



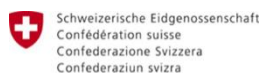
POLICY BRIEF

The inclusion of women from rural areas in decision-making practices

Case study: Municipality of Tirana

PERFORM

Performing and Responsive Social Sciences



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Dr. Bedini is the author of two books, several scientific publications and has participated in several international scientific conferences in EU countries. She also has experience in running and implementing various projects of modernization of higher education funded by European programs. She has contributed to several international scientific projects where she has often been a project leader. She has a teaching experience at Middlesex University in London at Global Policy and Governance, Policy Development and Comparative Policy courses.



Msc. Marsela Allmuça has been engaged for several years in the field of human rights, good governance, gender equality and domestic violence. She graduated in Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Tirana in 2012 and since 2014 has been engaged as an examiner at the Department of Labor and Social Policies at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Since 2015, she works at the Shelters for Violent Women and Girls, a social service that provides direct support to survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence, and implements programs focusing on empowering women and increasing their access to decision-making processes.

The direct experience in working with women and girls has helped to create a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities women and girls in Albania, especially those in rural areas and marginalized groups. She has also been engaged as a foreign expert in the development of local social and child protection plans with a special focus on improving municipal performance in providing social services at the local level for three years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall objective of this policy paper is to bring policy recommendations for the Municipality of Tirana, in order to deliver a more inclusive decision-making process, with special focus to women of rural areas. Indeed, the target of this research is the Mayor as the highest functionary of the executive branch and the Municipal Council as the decision-making branch of the Municipality of Tirana.

First of all, the policy paper makes a general statement of theoretical arguments on the inclusion of women and specially those of rural areas in democracy. Hence, in the first part there is a general introduction to the concept of democracy, participation and gender equality and how these elements are intertwined together and affect the quality of democracy.

Afterward, this document is followed by the descriptive part of the actual situation where are explained in details relevant elements like: (i) the legal framework of decision-making and management, including laws, by-laws, strategic documents and international supportive documents; (ii) the decision-making practice at the Municipality of Tirana having in consideration also the representative institution; (iii) the situation of women in the rural areas that are part of Municipality of Tirana.

In addition, in this section is described the methodology followed by the authors in order to be in the condition to understand properly how the municipality works and how the decisions are taken. Mostly have been used the qualitative methodology which consisted in interviews with administrators, representatives at Municipal Council, officials and focus groups with women of rural units. Simultaneously is used the quantitative methodology with the women of rural units through focus groups in two rural units.

Furthermore, special attention is given to the Municipal Council, as an elective decision-making institution which represents the citizens. Actually, the MC is an admirable gender equality example as half of its members are women. Nevertheless, the citizens and consequently women of rural areas are not represented properly. Therefore, this session is focused on the citizens rate or representation and how to correct it in prospective.

The third part of policy paper contains possible options which can strengthen the rural women participation in the decision-making process. Most of the options can be applied by the political willingness of the Mayor but not only. Anyway, the last part contains some relevant measurements in order to implement concretely the alternatives.

Finally, the authors argue that these recommendations not only will extend the decision-making process to a wider range of citizens and women particularly, but in the same time will contribute to increase the trust of citizens to the institutions. As a result, the quality of democracy will grow up. From the political point of view, the authors strongly believe that such techniques if applied, will bring also more votes.

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I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why democracy, participation and gender equality matter?

Democracy is the power of people and this means that people are the sovereigns, the power belongs to them and they should rule. In nowadays representative democracies people elect freely and equally through their representatives, who exercise the political power in their name and their interests. Hence, if people rule, this means that they monitor and influence the official's behavior while in office.

Democracy seems a simple concept but is a complicated political system to build. There are necessary some principles to be respected simultaneously in order to make it sustainable, efficient and fair. In a democratic political system are essential some crucial elements like rule of law, human rights, freedom, division of powers, democratic institutions but also participation, engagement, equality.

The citizens active participation in public affairs, as Putman assumes in his book “Making Democracy Work”, will mark the civic engagement of the society.¹ The strongest democracies of the world have interested people in public affairs. Obviously if people are involved in public affairs, they follow and influence the political power, in order to make it efficient and reasonable for the general interest. Walzer argues that the more people are interested in public issues and devoted to public causes; the more they develop the civic virtue,² which bring the citizens closer to the community and to the politics in the same time.

Consequently, such attitude in long terms induce a more responsible governance especially in local government, where people are physically closer to the decision-making process. In addition, from the practical point of view the local government decision-making has direct impact to the everyday life like: security, infrastructure, services, schools, environment etc. If people are active and participative, this will produce a successful democracy. Indeed, Dahl suggests, that the requisite for an efficient democracy is a responsible government, which is in the conditions to listen to the citizens' requests and in the same time is capable to give solutions and meet their expectations.³ The more people are active, the more responsible government becomes.

People should be free to participate, but if they don't have equal opportunities to participate we cannot even pretend to build a democratic system. For this reason, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines that everyone has the right to participate at the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.⁴ In this framework the gender equality in the decision-making participation is crucial. Actually, even at the strongest democracies of the world, the participation of men is much more visible than the participation of women in politics

¹ Making Democracy Work, Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, Robert D. Putman, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993, pg. 87

² Civility and Civic Virtue, Walzer Michael, pg. 64

³ Poliarquia, Partecipazione e Oposizione, Robert Dahl, Franco Angeli 1981, pg. 155-156

⁴ http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

and decision-making process. Moreover, the United Nations Development Program emphasizes and supports the participation of women in decision-making in all the dimensions: from household to community, to national parliament and public administration.⁵

In the last decades, this topic is getting wider awareness's in different global dimensions: from international non-governmental organization, to civil society, political parties and academic research. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dedicates the fifth goal to the gender equality achievement and empowerment of women and girls. In accordance to this global document only in 46 (out of 195) countries women hold only the 30% of seats in parliament. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure women's full effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making, in political, economic and public life.⁶

Likewise, the "European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life", which is a document of Council of European Municipalities and Regions, officially recognized that despite numerous initiatives and efforts, the equality of women and men in daily life, is still not a reality.⁷

Actually, the European Commission has officially recognized the problem and as a consequence is promoting gender equality in different aspects from fighting the stereotypes, putting the topic to the political agenda, cooperating with and supporting all groups concerned like NGO's, businesses, social parts, collecting and analyzing data on trends and information, increasing awareness and promoting networking.⁸ We can assume that participation of women in decision-making is a worldwide problem and it does not affect only the developing countries. Nevertheless, the inequalities between women and men in decision-making processes, are more challenging in undeveloped countries, like Albania, where the society is facing different kind of economic, social and political problems.

1.2 The legal framework

One of the most important objectives of Albanian Government is to build a sustainable democracy which will bring the country closer to the European Union integration. In line with the theoretical preconditions of democracy, in 2014 entered into force the Law no. 146/2014 on the "Public Announcement and Consultations" with the objective to create a debate platform for every relevant decision-making process, like strategic documents in local and national levels, law proposals and public policies with high interests. The law is based on the principles of transparency, effectively and responsibility,⁹ and aims to transform the citizens, NGO's, groups of interests in effective influencers in the decision-making processes.

⁵ United Nations Development Program, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/gender-equality/women_s-participation-in-decision-making.html

⁶ 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>)

⁷http://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf

⁸https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-balance-decision-making-positions_en#whatistheeucomissiondoing

⁹ Law 146/2014 "On the Public Announcements and Consultations in the Republic of Albania".

In addition, in 2015 the Parliament of Albania approved the Law no. 139/2015 “On the Self-Local Government in the Republic of Albania” with the mission to provide a more effective, more efficient and a closer local government to the citizens. The purpose of the law is to stimulate the effective participation of all citizens in the local government,¹⁰ intending here woman and man, without distinction. Moreover, the law establishes that the transparency of the decision-making at the local government institutions is a legal obligation and the administrative units should ensure the participation of the citizens through a special coordinator for the public consultation.¹¹ Such normative is in accordance to the European Charter of Self Government of Council of Europe where the concept of self-government denotes the rights and the ability of local authorities that within the limits of the law, regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population. Consequently, the participation of women and men, from rural or urban areas, in the decision-making process is very important.¹²

From the governance point of view, the law on self-local government is completing the new administrative territorial reformation which started in 2014 by the approval of the Law no. 115/2014 “On the Administrative Division at the Republic of Albania”. In accordance to this law the territory of Albania is submitted to a new territorial division where new and wider municipalities are created.

Concretely the new law on the administrative division combined with the one on self-local government, provided some relevant changes, especially in the aspect of decision-making process and representation. The table below (figure 1) explains how the representation and the decision-making process in local government is transformed.

Figure 1

Representation and decision-making in different legislations

Description	The old legislation		The new legislation	
	URBAN TERRITORIES	RURAL TERRITORIES	URBAN TERRITORIES	RURAL TERRITORIES
The territory division	65 Municipalities	309 Communes	61 Municipalities	Rural units merged with the municipalities
Representation power	Municipal Council elected by citizens	Communal Council elected by citizens ¹³	Municipal Council	Rural units have their representatives at the Municipal Council
Executive power	Mayer elected by citizens	Head of Communes elected by citizens	Mayer elected by the citizens	Administrators appointed by the Mayer

¹⁰ Law 139/2015 “On the Self Government in the Republic of Albania”, article 3, point dh “Mission of self-government”

¹¹ Law 139/2015 “On the Self Government in the Republic of Albania”, article 16, chapter 4 “The transparency, the consultation and the public participation”

¹² European Charter of Local Government, Council of Europe

The table above presents some relevant changes that occurred with the new legislations. For instance, the number of the municipalities decreased from 65 to 61, probably with the aim to create larger territories with higher social-economic potentials for development. At the other hand, the new law abolished the communes as rural entities with elected representatives and decision-making functions. Actually, the communes are transformed in rural units and attached artificially to the bigger municipalities. They have lost both the representative and executive power. Previously with the old laws the communes with 5.000-10.000 habitants could elect head of communes and councils with 13 representatives. Obviously, the communes with higher number of habitats could have councils with a higher number of representatives. In the same time, the communes had the possibility to have an elected person as executive branch. Actually, the rural units have only administrators which are hired by the Meyer of the municipality.

As a consequence of the new legal arrangements, Tirana is the biggest municipality of the country with 757.361 habitants. It is composed by 25 administrative units: 12 urban units and 13 rural units.¹⁴ As a result of this reformation, the municipality is challenging a new reality which consists in a wider territory composed of a new mixed urban-rural population, who lives in different social-economic conditions. As a consequence of such territory expansion, the decision-making is more centralized and more distant from the citizens, especially for the more peripheral rural units. Such problem is recognized even by the Council of Europe, which describes still unsolved the representation of different groups and areas with the new boundaries provided by the reform.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Municipality of Tirana is acting to implement the new law on the self-local government. In order to meet the law requirements on citizens' participation at the decision-making process, in March 2018, the Municipal Council approved "*The Action Plan of Gender Equality for years 2018-2020*". This plan is considered as a first step towards the practices of "European Charter for the Equity of Men and Women in the Local Government", which the Municipality signed in March 2017. The plan is covering different fields, including the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process.

Specifically, with the objective to increase the participation of citizens and women particularly the Municipality is organising four meetings per year. Usually meetings are on the budget planning but also on local public services, voting motivation, or with informative character. In addition, during 2019, in accordance to the Action Plan, the Municipality is going to hire an employee as specialist for the gender equality in each administrative unit.¹⁶

Even though the plan is focused on gender equality, it does not include specific tools to increase the participation of women of rural areas in the decision-making practices that directly effect the quality of their lives.

Anyway, we can assume that the local leadership is interested in finding more mechanisms and tools to enrich the participation of women in rural areas in the decision-making process. because

¹⁴<http://zgjedhje2015.reporter.al/profili-i-bashkise-tirane/>

¹⁵ Council of Europe, The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Information Note on Congress Fact Finding Mission to Albania (24-26 February 2018). <https://rm.coe.int/168071939a>

¹⁶ Action Plan of Tirana Municipality for Gender Equity 2018-2020", pg. 3

this is a law requirement. In the same time, it is emphasised in different public speeches and occasions.¹⁷

1.2 Methods of analysis

First of all, with the objective to figure out new mechanisms which can increase the participation of women of rural areas at the decision-making process, is important to observe the actual decision-making situation, social economic conditions in rural areas, as well as the general management at the Municipality of Tirana.

For this reason, the overall objective of this research is: *how can we improve the participation of women of rural areas, in the decision-making practices?* In the framework of this overall objective, the specifics objectives of the research are as follows:

- What are the actual decision-making practices at the administrative units and at the Municipal Council?
- What obstacles are women facing to participate as actors in the decision-making practices?
- What could be the new tools and/or practices that can grow up the interests of women in decision-making practices?

The methodology used for giving valuable answers to the research question and to the specific objectives are as follows:

1. For the first objective we are going to use the qualitative method. We choose to observe the decision-making process at the Municipal Council and at the rural units. We have conducted an interview with one of the members of the MC who is in the same time representative of a rural unit and part of the Commission for Gender Equality and Woman Entrepreneurship. At the other hand, we interviewed the administrators of two rural units: Krrabë and Ndroq. We choose Krrabë which is one of the most distance units from Tirana and Ndroq that is one of the closest units with the city. We have done interviews also with two employees of the respective administrative units in order to know specifically the everyday problems and challenges of women and society in general. Concretely, we interviewed the Director of Social Help in Ndroq and the Specialist of Communication in Krrabë;
2. For the second objective we used the focus group method. We met with 12 women in Krrabë and 10 in Ndroq with whom we discuss different aspects from the everyday problems to the institutional ones. We conducted interviews in order to know how their relation with the local administration in the unit is, what are they needs, their obstacles and their level of participation in the decision-making process or in public issues in general.

¹⁷Interview with Director of Social Inclusion at the Municipality of Tirana, dt. 02.08.2018

II - THE DECISION-MAKING AND WOMEN INCLUSION AT THE TIRANA MUNICIPALITY

2.1 The decision-making practice

The local governance to Tirana Municipality is divided in two different branches; the decision-making branch and the executive one. The decision-making branch is an exclusive competence of the Municipal Council, composed of 61 members, elected by the vote of citizens in all units, without any clear distinction between rural and urban units. In effect, the Municipal Council is the representative institution of citizens and is organized in different commissions like Law Commission, International Commission, Gender and Woman Entrepreneurship Commission¹⁸ etc.

The executive power is a competence of the Mayer of Tirana who is also elected directly through the votes of citizens. In each of the 25 units the Mayer has appointed administrators who represent the highest administrative position within the units. In the same time the Mayer has an administrative structure organized in directories and sectors for managing the everyday activities.

As described above, the decision-making process is exclusively concentrated in the hands of Municipal Council. The administrative units are not directly involved at the decision-making process. During the interviews conducted with the administrators of Krrabë and Ndroq, we have been informed that the decision-making is not extended in any way to the administrative units.

Actually, the administrative units are acting like extended executive structures of the Mayer at the units. The everyday activity of the rural units is mainly connected with the following topics:

- Preparation of legal documents for property issues. The units receive a considerable number of requests for property certificates from the citizens, which they assist to complete, in order to fulfill the law requirements. After that, they send the documents to the respective institutions in Tirana;
- Social help for the families without incomes. The rural units' staff are supposed to help the citizens to complete the online applications. Therefore, the decisions for social help are taken in Tirana and then delegated to the units for the final execution;
- Execution of different decisions delivered by the Mayer to the rural units.

Likewise, all kind of investments or purchases like maintenance of public goods are competences of the Mayer's administration.

Nevertheless, every day a considerable number of citizens come to ask for different problems at the units. Obviously, the administrators were extremely busy in receiving citizens, even though their competences are limited and not connected in any way with the citizens' problems. One of the administrators confirmed that they are feeling the responsibility to act as the image of the Mayer at the units. Mostly the citizens come for problems regarding the properties, but also for other issues like employment, social help, and sometimes even for personal problems. Therefore, we believe that the administrators are considered as political personalities who can help for figuring out different problems.

¹⁸ <http://www.tirana.al/keshilli-bashkiak/komisionet-e-keshillit-bashkiak/>

Through the interviews with the administrators, we found out that except the property problems, there are serious concerns like absence of infrastructure, unemployment, the portable water, but also education, (as some families have difficulties in bringing their children to schools as a result of the distance), and in rare cases the domestic violence.

Women, in accordance to the the administrators statements, are sometimes active in public meetings, intending here meetings on the budget. They appreciate having contacts with the authorities everytime they are invited, specially women who live close te the center of the units. For women in periphery the situation is different. They have difficulties in reaching the information and the location of the meetings.¹⁹

In addition, the rural units do not have any particular program for meetings with the citizens or women particularly. All the public events and activities are undertaken as initiative of the administration of the Mayer. Administrative units do not organise meetings or public events by their own initiative.²⁰

At the other hand, seems that citizens have interest in participating in electoral meetings, but also in the public meetings regarding the budget. For instance, the Directorate of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality organize regular meetings where 100% of participants are women. These meeting are about different social issues like the introduction of mechanism against the violence to the women of rural areas.²¹

The decision-making practice at the Municipal Council is completed in accordance to the law and to the internal regulations. Different departments of the Municipality prepare draft decisions, together with the necessary supporting relations and send them to the commissions of the Municipal Council, in accordance to their field of competence. The commissions discuss the drafts and send them back to the administration with suggestions for improvements. This process takes place from one week to ten days before the plenary sessions at Municipal Council. In the end, after potential modifications, the draft decisions are delivered to the plenary session for final voting.

The members of the Municipal Council do not have any obligation to have direct contacts with the citizens for any reason, but in case they would like to, they can participate in public meetings for the budget. At the official website of the Municipality of Tirana,²²it results that in a period of ten months (January - October 2018) the Council took 102 decisions. Therefore, approximately the MC is able to approve about 10 decisions per month. Almost 40% (42 out of 102) of the decisions are with economic impact for the citizens such as social help, economic aid, reimbursement for the electricity, financial aid for poor families, scholarship for children, accommodation for poor families, local tax system etc. In the same time, there are other decisions with impact to the life of the citizens like the construction of schools, roads, theatres etc.

¹⁹ In one of the interviews we have been informed that some citizens do not have any telephone at all, and it takes more than one hour of walking to come from home to the center because of the absence of an adequate infrastructure

²⁰ Interview with the administrator of Krraba Unit

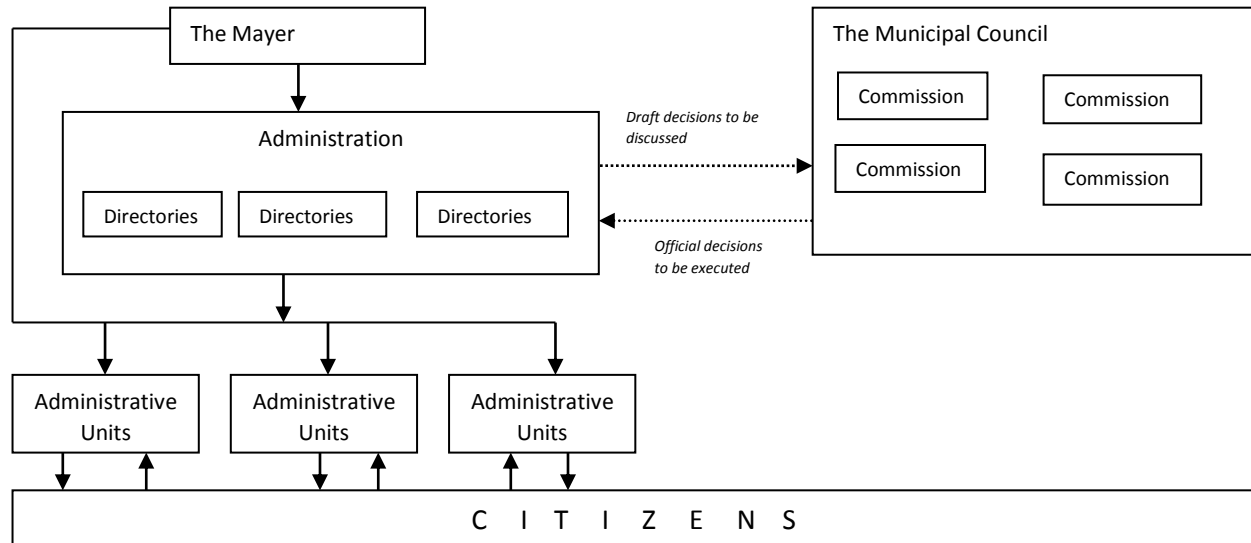
²¹ Communication with the General Directorate of Public Relations at the Municipality of Tirana, dt. 13.09.2018

²²<http://www.vendime.al/category/tirane/2018-tirane/>

Figure 2

The decision-making process at the Municipality of Tirana

Executive Branch *Decision-making Branch*



From the illustration above we understand that citizens do not have any direct contact with the decision-makers. The whole process seems a game for two: Mayer's administration and Municipal Council. Nevertheless, we can assume that the budget consultations are effecting indirectly to the life of the citizens.

The MC is composed by 61 members²³ elected by the population of Tirana, but only 4 members are representatives of rural units and only one of them is a woman²⁴. Nevertheless women representation is high because 31 members out of 61 (50% of the total) are females.²⁵ The gender equity at the MC is appropriate, even though the women and citizens of rural units is inappropriate.

Based on the Electoral Code the number of mandates for each area are decided in accordance to the number of the citizens that live in the electoral zones.²⁶ At this point we have to face a problem of the respect of political rights. The representation in a democratic system should be equal and this is arranged by the rate of representation, as it is stipulated in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights of the United Nations, based on which each citizen

²³<http://www.tirana.al/keshilli-bashkiak/anetaret-e-keshillit-bashkiak/>

²⁴ Interview with member of Municipal Council and representative of rural unit Petrela, on September 3rd 2018, at her office

²⁵<http://www.tirana.al/keshilli-bashkiak/anetaret-e-keshillit-bashkiak/>

²⁶ Article 75/3 of the Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, defines that the number of mandates in Parliament for each zone is calculated based on the number of citizens. Even though it is not specified for the Municipal Councils, without doubt it should be respected also for the local government.

without distinction, should take part in the political affairs directly or through his representatives.
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If we have a look at the figure below we can understand the distribution of the mandates is different for rural and urban units within the Municipal Council.

Figure 3

Rate of representation of urban and rural citizens at Municipal Council

	Description	Data
1	Population of Tirana ²⁸	747.084
2	Population in the City of Tirana (12 units) ²⁹	634.409
3	Population in the rural units (13 units)	112.675
4	Members at the Municipal Council	61
4	Representatives of urban units at the MC	57
5	Representatives of rural units at the MC	4
7	Rate of representation of urban units (4/2)	8.9
8	Rate of representation of rural units (5/3)	3.5
9	Difference between rates of representation in rural and urban units (7-8)	5.4
10	Optimal rate of representation (4/1)	8.1
11	Optimal number of habitants for one representative (1/4)	12.247
12	Optimal number of representatives of urban units (1/11)	51-52
13	Optimal number of representatives of rural units (3/11)	9-10

Based on these data we can understand that the citizens of rural units are not represented equally with the citizens of urban units. In a democratic system the number of representatives of an area should be in proportion with the number of the habitants. There is a gap of 5.4 between the rate of representation between the urban and rural units. The table above shows us that it is necessary to increase the number the representatives of rural units with 4 to 5 members in order to have an equal representation. In line with this argumentation and in proportion with the number of habitants, there should be 9-10 members in MC representing the rural units. Therefore, should be 4-5 women as representatives of rural units in order to respect the gender equity that the MC already has.

²⁷ Article 25, International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights of the United Nations 1976,
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

²⁸http://www.observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Fact-Sheet_Bashkia_Tirane.pdf

²⁹http://www.observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Fact-Sheet_Bashkia_Tirane.pdf

In addition, the members of MC don't have any kind of contact or consultations with the citizens. From the interviews it results that they define themselves as high local decision-makers.³⁰

Moreover, the members of MC are elected based on the plurinominal lists of candidates stipulated by the structures' parties, and the mandates are distributed by the proportional formula.³¹ This electoral formula has the tendency to keep a gap between candidates and citizens. Basically the campaign is covered by the candidate for Mayor, and usually only few candidates ranked at the top of the parties' list show up as supporters. In conclusion, there is few contact even during the electoral campaigns.

2.3 The situation of woman in rural units and their willingness to participate

Through two focus groups organized in rural units with twenty-two women, respectively 12 in Ndroq and 10 in Krrabë, we could get a general panorama on women of rural areas and their relations with local institutions. Likewise, when focus groups took place, we asked about the knowledge of women on the local decision-making and how do they see themselves as actors of influence. Our objective was to get as much information as possible, in order to have a general view on the social economic and political situation of women in the rural units.

First of all, there are differences between women who live in long distance from the center of the units and those who are close to the centre. It results that women in periphery live in a quasi isolated way. The infrastructure is poor, especially in Ndroq where from a total of 74 km of roads, only 4 km are asphalted in the recent years. At the other hand, the distance from the unit to the municipality is longer. Hence, there is an average distance of 17.8 km or 36 minutes from the most peripheral zones to the center of the unit and about 18.8 km or 40 minutes from unit to the Municipality in Tirana.³² Generally, the citizens do not have enough incomes to cope with costs of transport. Sometimes they have to walk for different hours to reach the centre because of the absence of the infrastructure. Some of them live in very poor conditions and don't have even a telephone. *"Sometimes I have to walk for hours to reach women and inform them to withdraw their social help"* - said the Director of Social Help in one of the units. These conditions are aggravated also by the backward mentality. There are cases when women do not have permission to go out and be involved in social and political life of their community. Anyway in both rural areas, these cases are rare and could not be generalized.

Mostly we noticed that the staff of rural units are correct, dedicated and serious. They publish in open spaces all kind of information on legal procedures but also regarding different activities. They are very welcoming with the citizens, even though their competences are limited. According to the interviewees in both units, the administrators are positive and they take seriously what citizens ask for. At the other hand, women are aware of the fact that the administrators and their staff, can not resolve important problems like infrastructure or poverty. Most of the women said they got help from administrators and their staff mostly, but at the other hand they are aware of the fact that administrators have limited competences.

³⁰ Interview with the member of Municipal Council and representative of rural unit Petrela, on September 3rd 2018, at her office

³¹ Law No. 10019 dt. 29.9.2008 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", article 165/2

³² Official statistics given by the Administrative Unit of Ndroq

We asked women about their interest on what administration is doing, if they read the information published in open spaces and most of them (19 out of 22) declared they do not stop to read them. Nevertheless, women appreciate (15 out of 22) the invitations in public meetings organised by the administrator's staff. One of the women said: *"It would be great if there are more activities, meeting, round tables, where we can participate and share our interests together. Also we would like to have more cultural and entertainment activities"*. We could figure out that women are not supposed to participate spontaneously, but when they are invited they take part with pleasure.

Moreover, a relevant barrier for women to participate is the fact that they work hard from the morning to the evening, in agriculture and livestock work. Therefore, it is complicated for them to find time for additional activities. Most of them are households (20 out of 22) which means that they are busy at home all day long. When we asked women what their most serious concern, they all answered the poverty and unemployment. Some of them would be content in finding a job in any factory but there were also another part (9 out of 22) that would prefer mostly a social help instead of a job. In addition, women have difficulties in going to Tirana to look for a job at the employment offices because of the weak resources to cover the transport costs.

Usually men are more predisposed to go in the units to take care on potential administrative problems. Some women live in isolation because their home are too far from the center and do not have time, or willingness to be interested in public issues.

III - POLICY OPTIONS FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Basically from the problem description above, we can generalise the situation as follows:

- 1- The process of decision-making is extremely centralised;
- 2- The Administrative Units have a pure executive role, with limited competences and few services to offer;
- 3- The social, economic and cultural conditions do not allow women to be active in the decision-making process;
- 4- The political representation of rural population at the Municipal Council is not equal with the urban population;
- 5- There is a lack of legislation for the representation of the rural population at the Municipal Council;

Three kind of interventions are possible: one at the decision making branch, the second at the executive branch with focus to the rural units and third one as a mix and comprehensive intervention.

Policy Option1: Reformation of the Municipal Council

This option is based on a *top - bottom approach* and consists in democratisation of Municipal Council. From this point of view, the MC should be more representative for the rural population and at the other hand should open the doors to the women of rural areas as well. These policy option consists in the following measurements:

- 1) The rate of representation of rural population should be at the same level with the urban population. Moreover women of rural units should be represented in the same grade as women of urban units. In accordance to the calculations based on the number of habitants

and number of representatives in Municipal Council (*figure 3*), we believe that the number of the representatives of rural units should increase from 4 to 9 or 10 members and at least 4 or 5 of them should be women resident in rural areas.

- 2) A new decision-making practice. A reformation of the decision-making practice is highly recommended. Concretely we are suggesting to insert phases of consultations between the phase of drafting and the phase of voting in the decision-making practice.
- 3) Members of Municipal Council should meet regularly with the citizens that have voted them. If these members will be women as suggested, women of rural units would be more motivated to participate. Therefore we suggest that all the representatives of Municipal Council should meet periodically with the citizens.

Policy Option 2: Reformation of Administrative Units

The second policy option is a bottom – up approach. The field studies showed that the administrative units are under-used. More specifically, they are offering few services, have limited competences to act and no decision-making functions. At the other hand they are close to the citizens, sensitive to their problems and we believe that with some reformation the rural units can deliver more services and act as bridges between citizens and decision-makers. We argue that the staff of rural units are already doing a good job and in case of wider competences they can perform even better. This option consists in the following measurements:

- 1) Decentralization of the decision-making. This option will bring the entire decision-making process closer to the citizens of rural areas. Some of the decisions instead of being taken in the Municipal Council, can be taken at the units especially those decisions with economic impact that directly affect the life of women;
- 2) Application of subsidiarity by delegating to the administrators wider responsibilities and duties. The mayor can delegate some competences to the administrators;
- 3) More women as administrators. The mayor should appoint more women as administrators in rural units as they are more sensitive and helpful for the female population;
- 4) Representative bureaucracy which means policies that recruit from a broad cross-section of population and especially from women and minority groups.³³ In other words, we suggest that women from rural areas should be hired as staff at the administration of rural units. Many state bureaucracies are applying these models and are having good results;³⁴
- 5) The specialist for gender equity that is planned to be hired in each rural unit in 2009, should be also a woman from the rural units;
- 6) There should be a detailed and well-planned agenda with different kinds of activities for rural units, with special attention to the women and their needs. This agenda can include also the consultations with the citizens before the decisions are taken.

Policy Option 3: Mixed comprehensive reformation

The third option is a mixed comprehensive reformation that can intervene in different parts of decision and executive branches of the Municipality. This option consists in:

- 1) Equal rate of representation between rural and urban units at the Municipal Council;

³³ Samuel Krislov "Representative Bureaucracy", Quid Pro Books, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, 2012, pg 215-216

³⁴ Newton and Van Deeth, Comparative Politics, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pg. 108

- 2) Higher representation of women of rural areas at Municipal Council;
- 3) Reformation of decision-making practices at Municipal Council by adding consultations with citizens;
- 4) Compulsory meetings between members of Municipal Council and citizens;
- 5) More women from rural areas hired as administrators in rural units;
- 6) Females resident in rural units should be highed as specialist of gender equity in each rural unit;
- 7) Application of representative bourocracy which means that women of rural areas with different social problems should be hired in specific positions connected to their conditions;
- 8) Establishment of employment offices at the rural units or at least arrangements in order to offer this service within in the rural units;
- 9) An agenda with different economic, social, cultural activities for women of rural units.

3.1 Analysis of political options

In order to have a clear clear undersanding and potential outcomes of the three shown political options, lets try to estimate the efforts, the costs and the outcomes of each alternative, looking at the figure below.

Figure 4

Outcome Matrix for the three Policy Options

Criteria	Policy Option I Reformation of Decision-making institution	Policy Option II Reformation of Administrative Units	Policy Option III Mixed Comprehensive Reformation
Number of women in decision-making	5-6 rural woman in Municipal Council	No estimation of women in the decision making process but women of rural areas will be closer to the decsion-making process	5-6 rural woman in Municipality Council
Costs	No added costs	Costs for training the existing employees. In addition costs for more employees at the administrative units	No added costs
Technical capacity	No need for additional technical capacity	More trainings for the employees, a bigger number of employees	No need for additional technical capacity
Political Feasibility	Political willingness to increase the number of representatives for rural units. Political willingness to propose amendements to the Electoral Code	No political feasibility, but just willingness of the Meyer to implemnet the representative bourocracy, and to nominee more women as administrtators of rural units	Political willingness to increase the number of representatives for rural units. Political willingness to propose amendements to the Electoral Code

Change in legislation	Amendments of Electoral Code	No needed changes in legislation	Amendments of Internal Regulation of Municipal Council
	Amendments of Internal Regulation of Municipal Council		

IV – RECOMMENDATION

The first option is focused on legislative changes. Therefore, if applied only the legislative amendment, we can not be sure about its effectiveness. For instance, even though women in urban areas are highly represented at MC, they are not very active in decision-making practices.³⁵ Consequently, we believe that only bringing women to the decision-making process, is not sufficient. Hence, there are indispensable additional measurements. The non-participation is a phenomenon that requires an institutional intervention accompanied by technical measurements which can develop in the future a well established political participation.

The second option would require a lot of time and money. Actually, the rural units do not have the capacities to make decisions. They have few employees and a poor administrative structure. It would be necessary to increase the number of employees in this units, and to improve their technical capacities. Such option would need a feasibility study and the results could be seen in long term.

Whereas the third option is more inclusive as it intervenes in both branches: decision-making and the executive branches. We believe that legislative amendments that figure out the representation of women of rural units, combined with a more inclusive decision-making process and with administrative measurements, can be more effective. In this way we could provide some kind of institutional inclusion in the decision-making process, which in the future we believe can create a strong civil culture and a more democratic society.

If women of rural units realise that women like them are in the core of the decision-making, would be easier for them to talk and discuss. In one hand, if the elected rural women are supposed to meet regularly with women of their area, this can make them more sensitive and practical, but on the other hand such events will increase the trust of the citizens (and women) to the institutions. Obviously there will be a political benefit because in this way the representatives can gain more votes. Anyway, having in consideration that rural citizens already contact everyday the administrators of rural units, because are seen as political functionaries, we can assume that the tentative to contact the members of Municipal Council will be higher.

Moreover, if the employment service will be offered within the units, more women would have the occasion to find a job and improve their lives. At the other hand, if more women from rural units could be appointed as administrators and as specialists of gender equity, or in other administrative positions, obviously will be more chances to improve the lives of rural units women. This measurement does not require additional costs because the specialist for gender equity is already planned to be hired in 2019 by the Municipality of Tirana.

³⁵ Interview with the Director of Communication at the Municipality of Tirana

In the figure below are summerising suggestions on how to implement this policy option and the expected results.

Figure 5

Implementation of Policy Option III and Expected Results

Nr.	Measurement	How to implement	Expected results
1	Equal rate of representation between rural and urban citizens and particularly women of rural units	<p>One: Change in legislation which can make compulsory the inclusion of candidates and women candidates from rural areas in the lists of parties.</p> <p>Two: The parties in competition, through their own willingness should include representatives or rural areas especially women in high positions of lists of candidates</p>	<p>If legislative amendments will be applied, it will affect all the municipalities of Albania. There will be a national benefit and improvement of democracy all over the local governance in Albania.</p> <p>At the other hand this will bring electoral benefits to the political parties itself. They will gain the trust of the citizens.</p>
2	Reformation of decision-making practices by introducing compulsory meetings between members of MC and citizens.	Through changes at the internal regulations of the Municipal Council.	<p>This new procedure will reduce the gap between citizens and representatives.</p> <p>Women rural members in MC will be in contact other rural women. Consequently they will know their concerns and opinions on different issues that MC will be treating.</p> <p>Will increase the trust of women to the local institutions.</p> <p>Will increase the participation of women in decision-making.</p> <p>There will be a political benefit as well.</p>
3.	More women from rural units hired as administrators in rural units	The willingness of the Mayor	Women are doing a great job in the rural administrative units. They are responsible and motivated. If some administrators could be women from rural units, this will motivate women to participate actively in

			<p>meetings in general and decision-making practices.</p> <p>It will increase the sense of civic culture as well.</p> <p>Women will feel more comfortable to contact the institutions</p> <p>It will improve the economic situation or rural population and women specifically.</p>
4	Specialist of gender equity should be women from rural unit	The willingness of the mayer or administrator	<p>Women know better the situation of other women in their unit. This knowledge will develop a sense of solidarity and motivation to participate.</p> <p>It will improve the economic situation of women of rural units.</p>
5	Application of representative bourocracy.	The willingness of the mayer or administrators	<p>Rural women in difficult economic and social situations should be hired as employees in rural units.</p> <p>This will increase the sense of solidarity between women, and will improve the economic situation of women in general.</p> <p>Will increase the trust to the institutions and consequently the motivation to participate in decision-making practices.</p>
6	<p>Establishement of employment offices in rural units.</p> <p>In case this is not possible we would suggest to offer this service by one of the directories of the rural units.</p>	Collaboration or institutional agreement between local and central government.	<p>If employment services will be delivered at the units, more women could have information and real possibilities of employment and as a consequence can improve their lives.</p> <p>This will increase the trust to the local institutions and the level of satisfaction of the citizens toward the politics.</p>
7	A special agenda with activities for women of	Mayer's administration in collaboration with the	If more acitivities of social, political, cultural nature will be

	rural units	specialist of gender equity in rural units.	<p>organized, more women will be motivated to stay together, discuss, understand and be motivated to participate in decision-making.</p> <p>These activities in the community will increase the civic culture that also affect the political participation.</p>
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In case this policy option will be adapted by the Municipality of Tirana, we can imagine a more inclusive decision-making practice that probably will be more dynamics, more democratic, and more inclusive for women or rural areas, but also for other rural citizens, as follows in this picture.

Figure 6

Improved decision-making practice at the Municipality of Tirana

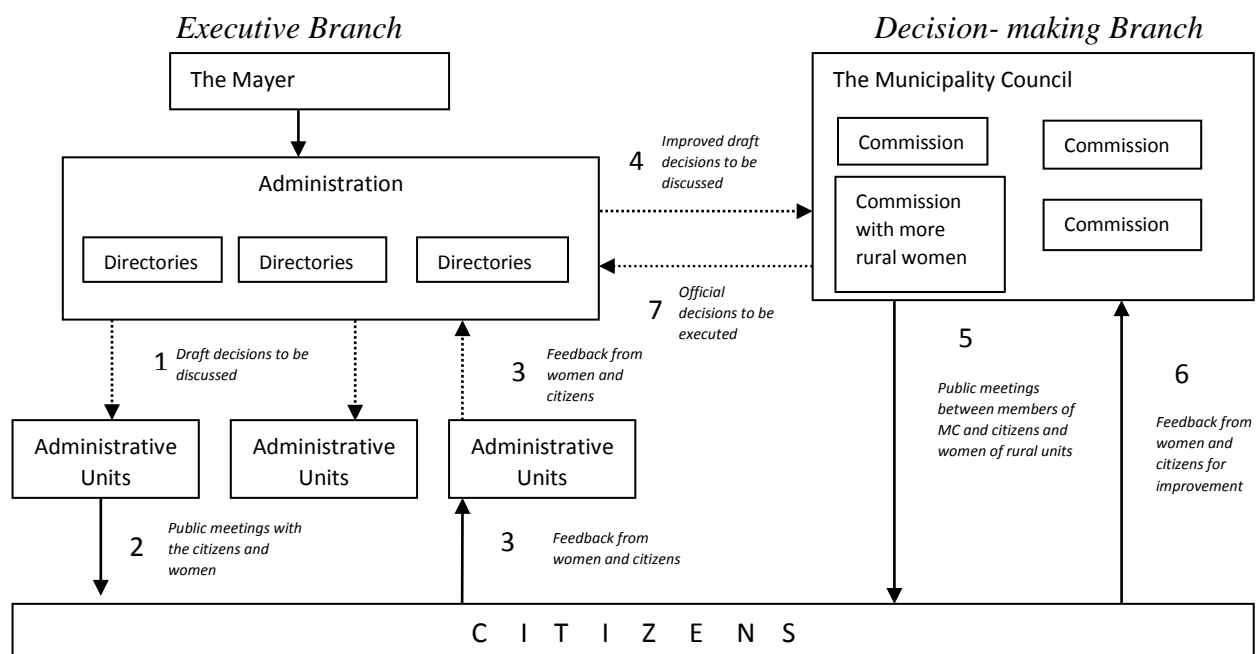


Figure 6 proposes a wider decision-making practice where members of Municipal Council, citizens, administration of Municipality and rural/urban units are involved. Concretely in phase 1 and 2, we suggest to inform the citizens in rural units with the draft decisions. This phase can be fulfilled by Municipal Administration in collaboration with the rural units administration, where specialists for gender equity, but not only, could have a crucial role (phase 2 and 3). Afterwards the administration of Mayer can reflect the citizens' contribution (phase 4) in improved draft decisions or in respective relations and propose them to the Municipal Council Commissions, where theoretically there are also included women of rural units. In addition, in phase 5 and 6, members of MC and in particular women representing rural units, could meet with other women

in rural units in order to have a clearer panorama of their concerns and to contribute in possible solutions in the future decisions.

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