

# UN WOMEN ALBANIA STRATEGIC NOTE 2022-2026





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UN Women Albania Country Office



# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BCCMA</b>	Business Continuity and Crisis Management Application
<b>BCP</b>	business continuity plan
<b>BOS</b>	Business Operation Strategy
<b>CBO</b>	community based organization
<b>CCA</b>	Common Country Analysis
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CIPS</b>	Charter Institution of Procurement and Supply
<b>CMT</b>	Crisis Management Team
<b>CO</b>	Country Office
<b>CPE</b>	country portfolio evaluation
<b>CSAG</b>	civil society advisory group
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>DRR</b>	disaster risk reduction
<b>ECA RO</b>	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
<b>ECOSOC</b>	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
<b>ERM</b>	Enterprise Risk Management
<b>ERP</b>	Enterprise Resource Planning
<b>ESD</b>	Empowerment through Self-Defence
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU4GE</b>	European Union for Gender Equality programme
<b>EVAW (also referred to as VAWG or VAW)</b>	ending violence against women
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GE</b>	gender equality
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GoA</b>	Government of Albania
<b>GRB</b>	gender responsive budgeting
<b>GREVIO</b>	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
<b>GTRG</b>	Gender Theme Results Group
<b>INSTAT</b>	National Institute of Statistics

<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>KM</b>	knowledge management
<b>KP</b>	knowledge product
<b>LGU</b>	local (self-) government unit
<b>LNOB</b>	leaving no one behind
<b>LTA</b>	long-term agreement
<b>M&amp;E</b>	monitoring and evaluation
<b>MERP</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan
<b>MEWGC</b>	Making Every Woman and Girl Count
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MPs</b>	Members of Parliament
<b>NAP</b>	national action plan
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NCGE</b>	National Council for Gender Equality
<b>NISARDF</b>	National Intersectoral Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries
<b>NSDI</b>	National Strategy for Development and Integration
<b>NSGE</b>	National Strategy for Gender Equality
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OMT</b>	Operations Management Team
<b>PMF</b>	Performance Monitoring Framework
<b>PSEA</b>	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>PUNO</b>	Participating United Nations Organization
<b>QCPR</b>	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
<b>RBM</b>	results-based management
<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>RGA</b>	Rapid Gender Assessment
<b>RM</b>	Resource Mobilization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SERP</b>	socio-economic response plan
<b>SILC</b>	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
<b>SN</b>	strategic note
<b>SP</b>	strategic plan
<b>TF</b>	Task force
<b>ToC</b>	theory of change

<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Populations Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNJPs (also referred as JP)</b>	United Nations Joint Programmes
<b>UNPoCSD</b>	United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development
<b>UNSDCF (also referred to as CF)</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>WEE</b>	women’s economic empowerment
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>WEPS</b>	Women’s Empowerment Principles
<b>WPP</b>	women’s political participation
<b>WPS</b>	women, peace and security

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**Figure 1**  
Albania in the world



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# 1. CONTEXT AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

This Strategic Note outlines the implementation of UN Women’s mandate to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in Albania. It is fully aligned with UN Women Global Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Albania (2022-2026), which for the first time includes a stand-alone gender equality outcome.

The SN seeks to address the country’s main priorities in terms of sustainable development and gender equality, as articulated in the National Strategy on Development and Integration II and the new National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021-2030). The SN draws on the UN Albania Common Country Analysis (CCA, 2020), the Albania Country Gender Equality Brief (2020), the UNCT-SWAP Gender Scorecard Report (2019), as well as on the findings and lessons learned from the UN PoCSD Evaluation (2020), and the UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation for Albania (CPE, 2021). The SN is also informed by regional consultations on the new Strategic Plan, as well as consultations with key stakeholders that were engaged in the development of the new UNSDCF 2022-2026, and with Country Office’s partners during the UN Women Albania CPE.

## Background

Albania is an upper middle-income economy and among the countries with a high Human Development Index (HDI 0.795 (UNDP, 2020)); its economy is dominated by the services sector, especially tourism – a driver of growth over the past two years. In the last two decades however, emigration and urbanisation have created a structural shift away from agriculture towards industry and services, leading to diversification of services within the Albanian economy—including banking, telecommunications and tourism—while the manufacturing sector contributed 5.9% to GDP in 2018 (UNCT, 2020). The country joined NATO in 2009, and in March 2020, the European Union Council opened negotiations with Albania for



accession. The EU accession process has become a cornerstone of Albania's global integration and foreign policy agenda and a key driver of reforms. In 2021, Albania was elected for the first time in its history as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Despite progress over the years, development trajectory continues to be severely hindered by high poverty rates, emigration of skilled workforce, persisting disparities, weak public administration services both at central and local level, and deep public mistrust toward public institutions and government authorities (UNCT, 2020).

**Albania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe**, with an at-risk-of-poverty rate of 23.4% in 2018, compared to 16.9% in the 28 EU countries.

Long-term unemployment represents 66% of the unemployed, with women, youth and those with limited education being the most excluded from jobs. Household consumption fuelled by remittances (9.4% of GDP in 2019) continues to be one of the main drivers of growth (UNCT, 2020).

**Albania's population has experienced continuous negative growth since 1990, with almost 40% of population currently living outside the country** (World Bank, 2011). Pull factors include higher quality training and educational opportunities abroad. The migration of skilled workers, particularly in health and IT professions, is exacerbating the aging of the population (UNCT, 2020). Persisting rural-urban disparities also led to internal migration: since 1990, the population

has doubled in the capital of Tirana, where about a third of Albania's population lives today (INSTAT, 2021), while rural communities are increasingly at risk of being isolated (UNCT, 2020). The impact of rural-urban migration, international migration and rapid urbanisation on gender inequalities has yet to be addressed and monitored by policy makers and the development community.

**Access to public and social services is another key development challenge** that adversely affects migrants' efforts and opportunities to return. Investments in education, health care and social protection as a share of Albania's GDP are below EU averages (UNCT, 2020). Social care and protection systems insufficiently protect people against poverty and environmental shocks and, despite major education reforms, children with disabilities, children from rural areas, and those among Roma and Balkan Egyptian populations face barriers and discrimination to school attendance and learning (UNCT, 2020).

**Public trust towards government and public authorities remains very low.** Electoral issues have been a cause of contention in recent years, with opposition Members of Parliament relinquishing their mandate following the 2017 elections. Reports highlight a drop in citizens' trust in the justice system reform, challenges with the independence of the judiciary, media freedom, and high levels of corruption across public institutions (Institute for Democracy and Mediation, 2021). Despite signals of economic recovery in mid-2021, mainly due to the success of the touristic season, Albania continues to face the impact of the 2019 earthquake and COVID-19 pandemic, which worsened its progress against economic and social indicators (UN Women, Albania Country Portfolio Evaluation, Inception report, 2021).

## Normative Commitments on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Albania committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda in 2015. The 2018 Voluntary National Review (VNR) indicated that 79% of all SDG targets and 59% of SDG 5 targets are linked to the specific objectives of the national strategic policy framework. **Gender equality and women's empowerment were highlighted as a priority in a number of national policy documents** (NSDI II 2015-2021, the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2017-2021, and 2022-2030), and reinforced by Albania's ambition to join the EU, where *gender acquis* is a key requirement (UN Women, Albania Country Portfolio Evaluation, Inception report, 2021). The Law on Gender Equality (2008) established the National Council on Gender Equality (NCGE). In 2010, the government passed the Law on Protection from Discrimination to protect individuals against discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Provisions on gender equality were also anchored in the Electoral Code from 2008 to 2020 to enhance women's representation in politics and among voters.

**Albania is signatory to several international instruments to guarantee the equality of men and women and eliminate gender-based discrimination**, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Istanbul Convention. The country also adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Resolution 1325 in 2018.



**Despite a solid normative policy and legal framework, its implementation is insufficient to achieve SDG 5 and other gender related SDG targets.** Key challenges include insufficient financial and human resources, and weak accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation. The quality of services to address gender-based violence, as well as services aiming to support and empower rural women and women from disadvantaged groups, is still inconsistent (CEDAW Committee, 2017). In addition, gaps in gender statistics need to be addressed to better respond to the specific needs of women and girls to persisting patterns of inequalities (UNCT, 2020).

## Key Gender-Related Issues

In 2020 the Government of Albania published the national Equality Index based on the methodology developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality, showing a 60.4 index compared to 67.4 average for EU members. The 2021 Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum places Albania 25<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries, up 58 positions from 2014 but down 5 positions from 2020 (World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap report 2021, 2021) following the COVID-19 crisis. The latter substantially changed the socio-economic outlook of Albania. Similarly, UN Women's Rapid

Gender Assessment revealed that the economic and social fallout affected women more than men. As the pandemic continues, further support will be needed to ensure that gender-responsive measures are developed and implemented, including those promoting women's role and influence for achieving an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

### ***Governance and Participation in Public Life***

**Current arrangements to promote gender-responsive governance remain insufficient to implement Albania's international commitments and obligations.** The Gender Equality Machinery lacks accountability, capacity and resources to coordinate government action at central and local levels. The ability to absorb the EU gender equality *acquis* is also limited by these challenges, particularly within Local Government Units (LGUs) where poor gender analysis and planning do not allow for effective gender mainstreaming, prioritization and funding for gender responsive interventions (UNCT, 2020), which does not help restore public trust, and particularly women's trust, in government entities.

**Thanks to the support of UN Women, the GoA recognizes gender equality as one of the principles of its planning and budgeting process, which over the years resulted in an increase of budget allocations for gender equality results.** GRB elements constitute 7.2% of the total planned annual budget in 2020, compared to just 1% in 2015. However, gaps remain to ensure systematic application of GRB across all sectors of government planning and budgeting, through improved gender statistics and analysis, and with more effective application of budget performance monitoring systems.

Albania has seen a striking increase of women's representation in politics, with 35% women MPs following the April 2021 elections, and 70% of women ministries in the recent central government composition. Despite these encouraging accomplishments, there are still challenges to substantive empowerment of women in decision making, due persisting patriarchal power dynamics in public life (OECD, 2021).

**Strengthening the women peace and security agenda within the global security framework is a key priority** for Albania's membership at the UN Security Council. Despite progress in the Foreign Service, women are still largely outnumbered in the police and armed forces (Mission of Albania to the United Nations, 2021). The implementation of the first NAP was somewhat hindered by issues including under resourcing and over reliance on civil society.

### ***Women's Economic Empowerment and Resilience***

**The labour market in Albania is strongly gendered, with a tendency for women to work in lower-skilled, "traditionally female" jobs, accompanied by higher female unemployment rates and lower earnings** (UN Women, Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020). The pervasiveness of stereotypical gender roles also limits women's and girls' career choices, as they work predominantly in health and social services, education, manufacturing, and agriculture, all sectors characterised by lower wages. Women are particularly underrepresented in the IT sector and girls only make up 18% of all TVET students in all Vocational Secondary schools (UN Women, Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020).



Agriculture is one of the main economic pillars of the Albanian economy, contributing 19% to the country's GDP and providing jobs to one-third of employed people. **Women's contribution to agriculture in Albania is significant, with 54% of employed women working in this sector.** However, rural women have limited access to agricultural inputs and limited off-farm opportunities compared to men (UN Women, Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020), such as land, property, productive assets, remittances, technology and finance. Rural women have been particularly affected by the 2012 legislation on property registration and ownership rights, which foresaw the issuing of the certificate of ownership of agricultural land in the name of the head of

household only: they head only 6.5% of all farms and are often excluded from decision-making (UNCT, 2020).

**Albania ranks as one of the top ten countries in the world with the highest economic risk from multiple hazards, in particular flooding and earthquakes** (UNCT, 2020). Natural hazards can adversely impact crop and livestock production and damage critical infrastructure affecting the whole population; however, they have increased and compounded consequences on rural women, who face increased risks of losing their subsistence agriculture production; single mothers or women heads of households, who are at risk of losing

their homes and falling into homelessness and poverty; women victims of domestic and/or intimate partner violence, and other groups with an increased vulnerability (UNCT, 2020). Protection of the country's environment has not kept pace with its economic growth and no information exists on the extent to which gender equality goals have been mainstreamed into the national legal and policy framework on environment and climate change (UN Women, Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020). The 2019 earthquake, which displaced over 17,000 people, shed light on Albania's lack of preparation to respond to natural disasters and inadequate measures in support of women and the most vulnerable citizens (UN Women, Albania Country Gender Equality Brief, 2020).

**Developing women's entrepreneurial capacities, particularly key value chains in rural areas is key to advance WEE.** In 2019, roughly 25% of active enterprises were owned or administrated by women, down from nearly 30% in 2017 (UNCT, 2020). The World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Albania uncompetitive in entrepreneurial culture (World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report 2019, 2019). To ensure that recent Government measures in support of women entrepreneurs can succeed, access to finance and the formalisation of women-owned enterprises should be prioritized.

## *Ending Violence against Women and Girls*

**Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is still pervasive and deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions that have shaped Albanian society** (Albania Council of Ministers, 2018). In both the private and public life, there is a clear power distribution of the roles assigned to women and men, with 83% of Albanian families reportedly headed by men (UNCT, 2020). Social norms and societal attitudes are key underlying factors that normalise and perpetuate gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices. **30% of Albanian women justify a husband for hitting or beating his wife for trivial reasons, compared to 8% on average in OECD economies** (OECD, 2021). VAGW takes multiple forms in Albania: domestic violence, violence against women in politics, online violence, sex-selective abortions and human trafficking. This shadow pandemic intersects and is exacerbated by poverty, inequality in employment or education, gender-based migration, with persistent stigma and discrimination from family and community members towards victims of domestic and sexual violence (Albania Council of Ministers, 2018).

Amendments to the Law on Domestic Violence, a stronger alignment of the new Gender Equality Strategy (2021-2030) with international standards, and improvements of the legal framework on free legal aid were introduced for a more effective response to violence against women. However, the implementation gap of policy and legislation remains considerable, with the network of coordinated referral mechanism still not fully functional and unable to guarantee full protection of survivors, and deal with perpetrators (UNCT, 2020). **The latest Concluding Observations of**

**the CEDAW Committee addressed to Albania in 2016 highlighted several concerns**, including an inadequate knowledge of the Convention among legal professionals, within society and among women themselves. The Committee recommended to enhance the understanding of the Convention and promote gender equality through education and training, especially for parliamentarians, the judiciary, law enforcement and senior government officials (CEDAW Committee, 2017). The non-execution of court decisions granting protection orders to victims of GBV was another key observation from the 2017 GREVIO report.

## **UN Women's Comparative Strengths in Advancing Transformative Change to Address Systemic Gender Inequalities**

Against this background, UN Women is uniquely positioned to build on its existing strengths to tackle the structural causes of gender inequality, and to address persisting discriminatory practices. In a country where socio-economic disparities in gender, ethnicity, age, geographic areas and places of residence are persisting, the new SN will maintain a strong LNOB (Leaving No One Behind) focus to ensure that its interventions reach women and girls at greatest risk. A stakeholder mapping reveals the synergies built with civil society organisations to address the complexity and intersectionality of gender-related issues,

notably by partnering with organisations across Albania with expertise working with vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities, LGBTI persons, elderly persons, and Roma and Egyptian communities. Beyond CSOs, the proposed ERAW programme involves, inter alia, central and local governments, oversight bodies, media and businesses. UN Women's work on gender-responsive and inclusive governance involves most national stakeholders, except for media and businesses, while the women's economic empowerment portfolio involves mostly the central government and CSOs.

Across the areas of focus of the SN, UN Women brings unique comparative advantages to the implementation of the new UNSDCF 2022-2026. These include its unique positioning to: 1) support the translation of gender international norms and standards and the EU gender equality acquis into national policies and legislation; 2) influence gender responsive governance systems and sustainable financing for gender equality across sectors, including through strengthened gender responsive budgeting and improved gender statistics; 3) promote a strong feminist agenda to transform social norms, challenge gender stereotypes, and ending violence against women, including through its work with women civil society organisations at central and local levels and; 4) introduce a gender lens across programmatic interventions and sectoral areas, ensure the application of the LNOB approach, and nurture synergies amongst its programme areas as well as with other partners and UN agencies.

## 2. LESSONS LEARNED

This SN builds on the lessons learned from the implementation of the existing strategy, as captured by the Albania CPE, the PoCSD (2017-2021) Evaluation, the EAW Regional Evaluation Management Response and EAW Evaluation 2020, including:

- i. To strengthen its strategic impact, the Theory of Change (ToC) of the SN needs to limit the level of granularity and address instead critical areas of the CO's approach, including fostering UN coherence, promoting changes in social norms (...), ensuring gender responsive support in emergency and post-emergency settings, and a dedicated approach to the inclusion of the most marginalized women and girls.

- Addressing this suggestion, **through its new ToC, the CO aims to leverage strong gender equality focus in the new CF, consolidate systems approach; advance transformative change by addressing systematic and underlying gender inequalities; and strengthen UN Women's strategic positioning based on its comparative strength vis-a-vis key partners. The CO will also continue its efforts to diversify its portfolio of programmatic interventions.**

- ii. The Joint Programmes implementation

modality has had mixed results for the CO, increasing the number of programme engagements but repeatedly under-allocating leadership roles and funding for the CO as noted in the CPE Final Report. Through its new SN the CO aims to establish itself more firmly as a leader in the gender mandate of the UNCT. Its success in advocating for a standalone gender outcome will support this aim.

- **Over the new SN period, the CO will work closely with other agencies and the RC to develop a joint programming strategy that recognizes and supports the CO's leadership.**
- iii. Some thematic areas (WPP, WPS, WEE), while each showing some progress, had limited resource mobilization and more short-term results during the SN period and remain areas of strategic opportunity for the CO. At the outset of the previous SN, the CO significantly stepped-up resource mobilization efforts, leading to the expansion of the WEE portfolio and venturing in new areas such as disaster response and recovery amid the COVID-19 crisis and the 2019 earthquake that hit the country.
    - **Over the SN period, the CO will work towards more innovative and strategic approaches to partnerships and resource mobilization to expand programmatic**



PHOTO: CREDIT: UN WOMEN ALB

**work in emerging areas and engage in more long-term programming and impact.**

iv. The CO's strong cross-programmatic synergies and integrated approaches proved effective in ensuring impact and sustainability of efforts, as mentioned in the CPE Final Report (UN Women, Albania Country Portfolio Evaluation, 2021). Substantive interlinkages contributed to maintaining strong alignment with the SDGs and related UNSDCF outcomes and GoA priorities. Two EAW programmes were harmonized to scale up efforts and

expand good practices. Connections were pursued between the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and the EAW JP to leverage local level planning and budgeting for the prioritization of EAW interventions.

- **Such synergies will be further consolidated and expanded including by developing cross-thematic approaches to advance culture change, tackle discriminatory social norms and shift public discourse on the role of women and men in Albania.**

v. Expanding partnerships with civil society helped ensure that the needs of the most marginalized women and girls are directly targeted and addressed, especially in the context of the global health pandemic (UN Women, Albania Country Portfolio Evaluation, 2021). Systematic consultations with service providers CSOs also led to more effective monitoring and a deeper understanding of beneficiaries' needs.

■ **The CO will consolidate and diversify partnerships with civil society to mainstream the needs of marginalized women across its programmes. It will deepen existing collaboration and widen the pool of partners by engaging local and national governments, the private sector, youth leaders, religious communities and the media, promoting their role as change agents for dismantling conservative gender norms.**

vi. Investing in deepening knowledge of gender equality and its relationship with sustainable development is key to strengthen UN response and accountability on gender mainstreaming. The CO was very effective in engaging with the UNDAF evaluation, the new CCA and UNSDCF and in generating updated and strategic gender analysis to inform these processes and maintain a strong GEEW prioritization. The CO chaired the GTRG, produced a new Gender Equality Country Brief, led the UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and continued to promote UNCT engagement on international norms and standards.

■ **The CO will lead and support strong GEEW integration in the new CF,**

**chair the gender outcome group and promote gender mainstreaming across other results areas, including through continuously supporting enhanced knowledge and skills of CO and UN personnel. It will continue to contribute towards UN programmatic coherence while at the same time seeking to enhance non-core resources from pooled funding mechanisms.**

vii. Responding and adapting quickly to new emerging realities is critical to reach those most in need. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the CO readjusted its programmatic work to respond to the needs of women impacted by the pandemic, especially in the area of EVAW. The Rapid Gender Assessment was a key source of data and analysis for the UN SERP, while the study on the “Impact of the COVID-19 on services for victims of violence in Albania” enabled the CO to ensure targeted and demand-driven support to survivors.

■ **Learning from the pandemic, as well as from the 2019 earthquake, the CO is better prepared to respond to crises and emergency situations requiring swift actions addressing the immediate needs of women and girls.**

viii. The **intentional CO's approach** of combining investment in **analytical work** on the status of GEWE in the country (GE Brief and CCA) and **strong engagement with national GE mechanism and women's organisations** during the Cooperation Framework consultations and prioritisation resulted in high-level focus on GEWE and the standalone GE Outcome.

### 3. PROPOSED PROGRAMME



UN Women Albania contributes programmatically to three of the four UNSDCF Outcomes, to which SN Outcomes are aligned. It also covers all four SP thematic areas: Governance and Participation in Public Life, Women’s Economic Empowerment, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Deduction (DRR).

In full compliance with the UNSDCF (2022-2026), UN Women Global SP (2022-2025) including its new coordination outcome, international commitments, and national priorities as highlighted in the

context and situation analysis, UN Women Albania aims to advance gender equality and women empowerment in the country through holistic and sustainable interventions in collaboration and in support to government institutions and grassroot organizations and feminist activists. The CO will leverage UN Women’s normative mandate to strengthen GEWE legislation and policies, to improve institutional capacities to implement international commitments, and to promote positive social norms around gender equality. Specifically, the CO will continue its previous practice of supporting government, CSOs and human rights institutions in participating in

**Figure 2**

Theory of Change guiding the Albania Strategic Note 2022-2026

### If...

- i) Increased and more equitable investment in people remove barriers and create opportunities for those at risk of exclusion;
- ii) Innovative and integrated policy solutions accelerate sustainable, productive and inclusive development;
- iii) Gender-responsive governance strengthens equality and non-discrimination

### then...

All women and girls in Albania will fully enjoy and exercise their human rights, in a gender-equal society, and meaningfully contribute to the country's sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and EU integration.

### Because...

1. Institutions make more gender-responsive policies and strengthen disaggregated data;
2. Women and girls have expanded their leaders and decision-making capacity and build their agency;
3. Women, girls, men and boys are engaged to tackle gender stereotypes and discriminatory social norms;
4. Women have greater business opportunities and barriers to their economic participation have been addressed;
5. Policies, capacities and mechanisms are enhanced to address climate change, disaster and emergencies;
6. Women have increased access to land, property, productive assets, remittances, technology and finances;
7. Women and girls have increased access to public services, including justice, education and social protection, especially in rural and remote areas;
8. Legislative and policy frameworks are implemented through greater accountability mechanisms;
9. There is greater leadership/cooperation across the UN system to advance GEWE.

intergovernmental reporting mechanisms, such as the upcoming (2022) CEDAW Committee Session, UPR reporting (2024), Beijing+30 review (2025) and possible VNR within the SN period, which will be grounded on current recommendations and updated to be used as advocacy tools for legislative improvements. Building on Albania's commitment to champion the Women, Peace and Security Agenda as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2022-2023), the CO will leverage its efforts to engage Albania in the Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action, which was created following the Generation Equality Forum and already involves the Albanian Women Empowerment Network as a signatory.

Programmatic work, including different levels of interventions and thematic areas, contribute to the overall intended impact of the SN so that "All women and girls in Albania fully enjoy and exercise their human rights, in a gender equal society and meaningfully contribute to the country's sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and EU integration."

All initiatives planned under the programmatic work of the CO are grounded in UN Women's triple mandate as they include normative support to improving legislation and policies; coordination with other UN agencies through the joint programming modality and operational activities to materialize the impact of the planned interventions. Adopting LNOB Principles across its outcome areas, the SN promote redressing disadvantage, countering stigma and violence, transforming social and institutional structures, fostering participation and social inclusion. The CO has identified and adopted an intersectional approach to its programmatic work to address the needs of those most marginalized and vulnerable, such as disabled women and men, LGBTI persons,

elderly persons, and Roma and Egyptian women and men. Building on successful initiatives in the past, the CO will continue to invest in south-south cooperation in delivering its programmatic results. Opportunities within the regional GRB programme to learn and exchange experiences with North Macedonia GRB Center of Excellence as well on participatory processes at the local level will be explored. Similarly, cooperation with other Western Balkan countries as part of the Gender Equality Facility projects being implemented across the sub-region will be ensured. The CO will continue to actively contribute to the annual regional fora organised in the framework of the regional EVAW project and explore further opportunities for south-south cooperation in emerging areas such as gender and climate change as well as DRR.

## SN OUTCOME 1

**By 2026, government institutions ensure increased and more equitable investment in people to remove barriers and create opportunities for those at risk of exclusion.**

The following output will contribute to achievement of this outcome:

**Output 1.1.1:** *Central and local government institutions have improved capacities to design, implement and monitor gender-responsive and evidence-based social protection policies and services for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including in emergency situations.*

The CO will consolidate efforts made in the previous SN to support social inclusion and social care reform through the second phase of the UN



joint Program “Leave No One Behind”, which will focus on the consolidation of the social care reform and strengthening of the results from the previous phase. The CO will take a holistic approach to empower vulnerable persons and groups to have equal access to public services that support their social rights, social inclusion and well-being, and are empowered to have a voice in public policy decision-making affecting their lives, and to hold decision-makers accountable for policy implementation. To achieve this, the CO will support national institutions at the central and local level to ensure that social services are adequately resourced monitored. The CO will also work to strengthen capacities of change agents, including CSOs grassroot groups, and citizens at large, to engage the design, delivery and monitoring of gender-responsive and evidence based social services. Finally, the CO will work

directly with vulnerable and marginalized women (including migrant women and girls), that are on the receiving end of social services, to utilize information, skills and opportunities for promoting justice and social protection. This specific outcome interrelates with UNSDCF Outcome 4 (C2) with regards to GRB and participatory processes at local level, as well as strengthened production and use of disaggregated data. UN Women builds on its comparative advantage in intersecting gender with other social cleavages and looking at structural causes of gender inequality and inter-sectional social exclusion of vulnerable women and girls.

This work contributes to achieving **UN Women Global SP Outcome 1 on Global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions and SP Outcome 4 Women's equitable access to services, goods & resources.**

## SN OUTCOME 2

**By 2026, all persons benefit from, and contribute to, innovative and integrated policy solutions that accelerate sustainable, productive and inclusive development, enhanced climate change adaptation and mitigation and transition to a green and blue economy.**

The following outputs will contribute to achievement of this outcome:

**Output 1.2.1:** *Government institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector have the capacity to design, implement and monitor policies and programmes focused on innovative and digital economy that contribute to women's economic empowerment.*

**Output 1.2.2:** *Planning and coordination mechanisms have strengthened capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including Disaster Risk Reduction, ensuring the integration of gender equality commitments.*

**Output 1.2.3:** *Women and young people have improved access to productive and financial resources, information and skill development opportunities to increase participation to the labour market.*

This outcome builds on efforts to expand programmatic interventions to new emerging areas identified by the CF, including climate change and transition to a green and blue economy. The CO will ensure that (1) government institutions, CSOs and the private sector have the capacity to design, implement and monitor policies and programmes focused on innovative and digital economy that contribute to WEE (*Output 1.1.2*); that (2) planning and coordination mechanisms have strengthened capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation, including DRR, ensuring integration of gender equality commitments (*Output 1.2.2 & UNSDCF 2.4*); and that (3) women and young people have improved access to productive and financial resources, information and skill development opportunities to increase their participation to the labor market (*Output 1.2.3*).

These actions involve work with public institutions, private sector and NGOs to create an enabling environment in regard to gender-responsive policies, budgeting, financing and sex-disaggregated data for innovative and integrated solutions, with a special focus on women and young people. Activities will revolve around the enhancement of capacities and mechanisms for gender-responsive climate action, management of

disasters and emergencies, with focus on rural and migrant women, amongst others. Strengthening access to productive and financial resources, knowledge and information and skills development opportunities, especially in the agriculture sector, is central to allow women (including women entrepreneurs), to enjoy greater opportunities and participate in the country's sustainable economic growth. Increasing resources, knowledge and capacities of rural women will have a strong impact on environmental preservation and climate action.

The CO will focus on 'building back better' approach in the response to crisis and emergency situations that require swift actions, more specifically addressed in Output 1.2.2. Coordination among UN agencies on environmental issues will be essential for advancing climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Outcome 2 contributes to the achievement of **UN Women Global SP Impact 2: Women's Economic Empowerment** for women to have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy, in linkage with **Impact 4: Women, Peace and Security, Humanitarian & Disaster Risk Reduction** for women and girls contribute to, and have influence in, building sustainable peace and resilience and benefit equally from the prevention of conflicts and disasters, and from humanitarian action. Outputs also contribute to the realisation of **UN Women SP Outcome 2: Financing for Gender Equality** and **Outcome 4: Women's Equitable Access to Services, Goods and Resources**.

## SN OUTCOME 3

**By 2026, all persons contribute to, gender-responsive governance that strengthens equality and non-discrimination, promotes women's empowerment and human rights, and reduces violence against women and children.**

This CF/SN outcome is central to the CO's strategic proposition and represents the largest portion of its programmatic involvement. To achieve this outcome, the CO will work towards the following outputs:

**Output 1.3.1:** *National Gender Machinery and public administration at central and local levels, public oversight institutions and CSOs have increased capacities to support, design and monitor implementation of international and national commitments and EU priorities for gender equality.*

The Albania CO will leverage its mandate and unique expertise to further the country's normative framework and policy environment for women's human rights. The CO will enhance the capacities of the national gender machinery, oversight institutions and civil society organizations to monitor and report on progress towards achievement of GEWE commitments. This includes Albania's upcoming CEDAW reporting, UNSCR 1325, UPR, the SDGs as well as EU priorities for gender equality. In light of the Beijing+30 progress review, the CO will engage with its governmental and non-governmental partners to take stock of progress and identify strategic priorities for GEWE in line with other international commitments. To integrate international normative frameworks and standards on GEWE (including the EU GE acquis) the CO will identify and address gaps in



the national legislative and policy framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. To deepen its advocacy role, the CO will continue to ensure the sustainability of the Monitoring Network Against Gender-Based Violence, a platform of 50 CSOs established in 2018. The Network has become a reference point for monitoring implementation of national and international obligations on ending violence against women, holding institutions to account and encouraging improvement of legal frameworks and implementation on the ground.

This work contributes to achievement of **UN Women Global SP Outcome 1 Global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions.**

**Output 1.3.2:** *Government institutions at central and local levels have increased capacities to plan, budget, monitor, track expenditures, and leverage resources for GEWE in targeted sectors.*

To ensure a gender-responsive governance that empowers women and strengthens equality the CO will continue to promote financing for gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting. Capacities of national partners to plan, budget, monitor, track expenditure and leverage resources

for gender equality will be strengthened through interventions that feature technical support to mainstream gender in the ongoing public financial management reform. The impact of COVID-19 will be addressed through increasing capacities of national partners to conduct gender equality analysis in emergency responses. Through strong partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the CO will work to contribute to more equitable allocation of resources through development of gender targeted objectives and key performance indicators. This will allow a better assessment of the impact of strategies and programmes. In addition to working with government partners, the CO will expand its pool of partnerships with public oversight bodies and other actors to apply gender lenses to their work, to advocate and demand accountability at the national and local level.

This work directly contributed to **UN Women Global SP Outcome 2 Financing for Gender Equality**

**Output 1.3.3:** *Government institutions at central and local levels and CSOs have increased capacities to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls, with a focus on vulnerable groups.*

The CO will promote integrated approaches to policy and service delivery that capture how gender inequalities and deprivations are manifested and lead to violence against women and girls (EVAWG). On one hand, it will support improvements in the legal and policy framework on EVAW (including the new National Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030; the Law on DV and newly revised Decision of the Council of Ministers on the functioning of referral mechanisms) so that they are in line with international and regional standards. The CO will also support direct provision of specialized services for women and girls, survivors of violence, to guarantee their protection and rehabilitation.

The EVAW portfolio will take a holistic approach, by engaging with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders at central and local level, as well as addressing prevention, protection, support and integrated services in line with the Istanbul Convention. In addition, the CO will expand its work with perpetrators, including through identification and replication of best practices from the region and beyond, taking into account especially evidence regarding their effectiveness in producing positive results for survivors of violence. On the latter, the CO will also investigate the existing programmes working with perpetrators in the country before engaging.

This work contributes to achievement of **UN Women Global SP Outcome 4 Women's equitable access to services, goods & resources.**

**Output 1.3.4:** *Influential leaders, communities, men and boys, women and girls have improved knowledge and capacities to address harmful norms, stereotypes, and behaviors that drive VAWG and gender discrimination, with an intersectional lens.*



In addition to improving services for survivors of violence, the CO will promote positive social norms and relationships that counter deeply rooted inequalities that justify and normalize violence. It will engage with men and boys, women and girls, feminist activists, and the media to improve knowledge and capacities to address harmful norms and stereotypes. The CO will continue engagement of faith leaders, which started already in the previous SN period, and has potential to impact community behaviors. Behavioural changes will be implemented in schools and in the communicates through resilience building approaches such as Empowerment Through Self-Defense (ESD). The CO will also engage in the Peace Build Fund action for the Western Balkans on strengthening the role of youth in promoting constructive narratives, respect for diversity, and trust, with focus on supporting social movements

and actors to address toxic masculinities, hate speech and social cohesion. Working with youth intends to help them gain confidence in the future through active participation and contribution to Albanian society, enhancing their trust in public institutions and countering the negative population growth in the country.

This work directly contributes to **UN Women Global SP Outcome 3 Positive social norms, including through engaging men and boys.**

**Output 1.3.5:** *Change agents (CSOs, grassroots groups, citizens, including women rights entities) and women and girls have increased capacities and opportunities to lead, participate, monitor and influence decision making processes and resources for gender equality at national and local level.*

The CO will continue its efforts to ensure that women's voice and agency is strengthened in the design and implementation of policies that consider the diverse needs of women and men. Through its work on gender-responsive governance the CO will work to engage women and girls to influence and participate in decision-making processes to make the best use of financial resources for gender equality at the local and central level, including efforts to better respond to their needs for social services during emergency situations, such as natural and health disasters. In addition to creating spaces for participation the CO in synergy with its work on addressing harmful norms and stereotypes will tackle root causes and barriers that keep women from meaningfully participating and leading political processes. The CO will work to shift attitudes that view the political sphere as the domain of men, towards inclusive and equality promoting norms, achieved in close collaboration with and in support to

government and CSO partners. This work is fully in line with the conclusions of the CSW on the need to accelerate the pace of progress towards women's full participation at all levels of decision-making in all spheres of public life.

It helps build credibility and improve women's confidence in public institution, contributing to the achievement of **UN Women Global SP Outcome 5 Women's voice, leadership and agency.**

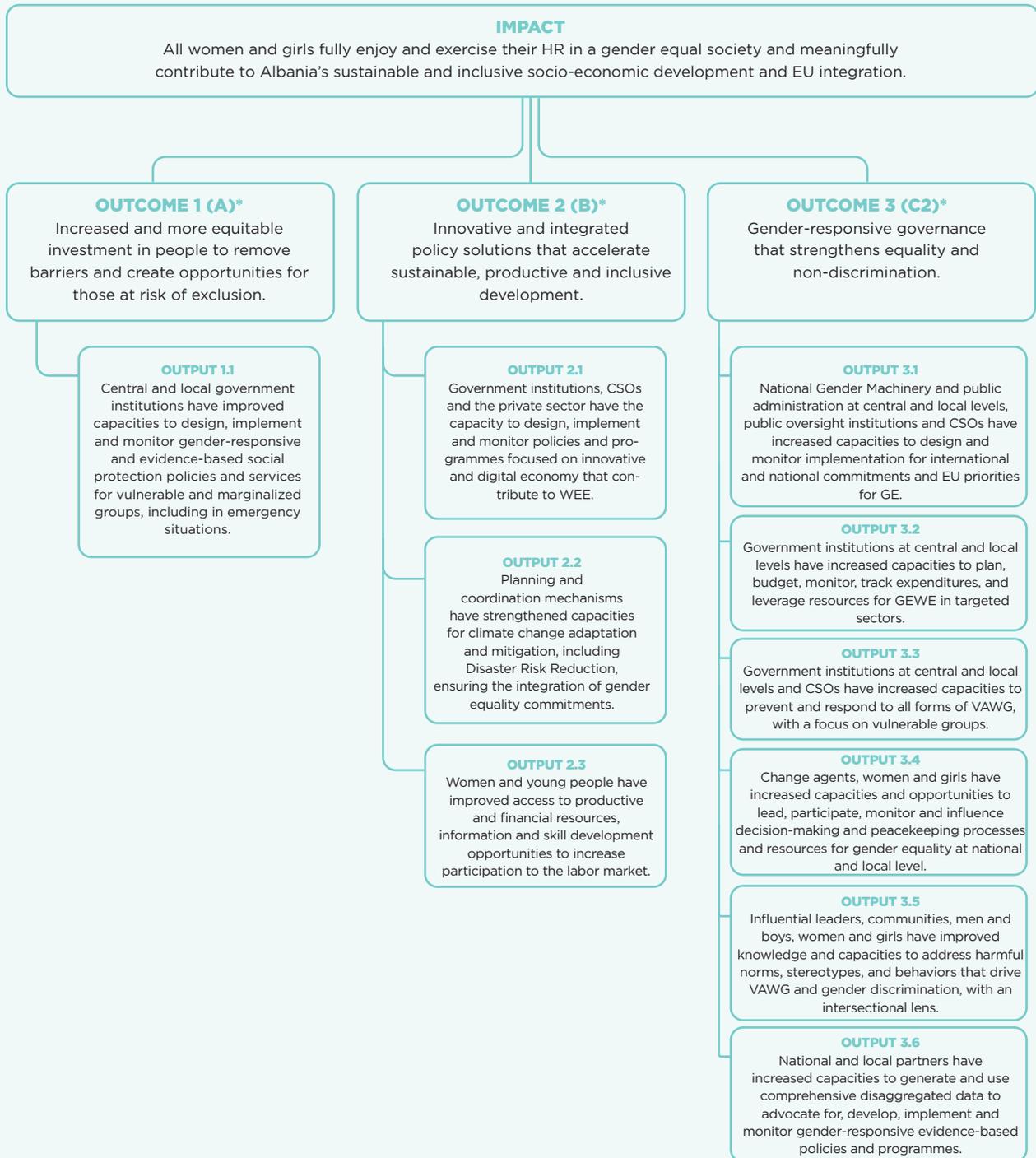
**Output 1.3.6:** *National and local partners have increased capacities to generate and use comprehensive disaggregated data to advocate for, develop, implement and monitor gender-responsive evidence-based policies and programmes.*

The Albania CO will leverage its strong expertise to help national partners generate and use data to develop, implement and monitor gender-responsive and evidence-based interventions. The use of data as advocacy tool directly contributes to a more transparent and accountable governance that equally addresses the needs of women and men. In the area of EVAW, the CO will engage in preparation of the new EVAW prevalence survey, jointly with relevant partners, support data collection on reported cases of VAWG at the local level, especially through women's CSOs. It will consolidate its strong partnership with the Institute of Statistics to continue strengthening its capacities to produce data, especially through the Women and Men in Albania publication. User-producer dialogues gender statistics and the SDGs will be continued.

This directly contributes to **UN Women Global SP Outcome 6 Production, analysis and use of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data and knowledge.**

**Figure 3**

Results Chain outlining the contribution of UN Women Albania's Strategic Note 2022-2026



\*The SN outcomes are aligned with the outputs of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026 for Albania, available [here](#).

## 4. UN SYSTEM COORDINATION

The CO will continue to be a key member of the UN Country Team, supporting the Resident Coordinator's efforts to strengthen the overall strategic positioning of the UN system in Albania as a key partner for sustainable development. It will ensure that gender remains central to the agenda of the UNCT, leading on the development of relevant joint analysis, policy positions and advocacy, on the design and implementation of UN interventions that prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women, and on advancing UN accountability on gender mainstreaming. The SN, its theory of change and results framework are fully aligned to the new CF 2022-2026. Through a dedicated outcome level result and the integration of gender outputs and indicators across other CF outcomes, the UN in Albania has adopted a twin track approach to gender mainstreaming that is consistent with relevant QCPR guidance and ECOSOC resolutions, providing a window of opportunity to help Albania consolidate and accelerate progress on SDG 5 and other SDG gender targets, also in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic and related UN SERP. UN Women has made a rigorous effort to identify and distil key comparative advantages that it brings in the context of the new Cooperation Framework. Those key strengths - summarized below and validated by the recent CPE - are at the core of the SN:

- Help translate international norms and standards on GEWE into national policies and legislation.
- Influence gender responsive governance and financing across sectors through GRB and improved gender statistics.
- Promote a strong feminist agenda to transform social norms, overcome gender stereotypes and eliminate violence against women, working with women organizations and the media.
- Apply a gender lens across programmatic interventions to leave no one behind, seeking synergies internally and with UN agencies.

Building on its history of *Delivering as One* in Albania, the CO will keep leveraging pooled funding mechanisms (both locally and at global level), to promote greater programmatic coherence and to expand its programmatic footprint. UN Women will lead and coordinate the EU4GE joint action (with UNFPA) that aims to strengthen governance structures and practices in central and local level institutions for the implementation of EU gender equality *acquis*, and to ensure effective gender mainstreaming



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in the new National Strategy on Sustainable Development and Integration, as well as in other sectoral strategies and actions plans. Joint interventions and approaches will continue to promote LNOB (for instance, Joint Programmes with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, and Joint Programme on EVAW with UNDP and UNFPA). The CO also aims to scale up joint actions with UNHCR, IOM, and other UN agencies in the area of mixed migration.

The CO will continue to lead the UN Gender Thematic Results Group (GTRG), whose functions and set up will be validated in view

of the new CF. The GTRG will implement the UNCT SWAP Scorecard and workplan, design and roll out joint advocacy campaigns, and serve as a UN policy conversation platform on key issues and challenges that stand in the way of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Group will also support integrated policy approaches, as well as more systematic review of joint programs where UN Women is not a PUNO to ensure adequate gender mainstreaming, and work with other inter-agency groups on areas of common interest (e.g., UN Association, UN Youth Advisory Group, Joint Communication Group, PSEA TF and UN OMT).

## 5. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

UN Women globally is a partnership-centered organization, and the SN for Albania fully reflects this approach at country level. The CPE confirmed that the CO was able to develop and nurture long-term, effective and trustworthy partnerships with diverse governmental and non-governmental stakeholders working on GEEW and human rights; it highlighted the strengths of the team in working collaboratively with counterparts in Government and civil society. UN Women will continue to leverage key actors in central **government institutions**: with the Prime Minister Office, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (which chairs the National Council on Gender Equality), and relevant line ministries. The CO will pursue a ‘partnership for impact’ approach that focuses on increasing investments, capacities and coordination for the implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy on Gender Equality, of relevant legislation, as well as for the integration of the EU gender *acquis* across government action. The collaboration with INSTAT will continue to address the production of gender statistics, their use for evidence-based policy development, as well as fostering public access for accountability. UN Women will implement MOUs recently signed with **key public institutions** such as the School of Public Administration, the Albanian State Audit Institution, and municipalities. The CO will capitalize on existing successful collaborations to deepen partnerships with **public oversight institutions** such as the People’s Advocate, the

Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and Parliament, to promote accountability on the country’s human rights and gender equality commitments.

The co-chairing – jointly with Sweden – of the Donor Group Gender provides the CO with a key strategic opportunity to lead the engagement with international partners to Albania (both bilateral and multilateral), through regular sharing of knowledge and resources as well as substantive dialogue and exchanges on key policy areas, both within the group membership and with key national partners.

Consistently with the approach identified in the CF, the CO will build upon its traditionally unique collaboration with civil society organizations, to create more inclusive spaces for dialogue and consensus-building around shared priorities. Specifically, as suggested by the CPE, it will seek to replicate systematic partnerships that were developed in the EAW area to other impact areas, to support programmatic results. The CO will continue to play an enabling role to establish networks and platforms (such as the Monitoring Network Against GBV and PRISMA-Participatory Gender Budgeting Network), that advocate for gender equality. The role and effectiveness of the CSAG will also be assessed and reviewed to maximize the benefit for the CO in terms of understanding and navigating the country civil



society environment.

The new UNSDCF also highlights the potential for stronger, more systematic UN engagement with the **private sector** to support achievement of EU accession priorities and the SDGs. Through a revamped approach to the WEPs and in synergy with the UN RC Office on the Global Compact initiative, UN Women will seek to promote increased commitment of private companies, both in terms of gender parity and women empowerment internally, as well as through their active engagement in advocacy campaign such as the 16 Days of Activism. UN Women will engage with **youth** for their fuller participation in society, especially young women and youth from excluded groups. The UN Youth Advisory Board that was set up in 2020 enjoys gender

equal representation and features several young feminist activists that support the prioritization of SDG 5 in Albania and the work of UN Women. This and other youth movements (such as for example the Tirana European Youth Capital 2022) will be mobilized to promote social conversations around deeply rooted patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes, across youth and with older generations leveraging the global momentum generated by the Generation Equality Forum. The CO will rethink its relationship with the **media**, new and traditional, by shifting from media as a tool for mass information, to media as a partner in educating and changing mindsets. The CO will seek to expand the existing membership and topics covered by the Media Forum that it supports, to reflect the intersectional nature of gender equality and women empowerment.

## 6. PROGRAMME SUSTAINABILITY AND EXIT STRATEGY

UN Women Albania has developed various strategies to ensure that the beneficial impacts of its interventions last and expand over time. Through a multi-partner approach, the sustainability strategy of the Country Office is closely linked to its partnership strategy, building capacities among local and national government entities, CSOs, beneficiaries.

**All programmes include a normative component for central and local governments to align existing and new laws and policies with international legal standards on gender equality.** The Country Office ensures that gender is integrated in government policy responses, including in national strategic and action plans such as the National Strategy for Development and Integration, the National Intersectoral Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries or the Law on Aliens. Programme interventions are in turn aligned with national strategies, notably the National Strategy on Gender Equality. All programmes seek to institutionalise capacity development by supporting the creation, integration and budgeting of governmental mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment. They also provide technical assistance, mentoring and training opportunities for line ministries, hence generating national ownership.

**At the level of right holders, programmes seek to anticipate needs, promoting investment in people and processes.** The CO is viewed by most as a trusted partner and has strong relationships with CSOs, who are equipped to provide gender-responsive services first-hand. Programmes aim not only to accompany CSOs in their advocacy work, but also to enhance their monitoring capacities for greater government accountability. Interventions draw on local consultations, targeting marginalised and vulnerable communities, and youth as agents of change and intergenerational dialogue. Lastly, communication campaigns organised around international days are anchored to the national context, which enables UN Women to raise awareness and challenge social norms more effectively.

**The CO plays a role in ensuring that innovative and successful practices can be replicated and/or scaled up in a sustainable way.** Staff members are engaged in activities to build their capacities on various issues to better grasp their intersectional dimension, including through inter-programmatic exchanges. They provide the government, CSOs and beneficiaries with tools that were previously tested, approved by other UN entities, designed or co-designed by



international partners, while at the same time facilitating knowledge and experience sharing across Western Balkans countries. They will also draw on the experience gained through the ECA RO innovation lab implemented in 2020. The strategies adopted are revised and refined over time through the collection and analysis of data, which is key to all programmes and integrated into the current SN. Lessons and recommendations generated by UN Women evaluations such as the CPE also help guide the expansion or transition of certain approaches.

**Overall, the CO uses a combination of Phasing Over and Phasing Out strategies to pave the way for a smooth handover following its**

**interventions**, focusing on capacity-building during the implementation and leaving the mechanisms in place to provide further support to beneficiaries. UN Women continues to navigate the larger political and socio-economic context of the country and the Western Balkans, drawing from the collective knowledge and position of the UNCT and the community of international partners. The EU integration process largely drives exit strategy considerations in terms of the longer-term prospects of development cooperation with Albania. The expected European Council's decision to set a date for the first intergovernmental conference will put the negotiation agenda in motion for the years to come, until Albania officially joins the EU.

## 7. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Successful performance on the existing SN, with increased human resources and programme portfolio, provide a solid ground for an ambitious new cycle. Strong operational performance was confirmed by the 2018 internal audit as well as the EU verification missions. The CO closed the 2018 audit recommendations within the set timeline. It excels in several corporate indicators with 100% compliance on performance management, completion of the mandatory learning courses, ERM, asset management as well as InfoSec requirements. Compliance will continue with the safety and security requirements, including by updating the BCP (BCCMA App), the Safety and Security Survey, and liaising with UNDSS and the Regional Security Specialist. The COVID-19 pandemic required enforcement of new safety measures and adherence to UN and CO Safety Protocols, which will remain in force as long as needed to ensure staff safety.

Senior management will continue to contribute to UN Delivering as One and programmatic coherence through key interagency coordination mechanisms that focus on operational and security issues, including the CMT, SMT and OMT, participate in joint operations work, like BOS and CBO implementation, joint procurement processes, LTA establishment etc.

While there is no expected change in the minimum staff positions for core functions, additional posts have already been filled for new projects, such as the Gender Rural Equality and Tourism (GREAT) and the EU4 GE. In addition, thanks to the recently increased portfolio, other SC posts were filled for both programmatic and operational support (three posts at SB3 level). A new Junior Professional Officer (JPO) post is expected to be filled in late 2021 to support programme development, UN coordination and engagement on SDGs, as well as knowledge management and advocacy. In the optimistic scenario of moving gradually to 'medium size' office, the CO will need to make arrangements to acquire standing capacity for Monitoring and Reporting and it will seek to enhance its communications capacities. Such increased capacity would ensure that the CO fully leverages the potential of communication to i) enhance visibility of UN Women's contributions in Albania; ii) strengthen public advocacy for gender equality; iii) further explore potential to develop new partnerships with a variety of stakeholders including youth and the private sector.

Personnel attendance in Headquarters and ECARO training courses strengthened their programmatic and operations capacities in several



areas, notably in project management and RBM, and procurement certification (CIPS). This is an ongoing learning process which will continue to be pursued, focusing on both group and individual learning available through several platforms, as well as face-to-face when applicable. The CO will continue to plan activities that nurture an enabling environment in the workplace by offering training opportunities to all colleagues, organizing team building activities, supporting initiatives that aim to empower, engage and nurture team members as well as applying flexible working arrangements equally to all personnel.

To ensure a successful SN implementation, the

CO will continue to prioritize the following: compliance with operational corporate policies and guidelines, financial regulations, as well as maintaining 100% compliance with corporate CO indicators, including on risk management, security (security risk management measures, business continuity management, and occupational health); financial management, including month-end closure checklist; enhancing capacity building of personnel in both programmatic and operations related skills; keeping the management ratio under the 20% threshold (currently at 13%); strengthening operational capacity of responsible parties; rolling out the new ERP and other online platforms.

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The CO has established good monitoring and reporting practices in line with corporate requirements which will be strengthened during the new SN to fully comply with RBM standards. The expansion of CO programmatic staff poses an opportunity to build and deepen capacities to measure and report impact of interventions following RBM principles. In this regard, all programme staff will complete UN Women-led RBM and other relevant external courses on M&E and data, to strengthen CO capacities and transmit to external partners, especially CSOs. At the project/programme level performance monitoring frameworks will be regularly updated and used as a key monitoring and reporting tool for measuring progress. PMFs are regularly utilized in all UNJPs and regional programmes the CO participates and contributes.

A good practice the CO has established for capturing data on beneficiaries from each project will be consolidated for use in all projects including at the level of responsible parties. It will continue to maintain its high performance in timely provision of quarterly update in UN Women's Results Management System as well as high quality annual reporting applying RBM principles. The CO will lead in 2024 the UNCT-SWAP scorecard and continue to lead the GTRG and coordinate with RCO for the annual reporting on the implementation of the scorecard conducted in 2019 as well as of the new one starting from 2025. With an increasing number of bilateral funding and expected increased leadership in UNJPs on GE in view of the stand-alone gender outcome of the new CFG, the CO will aim to shift to Tier 1 countries for donor reporting.



The CO will build on its evaluation capacities and strengths to undertake high quality evaluations of its projects and significantly contribute to joint evaluations of UNJPs. Several UNJP evaluations will be conducted in the first year of the new SN in the areas of social protection and EAW apart for regional projects (EAW and Financing for GE) and bilateral project evaluations (WEE) which will help to further inform future programming in these areas. Lessons learned from the Country Portfolio Evaluation (2021) will further guide the work planning and implementation of the new SN for which updates in the implementation of the management response will be regularly provided in the GATE Evaluation system. Besides the SN Mid-Term Review, a CPE is planned in the MERP for the new SN (planned in 2025).

## 9. RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The CO will build on its expertise and established reputation in the production of research, data and knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment issues in Albania to develop a clear knowledge management work plan for the new SN period. In terms of production, several research and knowledge products will be developed in line with relevant corporate guidance, including a new Country Gender Equality Profile. Based on its excellent collaboration with INSTAT, the CO plans to provide support for the new Time Use Survey (2023) which can be further used to analyse structural barriers to women's economic empowerment as part of the CF Outcome B and 5th national prevalence survey (tentative 2024-2025). Jointly with UNFPA, it will undertake in-depth gender analyses of the Census. In addition, the CO will also lead the UNCT-SWAP GE Scorecard by 2024.

In line with its normative mandate, the CO will continue over the new SN to provide technical expertise and financial support to government partners, national human rights institutions, and women's organizations to report to international mechanisms, such as the upcoming UPR 4th cycle, UNCT confidential report for the CEDAW Committee in preparation for the consideration of Albania's 5th periodic report and national Beijing+30 review. In addition, the CO will focus on the dissemination of the knowledge products generated recently and use them for advocacy and programming such as the CPE (2021), the results of the RGA on VAW (2021), study on social vulnerabilities at the local level (2019), media monitoring on VAW in Elections conducted during the 2021 general elections and appointments in the new government, knowledge generated from mapping and research on WEE for further use from LGUs, private sectors and



CSOs (gender sensitive value chain analysis, needs assessment targeting rural women), Gender Equality Brief (2020). It will also use knowledge products generated from regional projects or corporate ones to further advocacy at the country level.

The CO website and its social media platforms will continue to serve as the main channels for sharing knowledge products developed by the offices apart for specific launching events and collaborations with academia, media and feminist libraries. Engagement through communities of practice will be also ensured to further disseminate the produced knowledge. In line with its Knowledge Management Plan, the CO will strengthen capacities to increase the impact of its Knowledge Products.

Internally, the CO plans to establish a robust culture of knowledge production and sharing. To this end, it will review its KM plan annually, appoint a focal point, and connect with regional and HQ KM processes and best practices. Further, the CO plans to establish internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to enhance the quality of KPs and expand tools and avenues of dissemination.

# 10. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

Albania is an upper middle-income country with a limited funding base to support development cooperation. Main opportunities for financial support derive from the EU accession process through the EUD to Albania, and with few (mostly EU member) countries providing bilateral development assistance, including Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and USA.

While noting that UN Women was not entirely able to secure adequate resource across all areas of the existing SN (e.g., WPP, WPS, WEE), the CPE has confirmed that a new strategic approach to resource mobilization and long-term internal sustainability is already underway as part of the overall resource mobilization and planning for the new SN. Consistently with the CPE's findings, the CO will continue to scan the environment to identify opportunities for diversified resource mobilization that build on donor priorities, on UN Women global strategic direction and new SP, and on the CO's key comparative advantages identified during the UN strategic planning process and development of the new UNSDCF 2022-2026 (see *UN Coordination Section*).

A UNCT joint resource mobilization strategy was developed in 2020 and will be reviewed and updated, following the adoption of the new CF and related Funding Framework. UN Women will further detail its resource mobilization strategy and actions plan following the finalization of the joint UNCT approach, to which it will actively participate. The CO aims to consolidate and further enhance the positive results achieved in the last part of the existing SN with regards to increasing its financial resources. The indicative overall resource requirement for the new cycle is around 16.6 million USD, with a funding gap approximating 69%.

**Figure 5**  
Overview of Albania CO sources of funds for 2022-2026



Key elements that will inform the internal CO strategic approach include the following: 1) leveraging the UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund for continued access to a fair share of resources for development and implementation of JPs, and for ensuring that government cost sharing commitments to the Fund also address resource gaps for gender mainstreaming in the CF; 2) work with the UNRCO and other UNCT members to tap into opportunities from other global pooled funding mechanisms (e.g. the SDG Global Fund, the Peace Building Fund etc.); 3) Draw on global flagship programs (e.g. MEWGC) and ECARO resource mobilization efforts to address cross boundaries development challenges in the Western Balkans (e.g. on WPS, WEE, Digitalization etc.); 4) continue to expand its donor base and seek a diversified approach to funding, including by pursuing opportunities for unearmarked funding to the new SN; 5) reinforce partnerships with the private sector.

UN Women will also pursue funding opportunities for horizontal positions such as monitoring, reporting and evaluation, UN coordination and data. A UN Youth volunteer funded by Switzerland is currently serving in the CO, while a JPO supported by Italy will arrive on duty by the start of the new cycle.

# 11. COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

Communication and advocacy are essential elements of UN Women's work. Drawing on the corporate communication strategy and in close collaboration with the ECA RO communication team, the use of both traditional and new communication channels will continue to ensure visibility of UN Women's contribution and publicly advocate for gender equality. To amplify UN Women messaging, a number of strategic enablers will be considered such as investing in digital space, expanding partnerships with the media and its collaboration with UN agencies through joint initiatives, such as for example the UN Albania SDG week that takes place in September every year.

To maximize public visibility around its work, UN Women Albania will continue expand its digital presence; reach more visitors in the country office website; establish a new social media account (Instagram) and build on existing ones, such as Facebook and Twitter. The CO will continue to cultivate innovative, visually appealing content about programme results illustrating the importance and relevance of UN Women's work to attract larger audiences.

The CO will focus its advocacy and communication efforts on 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence campaign, that the CO will continue to lead jointly with the UN system and by involving women's rights NGOs and the international community. The CO will draw on UN Women regional and global campaigns (including HeforShe), follow up to the Generation Equality Forum, and mark international days (e.g., International Women Day, the International Day of Rural Women, International Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Human Rights Day, etc). It will continue to support civil society organizations in strengthening their



communications capacities and knowledge to increase public awareness on gender issues; will create and strengthen strategic alliances with key players within the UN system, civil society organizations and groups, governments, the international development community, and the media.

In addition to fostering visibility of CO programmatic interventions, strategic partnership with the media will be strengthened to promote public conversations on sustainable development and human rights, as well as countering hate speech in traditional and social media platforms. The CO will focus on supporting gender-responsive reporting and development of stories that focus on women's empowerment, including by providing training of media professionals on the thematic focus areas of the new SN. Engagement with the Media Forum, established in the context of the UNJP on EVAW, will continue as a key platform to promote public attention to patriarchy, gender stereotypes and toxic masculinities and their impact on the rights of Albanian women and girls.

## 12. KEY RISKS AND RISK MITIGATION

Internal and external to UN Women's programming risks have been identified and described in several parts of the SN outcomes, together with opportunities which will ensure the achievement of projected results. The UN Women team will continue to use the regular updates of the CO risk log as an opportunity to have in depth reviews of the various levels of risks that may affect its work. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation is associated with several contextual, strategic/programmatic and institutional/operational risks. While in the short-term, the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the health and living standards of the population, it may also affect the long-term social and economic stability in the country, which could impact significantly the implementation of CO programmatic activities in the field, as well as potentially the relations with partners. To mitigate the long-term impact of the contextual and strategic/programmatic risks, the CO will work jointly with the UNCT to follow up on the implementation of UN SERP as well as on the SILC (Survey on Income and Living Conditions) to map the vulnerabilities of women and girls at local level. Jointly with UN RC, it will enhance communication with key donors and partners and continuously involve them, focusing on visibility of programmatic and operational achievements.

The wide-ranging contextual risks related to the political climate (including in relation to EU integration), economic climate and natural disasters, may potentially result in a shift of focus from the Government towards other priorities, sacrificing thereby commitment to the national gender equality agenda as well as disruption of local government work on gender equality. As a mitigation measure, the CO will diversify partnerships to also include CSOs, continue to advocate with the Government of Albania to prioritize gender equality agenda and leverage the EU4GE project, thus ensuring gender mainstreaming remains high in the government agenda, as well as regularly interacting with local government representatives to ensure continued collaboration.

The medium-term contextual risks, including the country risk and economic climate, trigger other medium term and short-term risks contextual, strategic and operational risks, namely the Donor Relationship Management risk, Governance external to Un Women, Limited funding for which mitigation actions are clearly identified. All the above have an impact on programme delivery, but with the monitoring of the mitigation actions in place, the office will ensure smooth SN implementation.

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Tirana, 2021