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OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT AID FOR GENDER EQUALITY

THE STATE OF ALIGNMENT WITH KOSOVO GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES (2015-2018)

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MARCH 2020

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List of Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AGE	Agency for Gender Equality
AMP	Aid Management Platform
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDA	Department for Development Assistance
EBRD	European Bank for Research and Development
EU	European Union
GEO	Gender Equality Officer
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
KPGE	Kosovo Program for Gender Equality
LGE	Law on Gender Equality
MEI	Ministry of European Integration
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoE	Ministry of Education
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPISAAA	National Programme for the Implementation of the SAA
NSATHBK	National Strategy against Trafficking of Human Beings in Kosovo
NSPDV	National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PSVI	Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SGCP	Security Gender Coordination Group
SPD	Sector Planning Documents
SPO	Strategic Planning Office
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
USAID	United States Agency for International Aid
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

1. Executive Summary

This paper looks at the degree to which ODA in Kosovo targeting gender equality was aligned with government priorities during the period 2015-2018 and provides recommendations for further improvements. The assessment uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative primary sources – desk review, semi-structured interviews, and a review of the Aid Management Platform (AMP) data to answer these questions. In total, 1870 project descriptions from 2015-2018 were reviewed in the AMP database to identify and categorize gender-relevant projects.

The assessment follows a clear structure and flow, starting from basic questions to more specific analysis. First, the paper outlines the conceptual framework for the analysis and attempts to articulate what we measure when we use the term "alignment." The paper then provides statistical evidence (based on the AMP database) of the degree to which there was alignment between the Kosovo government's policy priorities and the projects implemented by donors. Last but not least, through insights from the interviews with government agencies and donors/development partners, the assessment attempts to understand the dynamics that enabled or prevented a higher degree of alignment.

The paper identifies the scope and volume of gender-relevant projects and the weight and typology of individual donors in the overall gender portfolio. Out of the total 1870 projects reviewed, 137 projects are found to have had gender relevance (by being assigned gender markers). In volume terms, out of the total of EUR 695 million, ODA disbursed during the period 2015-2018, EUR 49.4 million are found to have gender relevance. Gender relevant ODA thus represented 7 percent of total ODA during this period. Out of this gender-relevant ODA, 27 percent (104 projects in total) had a gender marker 3 (gender priority projects). The paper also identifies top donors and makes it possible to classify various typologies. Some donors might not have significant ODA portfolios in Kosovo, but projects focusing specifically on gender equality take up a sizeable part of ODA. Other donors are big gender donors but do so only through thematic programs in which gender is cross-cutting.

The paper aims to assess the degree to which gender-relevant ODA and individual donors themselves were aligned with Kosovo's priorities on gender. In total, the highest number of gender-relevant projects (49) were broadly related to the government priority of discrimination at work or education. In contrast, the second-largest number (32) were broadly related to the topic of domestic violence. The remaining priority areas had a much smaller number of projects. Nevertheless, a total of 53 gender-related projects had no clear focus on any of the priority areas. A breakdown of projects by thematic ODA volumes reveals that a third of gender-relevant ODA projects did not go for priority areas set by the government.

The paper assesses the key challenges witnessed that prevented higher degrees of alignment. During this period, there were generally weak local policy anchors connecting partner development strategies to government priorities in general, and gender policy was no exception. Gender priorities got "lost in translation" in the policy-dialogue that partners have with central level institutions because this dialogue takes place at a level that doesn't take into account gender policy

priorities. The development of specific programs and projects took into account gender perspectives and dimensions, but not necessarily in a strategic way or tied to government policy priorities. The government's insufficient ability to transmit its gender priorities is mostly the result of weak empowerment and capacity of key responsible institutions, which is exacerbated by donor preference to work through non-governmental partners. Donor capacities on gender are also insufficient at the local level and lead to a lack of coherence and continuity, especially at the program level, as the government does not drive the agenda. Insufficient ODA alignment with national gender policy-making and programming also results from weak data sharing – alignment cannot occur with blind spots.

The paper concludes with a set of broad but practical recommendations to increase alignment. Efforts should be made to make sure that the new Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (KPGE) should serve as a strong anchor for future policy planning and programming through better operational mechanisms and a more pro-active role by AGE. The paper also suggests ways in which AGE could play a much stronger position in the policy dialogue between the government and donors about development assistance strategies in general. It also emphasizes efforts to strengthen programming and project development capacities, especially concerning IPA, as well as program management, possibly through a specialized unit. Before any improvement in alignment could be considered, Kosovo's government and the donor community need to improve the availability of data on gender-relevant ODA, by including gender markers in the AMP and disaggregating and reporting gender data from projects. Last but not least, the paper looks at ways in which donors could work on their capacities for gender planning and programming and respect country ownership more.

2. Scope and methodology

The purpose of this assessment is to look at the degree to which Official Development Assistance (ODA) intended to support gender equality in Kosovo was aligned with Kosovo's policy agenda and institutional framework for the period 2015-2018, as well as to provide recommendations on improvements. By emphasizing "alignment" (as defined by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness), the purpose here is not to assess the quality of national policies or frameworks or the quality of work done by donors and development agencies on the subject of gender equality. Instead, alignment looks more at the interplay between what the government thinks should be done and how it should be done, with what donors are doing on the subject matter and how they are doing it. Namely, the key questions are: <u>how well are these working in concert, and to what degree is there local ownership</u>? This assessment does not aim to understand who is right and who is wrong in terms of the substance of policy-frameworks and their ultimate goals, but rather to understand the dynamics enhancing or preventing the process of alignment. The answers to these questions aim to help the government and the donor community to improve aid effectiveness.

The assessment used combined quantitative and qualitative primary sources to answer these questions through a three-layered process. First, after an initial scoping meeting with stakeholders, the assessment began with a <u>desk review</u> of relevant national policies on gender equality for the respective period 2015-2018 (as determined by the Agency for Gender Equality) as well as strategic documents of donors and development agencies. Secondly, the assessment used <u>official ODA data</u> from the database of the Aid Management Platform hosted in the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) to a) identify the top donors and development partners by volume in the area of gender equality for selection to interviews; b) provide quantitative insights relevant to assess the state of alignment. Third, <u>semi-structured interviews</u> were conducted with two government institutions and nine development partners to gain qualitative insights into the dynamics.

Type of source	Details
Framework policy documents (2015-2018)	**Government strategies / laws** Law on Gender Equality (LGE) National Development Strategy (NDS) National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence (2016-2020) National Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings in Kosovo (2015-2018) **Multilateral partner strategies** EU (IPA), World Bank Country Strategy, UN Women, UNDP, USAID, GIZ, SIDA, NORAD, ADA, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Finish Embassy, UK, Swiss Embassy
ODA statistics	Aid Management Platform (Ministry of European Integrations)
Conceptual framework	Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

11 semi-structured interviews:	**Government (2)** Agency for Gender Equality, MEI (DDA)
	Development partners (9) UN Women, EBRD, USAID, UK Embassy, Netherlands Embassy, ADA, Finnish Embassy, SIDA, Norwegian Embassy

The key thing to note: 1870 project descriptions from the period 2015-2018 were reviewed in the AMP database to identify and categorize gender-relevant projects. The ODA that Kosovo receives is reported regularly by development partners into the AMP, but it is hard to locate gender-relevant projects. AMP enables the disaggregation of ODA across various variables such as by donor, type of beneficiary, type of assistance (grant or project, etc.) as well as sector. Nevertheless, the OECD/DAC sector classifications do not have gender as a separate sector – women's empowerment is a sub-sector within the industry of "Government and Civil Society." After a preliminary review of the dataset, it was noted with many projects that had gender-relevant objectives and activities were not tagged as having any gender classification but were spread through various sectors like employment, health, or human rights. Therefore, for this assessment, the project descriptions of 1870 projects active in the period between 2015 and 2018 were reviewed manually. Out of this review, 137 projects (or only 7.3 percent) were found to have gender relevance and were flagged and given further classifications in the dataset.

The assessment has two fundamental methodological limitations that should be taken into account. First, much of the analysis relies on quantitative data from the AMP dataset and the subjective classification of gender-relevant projects from the project descriptions. The project descriptions and objectives are, in several cases, not clear in explaining what exactly the project does. Moreover, there is considerable inconsistency in terms of the level of detail that is given. Several thematic projects do multiple things and have gender as a component, but based on the description, the scope and share of that component within the total amount of the project are unclear. Therefore, the findings and analytical assumptions that form this report are accurate to the extent that the project descriptions inserted by donors and development partners were clear and correct. To this end, we have noted from other sources other projects implemented at this time that had a gender relevance but which were not found in the AMP database. However, for purposes of methodological consistency, these projects were not inserted into the database or included in the assessment. The second methodological limitation is that a considerable number of the qualitative interviews were conducted with representatives of donors and development agencies who did not have sufficient institutional memory for the respective period. Or the gender focal points of these entities did not possess an adequate understanding of the broader policy framework and alignment landscape. Therefore, the findings of this assessment are accurate to the extent that the interviewed subjects could recall developments in the 2015-2018 period or be familiar with the context.

The assessment follows a clear structure and flows, starting from basic questions to more specific analysis. First, the paper outlines the conceptual framework for the analysis. It attempts to articulate precisely what we measure when we use the term "alignment" and the parameters that we look at. Here we first describe the dimensions of ODA alignment, elaborate Kosovo's policy, and institutional framework in terms of gender equality and provide preliminary statistics on gender-relevant ODA. Secondly, using data from the AMP database that were categorized

explicitly for this assessment, the paper provides statistical evidence of the degree to which there was alignment between the policy priorities of the Kosovo government and the projects implemented by donors and development agencies. Last but not least, using insights from the interviews with government agencies and donors/development partners, the assessment attempts to understand the dynamics that enabled or prevented a higher degree of alignment.

3. Conceptual framework for analysis: what are we measuring?

The analysis of development assistance alignment on the subject of gender should begin with an understanding of the variables we are looking at and the establishment of an analytical framework. To understand how we can measure the level of alignment, we need to establish what alignment means and what its specific dimensions of analysis are. These dimensions will serve as a basis upon which we can determine the degree to which there was alignment or not between donors and the Kosovo government. Secondly, we need to look at the policy and institutional framework in Kosovo during this period, especially as it relates to national and sectoral policy planning, management, and donor coordination. Namely, what were the strategies, processes, and strategies governing the policy area? It is within this framework that alignment was supposed to occur. Third, we need to look specifically at the policy and institutional framework responsible for gender. Last but not least, we need to look at the ODA flows and try to capture and classify those projects relevant to gender equality, as these will be assessed for alignment.

3.1 Dimensions of ODA alignment

Donor alignment is a core part of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness agreed on in 2005. Some 60 partner countries, 30 donor countries, and an additional 30 development agencies were committed to undertaking specific actions to increase aid effectiveness. These actions included increased ownership by recipient countries, harmonization, alignment, managing for development results, and mutual accountability for the use of aid. In terms of the arrangement, the Paris Declaration takes into account *__four dimensions__* (illustrated in Figure 1).

Figure 1: Dimensions of ODA alignment
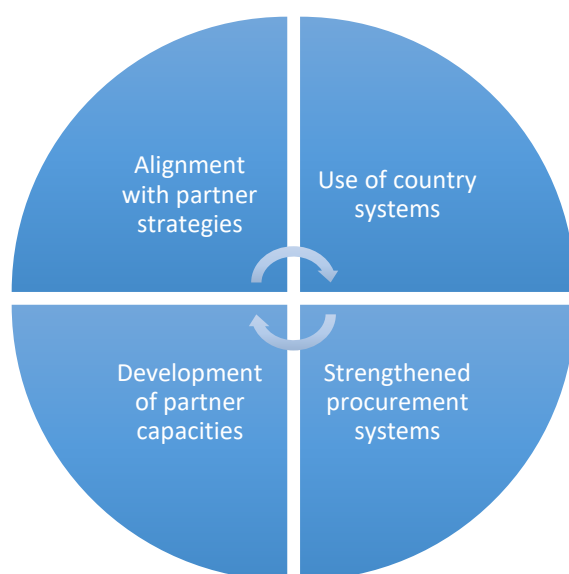
Namely, the notion of alignment means that:[i]

    a) Donors should derive their strategies, programs, or grants from local priorities (i.e., national or sector strategies), engage in policy dialogue with the partner country, and link to a single framework of conditions and/or manageable set of indicators.

    b) Donors should use the country's institutions and systems if there are assurances that aid will be used for agreed purposes and mutually agreed frameworks.

    c) Partners should strengthen development capacity with support from donors, including planning, managing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policy and programs.

    d) Donors and partner should use mutually agreed standards and processes to carry out diagnostics, develop sustainable reforms and monitor implementation, as well as commit sufficient resources to support and sustain medium and long-term procurement reforms.

3.2 The local context: Kosovo's policy framework

What were the local priorities on gender to which donors and partners were supposed to be aligned? Was there a policy framework established by the government during this period that they could use as a basis for development interventions? Normally, the policy priorities in terms of gender in Kosovo are (according to the Law on Gender Equality) outlined through the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (KPGE). However, the period of the last KPGE had long expired (it covered the period 2008-2013), whereas a new one was in the process of being developed.

Therefore, in consultation with the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) determined that during this period the guiding/priority documents in Kosovo were the important gender priorities deriving from the National Development Strategy (NDS) (2016-2020)[ii]; the National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan (NSPDV) 2016-2020, the National Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings in Kosovo (NSATHB) 2015-2018; and the Law on Gender Equality (LGE) (2015). For purposes of simplifying and assessing alignment, from these framework documents, one can identify the five priority areas the Kosovo government had during this period (see Figure 2). The priorities are not placed in any particular order based on the level of their prioritization. Instead, we note that these issues were a priority during this period.

Table 1: Kosovo's legal and policy framework documents for gender equality

FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT	CONTENT
Kosovo Constitution	More specifically, Article 7.1 sets out the constitutional order as being based on several principles, including equality, respect for human rights and non-discrimination. Moreover, and Article 22 ensures the direct applicability of a list of international human rights resolutions and instruments.
Law on Gender Equality (2015)	The LGE foresees various measures that prohibit gender discrimination and ensure, equal representation; through equal participation and representation in decision making and public life and affirmative actions in recruitment, hiring and promotion of women to achieve gender equality. The Law requires the application of gender analysis and gender impacts assessment on all country policy frameworks, equal access to and allocation of country resources following gender responsive budgeting (GRB) principles as a mandatory for all budget

	organizations in their financial planning and allocation of the resources. The Law demands that all Kosovo public and private entities gather and submit gender disaggregated data. The LGE calls for prevention of gender stereotypes in school textbooks and media and the promotion of gender equality values in all Kosovo societal life.
Kosovo Program for Gender Equality	KPGE is the only development program required by law to be drafted, while all other frameworks drive chiefly from governments' political programs or from the European integration process. While there was no KPGE document per se during this period, between 2017- 2019, the Agency, with the support of a SIDA-funded project, led the drafting process of the new KPGE.
National Development Strategy (2016-2021)	Presents 34 "priorities of priorities" or structural reform measures from other sectoral strategies. Two out of the 34 priorities are according to the AGE's assessment gender-relevant priorities.
National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence and Action Plan (NSPDV) 2016-2020	Aims to ensure: 1) Prevention and awareness raising by raising capacities of primary care services, encouraging victims to report cases and increasing social awareness. 2) Protection of victims through better coordination mechanisms between local level, central level and civil society. 3) Improved legislation for more efficient treatment of cases through training of investigators, social workers, prosecutors or judges. 4) Rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.
National Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings in Kosovo (2015-2018)	Seeks to: 1) Improving prevention through information, awareness and education; 2) Strengthen the system of identification, protection, assistance and reintegration of victims; 3) Increase efficient criminal prosecution and strengthen international and local cooperation.

Figure 2: Six gender equality policy priority areas for Kosovo during 2015-2018

Priority 1: Law on Gender Equality

Priority 2: Law on Anti-discrimination

Priority 3: Domestic violence (Strategy)

Priority 4: Anti-trafficking (Strategy)

Priority 5: Increased access to pre-school education (NDS)

Priority 6: Women's property rights (NDS)

3.3: Local context: Institutional framework

The Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) is mandated by the Law on Gender Equality to serve as the key central government institution responsible for designing and overseeing gender policy. The AGE is placed within the Office of the Prime Minister. It plays multiple roles in assessing the state of gender equality, raising awareness, working with other government bodies to mainstream gender in the preparation of laws, strategies, and programs. – and is responsible for designing and managing the KPGE. Since the KPGE was under development during this period, the AGE during this period played a central role in overseeing *the LGE* implementation and worked with the Gender Equality Officers (GEOs) in line ministries and municipalities to ensure sectoral and at all levels LGE implementation. As of 2015, the **Ministry of Finance** also plays a role- the Annual Budget Circular issued by the Ministry of Finance requires all public entities to implement gender-responsive budgeting principles into their annual budget planning process). Another principal central body is the **Strategic Planning Office (SPO) at the OPM**. It is responsible for coordinating the strategic planning process, starting from NDS, Economic Reform Program, and to the government program and sector strategies.

There were also other key bodies and mechanisms working on particular focus areas during this period. In terms of domestic violence, there was during this period *Inter-Ministerial Secretariat on Domestic Violence* led by a National Coordinator (a Deputy Minister of Justice), whose mandate was to oversee the implementation of NSPDV. There is also a *National Coordinator against Human Trafficking* who acts as a rapporteur in assessing trafficking and measures, supported by a Secretariat monitoring the anti-trafficking strategy, placed within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). In terms of advancing women's property rights, *the Ministry of Justice* is assigned in the NDS as responsible for implementing the respective NDS measure. It is also responsible for implementing the National Strategy on Property Rights, which specifies specific measures on women's property issues.[iii] The expansion of pre-school services is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and municipal directorates of education. During this period, there were also informal groups such as the *Security Gender Coordination Group (SGCG)*, consisted of government institutions, donors, development agencies, which focused primarily on domestic violence and access to justice.

In terms of donor coordination, the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) has a horizontal mandate for donor coordination. It serves as the *Secretariat for the High-Level Forum* and the *Sector Working Groups*. MEI administers the Aid Management Platform (AMP), an online data management system operational since 2009, where each donor can record information on funding commitments and disbursement at periodic intervals. The AMP data provides a clear overview of the external aid compared to Kosovo's development priorities. According to Kosovo Government Regulation 09/2016,[iv] the highest decision-making body responsible for the coordination of donor aid is the *High-Level Forum* chaired by the Prime Minister. The High-Level Forum is responsible for overseeing the flow of external aid in Kosovo, identifying top priorities for foreign assistance, reviewing the progress of development assistance, and monitoring the overall effectiveness of the external aid based on the aid management principles established in the Paris Declaration 2005. The High-Level Forum oversees several working bodies called Sector Working Groups, which are established to harmonize the donor assistance with Kosovo's national priorities.

Further, it monitors the assistance based on sector indicators and aligns the national sector strategies and policies with external aid. Each Sector Working Group can establish one or more sub-sector working groups focusing on specific areas of work. There is no particular sector or sub-sector working group on gender equality, and it is treated more as a cross-cutting issue (if meetings even occur).

Also, MEI produces annual reports on ODA flows and does a basic assessment of alignment with government priorities. MEI yearly reports provide information on donors' financial performance during the year; its commitments and disbursements by OECD/DAC sectors; includes information on disbursement by municipalities; as well as provides information on Kosovo's government priorities with donor planning. The reports list the priorities based on the NDS, the European Reform Agenda, and the National Programme for Implementation of the SAA (NPISAA) and identify five broad priority areas. It then groups several OECD/DAC sectors in line with the five vast priority areas to provide amounts granted per each policy area.

MEI has a robust institutional framework for coordinating with line ministries as well as the EU Office in IPA yearly action programming. During the preparation stage, national sector strategies and immediate assistance needs are translated into a Sector Planning Documents (SPD) that the MEI, beneficiary institutions, and the EU develop in close collaboration. A key document guiding the development of these documents is the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which prioritizes Kosovo's EU accession measures. These documents elaborate on a coherent intervention logic that guides the development of projects funded by the EU. They also set the overall monitoring framework. The SPDs are then consulted with the European Commission. Based on those consultations, the SPDs lead to the preparation of one or several Action Programmes per SPD.

3.4 The donors: ODA focusing on gender equality

Kosovo received a total of 695 million EUR of ODA during the 2015-2018 period, but it is hard to disentangle what part of ODA's focus is on gender. The AMP dataset classifies all projects according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sectors. The OECD currently identifies 25 sectors, none of which have a specific focus on gender and many other sub-sectors. This makes it impossible to come up automatically with a list of projects with gender relevance. A review of the project list in the AMP excel sheet shows that some gender projects are classified as Government and Civil Society (Code 150) projects and have Women's Equality Organisations and Institutions (Code 15170) or Human Rights (code 15160) as a sub-sector. However, many other projects do not use any sectors or sub-sectors that would suggest gender relevance, yet have strong gender relevance based on their project description.

The only way to identify gender-relevant projects was to classify all projects in the AMP dataset with a gender marker. The UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee developed the gender marker as a tool that "codes, on a 0-3 scale, whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way. If the project has the potential to contribute to gender equality, the marker predicts whether the results are likely to be limited or significant."[v] The gender markers and their respective scores are elaborated below.

Table 2: Gender marker descriptions

Gender Marker	Description
0	The project does not advance gender equality either through gender mainstreaming or targeted actions. There are no signs that gender issues were considered in project design. There is risk that the project will unintentionally nurture existing gender inequalities or deepen them.
1	The project is designed to contribute in some limited way to gender equality but not significantly. The project needs assessment includes a gender analysis that is not meaningfully reflected in activities and outcomes, or at least one activity and outcome aim to advance gender equality but this is not supported by the needs assessment.
2	The project is designed to contribute significantly to gender equality. The different needs of women/girls and men/boys have been analyzed and integrated well in the activities and outcomes.
3	The principal purpose of the project is to advance gender equality. The entire project either: a) assists women or men, girls or boys who suffer from discrimination creating a more level playing field or b) focuses all activities on building gender specific services or more equal relations between women and men

Through a detailed assessment of the project descriptions, we were able to identify and classify those with gender relevance according to gender markers. Out of the total 1870 projects reviewed, 137 projects had gender relevance. Out of the total of EUR 695 million, ODA disbursed during the period 2015-2018, EUR 49.4 million are found to have gender relevance. In contrast, a considerable amount of 15 million had a gender marker 3, meaning it went for projects with a primary focus on gender (Figure 3). In terms of the total volume of ODA, gender-relevant ODA represented 7.1 percent of total ODA (Figure 4). Out of this gender-relevant ODA, 27 percent (104 projects in total) had a gender marker 3 (see Figure 5). These projects, which focused primarily on gender inequality, were usually smaller projects in size, concentrating specifically on issues such as domestic violence, anti-trafficking or women's empowerment.

Nevertheless, the largest share of gender-relevant projects had a gender marker 2. In total, 19 projects or 43 percent of the total gender-relevant ODA, belonged to this category. These projects were smaller in number but much more significant in terms of volume of ODA because they were usually more prominent thematic programs, focusing on issues such as employment, skills, business development. Namely, these were flagship thematic programs implemented by donors such as USAID, SDC, or lenders like EBRD that primarily had economic focus (or in the case of USAID, a significant program on property rights which had a strong gender component.)

Figure 3: Gender relevant ODA as a share of total ODA
(% of total ODA amount)

7%

■ Total ODA ■ Gender relevant ODA
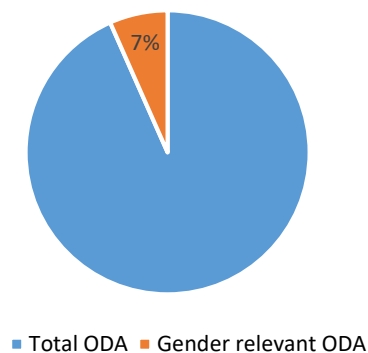
Figure 4: ODA in Kosovo (2015-2018) by gender relevance (in EUR)

Total ODA	695,992,825
Gender marker 1	13,203,782
Gender marker 2	21,175,415
Gender marker 3	15,046,176
Gender relevant ODA	49,425,374

0   200,000,000   400,000,000   600,000,000   800,000,000
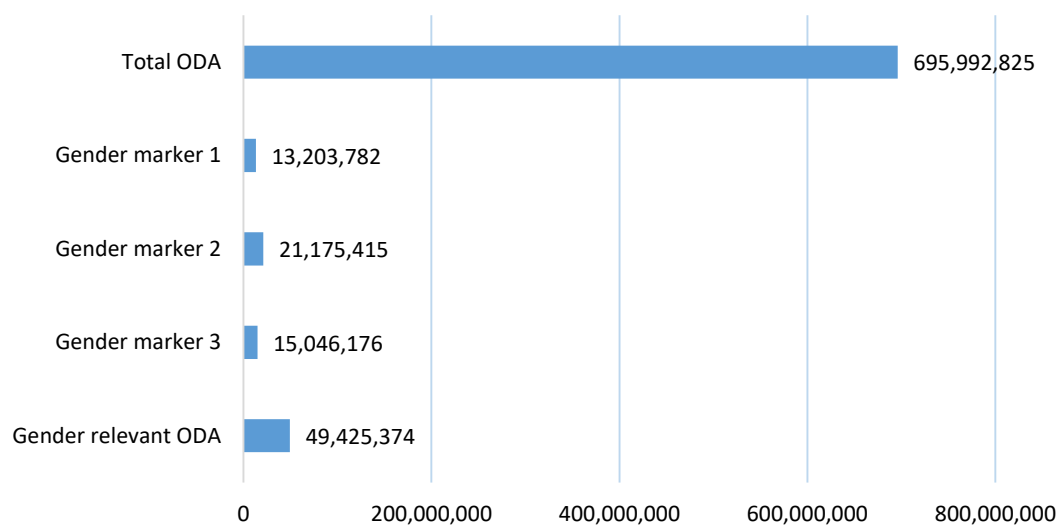
Figure 5: Gender relevant ODA by gender marker
(% of project volume)

27%   30%

43%

■ Gender marker 1 ■ Gender Marker 2 ■ Gender Marker 3
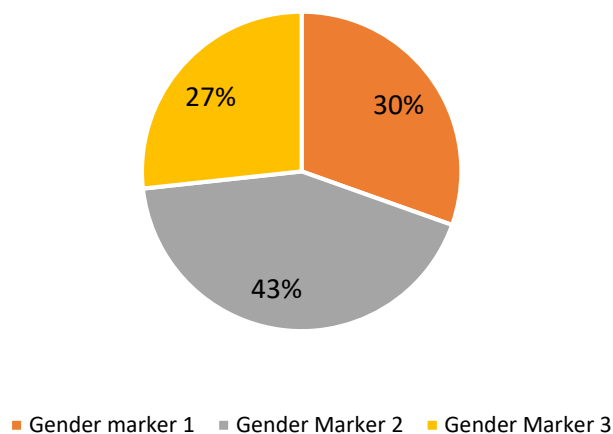
Through a closer look, it is possible to identify and classify top donor countries by total gender-relevant ODA, by gender marker and by share of gender ODA within total ODA. The first table (Table 3) provides a list of donors by the total amounts of gender-relevant ODA during this period as well as ODA by gender marker. At first glance, it seems that SDC and USAID are the most significant gender equality donors (more than €10 million of gender-relevant ODA during the period). But there is a caveat to it – none of their programs classify as Gender Marker 3 – most of their programs receive a Gender Marker 2; namely, they are designed to contribute significantly to gender equality but do not have gender as a priority. Namely, these were projects where the different needs of women/girls and men/boys have been analyzed and integrated well in the activities and outcomes. They are thematic projects focusing on the job creation/labor market or justice sector but have a strong gender component.

Table 3: ODA by Gender Markers and by donor (2015-2018), in EUR

Donor	Gender relevant ODA	Gender marker 3	Gender marker 2	Gender marker 1	TOTAL ODA	Gender ODA as % of total ODA
SDC	10,551,785	0	6,383,844	4,167,940	54,318,878	19%
USAID	10,364,316	0	10,144,188	220,128	120,732,773	9%
EU	8,685,682	3,302,112	848,391	4,535,179	261,030,211	3%
EBRD	5,000,000	5,000,000	0	0	25,284,600	20%
Sweden	3,882,404	1,054,597	0	2,827,807	39,703,971	10%
Germany	2,415,262	250,000	1,760,262	405,000	117,106,988	2%
Austria	1,804,564	527,800	1,088,842	187,922	14,697,669	12%
Finland	1,775,380	1,057,178	0	718,202	4,619,733	38%
Netherlands	898,769	678,912	123,078	96,779	2,664,382	34%
Luxemburg	882,773	882,773	0	0	10,178,331	9%
UK	857,879	689,349	168,530	0	21,419,905	4%
UNFPA	521,219	69,427	451,793	0	1,129,438	46%
Norway	471,553	436,281	0	35,271	2,548,218	19%
UNMIK	419,126	419,126	0	0	869,497	48%
UN Women	406,615	406,615	0	0	406,615	100%
UNDP	201,436	3,145	188,738	9,554	2,090,415	10%
Denmark	152,730	152,730	0	0	4,036,377	4%
Japan	71,758	71,758	0	0	8,448,664	1%
UNICEF	62,123	44,373	17,749	0	4,706,161	1%
TOTAL	49,425,374	15,046,176	21,175,415	13,203,782	695,992,826	

Table 4: Total amount of Gender Marker 3 ODA projects during 2015-2018 (EUR)

Donor	Gender marker 3
EBRD	5,000,000
EU	3,302,112
Finland	1,057,178
Sweden	1,054,597
Luxembourg	882,773
Austria	715,722
UK	689,349
Netherlands	678,912
Norway	436,281
UNMIK	419,126
UN Women	406,615

Some donors might not have significant ODA portfolios in Kosovo, but projects focusing specifically on gender equality take up a sizeable part of it. Table 5 illustrates the donors that prioritize gender the most within their portfolio (regardless of the size of total ODA). Namely, it demonstrates the share of Gender Marker 3 projects (primary focus on gender) as a share of total ODA. The types of donors who were relatively small but had a higher than average intensity of gender-priority projects included the Netherlands, Finland, and Norway. Understandably, UNWOMEN, though not in possession of an extensive ODA portfolio during this period (EUR 406,616), because of its mandate, its projects bore 100 percent gender relevance. Another category of donors have large programs, but they prioritize gender as a cross-cutting issue. The other table (Table 6) below illustrates the top 5 donors who have a strong focus on gender (Gender Marker 2) but mostly as a cross-cutting issue through large thematic projects like employment or the rule of law. Incidentally, donors like SDC and USAID have very sizeable contributions.

Table 5: Gender Marker 3 ODA as share of total ODA

Donor	Share
UN Women	100%
UNMIK	48%
Netherlands	25%
Finland	25%
EBRD	20%
Norway	17%
UNFPA	6%
Austria	5%
Denmark	4%
Sweden	3%
UK	3%
EU	1%
Germany	0%

Table 6: Gender Marker 2 ODA as share of total ODA

Donor	Share	Total
SDC	12%	6,383,844
USAID	8%	10,144,188
UNDP	9%	188,738
Austria	7%	1,088,842
Netherlands	5%	123,078

4. Assessing alignment: what do the numbers say?

This section of the paper digs deeper into the critical question of the assessment: how much was the gender-relevant ODA aligned with government policy priorities and systems? First of all, we focus on policy dimension – namely, by looking at the AMP data and cross-examining the degree to which there is alignment between gender-relevant projects and the above-established government policy priorities. Secondly, through insights gained from qualitative interviews, an assessment is done in terms of the rationale behind donor choices of interventions and where are the gaps or problems. It should be noted that the quantitative data should be viewed with a caveat when making assumptions about alignment. Just because specific projects (as described in the AMP database by donors) cover a particular theme that is a priority for the Kosovo government does not mean that they include it in the specific way the government thinks the issue should be covered.

4.1 Alignment with priority areas

The information drawn from the AMP database may be used to provide some quantitative indications on how much of the ODA focusing on gender was aligned to the government's policy priorities during this assessment period.

The gender-relevant projects listed in the AMP dataset were all screened once again in project descriptors (additionally to the screening on gender markers) and classified in line with the six policy priorities outlined in the previous section. Namely, each project was flagged as a) being not relevant to any preference; b) relevant to a particular preference or c) more than one priority at once. Table 7 below lists the total number of gender-related projects of line with their relevance to the five policy priorities. In total, the highest number of projects (49) were broadly related to discrimination at work or education, whereas the second largest number (32) were broadly related to the topic of domestic violence. The remaining priority areas had a much smaller number of projects. Nevertheless, a total of 53 gender-related projects had no clear focus on any of the priority areas.

Table 7: Gender relevant projects by policy priority area

Relevance	Total gender relevant projects	Domestic violence	Discrimination at work or education *	Anti-trafficking	Access to pre-school	Property rights	No clear focus on priority areas
Gender marker 1	*14*	1	5	0	0	0	
Gender marker 2	*19*	3	15	1	1	3	
Gender marker 3	*104*	25	29	5	0	1	
special note			*32 projects**	*0*	*0*	*0*	
TOTAL	**137**	29	49	6	1	4	**53**

*** special notes: In discrimination at work, 32 projects have an emphasis not directly on institutional discrimination but on the closely related social and economic supply-side causes hampering women such as workforce skills or access to finance.*

There is one key caveat to the high number of projects in the area of discrimination at work or education, which has an impact on the inferences that can be made on alignment. The highest number of projects (49) was broadly aligned with this policy priority. But upon a closer look, one should note *that a majority of these projects (32 in total) projects focused on the supply side of labor* through various forms of empowerment of women (namely projects focusing on workforce skills, financing for start-ups, etc.). These projects strike at the social and economic sources of discrimination in the labour market and aim to compensate for the existence of discrimination. While such approaches may touch the lives of women and remind partners of the importance of women's needs and contributions, they often leave unanswered questions of impact and sustainability. Such approaches create the assumption that providing women with micro-credit and training will enable women to increase their incomes, or it will make it easier for them to meet their practical gendered responsibilities and improve their bargaining power and status in the household community. However, they do not directly address the institutional and systemic aspects of discrimination, of the norms and values that foster gender stereotypes and sustain discriminatory practices and attitudes (they do so only indirectly), which is the mandate of all public institutions and beyond foreseen in the LGE.

In this sense, it remains inconclusive whether these projects formally were in line with the government priorities to ensure equal treatment, even though they overlapped in terms of intended purposes. In this regard, a more conclusive finding would have required an in-depth assessment of every individual project document and conducted project evaluation report/s, ideally capturing both expected and non-intended results and employment of a gender impact analysis. It should also be noted that the results of the project/program evaluations are not incorporated in the AMP. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that while the donors' projects may not have been entirely in line with the government priorities, the results and the impact of their projects contributed towards the progress of the Kosovo gender equality agenda. Additionally, a considerable number of projects within this category (15 in total) have a Gender Marker 2. Namely, they are projects treating gender as cross-cutting or having a strong gender component, but in the context a broader program. Hence, not all of the resources as part of the projects had a gender focus; subsequently, their gender impact was difficult to measure in the absence of more detailed information. As often happens with the cross-cutting approach, tracking the allocations and spending of the resources on gender-related project components pose a challenge as they may not have been made explicit initially.

A breakdown of projects by thematic ODA volumes reveals that a third of gender-relevant ODA did not go for priority areas set by the government. In the AMP dataset, gender-relevant projects were individually screened and marked if they were in line with any of the five government priorities. This enabled the calculation of the volumes of ODA that went per each policy priority. Through this method, it can be ascertained that almost 1/3 of the volume of gender-relevant projects (or 15, 2 million EUR) went to projects not matching any of the government priorities (see Table 8). Again, this does not mean that these projects may not have contributed to the overall progress of the gender equality agenda – after all, they are gender relevant. However, the projects focused on issues that were not in line with what the government considered a priority during this period.

The data also reveals that the highest share of (at least partially aligned projects) went to women's economic empowerment. The highest share of the aid volume during this period (49.2 percent or 26,6 million EUR) has gone for Priority 1 ("Anti-discrimination in the labor market and education"). However, as noted earlier in the document, a considerable share of these programs (18,3 million EUR or 37 percent of total gender-related ODA) focused on the empowerment-side (skills or access to finance) rather than on institutional discrimination. Through this prism, it is possible to note that programs focusing on property rights (Priority 5) have a considerable share (16,8 percent). That is primarily due to one USAID program on property rights, which had a cross-cutting focus on gender and but it was not a gender-priority program. We noted an additional special line for programs that provided gender policy support to the government (totaling 2.1 percent of Gender ODA). These programs (the SIDA funded initiative in support to AGE and Kosovo Gender Mechanisms and others EU support to gender mainstreaming in IPA) deserve a special classification because, while they may have a chief focus (like in the case of SIDA that focuses on the implementation of the LGE), they also have a specific focus on supporting the government to strengthen institutional mechanisms, policy systems and enhance organizational and staff capacities that contribute towards the overall improvement of gender equality agenda prioritization, implementation and improve alignment opportunities and results.

Table 8: Gender ODA by priorities (in EUR)

TOTAL GENDER ODA	49,425,374
NON-PRIORITY	12,456,528
Priority 1: Anti-discrimination	25,667,592
Priority 2: Domestic violence	3,324,108
Priority 3: Anti-trafficking	1,088,304
Priority 4: Access to Preschool	1,400
Priority 5: Property Rights	7,426,134
TA for policy-making	*1,043,226*
***Empowerment*	*18,375,672*
****Gen. property rights*	*7,301,991*

Table 9: Gender ODA by priorities (in %)

Project type	100%
NON-PRIORITY	29.2%
Priority 1*	49.2%
Priority 2**	6.4%
Priority 3	2.1%
Priority 4	0%
Priority 5***	14.2%
TA for policy-making	*2.11%*
***Empowerment*	*37.18%*
****Property rights program*	*16.83%*

The data also reveals which donors and development agencies had a program more aligned with government priorities. When the programs that are tagged by policy priority areas are cross-tabulated by donors and countries, one is able to get an indicative picture of donors and development agencies that were (in broad terms) more closely aligned to the policy priority areas. The data is presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Gender ODA by priority areas and countries (percent)

COUNTRY / AGENCY	Non-priority	Domestic violence	Discrimination*	Anti-trafficking	Access to pre-school	Property rights	** Policy support
Austria	34%	24%	66%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Finland	3%	94%	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Netherlands	55%	27%	14%	15%	0%	14%	0%
EBRD	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
EU	20%	6%	64%	8%	0%	0%	2%
Japan	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Germany	90%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%
Denmark	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Luxembourg	95%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Norway	10%	12%	85%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Sweden	47%	0%	53%	0%	0%	0%	23%
Swiss	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UK	40%	0%	30%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UN Women	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UNICEF	98%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UNDP	5%	2%	94%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UNMIK	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
UNFPA	87%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
USAID	30%	0%	0%	0%	0%	70%	0%

4.2 Other alignment dimensions: what can be inferred?

Not much can be said about the three other alignment dimensions – use of country systems, development of partner capacities, and procurement systems – because there is very little aid that goes through the system. At the same time, capacity-development is hard to measure based on the available shared information. The vast majority of gender-relevant projects during this period fall into two categories: a) technical assistance projects delivered through contractors or development agencies, or b) grants given to local civil society organizations. There are very few cases during this period when direct budget support is provided to the government (not just in gender-relevant projects, but aid in general). During this period, there is one significant donor support that provided budget support to a government entity, namely the 2016 - 2020 Sida Project Support to the Agency for Gender Equality. The Project provided considerable funds for AGE through technical assistance aid modality and thru direct grant fund to AGE. Most donors interviewed during this exercise could recall only a few cases when other aid modalities had been tested with other government entities. For example, there was a pool fund at the Ministry of Education, a planned EU Sector Budget Support for Public Administration Reform, and ongoing direct support to the Ministry of European Integrations by the Kingdom of Norway. In general, donors interviewed noted the lack of trust in the government's absorption and technical capacity to administer funds. As far as the dimension of donor use of country systems, it could be asserted that it is limited to information sharing through the AMP and (when possible) coordination meetings. This also means that local procurement systems are very rarely used. During this

assessment, we could not conclusively draw any findings on the other dimension of alignment, namely the development of partner capacities. The information incorporated in the projects' descriptions in the AMP on this dimension was informatively too thin, and information on the allocation of resources either was missing or it was aggregated. Projects' intended results or results achieved regarding the capacity development dimension were not part of the shared information.

5. Alignment dynamics: what are the key challenges?

1- **During this period there were generally weak local policy anchors connecting partner development strategies to government priorities in general, and gender policy was no exception.**

Most of Kosovo's partners interviewed for this assessment noted that there was generally a weak and unclear policy framework in Kosovo to guide development assistance planning in general. On paper, there was a consolidated policy framework at the intermediate level, with a National Development Strategy and a plethora of other sectoral strategies. Kosovo also had the contours of an institutional system for policy management (with the SPO at the center of government) and donor coordination (MEI). But those interviewed noted that in practice, the various framework documents are loosely connected. The actors are inconsistently active in steering and managing the country policy agenda, thus causing a general lack of policy coherence. For example, it was noted that some sector strategic documents are developed or approved in a non-consistent manner. Some of the sub-sectors' strategic documents are developed independently from their sector strategies, and the policy objectives or measures don't always match. For this reason, national strategic documents do not carry sufficient weight and are most often not operational. It is for these reasons, among others, that they are neglected by donors (who, in any case, seem to tend to set their agenda).

Concerning gender policy, Kosovo did not have a central framework document (which, as ascribed by the LGE should be the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality) that could be used as a reference in the policy dialogue and strategy formulation by donors and partners. The five priorities considered here in this assessment are found in four separate documents (two sectoral strategies, law and the NDS). The lack of a clear and well-communicated policy framework left donors without a well-defined platform of priorities during this period, making their agenda-setting a scattered top-down exercise without much coordination.

Each partner that was interviewed had its own unique strategic planning processes and tools and unique ways of addressing gender equality in development programming. Several of the more significant donors have global strategies for working on gender equality; some of them conduct country-specific gender diagnostics that inform their programming, while others also tend to engage with stakeholders in the planning process. For example, USAID's country strategy for Kosovo (2014-2019) was informed by a Country Gender Assessment (2012) as well as by a global "Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy" (2014). The EU in 2018 also conducted a Gender Analysis to identify objectives, indicators, and targets. Other smaller bilateral donors have a more ad-hoc approach. They have broad policy goals and priorities (often regional) that are shaped into interventions at the discretion of the local level, mostly channeled through civil society. Yet others, such as the UK, had global themes such as the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative in

Conflict (PSVI) which had high visibility in Kosovo as the initiative was embraced and promoted by President Jahjaga.

2- Gender priorities got "lost in translation" in the policy-dialogue that partners have with central level institutions because this dialogue takes place at a level that doesn't take into account gender policy priorities

The established donor coordination mechanisms should have been the platform through which the government steers and sets its policy agenda with the donors and where cross-cutting issues such as gender could have been looked at more strategically. But interviews revealed that those mechanisms do not function accordingly and equally for all. Donor coordination meetings (High-Level Forum) are sporadic, whereas sector coordination group meetings even rarer. When they do occur, they only serve as a platform for information sharing rather than agenda-setting. The policy-dialogue between development partners and the government is therefore done exclusively at the bilateral level.

Moreover, it is done only at the level of general country development strategies (with central government institutions) or project level (with line ministries). Here at these levels of the government, the gender dimensions and policy priorities are not reflected or articulated sufficiently. Almost all development partners treat gender as a cross-cutting issue or as part of a broader theme (e.g., human rights) in their development strategies. The data shows that the largest share of gender-relevant projects (42 percent) has a gender marker 2, meaning that they are thematic projects that considerably incorporate gender dimensions. But they are based on priorities discussed only with sector-relevant agencies and not AGE. There is no AGE or GEO involvement or inputs in these consultations. AGE notes that most of the time, "donors come to us just to inform us of what they are doing."

3- The development of specific programs and projects took into account gender perspectives and dimensions, but not necessarily in a strategic way or tied them to government policy priorities.

Around half of the development partners interviewed noted that projects and programs were screened internally for their gender sensitivity through mandated processes during this period. Several donors indicated that their agency does have gender experts working at the corporate level or regional offices, providing technical assistance in reviewing interventions and mainstreaming gender in them. Some development partners are also obliged to assign projects gender markers or even (as in the case of ADA) now have it as an organizational policy priority to not have projects with a gender marker 0. Nevertheless, these types of in-house donor prioritization of gender sensitivity are not necessarily tied to country priorities and context, but merely represent mainstream gender efforts based on donor understanding of what these priorities are.

While development agencies themselves do much of donor programming, Kosovo has a strong say in designing the most significant chunk of assistance – namely, the EU's IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) programming. Every year, in line with the Indicative Strategy Paper for the period (2014-2020), the government undertook a programming cycle to develop action documents that become part of the IPA package for the next year. The development of action documents requires outlining an intervention logic and a logical framework, which breaks down the objective of the intervention from the strategic policy to the sector level and down to the action. All of this requires

the existence of a national framework (which was in place) and the presence of a sector strategy (many sectors did have, some not) and the capacity to identify specific and detailed interventions. During this period, the EU provided support (for about three years) to MEI/ line ministries and the EU office to screen IPA projects for their gender sensitivity – a so-called "help desk." But interviews suggest that these interventions usually came too late in the program design stage and often merely 'edited the gender language' to make it more inclusive rather than integrate gender activities from the outset.

4- The insufficient ability of the government to transmit its gender priorities is largely the result of weak capacities and lack of power of key responsible institutions, which leads to weak alignment with ODA and to donor preference to work through non-governmental partners.

Concerning policy and agenda-setting, AGE is not sufficiently empowered to take more of a leading and proactive role within the institutional framework. As the EU's Gender Analysis noted: "AGE's work has been hindered by insufficient political support, under-staffing, insufficient budget and government failure to involve them sufficiently in all policy-making"[vi]. Interviews suggest that AGE has capacity constraints to manage policy processes and programs, except gender-based violence, where it does have significant expertise but faces obstacles throughout the institutional system in getting its voice heard. The problem rests with the lack of the firm observation of the LGE by Kosovo public administration in applying gender mainstreaming instruments during the policy drafting phase and placing AGE at every principal decision-making policy body. Also, having no gatekeeping system to ensure that the produced policy frameworks include AGE's inputs and transfer of gender priorities and provisions cited in the LGE, KPGE, and Law for Protection from Domestic Violence into other sectoral and sub-sectoral policies, further exacerbates the lack of gender perspective and gender development objectives in Kosovo policy framework. Furthermore, AGE operates within the OPM and relies on its procurement and has difficulty contracting quality consultancy services because of how the procurement services are being procured.

As far as the GEOs are concerned, the gender analysis notes that they "have faced insufficient political and institutional will to involve them in policy processes, which subsequently has contributed to the lack of gender perspective in several Kosovo laws and policies." Interviews also confirmed that they are rarely involved in discussions on EU accession processes and programming. Most of the GEOs have weak gender analysis capacities and other policy processes, which hinders them from carrying out their responsibilities. In general, the policy-making process in Kosovo public administration remains a sphere of exclusivity of a few and lack inter-institutional inclusion approach. GEOs in line ministries rarely are given the opportunity of participating in the policy-making process, which provides the proper space where the GEOs can practice skills and concepts obtained through chiefly donor organized capacity development events.

Generally, there is weak coordination between the various actors relevant to policy development and management, such as the SPO, MEI, line ministries, and AGE about the donor community. The only instance where some degree of coordination occurs is the Security Gender Coordination Group, but mostly at the operational level for ongoing activities in a particular sub-field, not planning or programming development. About development programming, MEI faces constraints in capacities and abilities of sector ministries to engage in structured communication and policy

dialogue both within central government institutions as well as other line institutions in the programming cycle for IPA in general, and specifically in gender mainstreaming.

Overall, the capacities of the staff at MEI are higher than average than in other line ministries. Yet, this does not extend to the area of gender mainstreaming in areas under their mandate, such as IPA documents or the National Plan for the Implementation of the SAA. The key personnel can generally comprehend and steer strategic policy processes, including work produced by external consultants on which the MEI staff has to rely often. However, capacity constraints concern the staffing number in MEI. The Department for Development Assistance (DAA) staffing numbers are limited compared to the breadth and depth of its mandate. Besides, not all staff possesses the technical capacity to engage in project preparation and assessment of documentation. The level of analysis and breadth of data in aid annual reports leaves room for further improvement.

5- **Technical assistance to support capacities and policy/institutional processes aiming to mainstream gender in policy-making has been insufficient, not strategic and has not fostered sustainability.**

Some of the donors for policy development and management have provided technical assistance at the institutional level. The EU has supported MEI and line ministries in programming, while Sida and GIZ have provided technical assistance support to AGE in the areas of policy development and implementation, institutional strengthening, and organizational development. However, the most significant number of donors engage very little or not in strengthening the government's policy planning capacities in any sector. They prefer – mostly because of a belief in the low absorption capacities in the government or the desire to reach quick impact – to work through short-term contractors, development agencies with project units in ministries, or through NGOs. This approach ends up insufficiently strengthening the capacities of the government institutions for policy-making and management. The same observation bears relevance to gender mainstreaming capacity development efforts. Technical assistance in this area, as the interviews revealed, was often insufficient in both time-length and resource allocations. Not much emphasis is given to coaching and mentoring during the technical assistance support activities. The pressure seems to have been mostly in producing quick results, which is totally at odds with capacity development principles. In this sense, much of the assistance in this respect appears instead ad hoc, piecemeal, but not long-term and strategic. There seems to be a need for a more strategic approach to technical support delivered to strengthen gender mainstreaming capacities within the various government institutions – primarily AGE and horizontal ministries like MEI or the Ministry of Finance and in the overall policy-making processes.

6- **Donor capacities for gender assistance are also insufficient at the local level and leading to lack of coherence and continuity, especially at program level, as the government does not drive the agenda.**

Interviews revealed that almost all donors rely on gender expertise from regional centers or headquarters. In contrast, at the local level, gender focal points are usually staff members whose primary job is to manage other thematic programs. The degree of gender expertise at the local level varies among donors, whereas staff turnover often leads to a decrease in coherence and continuity of policy and programming. In interviews, several of the interviewed focal points were unaware of the details of what was done during the preceding years on the gender area or what the strategic

policy approach on gender is. In other words, institutional memory on a particular subject matter is not at the desired level. Several donors mentioned that they also used local or international consultants to fill their capacity gaps. Other donors, who lack in-house gender expertise, preferred not to engage entirely with the government and made up missing capacity by relying on proposals from local civil society. Such an approach leads to further disintegration of priority alignment as these initiatives (despite being well intended) were sporadic and not attached to the broader Kosovo gender equality agenda. The shortage of qualified gender officers within donor organizations hampers the direct dialogue between donors and gender mechanisms in Kosovo as well as the better alignment and coordination with the Kosovo gender agenda priorities. Further, such an approach has led to the transfer of the government's responsibilities to civil society, which in turn weakens the performance of state institutions and releases them from the duty bearer role.

7- Insufficient ODA alignment and gender policy-making and programming also results from weak data sharing – alignment cannot occur with blind spots.

Development partners provide regular reports about their projects and aid disbursements to the AMP managed by MEI and the system generally works well, despite flaws and inconsistencies in reporting. However, as noted in the methodological section and other parts of this assessment, it isn't easy to disentangle in the AMP projects relevant to gender policy. They are scattered across various OECD/DAC categories and not flagged as having any gender relevance. As such, neither the government nor partners are fully aware of who is doing what in this area. Furthermore, there is considerable data that donors collect from their projects. Most donors conduct periodic evaluations of programs in general, but these are mostly internal or not accessible or shared with the government. In turn, the government does not have a system in place to collect and seek donor evaluations or statistics. Almost all donors noted that their gender mainstreaming efforts had instilled a practice of disaggregating data by gender (e.g. of beneficiaries). But this data is not shared, or if it is shared, that sharing is sporadic. The lack of clear evidence on gender in the AMP (through a gender marker) or ways to report actual beneficiaries' impacts policy-making and policy management process. A lot of information seems available, but it is not collected and distributed in a way that can make it useful and practical.

6. Recommendations

1. Before any improvement in alignment could be considered, Kosovo's government and the donor community need to improve the availability of data on gender-relevant ODA.

The first step should be to include gender markers as a new variable in the Aid Management Platform (AMP). Donors would be required to classify projects similarly as done in this report by adding a gender marker to each specific project, which would mark the degree to which the project has a gender component. Additionally, since the OECD/DAC sectors and sub-sectors often do not capture gender projects well, MEI could work together with AGE to develop a taxonomy of categories of gender projects that would be added on top of OECD/DAC sectors. In this way, AGE would be able to, through the dataset obtained from MEI, automatically disaggregate donor projects according to both their gender marker and their gender-specific category. The data collected through this report would become more regular. MEI could also include a chapter on gender projects within its annual reports on ODA in Kosovo. Secondly, AGE could work with donors to create a system through which AGE would regularly obtain data from gender-relevant projects and programs. The creation of a database of project evaluations would contain data on the number of project beneficiaries (namely, outputs). AGE could quickly identify these projects through the AMP and proactively seek information from donors. Further, AGE could include data from this qualitative dataset in its periodic reports and make sure that its reports are regularly disseminated.

2. Efforts should be made to make sure that the new Kosovo Program for Gender Equality should serve as a strong anchor for future policy planning and programming.

AGE expects to start the implementation of the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality soon. Within the KPGE implementation time-frame, AGE should work on making sure that the Program is communicated publicly wide and should work proactively with donors, both bilaterally and in groups, to ensure that donors are aware of its existence and details. AGE should collaborate with central government institutions such as the SPO in the PM's office or horizontal institutions such as MEI to make sure that they take into account the Program in all activities and that they communicate the plan to donors. The Agency should also hold training for Gender Equality Officers and line ministries' staff to incorporate elements of the Program in documents such as IPA programming cycles and Sectoral Planning Documents. AGE should periodically update its donor database of contacts for either local level focal points or headquarter level experts to disseminate information on the Program and generally raise awareness on its achievements, challenges, and engagement with donors in a real-time fashion. The Program should also be publicly accessible, and civil society should also be involved in monitoring and advocating for its implementation. Most importantly, AGE should lead an operational, organizational structure that would serve as a central platform to oversee the implementation of the Program. Within this functional structure, AGE should coordinate the KPGE Donor Group that shall meet at regular intervals, at every four month.

3. **AGE should play a much stronger role in the policy dialogue between the government and donors about development assistance strategies in general.**

As noted in the assessment, a large share of the ODA that goes to gender issues is channeled through projects which treat gender as cross-cutting. Discussions in the policy planning stage of bilateral or multilateral development strategies are done with central level institutions covering thematic portfolios or central level institutions such as the SPO in the OPM and MEI. AGE needs to proactively engage in inserting itself in these stages of the dialogue. AGE could do this by getting involved and working with donor focal points on gender to understand the timelines of their policy planning process, developing a calendar of policy planning per donor, and reminding them to be in touch with AGE. The head of the Agency should have regular and periodic meetings (annual or biannual) with all key donor agencies to a) show presence and ownership over the gender agenda, and b) suggest ideas on how the partner's development strategies or programs could support the gender agenda in Kosovo.

4. **Efforts should be intensified to empower AGE and gender mechanisms and strengthen their institutional capacities.**

Donors shall pay considerable attention, increase funding, and diversify their interventions to support gender mechanisms work in Kosovo. Funding to AGE and gender mechanisms throughout their existence has been sporadic, insufficient, and short-term. Further, the aid has lacked linear capacity building orientation and has not been linked to the gender equality priorities agenda and within government policy systems and processes. These issues should be addressed and be taken into consideration by donors in their gender equality program/project interventions if sustainable achievements and desirable progress are expected to be achieved at the macro level.

Capacity development and institutional strengthening are more effective if implemented within the framework of broader country initiatives. They may be reform programs, national agendas, or national policy frameworks that create an enabling regulatory and institutional environment for gender equality agenda. Therefore, capacity development and institutional strengthening should be coupled with programs that focus on improving governance, transparency, and accountability. The technical assistance support through which capacity development and institutional strengthening interventions are delivered should instead aim at approaches that avoid fragmentation and segregation of gender issues. They should contribute to building a body of knowledge on gender issues not only among the Kosovo gender mechanisms but among Kosovo civil servants, as well. Certainly, for the interventions to be successful, the capacity development interventions shall be tailored to the recipients' needs and work mandate.

National sectoral and cross-sectoral policy frameworks, national agenda, and platforms present excellent entry points for donors' interventions, to name a few: Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, SAA through IPA funding, National Development Strategy, etc. For example, IPA is the most substantial chunk of ODA, and simultaneously, it is the one in which Kosovo's government has the most excellent opportunity to shape interventions. AGE and gender mechanisms in line ministries require more robust capacities to be able to work with MEI to intervene and contribute to the IPA planning cycle and producing more gender mainstreamed IPA documents. Instead of ad-hoc projects or help-desks operating externally from the government and not in line with its priorities, donors should support AGE and gender mechanisms to develop strong in-house policy

planning and programming capacities. These actions could be done through long-term support to AGE staff to actively contribute to and support IPA preparation. Also, training should be extended to GEOs and ministry staff in gender dimensions of IPA preparation, etc. Support to capacities for policy development and management should be strategic and long-term without expecting quick results, and it should be institutionalized to strengthen country systems, possibly through pool funding. Support should also include more funding (either from central government or donors) for direct project implementation, especially of training programs with the public administration. But for all of this to have any success, AGE should be more empowered by central level institutions, especially the political levels, and be consulted continuously by the donor community.

AGE's position as the leading entity of the country's national gender equality agenda should be observed and reinforced through continuous support. To date, in-country positive cooperation and long-term technical assistance and support experiences between AGE and donors such as Sida, GIZ, and UNWOMEN should be shared. These experiences, altogether with previous and on-going donor interventions concerning the institutional strengthening of AGE and Kosovo gender mechanisms, should contribute to the formation of in-country dynamic knowledge repository on gender issues and inform the shaping of future interventions.

5. **Donors should enhance their capacities for gender planning and programming and have up to date knowledge of Kosovo gender equality agenda and policy framework.**

Although donors and development agencies are increasingly prioritizing and mainstreaming gender in all kinds of ways, staff responsible for gender issues often do not have sufficient conceptual understanding of topics or awareness on the country policy framework. Donors should consider staff training, and training must be targeted, systematic, and continuous. Country offices shall undertake a systematic approach to knowledge management, learning from country offices' knowledge and experience on their intervention on gender issues, and women empowerment. Donor agencies should also work more to ensure the transmission of the institutional memory through data repository (i.e. reports, databases) in terms of gender policy and programs to reduce the impact of staff turnover.

Heads of development agencies should work with AGE in developing some induction training in which all local staff of donor agencies would get familiarized with Kosovo institutional and policy framework as well as the thematic challenges and problems in the country. Notably, GIZ and Sida in concert with AGE staff organize such events on an annual basis. Similarly, AGE could make sure that it is in direct contact with gender experts of donor agencies in headquarters or even arrange visits to familiarize them with the local context.

6. **Donors should include gender equality in their policy dialogue with Kosovo institutions and increase funding in support of gender equality and women's rights agenda.**

For many bilateral and multilateral donors, gender equality and women's rights in policy dialogue are a requirement. Much of this dialogue's intensity is linked to the leadership of individual donor entities and embassies, and gender equality is often not brought up systematically. Donors should bring gender equality into the policy dialogue and use it and program support as reinforcing elements in the alignment process and overall cooperation agenda. Donors shall support and demand the participation of country gender machinery during policy dialogue with country

government and public institutions. There are already several examples of good practices of donors in engaging Kosovo gender machinery and gender equality and women's rights into policy dialogue nowadays in the country. These good practices are not limited within the country assessment missions but also seem to expand in the regular policy dialogue, progress assessment of development aid, etc. All donors should embrace such good practices as means that contribute to better alignment of policies and maximization of results.

Achieving robust gender equality outcomes requires adequate, sustained financing in support of gender equality and women's rights. The results of this assessment, regardless of the data reporting issues duly noted, demonstrate that donors' support for gender equality and women's rights is deficient by all standards. Partly, the problem lies with two elements: the donor approach with aid disbursement and the multi-dimensionality nature of gender equality. Donors have moved to a twin-track approach supporting direct investments in activities for women and/or girls in specific sectors, and 'mainstreaming' a gender perspective in all donor policies and programs. However, mainstreaming has not succeeded in embedding a gender equality orientation into the institutional systems, processes, and donors' approaches. Also, the multi-dimensional nature of gender equality seems to remain a challenge for donors in the routine operation of resource allocation, making it hard to match the policy rhetoric.

To tackle these challenges, donors need to undertake several changes in their institutional practices. As a first step, they should stop characterizing "gender equality" as a cross-cutting issue that makes gender less likely addressed systematically across all the policy domains and work more towards the application of gender mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming should become the norm of the day to allow for systematically integrating gender perspectives in all donor policies, programs, and projects. Further, donors should invest and acquire specialized expertise that combines gender analysis with sector/s specific experience, particular context skills, and knowledge on public administration functioning and reform organization.

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