



A Peer Reviewed International Journal of Asian
Academic Research Associates

AARJSH

**ASIAN ACADEMIC RESEARCH
JOURNAL OF SOCIAL
SCIENCE & HUMANITIES**



GENDER EQUALITY IN KOSOVO, THEIR ROLE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF KOSOVO

EKREM GJOKAJ*; **MYSLYM OSMANI**;** **SYLE SYLANAJ***;**
******MUJE GJONBALAJ**

*Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Rural development,
Department of Economic Analyses and Agricultural Statistics,
Street "Mother Teresa" nr 35, 10000 Pristine, Kosovo

**Tirana Agricultural University,
Faculty of Economics & Agribusiness,
Department of Economics and Rural Policies, Tirane, Albania

***University of Pristine,
Faculty of Agriculture & Veterinary,
Street "Bill Clinton" 10000 Pristine, Kosovo
***University of Pristine,
Faculty of Agriculture & Veterinary,
Street "Bill Clinton" 10000 Pristine, Kosovo

Abstract

The population of Kosovo is estimated at about 1,8 million, of which 88% are Albanian, 7% Serb and 5% other ethnic groups. The shares of population are 50% for male and female, respectively. The population is very young, with high fertility rates. The society in Kosovo is characterized by patriarchal structures. This has strongly influenced the structure of Kosovar society, especially in rural areas. During the 1990s, the creation of Kosovo-Albanian parallel structures consolidated the emancipation of women. However, despite this, less than 3% of women were employed at the end of the 1990s. Kosovo Albanian women played an important role and were very active participants in the years of non-violent opposition. They helped to build parallel structures, such as schools and clinics. After the war, the placement of international organizations indicated high participation of women in civil society. Today, the position of women in Kosovo differs between urban and rural areas. A serious problem in all areas is unequal power relations, and women lack access to education, employment and decision-making positions.

Key words: unemployment rate, gender equality, patriarchal structure, non –violent.

Unemployment rate

Income levels in Kosovo are one of the lowest in Europe. An SOK study (2004) indicated that 61% of households reported an income of less than 200 euro per month. The opportunities for female participation in the economy are very limited. **Table 1** shows that 58% of women were unemployed in 2004 in both rural and urban areas. The total female unemployment rate (covering urban and rural areas) is approximately 50% higher than for males. Unemployment for females in rural and urban areas is 66% and 52%, respectively.

Table 1: Participation in the labor force and unemployment (Human Development Report – Kosovo 2004, UNDP)

| | Participation Rate % | | | Unemployment Rate % | | |
|--------------|----------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Rural | 74.39 | 25.54 | 49.54 | 42.62 | 65.50 | 48.62 |
| Urban | 76.64 | 37.19 | 55.96 | 33.48 | 52.11 | 39.97 |
| Total | 75.42 | 30.91 | 52.47 | 38.47 | 58.06 | 44.42 |

Concerning **Table 1**, participation rates are higher for men than women in both rural and urban areas, whilst total participation for both sexes is approximately 10% higher in the urban area (56%) than the rural area (50%). For the unemployment rate, this is higher for women than men in both rural and urban areas. The total unemployment rate for both sexes is higher in the rural area (49%) than the urban area (40%).

**Table 2: Participation in the labor force of women based at the municipality level
(women aged 15-64 years old)**

| Municipality | Participation rate % (women) |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Zubin Potok | 53.19 |
| Leposavic | 52.46 |
| Zvecan | 51.38 |
| Gjilan | 47.29 |
| Kamenice | 45.31 |
| Mitrovice | 42.75 |
| Prishtine | 39.60 |
| Peje | 38.88 |
| Kline | 34.59 |
| Obiliq | 33.05 |
| Fushe Kosove | 32.60 |
| Novobrde | 31.81 |
| Ferizaj | 30.63 |
| Shterpce | 29.60 |
| Decan | 28.83 |
| Skenderaj | 28.48 |
| Viti | 27.62 |
| Gjakove | 26.57 |
| Vushtrri | 26.22 |
| Istog | 25.74 |
| Podujeve | 25.45 |
| Glogovc | 23.00 |
| Shtime | 22.99 |
| Rahovec | 20.80 |
| Prizren | 19.40 |
| Suhareke | 19.13 |
| Dragash | 17.43 |
| Kacanik | 15.54 |
| Malisheve | 13.36 |
| Total Kosovo | 30.91 |

Table 2 mirrors the unemployment situation described (but not exactly). It shows that the women's participation rate is highest in Zubin Potok (53%), Leposavic (53%) and Zvecan (51%), and lowest in Malisheva (13%), Kacanik (15%) and Dragash (17%).

Concerning participation in rural areas, 60% of women are never/very rarely integrated into the community leadership, whereas 60% of men always play a leadership role in the community. However, as members of farming families, women contribute greatly to rural economies. According to SOK (2001), rural women are involved in cattle raising (20%),

vegetable production (37%), chicken farming (84%), childcare (82%), caring for older relatives (79%) and cleaning and food preparation (96%).

Table 3: The unemployment of women based at the municipality level (women aged 15-64)

| Municipality | Unemployment rate % (women) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Zubin Potok | 20.00 |
| Zvecan | 26.20 |
| Ferizaj | 33.90 |
| Shtpce | 35.29 |
| Leposaviq | 36.84 |
| Prishtine | 38.62 |
| Peje | 49.06 |
| Gjakove | 49.06 |
| Prizren | 50.00 |
| Suhareke | 51.43 |
| Mitrovice | 51.97 |
| Vushtrri | 53.23 |
| Novobrde | 57.18 |
| Rahovec | 58.59 |
| Istog | 61.06 |
| Shtime | 64.55 |
| Kacanik | 65.38 |
| Kamenice | 66.20 |
| FusheKosove | 67.43 |
| Viti | 67.59 |
| Podujeve | 73.23 |
| Glogovc | 73.55 |
| Decan | 74.60 |
| Gjilan | 74.68 |
| Malisheve | 75.00 |
| Skenderaj | 77.98 |
| Obiliq | 79.87 |
| Dragash | 81.58 |
| Kline | 86.67 |
| Total Kosovo | 58.06 |

Table 3 shows the difference at municipality level concerning women's unemployment rates. Zubin Potok, Zvecan, Leposavic and Strpce municipalities have the lowest unemployment rates, whilst Klina, Dragash, Obiliq and Skenderaj have the highest. The low unemployment rate in Northern Kosovo can be explained in part by the fact that, there, some women are supported by the government of Serbia through social aid and pensions. Also, employees receive incomes from Belgrade. In general, citizens in Northern Kosovo rely more on public

income sources. In other areas of Kosovo, people are more oriented to earning income from private sector activities. There also is a clear relationship between employment and education: for example, the unemployment rate for women of North Kosovo is lower due to the fact that the level of women's education is higher. In the municipality of Zubin Potok, for example, the average number of school years for women is 10.9 compared to (say) Malisheva municipality where it is 6.9. In Klina, Dragash, Obiliq and Skenderaj, the high unemployment rate (generally for both sexes) can be explained by the low level of trade and industry, low participation rate, limited infrastructure, as well as isolated geographic position, such as in Dragash municipality.

Education

Women are generally disadvantaged in education relative to men, with lower literacy rates and lower combined (primary, secondary and tertiary) enrollment rates.

Sex differentials exist at all ages. Rural women are the most disadvantaged. Whilst only 17% of rural women have completed education beyond primary level, the equivalent figure for urban males is 67%. This reflects financial and/or security concerns if the school is not nearby: (Kosovo Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality, UNIFEM 2003).

There are large differences in educational attainment among Kosovo's male and female agricultural population aged 15-64 years. Again, rural women are the most disadvantaged. 13.4% of women (15 year old and above) living in rural areas are illiterate, whereas the corresponding part of illiterate males is 3.8%. The same situation is mirrored at urban level, and in total: (see **Table 4**).

Table 4: Illiteracy rate by type of residence and sex in 2003 (SOK)

| | Female, 15+ | Male, 15+ | Total, 15+ |
|-------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Rural | 13.4% | 3.8% | 8.7% |
| Urban | 10.4% | 2.3% | 8.1% |
| Total | 12.5% | 3.4% | 8.1% |

Table 5: Educational attainment of agri-rural population by gender from 15-64 years of age (Agricultural Household Survey 2004)

| Education level | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total (%) |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|-----------|
| None | 1.6 | 6.5 | 3.9 |
| Some primary | 5.9 | 11.9 | 8.8 |
| Primary completed | 25.9 | 50.9 | 37.8 |
| Some secondary | 9.2 | 6.7 | 8.0 |
| Secondary completed | 47.2 | 20.3 | 34.4 |
| Some high school | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| High school completed | 3.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| Some tertiary | 3.4 | 1.4 | 2.0 |
| Tertiary completed | 3.0 | 0.9 | 2.0 |

Table 5 shows that the number of females without education is four times higher than males. The gender difference in agri-rural areas is due not only to the priority given by families in rural areas to educating sons, but also depends on the distance from the place of residence to school, traffic conditions, cost and on the existing physical infrastructure. In villages with primary schools, both genders usually attend. **Table 5** shows that the apparent educational switching point between males and females occurs at the completion of primary school education.

Regarding the educational level of women, UNDP's 2004 survey of human development summarized data for schooling in the 30 municipalities. The highest figure is in North Mitrovica. The high level of women's education in the North is explained by the fact that women there have had the opportunity to attend the high school and university in Mitrovica, as well as in Serbia. Women in other parts of Kosovo have a lower level of education that reflects the low level of access caused by the recent political situation, as well as financial and security concerns.

At municipality level, there is low average schooling and high unemployment for women in poor areas e.g. Dragash municipality is a disadvantaged areas that is isolated by surrounding mountains and poor road infrastructure. Unequal treatment of women is part of the local tradition.

Overall, the main factors affecting differences in education at municipality level are ethnicity, geographic location, financial reasons and distance from schools in rural areas. The higher a person's level of education, the more likely is that he/she will be employed.

Political situation

The Assembly of Kosovo approved the Law on Gender Equality in Kosovo 2004/2. This law provides comprehensive protection against discrimination against any man, woman or child.

In the Kosovo Assembly, 33 of the 120 seats are occupied by women. Women occupy 28% of all municipal assembly seats. There is one female minister out of 13. Women comprise 25% of judges, 17% of prosecutors and 15% of the Kosovo Police Service: (Report of the Secretary General on the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo 2004). In May 2005, the Regulation on establishment of the Office on Gender Equality was approved, and is functioning within the Office of the Prime Minister.

Gender mainstreaming - International actors

The following organizations are working on gender issues in Kosovo:

- UNIFEM has mainly focused on: gender mainstreaming inside the UN mission in Kosovo; peace building through engendering governance and leadership and advocacy; and building alliances with and between international and national actors. UNIFEM was also the key player in the elaboration of the National Action Plan on the achievement of Gender Equality in Kosovo that was developed with the involvement of governmental and non-governmental organizations: it was endorsed by the Government on April 2004. This document is the most important regarding gender issues for the future of Kosovo.
- UNICEF has worked in education: it is introducing gender sensitivity into curriculum development, as well as child rights and health education.
- OSCE is the institution building pillar of UNMIK: the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) focuses its policies and programmes on democratic governance and human rights/rule of law.

UNDP and IOM also work on gender projects. Most bilateral donors also have a gender mainstreaming approach e.g. the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, USAID and SIDA.

Domestic actors

In order to empower the position of women in Kosovo, institutional mechanisms have been created that include:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): this is part of the Constitutional Framework in Kosovo;
- The office of Gender Equality in the Office of Prime Minister, which is an executive body of the Government of Kosovo;
- The UNMIK Gender Office;
- The Office of Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Gender Issues, housed in the Office of the Prime Minister;
- The Commission for Equal Opportunities and Gender Issues in the Kosovo Assembly;
- The Inter-ministerial Group for Gender Equality within the Government of Kosovo;
- 13 representatives of ministries responsible for gender issues;
- 30 municipal offices responsible for gender issues;
- 12 committees responsible for gender equality;
- The Office of the Ombudsperson;
- The Law on Gender Equality;
- The Anti-discrimination Law; and
- The Action Plan for Reaching Gender Equality.

The role of NGOs, women's organizations and civil society

Gender mainstreaming and special projects for women are complementary strategies for reaching the goal of gender equality. There are around 2,000 NGOs in Kosovo. Approximately 10% of these are women's NGOs whose work is focused on improving the position of women and creating equal opportunities for both genders. Most NGOs are based in Prishtina: others with limited capacities are found in other parts of Kosovo. Some of the most active local NGOs in Kosovo include:

- Women for Women Internationa - Prishtina;
- Aureola - Prishtina;
- She-era - Gjakova;
- Organization of Serbian Sisters - Mitrovica; and
- Shpresa – Glogovc.

Important networks that operate as umbrella organisations for many local women's NGOs include:

- Kosovo Women's Network – Its mission is to support, protect and promote the rights and the interests of women throughout Kosovo, regardless of their political beliefs, religion, age, level of education sexual orientation and ability: the Network consists of more than 50 local women's groups;
- Kosovo-wide Business Women's Network - This network supports, protects and promotes the interest of business-women in Kosovo; and
- Kosovo Women's Lobby – This is a group of female leaders in politics, civil society, media and the economic sphere that engages and supports constructive critical thinking and strategic actions.

(The Kosovo Women's Initiative recently stopped its activities due to lack of funds. The organization consisted of approximately 35 local Albanian and Serbian women's organizations, and was very active in providing support and advice. It increased the capacity of women's groups through Local Women's Councils, in order to address issues of civil society development.)

Implications for support of women in agri-rural areas

According to UNDP (2004), almost 66% of women in rural areas were unemployed in 2004. The unemployment rate in rural areas is higher for women than men in both rural and urban areas. The strategies and the general policies for improving the economic situation in Kosovo are oriented towards reducing the current level of gender inequality in the economy. The promotion of private sector development and improvement of the tax base are very important, especially for rural areas. One priority for women in agri-rural areas is to provide support for family businesses so that women have a greater chance to play an active role as a partner in production/management. Considering rural diversification and potential for development, it is necessary to build women's decision-making capacities. Training in business development will help them to start new rural activities.

Education of women in agri-rural areas is a critical factor in determining the possibility for them to become employed. After the war, women's NGOs (more than 70) were involved in improving education through informal training, as well as offering training in computer skills,

foreign languages, handicraft and women's health. Increasing the number of women in secondary school is an urgent policy priority to complement the informal training and education for rural women that is delivered by local/international NGOs.

A concern in agri-rural areas is women's lack of awareness and education concerning public health issues. Most women living in rural areas have no access to health care centres. However, an increasing number of women seek professional healthcare services. According to vital statistics of 2004, 10% of women in both rural and urban areas had medical assistance during birth, compared to 1999 where 20% of births took place without the assistance of a midwife. Efforts to encourage women and families to use the professional healthcare services have shown a gradual improvement in maternal and infant mortality rates. For example, the infant mortality rate in 2000 was 29.1 per thousand births compared to 28.7 per thousand births in 2001. According to the same source (Women and Men in Kosovo, 2003), maternal mortality rates reduced between 2000 and 2001, falling from 23 per one hundred thousand live births to 12.6 per one hundred thousand live births. Considering the low education level of women in agri-rural areas, a main priority for women is better advice on reproductive health and family planning.

ARDP 2007-13 will involve women in the Plan's eight measures, where possible and relevant. Specific support activities under ARDP 2007-13 will aim to integrate women better into the economy through: targeted vocational training; production, processing and marketing of agricultural commodities; rural diversification; maintenance of rural heritage; and local community development through support for civil society and NGOs.

References:

1. Statistical Office of Kosovo
2. Human Development Report, Kosovo 2004
3. Women and Men in Kosovo, 2003
4. Kosovo Gender Analysis, 2004 SIDA
5. National Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Quality, 2004