences and success stories, to discuss common challenges, and to identify areas for further action could be effective. Group-therapy interventions and efforts of linking women with other peers who experienced GBD at work can be an effective empowerment strategy. In other contexts, collective actions and community-based dialogue have proven valuable for addressing GBV, which can be replicated to address GBD at work too.

## 2.4. Efficiency

### Q1. How efficient was the Intervention in its use of resources to achieve its aims?

*To what extent was the project organisationally and administratively flexible and responsive to changing conditions?*

According to data collected from interim reports, KIIs, SAQ and the online survey, there is assessed a high level of efficiency. The outputs are attained, and resources were used according to the goals set. In addition, the Action's activities were extensively supported by other non-financial resources, such as: knowledge, know-how, experience of KWF<sup>13</sup> and the experience and methodology of Kvinna till Kvinna in different anti-discrimination fields.

The Action has responded timely and accordingly to the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing modified implementation methods and budget reallocations. Interviews with IPs and SG confirmed that there is no evidence of break in provision of support services from CSOs to women in need during COVID-19, primarily due to the flexibility and quick response of KWN and IPs after the pandemic's outbreak. The SAQ and KII confirmed commitment and willingness of KWN to adjust activities to the new situation, and to assist the most vulnerable end users. Additional resources provided by the Action ensured continuity, directly supporting cases of labour rights violations related to and during COVID-19. Use of contingency funds and savings allocated to direct support helped reach more women in need. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most meetings and workshops were held online, which is assessed as efficient.

*".... We needed support at the beginning of the pandemic so that we could focus our activities on women who were fired without respecting basic obligations by employers. We got that support which allowed us to focus our work on helping those who most needed it." - SG.*

*Have activities been carried out on time, considering and adapting to the external factors outside the Action's control (including COVID – 19 pandemic situation)?*

<sup>13</sup> A fund run by KWN supporting grassroots CSOs

The Action's reports, KII and SAQ inform that overall, activities were implemented timely, except activities that were rescheduled due to pandemic restrictions. Changes in the governments in Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo delayed certain advocacy activities. Nevertheless, these activities were rearranged and completed. The political situation had the greatest impact on the implementation of activities in Montenegro, where changes in legislative bodies led to significant staff turnover that interrupted the regular flow of the Action; this required WRC to find a new advocacy channel. WRC managed to ensure that activities were carried out regardless of government changes by continuous "pressure" on management structures.

This is a good example of mitigating activities, since WRC intensified communication with international actors and the parliament, especially the Women's Club in the Parliament of Montenegro. Also, the organization approached the new Government with recommendations for improving the economic position of women affected by the pandemic and established a partnership with the newly formed Council for Competitiveness, which is engaged in implementing economic measures in the country. Organizations from other countries also invested significant efforts to mitigate unexpected political obstacles.

#### *Is the project on budget?*

Review of relevant documents provided by KWN, IPs and SG inform that project activities were mostly implemented in compliance with proposed and amended budget. Some necessary reallocations were supported by KWN, which provided organisations with professional support in the process of budget restructuring. Interviews held and data collected from SAQ informed that financial procedures (which are based on the European Commission's requirements) were too demanding for some CSOs. All SG interviewed (verbally or through SAQ) highlighted the valuable support from KWN in terms of financial management and reallocations.

*"...In general, the instructions concerning financial management were clear enough, but also all individual questions and concerns were quickly resolved. I believe that our organisation, mainly me as the coordinator and finance officer, learned a lot from this experience. We conducted a reallocation process. The justification for the reallocation of funds was immediately accepted, and it did not take too much time to approve the funds. We understand that it is a big project, with many diverse partners, and because of that the procedures were a bit more complex." - SG project coordinator*

Considering the complexity of reallocation procedures (in accordance with European Commission's rules and procedures), several IPs and SG had to elongate the period of implementation of the planned activities. Nevertheless, this did not have a significant impact on the overall success of the project implementation. The evaluation confirms that KWN is a well-capacitated organisation that managed to be flexible (as much as the procedures allowed) so that project activities would not be delayed due to procedural reasons. This understanding was especially expressed during unforeseen COVID-19 circumstances.

*"...We waited for some time for the reallocation to be approved, but we had the support of KWN, who helped us with the reallocation and they did their best to get it approved as soon as possible, especially since it was about supporting vulnerable groups." - IP representative*

All budget changes and fluctuations, which could be noted through the assessment of financial reports, are clearly explained in Interim reports under the section: *Budget notes*. The evaluation assessed that the budget for the project management was mostly insufficient, which impacted frequent staff fluctuation. These restrictions were related to the overall restrictions of the total budget amount, across all six countries.

"...During the implementation of the project, three coordinators changed. The employees left this project because they were not satisfied with the salary." - SG representative

*To what extent and how effectively does KWN coordinate and cooperate with...?*

The Evaluation has assessed the coordination and cooperation of KWN with:

a) *Implementing partners.* Close, constant, and very effective cooperation and consultation were held by KWN with IPs. Input from them is taken into account for regional initiatives, research, regional awareness campaigns, management (No-Cost Extension and reallocation of funds), mitigation strategies for working under COVID-19 circumstances, etc. (see Section 2.2 Effectiveness, *point f*).

All investments made by the Action "paid off" through knowledge gained, skills built, research published, regional relationships established and exchange of information and best practices - IPs and SG, SAQ.

b) *Other CSOs working in the same field.* KWN, IPs and SG established and enhanced cooperation with local CSOs in their countries by advancing their capacities in supporting end beneficiaries and trust building. Reports and interviews indicate very significant support for CSOs that serve the most vulnerable groups - rural women, ethnic minorities, women with disabilities (see Section 2.2, Effectiveness).

There is evidence of efficient cooperation between civil society both at national and regional context through exchanging experiences and best practices, introduction of data and research methodologies. Regional cooperation is assessed as very helpful to local organisations (ones with less experience) in framing and implementation of the activities, cooperation with partners and better outreach (see Section 2.2, Effectiveness). The online campaign was spread through various networks and women's rights groups working with marginalised groups, informing them of the Action's support (LGBTI, Roma CSOs, other WCSOs not directly involved in the Action).

c) *Government authorities.* The Action has invested in efforts to involve all relevant institutions in its implementation process<sup>14</sup>. Significant efforts have been made to bring the topic of GBD in labour into the focus of institutions. The IPs and SG made a great effort to become recognisable by the institutions as partners in prevention and fight against discrimination at work. Government turnover was a reason why some countries had less governmental interaction.

"...Not even the president of the TU could understand the role of non-governmental organisations in the context of their mandate. From this distance, I can freely say that TU now understand the role of non-governmental organisations and understand that we can be partners in the process of information sharing, advocacy, and direct support for women, whose rights are violated, to seek for justice." - SG

d) *Other international actors.* It is assessed by the evaluation that the Action used a fine mixture of local and international expertise. International expertise was engaged when different and new perspectives, methodologies, and practices were considered beneficial for advancement of knowledge and information of local stakeholders. Meetings and participation in several conferences and regional events are reported with presence of diverse international actors<sup>15</sup> where the Action, research findings and recommendations

<sup>14</sup> State institutions are listed in Section of Effectiveness and Coherence and sustainability.

<sup>15</sup> Regional Cooperation Council (RCC); Serbia DG NEAR; Women's Economic Empowerment: Areas for joint actions in the Western Balkans" organised by the RCC and UNDP in Serbia where several international actors were present such as Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNDP; Women's Economic Rights as a side event for the World Bank Civil Society Forum; COELA/COWEB; CEDAW - Convention on the

were promoted and opportunities discussed for cooperation on joint advocacy related to women in labour, etc.

Towards the end of the Action, an important synergy has been created with the UNFPA regional project supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), which has supported efforts in some countries (e.g., Kosovo, Albania, Moldova) towards policy reforms in line with the EU Work-Life Balance Directive, family-friendly workplaces, and raising awareness among government, employers, and citizens about the importance and benefits of these reforms. The two related Actions have shared information, cooperated in shared policy advocacy points, and shared awareness-raising social media campaigns, based on consent from all parties engaged, and, in the spirit of GAP III's joint collaboration among actors towards implementing GAP III.

In accordance with Outcome 2 - Strengthening of the existing Coalition, the Action supported very good access and visibility to EUD, DG NEAR, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, including when presenting the regional reports on "*Gender-based Discrimination and Labour*"; and they encouraged the political leaderships in the region to follow up on report recommendations. The presentation itself significantly improved the visibility of the Action and the advocacy capacities of the IPs in international environment.

**Q2 How efficient was the Intervention in its use of resources to achieve its aims, particularly in comparison with Interventions of a similar nature led by international organisations or UN agencies?**

*Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives (if any)?*

The evaluation did not focus on a comparative analysis of the efficiency of this Action compared to other similar interventions or alternatives implemented/led by International Organisations or other entities. No interviews with relevant stakeholders or review of documentation related to it, occurred.

Nevertheless the ET can provide its assessment of the efficiency of the Action by highlighting some of its components that make it more efficient and competitive, such as its regional dimension, its length, the wide involvement of a significant number of local CSOs, relevant institutional and non-institutional actors and partners, evidenced-based advocacy and the fact that it is the first Action targeting GBD at country and regional level by informing advocacy and discussions in Brussels and EUDs in WB countries.

*How did project partners coordinate to encourage synergy and avoid overlap?*

According to ET the risk of duplication of Action's efforts with other interventions (locally driven, or donor funded interventions) was minimal due to the synergy provided by KWN and local partners. The Action built on ongoing capacity-building initiatives and progress already made in strengthening WCSOs.

- ✓ The Intervention complemented the ongoing Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation Sida-funded EU Regional Advocacy Programme for engendering the EU accession process by providing needed resources for research, advocacy, and capacity-building; involving more CSOs in the Coalition; and improving CSOs' sectoral expertise on discrimination and labour rights.
- ✓ The Action supported KWN's advocacy initiatives on addressing GBD in labour by putting forward recommendations in the ongoing working groups led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

---

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; input process for CLIP used by UN Women etc.; "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces" Workshop, Banja Luka by UN Women.

on amending the Labour Law, as well as KWN's support of the EUO in mainstreaming gender in IPs programming and implementing the EU GAP II and III (by providing better quality data).

- ✓ The Action complemented Reactor's (partner, *North Macedonia*) ongoing work towards strengthening civil society's impact on public policies and decision-making to influence key reforms in the EU accession process, funded by the EC; and their later regional Coalition on furthering gender equality in the EU Accession process, co-funded by the EU and Sida.
- ✓ In *Albania*, it complemented the GADC project focused on improving the implementation of the Labour Code and the Law on Safety and Health in the textile and shoes industry in Albania (where most workers are women) by supporting advocacy towards legal reforms, legal aid, and added information about rights to women.
- ✓ The Action complemented the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banjaluka in *Bosnia and Herzegovina's* work on building capacities of members of the Initiative "Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform" for advocacy and lobbying, public presentation and media monitoring, as well as the Clean Clothes Campaign.
- ✓ In *Montenegro*, the Action complemented WRC's ongoing work promoting women's rights in the EU integration process. Moreover, the Action supported informing Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee particularly related to discrimination in employment.
- ✓ *Example of synergy*: Delivering the inputs for the third periodic report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, prepared by BiH Civil Society Initiative for the Universal Periodical Review report, an informal coalition of 14 CSOs from across BiH. Among others, focus was given to measures taken to address the gender pay gap, growing disparities between men and women in terms of labour force participation, employment and measures taken to combat horizontal and vertical occupational segregation of women and to enhance the access of women and girls to vocational and technical education by providing evidence highlighted in the national research report of BiH supported by this Action.

## 2.5 Impact

### Q1 To what extent has the Intervention initiated a change process that leads to potential long-term impact?

*To what extent are women's labour rights increasingly protected, promoted and respected in the Region? To what extent has the intervention-initiated change in terms of the protection, promotion, and respect of women's labour rights at national and regional levels?*

The Action has contributed through its support to preliminary changes towards protection, promotion and respect of women's labour rights at national and regional levels.

Policy and legal changes supported by the Action in each WB country will have a lasting impact in favour of promotion and protection of women's labour rights. Support of institutions is consolidated for permanent changes addressing discrimination.

Lasting policies and practices for reporting, referring, and addressing cases of discrimination are established by institutions through the Action's support. The Action has deepened cooperation of KWN, IPs and SG with other significant partners - organisations and institutions (e.g., TU, Ombudspersons, and Labour inspectorates)<sup>16</sup>.

GBD and labour rights is integrated in the coming strategy of Kvinna till Kvinna for the WB region, so more stable funding is expected to support national and regional initiatives.

Based on the Interim reports of the Action and interviews conducted, the ET concludes that the Action managed to lead to litigations in cases of GBD in labour in some countries for the first time, which had a direct impact on the establishment of court practices. In some countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo), the first litigations were initiated and legal

<sup>16</sup>The level of cooperation and impact produced varies from state to state

support provided. This had an overall impact on judicial professionals (prosecutors and judges), their perception of GBD, and elaboration of court decisions (assessment of the case circumstances as well as aggravating and mitigating factors).

*"...An issue was the fact that previously, although there were cases that could be classified as discrimination based on gender in labour, there was no significant court practice. Neither the prosecution nor the judges understood the specifics of these cases. Now, with at least a few of these cases, properly classified, we are building a judicial practice, and stronger awareness of judiciary on this type of discrimination. Today, these cases have priority, at least in our Court, and we hope that this will become a practice for the entire country and the region." - SG*

Judiciary and CSOs (most notably in North Macedonia and Montenegro) testified of more cases reported in general, changed individual approaches to decision-making by the judiciary, weighing of mitigating and aggravating factors in these cases, citing of international standards in elaboration of decisions, but also institutional changes in cooperation between lower and higher courts in terms of harmonization of sentencing policies. Some CSOs continue to have weak capacities that undermine their ability to impact implementation of legislation. Further monitoring of court practices is necessary and recommended for future programming.

In Serbia, judges that were interviewed for the second edition were happy to participate in the research. This demonstrates awareness-raising and drew their attention to other labour-related cases in other cities that have had verdicts of GBD.

The Action through its activities has directly impacted on better and increased awareness on GBD and labour rights which got media attention. Media reported on the Action's results and put GBD and labour rights in the spotlight. Written articles explored GBD in labour, illegal dismissals and particularly discrimination against women due to pregnancy and motherhood. The online GBD campaign was spread through various networks, international actors, and women's rights groups working with marginalized groups, informing them of the availability of the Action support. This campaign was accessible to persons with disabilities too.

The evaluation assessed, through KII, online survey and SAQ, that the awareness on the lack of statistics was raised and relevant responsible institutions and judiciary understood the significance of more advanced data collection and dissemination. In most of WB countries, CSO service providers, provided more sustainable support to victims and built their capacities to continue with this kind of support in the future (they were provided with the know-how and resources to advance their support of cases involving GBD in labour, among other forms of discrimination from which they already protected victims).

The Action had a visible regional networking feature and an extensive impact in terms of established good partnership, transfer of know-how in previous, current and future common applications under different donor programmes.

The KII, SAQ and online survey confirmed that CSOs are capacitated to collect data, information and build capacities to continue working on this issue and apply for future funding opportunities that can further advance the fight against discrimination.

*"...Recognition of CSOs by the parties themselves, who realized that they can turn to organisations for advice and support, demonstrates the impact of the Action." - IP and SG*

*What early signs exist of lasting impact resulting from the Intervention, including specifically signs of contributions to SDGs and EU GAP III implementation?*

The Action's activities contributed to the implementation of SDGs, specifically to: Goal 5 on *Gender equality*; Goal 8 on *Decent work and economic growth*; Goal 10 on *Reduce Inequalities*; Goal 16 on *Peace, Justice, and strong institutions*; and Goal 17 *Partnerships for goals*. CSOs and institutions became more aware of the importance of the SDGs and now are using them more as resource and guidance.

The Action has sought to contribute to implementing the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) II for 2016-2020 and GAP III 2021–2025<sup>17</sup>. In each country, the Action furthered progress towards Objective 18, "Women's organisations and other CSOs and Human Rights Defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights freely able to work and protected by law", and Objective 6, "Partnerships fostered between EU and stakeholders to build national capacity for gender equality", among others. The Action remained relevant and contributed to GAP III objectives and relevant indicators (see Annex 9, Table 3)

The Action has directly impacted the establishment of relevant data on GBD at work, development of Gender Country Profile (areas of labour rights, employment, and social protection) contribution to the EU Country Progress Reports, dissemination of Country Research Reports to key institutions and partner organisations at national and regional level.

## 2.6 Sustainability

### Q1 To what extent are the outcomes achieved likely to continue?

### Q2 How could partners further strengthen sustainability?

The Action has produced positive results at different levels: (i) Regional advocacy, (ii) National Policy (system), (iii) Organisational development and stability and (iv) Community and end beneficiaries/ Service provision. It is assessed by the ET that Action results at the above levels have varying degrees of sustainability with the highest likelihood of maintaining achieved results at regional advocacy, national policy, and organisational development. Sustainability of IPs and SGs work at national level and direct service provision to end beneficiaries remains the most critical due to its dependency on donors' funding and lack of public funding at central and local level, which varies from country to country.

*"Funds for furthering women's labour rights and gender equality in paid and unpaid labour are scarce. Under this Action, several women workers from precarious industries received free legal aid, and this was especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we saw a rise in violations. Although all partners and sub-grantees tried to ensure sustainability of our advocacy efforts, additional funds are needed to secure long-term impact, legal changes foreseen within the advocacy efforts and monitoring of its implementation."* - IP

#### (i) Regional Advocacy

The Action is built on an existing informal network/Coalition of CSOs in the region and existing networks in some of the WB countries. Thus, the Coalition's work is not depending only on Action support and the Coalition will continue after the Action ends. The Action has established very close and good relations with relevant stakeholders through advocacy events, communication, information access and sharing as well as exchanges at a regional level. Access to the EU, ensured by the Action, is assessed as a sustainable step towards addressing the GBD and enhancing regional advocacy.

The evaluation assessed as very positive and forward looking the advocacy events organised at European level in Brussel. It is an important tool for addressing as one regional voice the GBD with evidence-based data from research reports at national and regional level.

<sup>17</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/swd\\_2020\\_284\\_en\\_final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/swd_2020_284_en_final.pdf).



*"The presentation of GBD as a topic that must be treated urgently is one of the biggest achievements of this Action. The work done as a region is an example that will remain. The reports produced on the state of the spread of GBD in our countries will inform students, organisations, activists and researchers for years on end about the needs." - IP*

(ii) National Policy (system)

The Action has built wide and sustainable national partnerships. The Action's partners have introduced key stakeholders to GBD at work by raising their awareness and highlighting the importance of collaboration between actors in addressing the issue. The Action has strengthened existing partnerships and established new ones. Some key stakeholders include: Ombudsperson's institutions, Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare / Social Policy, Ministries of Justice, Trade Unions, Labour inspectorates, National Gender Equality Mechanisms (i.e. Council for Gender Equality, Agency for Gender Equality), several CSOs, and legal aid providers (including bar associations), some of which initially agreed to support the provision of free legal aid after the Action's end.

Review of Action reports by ET, KII, and the online survey informed that the Action has influenced positively greater and sustained knowledge and awareness. The interviewed stakeholders (high-level decision-making bodies and civil servants in relevant counterpart institutions) confirmed that this Action has positively enhanced their attention to the issue through participation in advocacy events, direct cooperation on improving legal policies, and awareness events. Support of partner institutions is consolidated through the Action's support for very important and permanent law and policy changes addressing GBD.

Lasting policies and practices for reporting, referring and addressing cases of discrimination established through the Action's support are now endorsed and with a high likelihood to be sustained and applied beyond the life of the Action.

Formal partnerships (MoU) with state relevant institutions (Commissioner, Ombudsperson, Labour inspectorate) are not applied. In some cases, we learned that institutions themselves considered that were not necessary since they had already signed associates' agreements with relevant local partners.

(iii) Organisational development and stability

The Action has contributed directly to trust building with CSOs, and sustainable capacities of IPs and SG. Data collected from KII, analysis of SAQ, and review of the Action's Interim reports, demonstrate increased and improved capacities to develop strategic and long-term activity planning, widen the scope of their work, influence better policy-making, and conduct systematic evidenced-based advocacy and research (progress is shown for CSOs by using the OACA tool).

Improved performance in organisational development and management, financial sustainability, and fundraising were highlighted as a sustained benefit from the Action by IPs and SG, which will remain with them for further application in future programs and interventions.

Although the Action was donor dependent, several services provided mostly by IPs are likely to continue at national level and will be supported through other sources of funds after the end of the Action, i.e.:

- *Strategic litigation (contracts are signed with the agreement until the cases are closed).*
- *Sub-grantees (capacitated through Action support in fundraising) have secured funding from other donors for continuing their work on GBD at work and women's labour rights.*

(iv) Community / end beneficiaries / Service provision

The ET evaluates changes in direct beneficiaries' lives and the benefits they have received from the Action's support as lasting and sustained beyond the life of the Action. Women in the region have increased sustainably their knowledge and awareness about their rights through Action activities such as face to face meetings, online campaigns, and legal aid. Successfully managed and supported cases of women that experienced violations of their rights will continue to "enjoy" the benefits of the Action's support even after its end. Reports, interviews with stakeholders, and case studies evidence an increased awareness and women who are more empowered to claim their rights to compensation or re-installment in their place of work.

Attention brought to media on GBD and women's labour rights is likely to be sustained and will continue to keep the attention of society.

Transition of services from CSOs to relevant governmental institutions and entities and maintaining services provided by the Action's support for women experiencing GBD at work remains a challenge in some WB countries due to lack of funding for such services.

*"... There will be fewer activities especially in the areas we have already identified through our research. Less engagement in fieldwork with women and girls from different communities due to the inability to support these activities. However, as a Coalition, we will maintain communication to advocate for various issues, but it will still be more difficult to cooperate in concrete activities with the aim of eradicating GBD." – IP*

## 2.7. Coherence

**Q1. How compatible and complimentary was the Intervention with other actions in the sector and how could coherence have been improved?**

**Q2. What is the EU added value, beyond Member States' interventions only?**

This Action can be considered *unique* since very few, almost no, similar initiatives existed in addressing such a complex topic, GBD at work. It is important to highlight that prior to this Action there were very few CSOs working on GBD, with experience on women's labour rights and the provision of legal aid. GBD was introduced by the Action, and it was not addressed at all previously in the region, thus there were no data available.

The Action has established very good partnerships, transfer of know-how and learning from previous projects is applied.

It is evidenced a high level of involvement of all stakeholders mainly in advocacy and awareness events at a national level.

Data collected from KII and the online survey report a very good relationship established by IPs at the national level. There is no duplication of the Action's activities with the work of other EU and Sida funded interventions focusing on similar issues. On the contrary, IPs provided evidence of efforts to complement the work supported by other funds and actors, as detailed below Synergies were ensured with other interventions and relevant actors (see *Efficiency, Section 2.3, Q.2*). Due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., COVID-19, political climate), the planned cooperation with local media as indicated in the communication strategy document was not fully realized.

The Action has contributed to gender equality and complemented several other projects at national and regional levels funded by EU targeting women's rights, violence against women, work life balance, women's empowerment and employment.

The Action has also contributed to the implementation of the acquis and achievement of the accession criteria. Some of the data and analysis provided by CSOs are used not only by national authorities, but also by the EU while preparing EC progress reports.

The Action has also contributed to reconciling work and family life, where EU is calling for taking action to enable women and men to better reconcile their working and family lives.

The EU support facilitated aligning this Action with EU accession processes, beyond WB states' relations with individual Member States. The regional approach was linked to the EU's regional approach, enabling comparison across countries in their road to EU accession and needed reforms. With the EU as a funder, CSOs had better access to Brussels (i.e., report launching events and making related advocacy connections). While Sweden as a Member States fund such work, for example through Kvinna till Kvinna's Regional EU Programme "EU Accession for Whom?", this Action supported direct linkages with the EU accession process on GBD, which was sector-specific and thus using methods that are less common in Sweden and Member States' other programming. Similarly, although ADA supports UNFPA in Kosovo and Albania on progress on work-life balance, this support started after this Action had begun and did not involve the entire region; nor was it as closely tied to the EU accession process with a regional approach.

The EU added value is in the full regional approach combined with the sector-specific approach which were both directly linked to the EU accession process and using the process to facilitate and support CSOs' advocacy.

## 2.8. Other issues

*To what extent and how has the project contributed to gender equality?*

The ET has assessed that understanding of GBD and gender equality rights and practices have been promoted through the Action's activities directly impacting understanding. In addition, the Action advanced understanding of sexual harassment at work.

*"...The project brought the issue of gender equality closer to a wider circle of professionals, some of whom may have started thinking about the interconnection of labour rights and gender for the first time." - IP*

*"....Very little is said about the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Now the preconditions have been created for us to deal with that topic more and to put it in the context of discrimination within the framework of work. A special problem is the misunderstanding of it and abuse of official position, which are topics that have been openly discussed lately. Earlier this was taboo." - SG*

The Action has contributed to the adoption of Guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment at the University of Banja Luka and promotion of the Law on Prohibition of Harassment at Work in Republika Srpska. In addition, the Action has indirectly focused on changing gender norms and working extensively with men (i.e.: men were targeted in awareness campaigns on social media through posts featuring men). Info on available services (mostly legal aid) was disseminated to LGBTI+ groups and networks for referral and case management. Nevertheless, no cases have been reported yet.

IPs and SG have received intensive capacity development support at the Action's outset and used this knowledge in assisting other CSOs in their countries, with an approach similar to Training of Trainers. Improved capacities of WCSOs on project implementation, advocacy and sub-contracting are evident and are a lasting impact of the Action. Empowerment of CSOs that are directly included in supporting victims of GBD (i.e.: SOS lines for victims of GBD and GBV) has a very significant effect on supporting

women victims of GBD and GBV. WCSOs remain key actors stepping in to fill the gap and address GBD in labour when governments (who are mandated to do so) fail to address the issue and fail to provide services/support.

*To what extent and how has the project contributed to preventing adverse effects of any potential Environment & Climate Change?*

Due to the pandemic restrictions, fewer face-to-face networking meetings and monitoring visits were carried out internationally, which had a positive impact on the environment due to decreased use of transportation. In addition, only materials that were necessary were printed, which had a direct benefit on environmental protection. All sub-contracts with IPs and SG included a paragraph on recycling and environmental protection.

The fact that the entire Action targeted discrimination including multiple discrimination and focused on helping the most marginalised, is an evidence that it used a **"Leave no one behind" approach**. The entire action contributed directly to it as explained in prior sections given that the very action itself was focused on strategically addressing GBD and multiple forms of discrimination using an intersectional approach that reached out to the most marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups.

Regarding the human rights-based approach (HRBA)<sup>18</sup> principles, it can be concluded:

- **Participation:** Broad and inclusive meetings for possible beneficiaries to engage with the Action have enhanced participation and provide citizens with access to information. Local organizations have been targeted for promotion of multi-stakeholder participation as well as women and men.
- **Accountability:** A systematic publication of information on websites, social media, TV is recognized as important to enhance accountability. Engagement of CSOs in monitoring implementation of legislation, ensuring that indicators reflect women labour rights, are ways of strengthening an accountability focus.
- **Transparency:** The Action demanded a high level of internal transparency of its partners. In combination with application of sound tender processes and procurement procedures this facilitates the promotion of transparency. A constant flow of information and news on websites and social media helped promoting transparency (and accountability).
- **Non-discrimination:** A specific focus on being inclusive is a way of addressing non-discrimination, e.g. efforts to include LGBTI and people with disabilities. Keeping the focus on women's labour rights, GBD, and direct support to cases in need, facilitated a focus on non-discrimination. The evaluation found a proactive approach to ensure participation of ethnic minorities too.

The entire focus of the Action was on rights including national legislation and relevant improvements based on the EU gender equality acquis. The focus was on supporting people in claiming their rights and in holding institutions accountable to protecting and promoting rights. Therefore, a **rights-based approach** was applied throughout the entire Action.

### 3. Conclusions

---

#### 3.1 Major conclusions by order of importance

- a) The Action has produced positive results at different levels, which are likely to be maintained and sustainable. It is highly relevant and successfully implemented with a sound level of effectiveness and efficiency. Its contribution to public policy reforms, EU policies, national and regional advocacy, organisational and capacity development for local

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/human-rights-based-approach>

CSOs, cooperation with relevant institutions, and individuals who suffered GBD at work is documented and sustainable.

- b) Combating GBD across the region at all levels remains relevant and urgent, especially involving all actors including governments, business sector representatives, and civil society towards realising the necessary reforms and actions to foster gender equality and women's empowerment.
- c) The Action has directly influenced recognition of GBD in labour as a specific form of discrimination. More reported cases are evidenced. Women are more sensitized and empowered to report discrimination cases. Awareness of the importance of preventing discrimination against women in labour has been increased. The topic of GBD in labour relations has been put into public discourse.
- d) Grassroots CSOs rarely are able to benefit directly from sizeable grants from the EU and other donors due to limited access (mostly related with eligibility) and capacities, in a very competitive environment with other better-structured international entities and agencies. Sustaining their work remains a challenge.
- e) Support to such Actions, implemented by Networks and Coalitions who directly support grassroots CSOs that serve directly, more efficiently, and in a sustained way the most in need groups, is necessary.

## **3.2 Major conclusions by evaluation criteria**

### **3.2.1 Relevance**

- a) The Action is highly relevant in line with WB government's priorities, needs and priorities of the target groups, key stakeholders and final beneficiaries in the current countries' contexts, particularly to CSOs operating in the field of women's rights and anti-discrimination in labour.
- b) The Action is highly relevant in supporting capacity building for CSOs and relevant government stakeholders to increase their capacities to use anti-discrimination legislation, build capacities in research, monitoring (EU) law, specifically GBD and labour rights, advocacy, citizen engagement, networking, and management. It has facilitated learning and supported an exchange of experience between CSOs and peer national institutions.
- c) The delivery of relevant direct legal support to women in claiming their rights, combined with prevention activities and campaigns (awareness-raising, information dissemination, and frontline worker capacity building), has enabled the Coalition to sharpen its advocacy messages and ensure that they are evidence based from real experienced GBD cases.
- d) Fighting discrimination in the field of labour as a core activity is also highly relevant, both from a need's perspective and the Coalition's strategy perspective. KWN and the other IPs are among the most active CSOs in their respective countries, with sufficient track record in implementing different projects and being an active part of the process for fighting discrimination in labour.
- e) The Evaluation has identified a high ownership of the intervention from the majority of stakeholders, CSOs and public bodies, which are deeply involved and dedicated to fighting for women's rights and anti-discrimination in labour.

### **3.2.2 Effectiveness**

- a) Overall KWN and IPs have effectively managed to implement the Action as planned. Despite facing unexpected challenges, the management team successfully put extra efforts and investment to overcome all barriers and difficulties by taking all necessary measures to achieve expected outcomes.
- b) The Action's overall goal and expected outcomes have remained consistent throughout the Action's life. For three outcomes, the activities/indicators were adapted accordingly. The Action has managed to fully achieve its expected outcomes.

- c) The topic of discrimination in labour relations has been put into public discourse. CSOs are empowered to effectively hold relevant institutions accountable for implementing anti-discrimination legislation related to women's labour rights, while an important collaboration with responsible institutions has been recorded.
- d) The established partnership is assessed as very appropriate and managed effectively. Positive relations have facilitated the research, its launching, and follow-up joint advocacy.
- e) Flexibility to adapt the activities by the Action's management team based on donor approval, including alternative responses to unexpected developments (COVID-19) have strengthened its effectiveness by responding to the country and regional context.
- f) Coordination of the Action by KWN is assessed as very effective for the overarching strategy of developing the capacities of CSOs, continuous learning and efficient, regular, interactive and positive communication, working relations among the partners. Partners were equally involved in all decision-making processes.
- g) A very effective sub-granting approach was applied by KWN.
- h) A very effective internal monitoring and evaluation system was in place. Online monitoring tools were developed and applied with relevant forms and deliverables. Mentoring was reported by all IPs and SG.

### **3.2.3 Efficiency**

- a) There is assessed a high level of efficiency. The outputs are attained and resources were used according to the goals set. Project activities were implemented on schedule with the planned budget and all reallocations were supported by KWN, which provided professional support to IPs and SG.
- b) Activities were implemented timely and accordingly. Some of them were postponed/rescheduled due to pandemic restrictions or government changes.
- c) Although clear division of tasks and responsibilities were set in sub-award agreements among KWN and IPs (including monitoring, revision of financial and narrative reports of SG) the main responsibility remained with KWN which has caused an overload work.

### **3.2.4 Impact**

- a) Policy and legal changes supported by the Action in each WB country will have a lasting impact in favour of promotion and protection of women's labour rights. Support of institutions is consolidated for permanent changes towards addressing discrimination.
- b) The Action has led to litigation in cases of GBD in labour in some countries for the first time, which had a direct impact on the establishment of court practices.
- c) The Action had visible regional networking and extensive impact in establishing good partnerships and transferring know-how in previous, current and future actions funded by different donors.
- d) GBD and labour rights received institutional and media attention. Media reported on the Action's results and put GBD and labour rights in the spotlight. The online GBD campaign was spread through various networks, international actors, and women's rights groups working with marginalised groups, so it has raised public awareness as an impact.
- e) The Action's activities contributed to the implementation of SDGs, EU GAP II and III.

### **3.2.5 Sustainability**

- a) The Action has produced positive results at different levels, which are likely to be sustained.
- b) The Action is built on an existing informal coalition of CSOs in the region and existing networks in some of the WB countries. Thus, the Coalition's work does not depend only on the Action's support and will continue.
- c) The Action has contributed to the adoption of laws and policies, which will be sustained. However, they need further use to become institutionalised practices by institutions.

Transition of services from CSOs to relevant governmental institutions and entities, such as maintaining services provided by the Action (e.g., support for women experiencing GBD at work), remains a challenge in some WB countries due to lack of funding for such services.

- d) Improved performance of CSOs in WB countries in organisational development, management, financial sustainability, and fundraising are a sustainable benefit for them, which will remain with them for further application to future programs and interventions.
- e) Changes in direct beneficiaries' lives and the benefits received from the Action, are lasting and sustainable, beyond the life of the Action. However, there are many more women still in need of support.

### **3.2.6 Coherence**

- a) The Action can be considered *unique* since there were few actions with which coherence can be discussed. Very few, almost no similar initiatives exist in addressing such a complex topic, GBD at work.
- b) The Action has transferred partnerships, know-how and learning from previous projects implemented by its partners.
- c) The Action has contributed to gender equality and complemented several other projects at national and regional levels funded by the EU, targeting women's rights, violence against women, GBV, domestic violence, work life balance, women's empowerment and employment.
- d) The Action has also contributed to reconciling work and family life, in line with EU priorities.
- e) The Action has begun to build foundations for future coordination with other actors such as UN Women, ILO, RCC, and UNDP mainly on exchange of information and joint advocacy work.

### **3.2.7 Other issues**

- a) Understanding of GBD and gender equality rights and practices has been promoted regionally through the Action.
- b) The Action advanced understanding of sexual harassment in the workplace.
- c) The Action has indirectly focused on changing gender norms and worked extensively with men by introducing GBD as a new topic to Labour Inspectorates and TU (mostly male-led sectors).
- d) Info on available services (mostly legal aid support) provided by the Action was distributed to LGBTI+ groups and networks for referral and case management.

### **3.3 Lessons learned**

- a) Regional cooperation enhanced through this Action proved to be a successful model for further strengthening and expanding towards achievement of set goals and objectives. CSOs remain the most progressive force and natural alliance for donors to achieve changes in the region.
- b) The research produced by the Action proved to be an important tool to inform EU-related advocacy not only on GBD but also on gender equality, the EU Directive on Work-Life Balance, etc.
- c) Experience in this Action confirmed that it is very important to budget sufficiently for human resources costs, as everything seemed to take more human resources and time than anticipated due to the contextual challenges, the complexity of sub granting, and the newness of addressing GBD in the region.

## 4. Recommendations

---

### 4.1 Recommendations per evaluation criteria and audience

#### 4.1.1 Relevance

- a) Conduct consultations from a feminist and *Do No Harm* approach with end beneficiaries in the design of future actions, ensuring a participatory approach (Coalition)<sup>19</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 Effectiveness

- a) Enhance partnerships with the business sector and TU for implementing national policies and legislation either through Memorandum of Understanding or Grant Contracts (particularly for TU), towards more effective advocacy in furthering women's labour rights (Coalition).
- b) Conduct an in-depth analysis of the country advocacy strategies on the effectiveness and impact of advocacy actions, as well as tailored follow-up on advocacy actions (Coalition)
- c) Conduct an update of the evidence-based research at national and regional levels, further enriching it with more face-to-face interviews and direct communication to reach more beneficiaries (Coalition).
- a) Involve more women beneficiaries in advocacy initiatives at national and regional levels, particularly those who experienced GBD in labour; include them in designing and implementing specific advocacy initiatives. Using more case studies on GBD and violations of labour rights also can contribute to effective advocacy at national and regional levels (Coalition).
- b) Involve more proactively women beneficiaries in speaking with women needing support, to share experiences, success stories, challenges, and areas for further action. Group-therapy and efforts of linking women with peers who experienced GBD at work can be an effective empowerment strategy. In other contexts, collective actions and community-based dialogue have proven to be valuable for addressing GBV, which can be replicated to address GBD at work (Coalition).
- c) Consistent support to CSOs to further increase awareness regarding labour rights and GBD towards sustaining the attention of governments. The evaluation highly recommends EU and Sida further support financially the CSOs' capacity-building through similar grants by creating an enabling environment and expanding the space for civil society to be empowered, capacitated, and take ownership over their engagement (EU and Sida).
- d) Improve planning of human resources in future programming, including program and administrative staff, to ensure proper monitoring and support for advocacy (Coalition).
- e) Allow flexibility in future Calls for Proposals to accommodate realistic needs for significant human resources for activities such as research, advocacy, and awareness-raising. Plan more resources for long-term, multi-country actions; increase the maximum amounts in calls while maintaining minimum amounts to allow for CSOs' different financial capacities when applying (EU).

#### 4.1.3 Efficiency

- a) Women's CSOs should be further assisted in developing capacities to support women who are victims of GBD at work, further develop specific research methodologies, and cooperate with courts in monitoring cases and advocacy at all levels (Coalition).
- b) Longer term projects for SG and more funding are recommended, if possible, with EU funds and within sub-granting limitations, which can enable local organisations to better deliver results and reach more sustained and long-term changes (Coalition, EU and Sida).
- c) Allow flexibility in future Calls for Proposals to accommodate realistic needs for significant human resources for coordination, monitoring and sub-grant management at national and

---

<sup>19</sup> This is related with recommendation b) under Coherence for EU



regional levels, particularly considering the complexity of sub-granting in a regional context and the EU's demanding requirements for administration and finance (EU).

- d) Better monitor sub-award agreements among Action IPs, ensuring better planning, division of tasks and responsibilities, and their completion in a productive and efficient way (including revision of reports financial and narrative) (Coalition).
- e) Map other national and regional interventions for further strengthening synergies, consultations, coordination, and measures (Coalition).
- f) Develop a better cooperation strategy to ensure improved regional and national coordination with international actors such as UN Women, ILO, RCC, and UNDP on the same topic through joint forums, platforms, exchange of information, and advocacy work. Undertake such cooperation at the design phase of any future Action and promote this to other international actors with support from EU delegations, DG NEAR, and Sida (Coalition, EU and Sida).
- g) Continue support of such Coalitions that directly support grassroots CSOs that serve directly, more efficiently, and in a sustained way the most in-need groups. Sub-granting via CSOs experienced in and qualified for sub-granting is important for reaching CSOs that struggle to apply directly for EU funds (EU).
- h) Enable more responsive and pro-active communication with less bureaucracy and difficulties in setting arrangements in a timely manner; ensure a faster response time to CSOs beneficiaries' emails (EU).

#### **4.1.4 Impact**

- a) Further monitor court practices and provide training for judges and prosecutors (Coalition).
- b) Undertake more proactive and constant awareness-raising within communities (including the business sector) to change social norms and mind-sets. Promote more success stories widely in country and regional contexts (Coalition).
- c) Establish a more proactive and structured cooperation with media to promote best practices and raise awareness (Coalition).
- d) Best practices, knowledge gained, learning, and research methodologies should be further developed and replicated in future similar programming. Promotion of more success stories and dissemination of them widely in country and regional context should continue (Coalition).

#### **4.1.5 Sustainability**

- a) Continue support to CSOs' capacity-building through similar grants. Moreover, the EU can play a more constructive role in supporting the enabling environment and expanding the space for civil society to be empowered, capacitated, and sustained, as well as better recognise publicly the achievements of CSOs (Coalition, EU and Sida).
- b) Provide core support (operational costs) in addition to *Action-funded activities*, which can lead to more sustainable and longer-term impact of CSOs and actions (EU and Sida).
- c) Undertake continuous and more clearly targeted advocacy at the EU with concrete recommendations provided to several EU platforms (e.g., dedicated parliamentary sessions on the topic). Address with one regional voice GBD with evidence-based data from research reports at national and regional levels. This could be realised through establishing active links and proactive communication with Brussels EU-based policy makers and rapporteurs for WB countries, ensuring their participation in events, including member states representatives; planning ahead for such events; and avoiding short-term announcements or Fridays. The Coalition should explore and make use of existing opportunities to engage DG NEAR more at a technical working level, develop a joint calendar of meetings to discuss specificities in the region and each WB country, in addition to launching research reports and relevant findings (Coalition).

- d) Further foster interactive, constant, and evidenced-based advocacy for changes towards sustainably aligning national laws with the EU Gender Equality *Acquis* (Coalition).
- e) Establishment of formal partnerships (MoU) with state relevant institutions (Commissioner, Ombudsperson, Labour inspectorate) at the start-up of the future programs for a better synergy with national strategies and joint organized advocacy activities, awareness and monitoring of the legislation by considering them partners and *not a target group or observant* (Coalition and responsible government actors).
- f) Work more consistently with institutions at the national level to identify more sustainable ways and modalities (proper gender budgeting) for providing legal aid to women who experience discrimination at work; maintain provision of services provided by the Action's support for women experiencing GBD at work and gradually hand over such services to the relevant institutions (Coalition).

#### **4.1.6 Coherence**

- a) Organise consultations with other actors working in the same field apart from IPs in the design phase of future Actions to ensure maximisation of resources (Coalition).
- b) Launch the calendar for Calls for Proposals early in advance, allowing proper time for CSOs to plan their preparation, consultations with relevant actors, linkages, and synergies with other initiatives, considering their ongoing commitments (EU).
- c) More effective and productive modalities should be developed to ensure better regional and national coordination with international actors UN Women, ILO, RCC, UNDP on the same topic (forums, platforms, exchange of information and joint advocacy work).
- d) Best practices already applied in Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo by engaging local CSOs and networks in leading the process of drafting CLIPS for GAP III, can be further replicated (EU).

## **5. Annexes to the report**

---

The report includes the following annexes:

- Annex 1: The Terms of Reference
- Annex 2: The names of the evaluators and their CVs
- Annex 3: Evaluation methodology including tools utilised, analysis of the limitation
- Annex 4: Evaluation Matrix
- Annex 5: Intervention logic / Logical Framework matrix of the intervention
- Annex 6: Relevant geographic map(s) where the intervention took place
- Annex 7: List of persons/organisations consulted
- Annex 8: List of all literature and documentation consulted
- Annex 9: Tables with outputs of the Action