

GENDER EQUALITY IN RURAL AREAS; A DELPHY RESEARCH ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

In the recent years, Albania has made significant efforts to address the issue of gender inequalities through its nationwide commitments towards gender equality. However, there is yet a long way towards gender equality in the country and more so for specific disadvantaged and remote regions and groups. Irrespective of the progress made in the institutional, political, and legal framework, there are deficiencies and gender disparities, particularly for rural women. Empowerment of women in rural areas remains a great challenge to Albania. This paper presents findings resulting from the assessment of gender equality and particularly women situation in rural areas in Albania. The Delphi method of research was selected to ensure an all-inclusive, informed and consensus-based process. The methodology was phased out in four stages. First, national experts of rural development and gender identified the areas and problems to be explored. Second, problems identified were explored from the viewpoint of participants in the research by soliciting their opinion and feedback on the concerns identified. During the third phase, once the data obtained in the first phase was processed, the identified problems were revisited by participants of the research to come to consensus on major identified problems. During the fourth phase, participants were organized into groups to discuss and develop major principles that would support the development of rural women in Albania as well as the strategy and the concrete steps to be undertaken for addressing them. In Delphi research anonymity and confidentiality are crucial; therefore they were both guaranteed in the first two phases. Some 66 participants completed the first phase identifying priority areas for further exploration such as economic empowerment, education, health, social inclusion, welfare services, and gender-based violence. Twenty-five or 38% of the sample continued into the following phases as expected for this type of methodology. Finally 15 key experts worked in focused groups to develop strategies for intervention in all the identified and agreed priority areas. Through challenges in each phase, the whole process led to a consensual and widely accepted national gender and development agenda to be adopted by relevant actors at the local level.

Keywords: *gender equality, women, empowerment, rural areas, Delphi research*