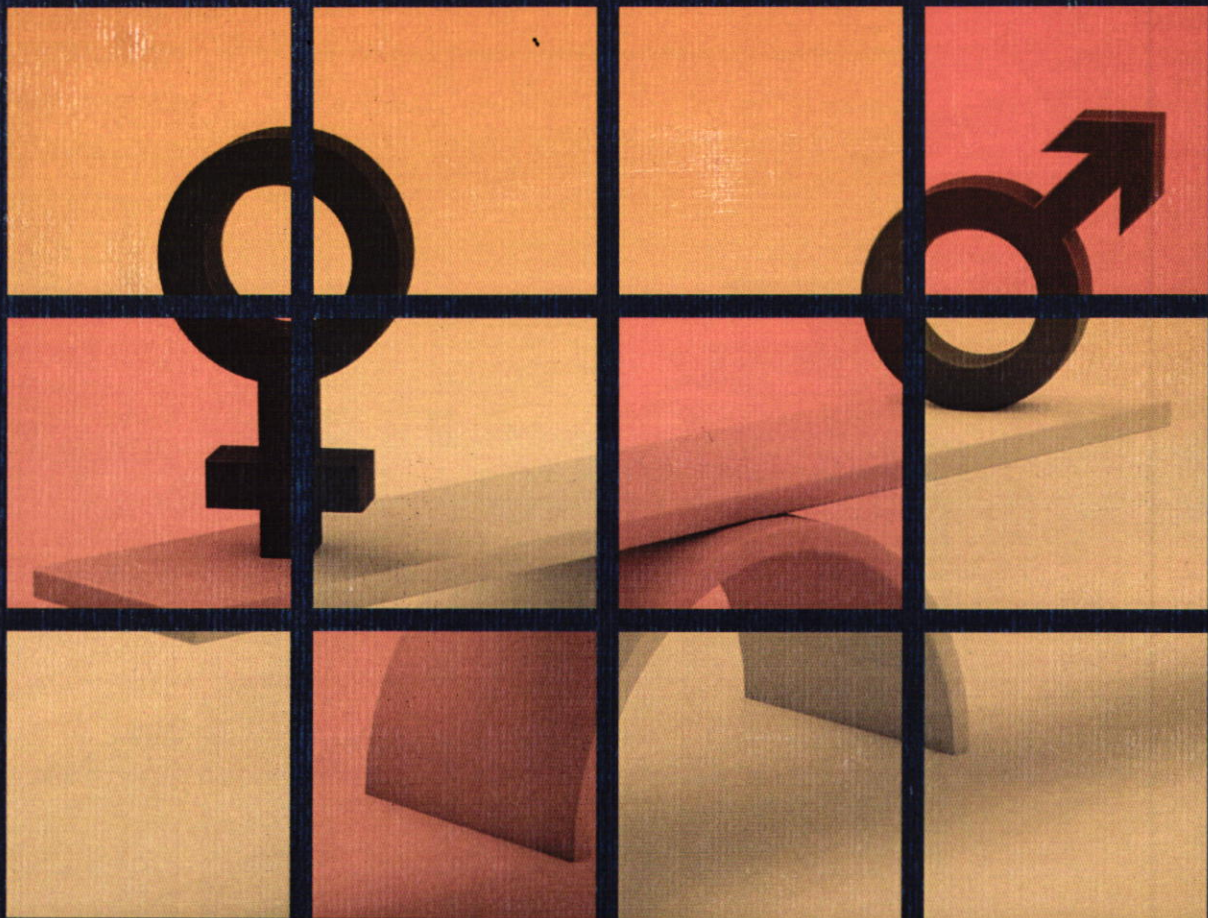




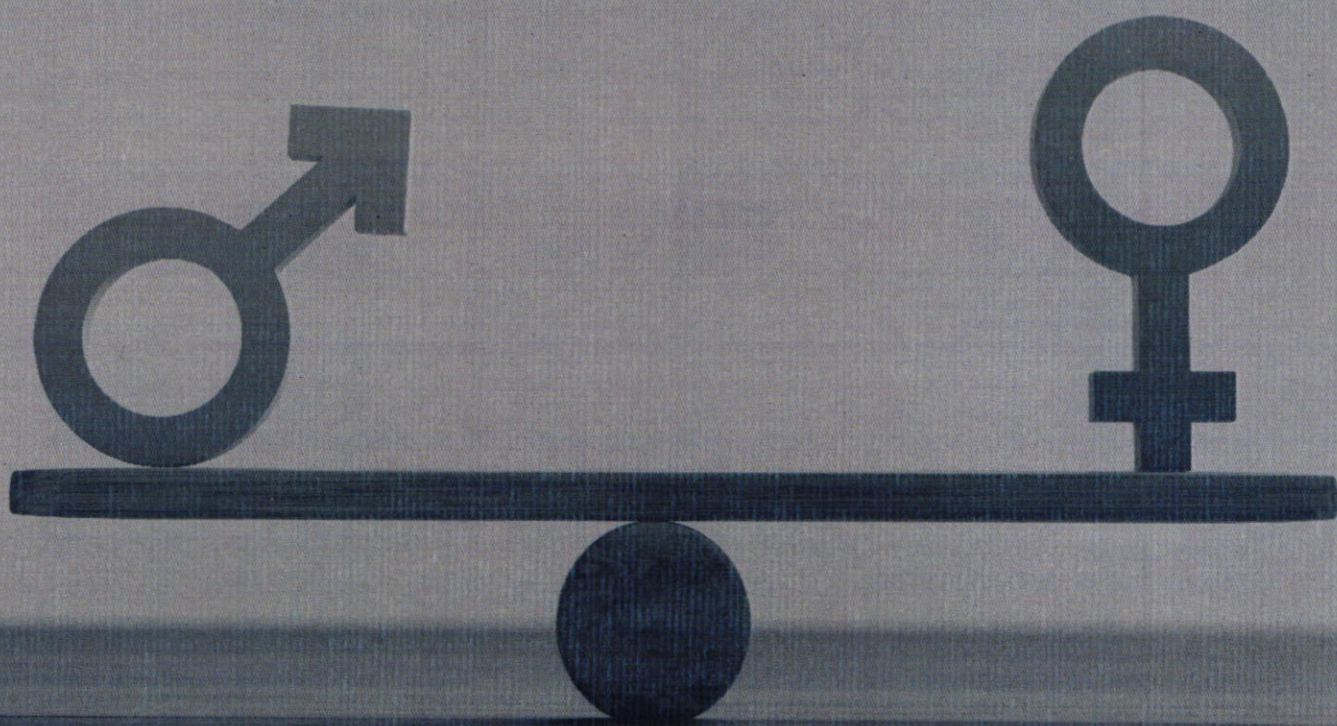
GENDER AUDIT


GUIDELINES



GENDER AUDIT

GUIDELINES



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References	4
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES	6
1.2. WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?	8
1.3. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY	9
1.4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA	10
1.5. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO AUDIT GENDER EQUALITY?	11
1.6. IS GENDER EQUALITY AN AUDIT RISK?	12
1.7. HOW DOES GENDER EQUALITY RELATE TO PROGRAMME EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY, AND EFFECTIVENESS (3E)?	12
2. AUDIT APPROACH	16
2.1. TYPES OF AUDITS	16
2.2. AUDIT PROCESS	16
2.3. PHASES OF GENDER PERFORMANCE AUDIT	16
2.3.1. PLANNING PHASE	17
SELECTION OF AUDIT TOPIC	17
AUDIT DESIGN	18
2.3.2. CONDUCTING PHASE	26
2.3.3. REPORTING PHASE	27
2.3.4. FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS	28
ANNEXES	29
ANNEX 1. Characteristics of gender audits	30
ANNEX 2. List of questions for assessing gender aspects in the preliminary phase of a performance audit on a general topic	31
ANNEX 3. Audit Programme contents sample –Gender Equality Audit (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)	33
ANNEX 4.1. Questionnaire sample – Budget statement (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)	41
ANNEX 4.2. Questionnaire sample – Political party (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)	42
ANNEX 4.3. Questionnaire sample – the Budget (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)	43
ANNEX 4.4. Questionnaire sample –the Assembly (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)	44
ANNEX 5. Example of integration of gender perspective in the audit of the policy for balanced regional development with special emphasis on demography	45
ANNEX 6. Legal framework for gender equality in the Republic of North Macedonia	48

Abbreviations and acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
INTOSAI	International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions
ISSAI	The International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SAI	Supreme Audit Institutions
SAO	State Audit Office of the Republic of North Macedonia
EU	European Union
IDI	INTOSAI Development Initiative
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
UN	United Nations
AAG	Assistant to the Auditor General
AR	Audit Reports
RNM	Republic of North Macedonia

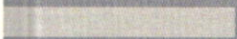
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- ▶ IDI's SDGs Audit Model (ISAM), INTOSAI;
- ▶ Practice Guidelines to Auditing Gender Equality, Canadian Audit & Accountability Foundation;
- ▶ Performance Audit Handbook, SAO 2022;
- ▶ Audit documentation from the performance audit conducted by the SAO in 2021 on the topic "Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives".

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INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming is among the long-term goals of most governments around the world, including the Republic of North Macedonia.

The State Audit Office of the Republic of North Macedonia as a Supreme Audit Institution joins the initiatives of the Supreme Audit Institutions in promoting the implementation of gender equality as a Strategic Development Goal by auditing gender equality and developing audit reports and recommendations to support the achievement of greater efficiency, effectiveness and economy of public policies and programmes in the area.

The purpose of these Gender Audit Guidelines is to provide auditors with a structured approach to audits that should help them assess how gender equality is integrated in public policies and programmes. They include guidance on how to conduct **performance audits of gender equality or assess the effects of gender equality policies and programmes and how to integrate these issues in broader audit topics.**

Performance audits **specifically aimed at assessing the effects of designed and implemented policies, measures and tools to promote gender equality** allow monitoring of the way in which the government and institutions incorporate gender equality issues into the planning, implementation and evaluation of their programmes, initiatives and services, that is, how and to what degree the government implements national and international provisions towards achieving gender equality.

Through a 'gender lens' gender equality is **included in the broader topics of the performance audit, thereby emphasizing the added value in the assessment and identification** of the specific impacts of government programmes on men and women, as well as making recommendations that will improve the process of development of public policies and programmes and the implementation of the findings aimed at promoting gender equality.

We believe that in this way we will contribute to the efficient implementation of international and national commitments for gender equality, as well as to the implementation of legislation, government priorities, horizontal strategies and strategic and action plans.

The audits will help raise public awareness and the importance of the development component in the performance audits and strengthen institutional awareness of the importance of gender equality and its impact on men and women.

1.1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

In its activities, the State Audit Office follows and applies the international professional standards of INTOSAI and the best practices of SAI in the implementation of state audits.

These Guidelines are based on the **Performance Audit Handbook of the State Audit Office (issued and published on the SAO website in June 2022 - <https://dzt.mk/mk/metodoloski-akti>)**, and follow the same principles and procedures for conducting performance audits. When developing these Guidelines, the requirements of the international standards of the supreme audit institutions were taken into account to ensure compliance with the previous audit experience of the state auditors and the applied audit methodology and practice.

This is the first time that SAO has developed this type of Guidelines to provide basic guidance on the key issues that should be covered when selecting, conducting and reporting audits on topics related to gender equality and also when integrating a gender perspective into general audit topics. The Guidelines specifically focus on the important processes resulting from the specificities of gender equality.

The key objectives and tasks of these Guidelines are aimed at:

- ▶ Enabling understanding of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the processes of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and programmes and in the allocation of budget funds to all stakeholders in social life;
- ▶ Improved public sector management through the development of inclusive and fairer policies and programmes for institutions, civil society organizations, the public and interested parties;
- ▶ Understanding the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness through the analysis of equal opportunities for men and women in the implementation of policies and programmes;
- ▶ Providing guidance on how gender issues should be integrated in all performance auditing procedures, especially in the processes of setting audit questions, collecting evidence and formulating audit conclusions by the auditor;
- ▶ Providing tools, techniques and guidance that will allow the auditor to assess the effects of policies, programmes and results in the implementation of the specific objectives from a gender perspective.

These Guidelines include 2 sections:

Section 1 of the Guidelines presents important definitions, considerations and issues related to gender equality to provide the auditor with information on:

- ▶ importance of gender equality and key related concepts,
- ▶ basic information about the relevant international and national commitments to gender equality,
- ▶ addresses the question of the importance of gender performance audits,
- ▶ introduces auditors to gender-based analysis and explains how this tool can be applied to define the gender equality focus of a performance audit.

Section 2 of these Guidelines provides the methodology to be used in a performance audit of gender equality in all three phases of the performance audit: planning, conducting and reporting. The follow-up phase is covered by a separate SAO Handbook.

Annexes 1-6 are presented at the end of these Guidelines:

1. Characteristics of gender audits;
2. List of questions for assessing gender aspects in the preliminary phase of a performance audit on a general topic;
3. Example of an audit programme content for an audit of gender equality from a performance audit conducted in 2021;
4. Questionnaires
 - 4.1. Example of a Questionnaire for a budget statement from a performance audit conducted in 2021;
 - 4.2. Example of a Questionnaire for a political party from a performance audit conducted in 2021;
 - 4.3. Example of a Questionnaire for the budget from a performance audit conducted in 2021;
 - 4.4. Example of a Questionnaire for the Assembly from a performance audit conducted in 2021.
5. Example of integration of gender perspective in the audit of the policy for balanced regional development with special emphasis on demography;
6. Legal framework for gender equality in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Note: Annexes 3 and 4 are practical examples of a performance audit conducted by SAO in 2021.

The forms and steps in the audit activities are presented in the 2022 SAO Performance Audit Handbook.

1.2. WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

The concept of gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men. Gender equality ensures that all people, whether female or male, can actively and meaningfully participate in the development of their lives, communities, and societies, free from discrimination on the basis of being female or male. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, especially in the processes of development, monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

Namely, gender equality and gender mainstreaming are not only a matter of social justice but they are also extremely significant in dealing with poverty and unemployment, providing equal opportunities and quality of life for all. For these reasons, it is necessary to recognize that achieving greater gender equality and dealing with persistent inequalities, very often, means working differently with women and men, recognizing the different obstacles they face, but also their different needs, priorities and aspirations.

Today, the integration of gender perspective into government policies and programmes at the national and international level becomes an obligation and a strategy for the achievement of gender equality. This process also implies the (re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all development policies, at all levels and all stages of the process. It is especially important when developing policies, programmes and projects to anticipate the possible effects and also the consequences that the relevant policy can have on women and on men.

This approach ensures that the women's as well as men's roles, concerns and experiences become an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies, programmes and sub-programmes so that the end users, men and women, benefit equally of these policies and inequality and discrimination are not perpetuated.

Such a strategic approach enables the development of gender-responsive policies that lead to the improvement of the situation of women and men through relevant, achievable and efficiently defined priorities, goals, programmes, measures and activities, as well as through the effective management of financial resources intended to support programmes and activities.

Most often, attention to gender equality in public policies is implemented through the so-called dual approach to gender equality or "twin-track strategy".

The dual approach refers to complementarity between gender mainstreaming strategies and specific gender equality policies and measures, including positive measures aimed directly at strengthening women's rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

The most common mechanisms for gender mainstreaming into public policies are:

- ▶ Using gender-disaggregated statistical data on the situation of men and women in certain sectors;
- ▶ Analytical and descriptive information that explains the reasons for certain statistical differences in the experiences of men and women. This information should be an integral and routine part of the analysis of the problem, circumstances or situation in the given sector. It is of exceptional importance to determine whether gender differences and inequality are significant issues in a specific policy, programme or in a specific area.
- ▶ The information gathered in the analysis of the situation forms a basis for monitoring of the progress achieved in the respective area using specific indicators.
- ▶ Consultations are an important segment of the gender mainstreaming process, that is, consultations with user groups (men and women) and understanding their needs and priorities in the area.
- ▶ Designing actions to promote gender equality that can be specific or integrated into existing measures and actions, but monitored through the coverage of end users (men and women).

Gender impact assessment and **gender-responsive budgeting** are important instruments for creating fairer public policies and promoting gender equality.

Gender impact assessment is a strategy for achieving gender equality by assessing the gendered impact of public policies, programmes and activities in all areas and at all levels and understanding of how these impacts promote or hinder equality.

Gender-responsive budgeting is a key part of gender mainstreaming that uses fiscal policy to promote gender equality and development. This implies a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Namely, public budgets are not solely an economic tool, they summarize government policies in monetary terms and reflect the government priorities. For these reasons, budgets are not gender neutral. They affect men and women differently, reflect the (in)adequate distribution of power in society, social and economic disparities and different social roles.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes: "Gender budgeting involves using the tools, techniques and procedures of the budget cycle in a systematic way to promote equality."

The Council of Europe defines gender budgeting as "the application of gender mainstreaming in the budget process". It entails gender assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budget process and restructuring of revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality."

The gender-responsive budgeting initiative does not aim to create separate budgets for women. Rather, gender-responsive budgeting seeks to analyse any form of public expenditure, or method of raising public money, from a gender perspective, identifying the implications and impacts on women and girls compared to men and boys. The key question is: What impact does this fiscal measure have on gender equality? Does gender inequality decrease; does it increase or does it remain the same?

Finally, working towards the goal of achieving greater gender equality and tackling existing inequalities very often means working differently with women and men, recognizing that men and women often have different needs and priorities, face different obstacles and have different aspirations and differently contribute to social development.

1.3. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

The Republic of North Macedonia is a signatory of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which commits to improving the status of women and their empowerment in public and private life. Also, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is one of the key documents for women's rights, and in accordance with its commitments to this convention, the RNM submitted its sixth periodic report in 2017, and the Committee published its conclusions and recommendations in 2018. They are also included in the strategic goals and activities of the Strategy for Gender Equality for the period 2022-2027 of the RNM. Considering that the RNM is a candidate country for EU membership, this Strategy reiterates the respect and promotion of European standards and practices for achieving gender equality. In this regard, it should be mentioned that EU directives and recommendations on the framework for equal opportunities for women and men have been implemented in the national legislation. Therefore, our country has fulfilled its obligations set in the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

The RNM is a member state of the Council of Europe and shares the commitment of the Council of Europe to ensure an adequate level of social protection, especially for the most vulnerable categories of citizens. The strategic priorities of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Council of Europe 2018 - 2023 focus on preventing and combating gender stereotypes and sexism, preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, ensuring equal access of women to justice, achieving balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures. The RNM participates in the development of the Council of Europe's Strategy through its representatives in the Gender Equality Commission.

The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) is a comprehensive document to combat violence against women and it is a basis and obligation, particularly for activities aimed at recognition, prevention and protection of women and girls from violence and domestic violence. The RNM was among the first countries to ratify the Istanbul Convention in 2017, after which the process of its implementation was initiated.

In 2015, all UN member countries adopted the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which provide the main guidance on overall prosperity, peace and sustainable development of all countries. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" specifically refers to achieving gender equality by introducing measures for the implementation of 9 targets to advance the position of women in the world.

In 2018, the Government of the RNM, through the National Council for Sustainable Development identified five priority SDGs (1, 4, 8, 13 and 16). In 2020, the Government published the first National Voluntary Review of the country's progress in achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2020, the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between the Republic of North Macedonia and the United Nations 2021-2025 was signed, to guide the work of the UN system in the country in the next 5 years. The Framework provides specific guidelines for progress in accordance with national development documents aligned with the SDGs and EU law.

The gender perspective is an integral part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Preamble of the Paris Agreement (2017), which emphasize that when taking actions to address climate change, parties should respect and promote the right to gender equality and empowerment of women. To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of these documents, a national responsible person for gender and climate change has been appointed in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

In 2020, the RNM became a member of NATO, thereby committing to the application of the principle of gender integration in all policies and measures related to peace and security. In this area, the most important document is the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The Women, Peace and Security agenda was launched in 2000 with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and now includes nine additional Resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2422, 2467 and 2493).

1.4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

From a legislative perspective, gender equality issues in the Republic of North Macedonia are regulated by the Constitution and by a special law, that is, by the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and also by integrating the gender perspective in other laws.

The National Strategy for Gender Equality is the basic strategic document of the RNM, which establishes a comprehensive framework of activities for the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women. The Strategy 2022 - 2027 was adopted on 28 July 2022. It is adopted for a period of 5 years and this is the fourth strategic document in this area. The basis of the Strategy derives from the Constitution of the RNM, which guarantees that "citizens of the RNM are equal in their freedoms and rights, regardless of sex, race, colour of skin, national and social origin and religious beliefs, property and social status". The adoption of the Strategy is regulated by the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 6/2012).

The legal framework in the area of gender equality of the RNM is presented in Annex 6 to these Guidelines.

1.5. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO AUDIT GENDER EQUALITY?

Achieving the international and national development goals requires accelerated progress in advancing equality and women's empowerment. A growing body of evidence-based research shows that closing the gender gap in health, education, the labour market, and other areas is directly linked to poverty reduction, increased economic growth, higher productivity, better education for children, and many other improved benefits.

From this perspective and from the perspective of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the pledge to "leave no one behind", the Supreme Audit Institutions and the INTOSAI Development Initiative have joined in the goals of promoting gender equality.¹

Considering the global importance of the Sustainable Development Goals, and specifically SDG 5, as well as the existing national commitments to greater gender equality and gender mainstreaming, INTOSAI and its members called on governments to be accountable for the gender commitments undertaken.

According to its Strategic plan 2019-2023, IDI seeks to integrate gender equality into its auditing activities, especially into the audit methodology and approach, and most importantly, into the processes of strategic planning, selection of audit topics and audit planning. Encouraged by good international practices, SAO recognizes its role and importance in promoting gender equality in our country. Through the findings and recommendations in its audit reports delivered to the institutions, the media and the public, SAO has a key role in improving gender equality in the country.

At the same time, SAO also has a key role in monitoring the undertaken national and international commitments for promotion of gender equality and their successful implementation by the government and relevant institutions. From this perspective, SAO has an extremely important role:

- ▶ to determine the degree of compliance of government's policies and programmes with national and international commitments to gender equality, including the implementation of national legislation, public policies and action plans. This approach ensures that the government is responsible and accountable to the citizens for meeting its obligations arising from the national legislation;
- ▶ to identify and examine the gender-specific aspects of government programmes;
- ▶ to determine the impacts of government public policies, legislation and programmes on gender equality. The audit should assess whether the design of the policy or programme is based on an analysis of the position of men and women in society and takes into account the circumstances in which they live and accordingly determines measures to reduce inequalities;
- ▶ to make recommendations that can lead to improvements in the design and implementation of government policy, contributing to better gender equality outcomes. A critical first step in such modifications is to raise awareness within government and institutions that policies and programmes need to be based on gender-disaggregated statistics and be designed and implemented with consideration for the differences in how women and men will be affected.
- ▶ to publish audit reports on gender equality that raise awareness within and outside the government of gender equality issues and how they affect the lives of citizens. Audit reports should highlight the positive aspects and also give recommendations for the promotion of gender equality through government policies.

¹ <https://www.idi.no/elibrary/idi-administrative/policies/1222-idi-gender-policy-2021/file> (accessed on 17 November 2021)

1.6. IS GENDER EQUALITY AN AUDIT RISK?

Gender equality is a risk that SAO should take into consideration when undertaking activities and planning audits in this area, from the following aspects:

- ▶ Examining the setup of the entire system of the executive and legislative power from the aspect of the integration of policies, measures, tools and commitments through the system institutions purpose-oriented towards fulfilling the regulations – national and international to which the RNM is a signatory;
- ▶ Are there national strategies at a system level that set gender equality as a strategic goal;
- ▶ Are the strategic goals for gender equality of the general strategy included in specific strategies – for example – for rural development, for agriculture, for population protection, for crisis management etc.;
- ▶ Does the government monitor, measure and report on the degree of fulfilment and quality of the results of these strategies and strategic goals from the aspect of gender equality;
- ▶ Are the budgets that are planned and allocated to the implementing entities of these strategic plans and goals prepared in accordance with the requirements for gender-responsive budgeting;
- ▶ Do the entities meet expectations;
- ▶ Do the entities evaluate the results against expectations;
- ▶ Do the entities make projections in future budgets and strategies based on the performed measurements.

A number of significant questions can be developed that will help the auditor assess the initial risk of whether the gender equality areas are auditable or not.

1.7. HOW DOES GENDER EQUALITY RELATE TO PROGRAMME EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY, AND EFFECTIVENESS (3E)?

As with any performance audit, when conducting a performance audit on the topic of gender equality, the elements of economy, efficiency and effectiveness should be taken into account.

Auditors must decide which of the 3 Es (economy, efficiency or effectiveness) will be covered and evaluated. This drives the specific audit objective/s and associated criteria as well as the collected evidence required to reach audit conclusions against the set audit objectives.

A performance audit that is primarily concerned with whether the government's intended gender equality outcomes, goals, and targets are being realized focuses on **effectiveness**.

An audit that is primarily concerned with how resources and processes are used to achieve intended output or outcomes emphasizes **efficiency**.

An audit that is primarily concerned with how resources (people, assets, funding) are used focuses on **economy**.

Evidence-based policymaking is a process that uses multiple sources of information, including statistical data and the best available evidence and assessments from relevant scientific and professional research as well as analyses and results of those analyses before making certain decisions. This also involves a process of consultation with various interest groups before a decision is made to start, implement or change the direction of a public policy or programme. This evidence-based approach is extremely important for improving programme efficiency, economy and effectiveness.

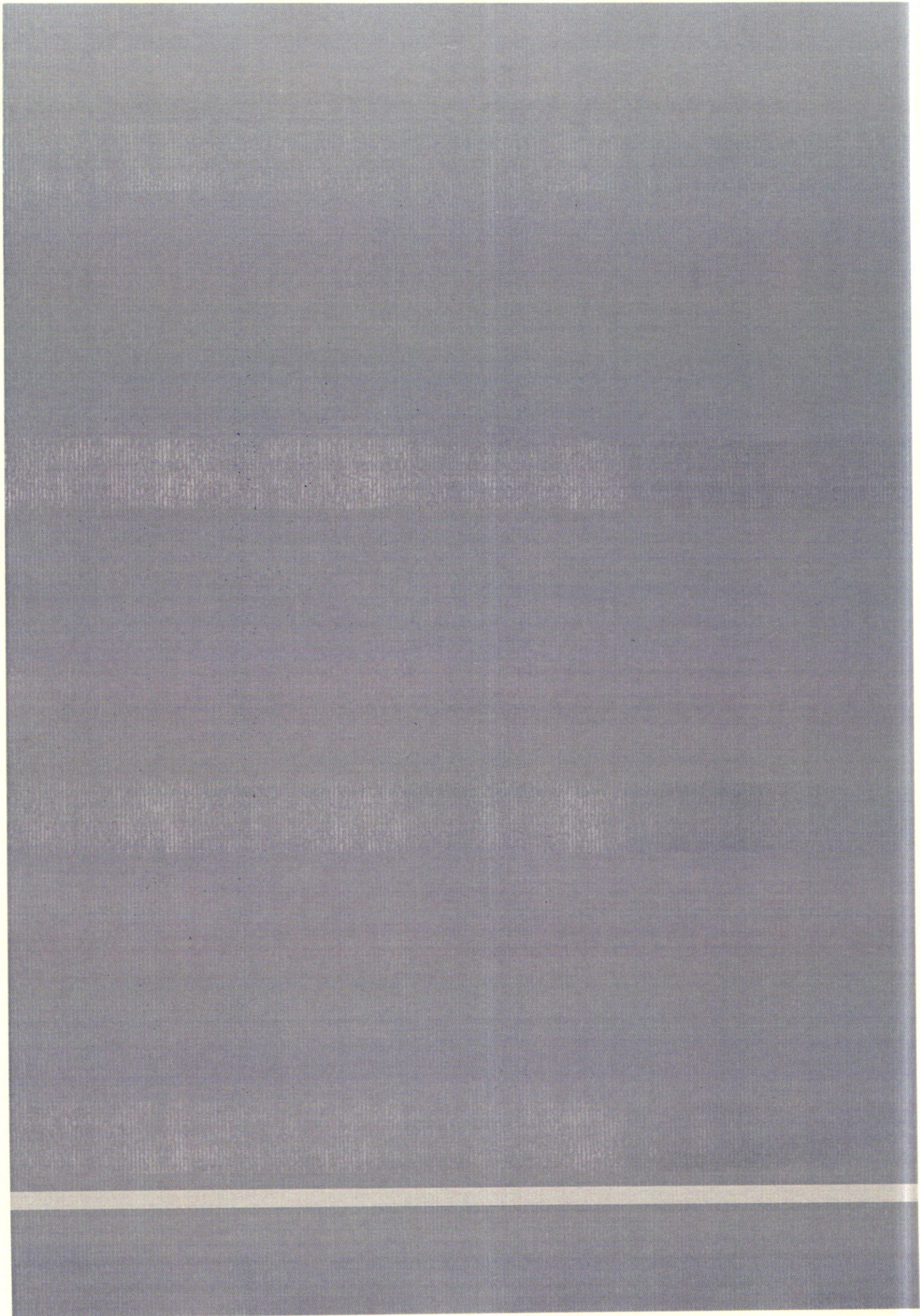
However, to consider programme efficiency, economy and effectiveness from a gender perspective, one must take into account the differences and potential inequalities between men and women in various spheres of life.

It is, therefore, necessary that the analyses and all further measures of the government and institutions are based on data disaggregated by sex, to reflect gender differences and monitor social changes.

Gender-disaggregated statistics allow adequate description and analysis of the situation in a certain area and reveal the potential risks for men and women. They allow understanding of the roles, responsibilities and relations between men and women and monitor the achievement of development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Auditors should, therefore, take into consideration the following questions:

- ▶ Have the specific needs and interests of the target beneficiaries (e.g., different groups of women, men and marginalized groups) been identified when designing the government programme?
- ▶ Have indicators been designed for the government programme/s to measure the planned and implemented activities and the programme performance, i.e. its effects?
- ▶ Does the status/problem/situation analysis use gender-disaggregated data to identify existing differences or inequalities among beneficiaries, which will help improve government programme planning and implementation?
- ▶ Are the initiatives based on gender analysis, to ensure that any inequalities between women and men due to their different gender needs and gender roles are identified and taken into account?
- ▶ Does the government programme recognize potential negative gender stereotypes that can or do hinder men's and women's equal access to opportunities and resources?
- ▶ Are there policies, programmes, projects or services in place that are designed to target women and men equally and in accordance with their gender needs or, where appropriate, target women or men in particular to close gender gaps?
- ▶ Are indicators and data gender-disaggregated?
- ▶ Do the policies, programmes, projects or services provided include gender indicators to monitor the policy, programme, project or service from a gender perspective?
- ▶ Are there indicators for all gender goals?
- ▶ Do the indicators relate to progress toward increased gender equality and change in social and institutional norms?
- ▶ Is there a specific budget for the activities aimed at achieving gender equality?
- ▶ Is gender analysis training included in initiatives to ensure that implementing organizations have the appropriate skills?
- ▶ Are gender indicators, gender analysis and gender impact assessments used in all cycles of policies, programmes and projects?
- ▶ What mechanisms are in place for ensuring accountability for achieving gender equality?
- ▶ Are the persons appointed to monitor the degree and continuity of government programmes also responsible for reporting on the results of the set gender goals?
- ▶ To what extent are gender challenges overcome during the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the initiatives?
- ▶ What are the potential or existing key performance indicators?



2

**AUDIT
APPROACH**

2. AUDIT APPROACH

2.1. TYPES OF AUDITS

For all types of audits, SAO has developed handbooks that will ensure the application of internationally accepted standards by all auditors as well as uniformity in the conduct of audits to ensure an effective and efficient audit and the preparation of quality audit reports.

Positive practice shows that gender audits are conducted exclusively as performance audits and as performance audits with elements of a compliance audit.

2.2. AUDIT PROCESS

Performance audits and performance audits with elements of a compliance audit of gender equality follow the same methodological steps as explained in the Performance Audit Handbook issued and applied by the SAO, and aligned with the ISSAI standards for performance audit and accompanying guides².

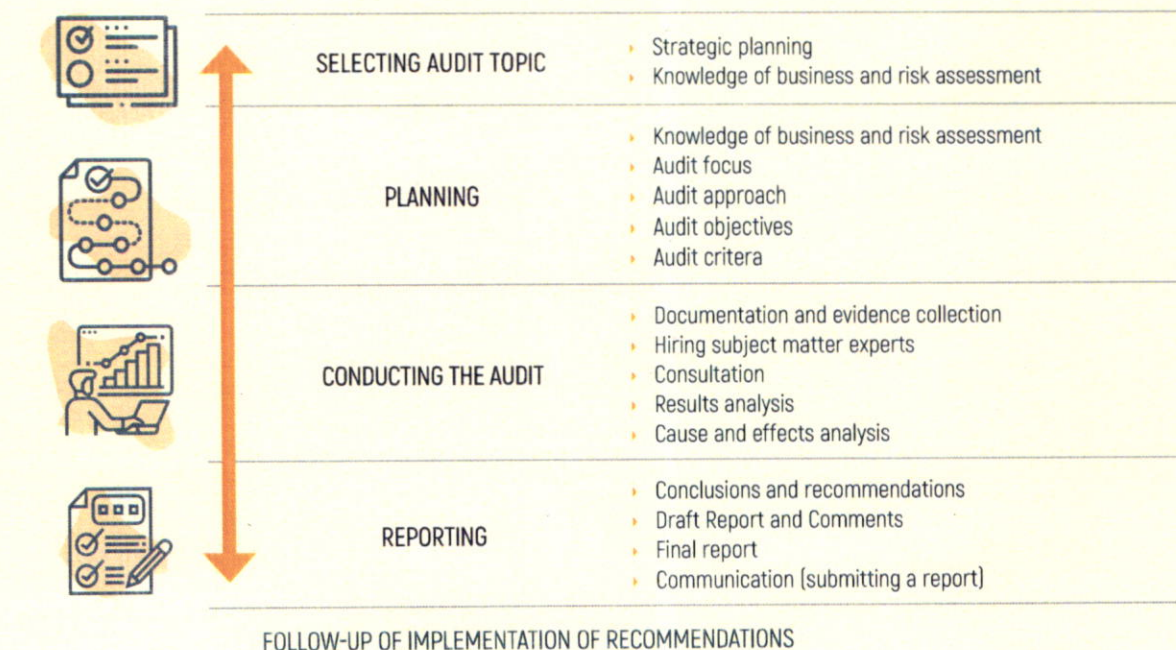
An overview of the performance audit process is presented in Figure 1.

Annex 1 of these Guidelines presents the essential characteristics of gender audits.

When conducting a gender audit of a given institution (auditee), programme or activity, auditors are faced with many questions and choices. In order to assist the auditors, this section elaborates on issues and approaches specific to gender performance audits.

2.3. PHASES OF GENDER PERFORMANCE AUDIT

A gender performance audit follows the same phases and sequential steps as any other audit:



² GUID 3910, GUID 3920 etc.

2.3.1. PLANNING PHASE

The planning phase consists of two main steps:

- ▶ Process of selection of audit topics
- ▶ Audit design.



SELECTION OF AUDIT TOPIC



Auditors select audit topics based on the SAO's strategic planning process, analysing potential topics and conducting research that identifies audit risks and constraints. In the procedure for selecting a topic for a gender audit, auditors follow the steps from the Performance Audit Handbook issued and applied by the SAO.

Additionally, if a gender audit is in question, the auditors will need to acquire sufficient information and knowledge about:

1. A topic that is suitable for gender audit and/or;
2. Determine whether gender aspects of the potential areas and audit topics are relevant to the broader audit topic, i.e. apply a "gender lens"³.

SUITABLE TOPIC FOR GENDER AUDIT

In the first case, the performance audit of the government's policies for the promotion of gender equality is aimed at determining the extent to which the entire government, ministries and/or other public institutions are compliant with national and international obligations and commitments on gender equality, including implementation of national legislation, strategies, horizontal strategies, policies, programmes, sub-programmes and action plans.

Auditors have a choice based on the strategic priorities and risk-based assessment to focus on a gender performance audit or a performance audit with elements of a compliance audit. Gender audits may also include an assessment of:

- ▶ Government or individual ministries that are well-suited for gender audits to gain a greater understanding of the systems, policies, practices and initiatives that advance or hinder gender equality;
- ▶ Specific programmes/policies, of whether policy objectives have increased or decreased inequalities/discrimination and their impact on service users and/or the public. This audit can refer to individual sectors, for example, gender equality in the agricultural sector (audit of measure 115 for support of women in rural areas under which the government allocates funds in the form of a grant)⁴, the economy sector (a programme for women's entrepreneurship under which the government allocates funds to support women's entrepreneurship), the health sector (programme for free gynaecological examinations for all women), in the field of labour and social protection (support through the programme for active employment measures targeting women), social security, social protection, education, etc. Auditors may also consider auditing budget allocations to policies/programmes specifically targeting women or gender equality issues.
- ▶ Government initiatives/thematic policies specified in the government programme and evaluation of their implementation. (For example, participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions in government).

³ To identify possible audit topics, the same methods are used as for any other audit: monitoring of the public sector; review of official announcements; financial analysis; media monitoring; general research; understanding stakeholder expectations; relations with other external stakeholders; internal discussions and assessments in the SAO

⁴ For example, audit of measure 115 for support of women in rural areas, under which the government allocates funds to women

GENDER LENS

In the second case, when selecting the broader audit topic in which gender aspects form only a small segment, it is necessary to apply a "gender lens" to auditing. This means that in each phase of the audit process auditors should consider how certain solutions were reached in the implementation of the government's policies and programmes. In the analysis of the evidence, they assess whether the data are gender-disaggregated and provide information on the status of men and women in the relevant area, and take into account the possible impacts, positive or negative, of the selected audit topic.

When selecting the audit topic, it is important for auditors to consider the following questions:

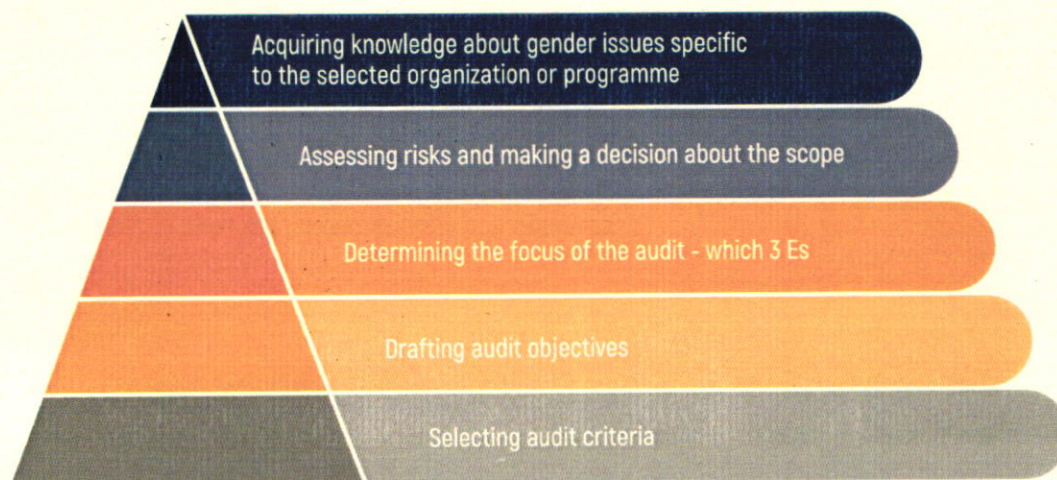
- ▶ Why would **gender inequalities matter** for this programme or organization?
- ▶ What might be the **source** of gender inequalities?
- ▶ Is the **programme directed to a specific gender** to address an identified gender need or a known gender inequality?
- ▶ Was a **gender-based analysis** performed to inform policy makers of the gender impacts?
- ▶ Is programme delivery **sensitive to gender issues**?
- ▶ Are **significant outcomes** for the organization related to or influenced by **gender issues**?
- ▶ Has **special emphasis been given to gender in the design, implementation, and monitoring** of a given organization or programme? For example, has an organization or programme implemented recommendations from a gender-based analysis?
- ▶ Are there indicators that **gender inequalities exist** in a programme or organization?
- ▶ Are there indicators that the promotion or achievement of **gender equality is at risk in a programme or organization**?

A List of questions for the assessment of gender aspects in the preliminary stage of a performance audit on a general topic is presented in **Annex 2** to these Guidelines, and an example of the integration of gender aspects in the audit of the policy for balanced regional development with special emphasis on demography is presented in **Annex 5** to these Guidelines.

AUDIT DESIGN



Once an audit topic has been selected, auditors begin the design phase of the audit. In this phase, it is useful for auditors to discuss with the auditee the significance of gender equality in relation to the internal organization and/or programme being audited. This may include a discussion of the auditee's attempts/procedures/policies/measures and tools to incorporate gender equality and plans for their future improvements to better understand gender issues from the auditee's perspective.



After an audit topic has been selected, defined and approved, the audit's detailed planning phase begins. A key decision in the planning phase is to determine whether and which gender equality issues should be included in the scope of the audit.

As part of the planning phase, auditors should:

- ▶ evaluate the initial information collected in the preliminary phase or in the phase of knowledge acquisition or coverage from the perspective of gender equality;
- ▶ identify key contacts within the audited entity, which will need to be included e.g. senior leaders, managers, responsible persons for gender equality;
- ▶ identify stakeholders, external groups, partners with an interest in the policy area, e.g. civil society organizations, women's groups;
- ▶ consider whether audit team members possess sufficient knowledge of gender equality to conduct the audit;
- ▶ consider whether the audit team will need the support of an expert to plan and conduct the audit;
- ▶ consider the types of findings and conclusions likely to result from the audit, and ways to increase the impact of the audit report;
- ▶ consider whether programme activities have different impacts on women and men;
- ▶ consider whether programme results have equal benefits regardless of gender;
- ▶ determine whether women and men participate in the programme implementation;
- ▶ assess whether the designed programme takes into account gender equality aspects.

Effective design concludes with the development of a detailed audit programme that includes the type of audit, audit topic, objective(s), audit approach, audit questions, audit criteria, potential risks identified, evidence and sources of evidence, and methodology and techniques for information gathering and analysis, scope (including limitations), action plan including timeline and resources (people and money). Developing a good audit programme, a planning matrix, and an action plan is critical to laying the foundations for evaluating economy, efficiency and effectiveness in any performance audit.

To develop a solid performance audit design, auditors should know:

- ▶ How to conduct a preliminary study of the audit topic
- ▶ **How to determine a performance audit approach**
- ▶ **How to draft audit objective(s)**
- ▶ How to formulate audit questions
- ▶ How to determine the scope of the audit
- ▶ **How to select audit criteria**
- ▶ How to develop an audit methodology
- ▶ How to manage risk in audit design
- ▶ How to determine time frames and resources for a performance audit
- ▶ How to document an audit plan
- ▶ How to involve internal and external stakeholders and management

These issues are explained in detail in the SAO Performance Audit Handbook issued in 2022.

In these Guidelines, we will only address issues of **approach, objectives and criteria** with specifics of certain issues from a gender equality perspective.

1. How to determine the gender performance audit approach?

Auditors should decide on the focus of the audit.

There are many ways in which a performance audit can integrate gender equality considerations. Some audits will focus exclusively on gender equality, while others will cover gender equality only as a specific accompanying area.

- ▶ **Marginal or no focus:** There is no formal plan to audit gender equality, but the issue comes up during an audit.
- ▶ **Non-specific focus:** Some audit steps touch on gender equality even though there is no specific gender equality criterion.
- ▶ **Specific focus:** Structured audit work on gender equality is part of a larger audit.
- ▶ **Exclusive focus:** This audit is fully focused on gender equality

At the same time, the question arises whether the audit of gender equality should focus on systems, results, or problems.

Typically, performance auditors use or combine the following audit approaches: **a systems-oriented approach, a results-oriented approach, and a problem-oriented approach**. Auditing for gender equality in a performance audit needs to consider which of the approaches to use, or a combination of them. In practice, a well-balanced audit includes aspects of all three approaches; the difference is only which one will be emphasised. The characteristics of these approaches are given in the Performance Audit Handbook and in ISSAI 300.

SYSTEMS AUDIT

In a systems audit of gender equality, the focus is on examining the proper functioning of management systems and practices, including a wide range of systems such as: systems of financial management, systems of internal control, used by the organization for achieving, maintaining, accountability and transparency and improving the gender equality aspects of its services or operations. For example, the audit could identify and analyse the strengths, good practices, weaknesses, gaps, and challenges in the institutional mechanisms and processes for gender equality within the organization.

In practical terms, systems audit work means examining the key organizational systems, practices, procedures, and controls supporting gender equality, such as human resource management, performance measurement and reporting systems (systems of equal valuation of labour and knowledge), and management systems for benchmarking organizational performance.

A systems approach may be used in audits of gender equality in one of three ways:

1. The audit may examine the organization's overall strategy and focus on gender equality.
2. The audit may examine the systems and practices that relate to gender equality in a particular programme or activity.
3. The audit may combine these two options.

The particular option chosen will depend on the knowledge of business acquired, the auditor's mandate, and the auditor's analysis of significance and risk. Auditing an organization's overall focus on gender equality may be a good entry point into auditing gender equality. Subsequent audits in particular programme areas could follow this first audit. This strategy would provide the SAO with a good overview of an organization's central approach to gender equality before undertaking more in-depth audits of gender equality in specific programmes.

RESULTS AUDIT

In a performance audit of gender equality that applies a results-oriented approach, the auditor assesses whether results and outputs/outcomes are achieved in accordance with projections, programmes and service delivery as intended. The auditor determines whether a programme or activity audited is achieving results from the aspect of gender equality as planned or has unwanted/unintended negative outcomes with due regard for the 3 E.

Generally, results audit work involves comparing current or recent performance against benchmarks, a baseline, or key performance targets. If the organization is performing regular analyses based on gender-disaggregated statistical and analytical data, then it may be possible for the auditor to determine the programme's impacts on gender equality over time while considering other potential factors at play.

A results audit is practical only if an organization measures its gender equality performance or if auditors are able to measure gender equality achievements. In cases where management does measure gender equality from these aspects, auditors will need to do additional analytical work to validate the collected information in order to be able to rely on it as supporting documents and evidence in the audit. Also, without a clear understanding of the scope, distribution, social status, and other elements of the population targeted or affected by a particular programme, it may not be possible to align programme outputs with the programme's impact on gender equality.

In cases where management does not measure gender equality aspects, auditors may decide to measure gender equality themselves based on the application of their professional judgment. However, measuring gender equality can be challenging, so auditors do not decide to measure it directly without first determining whether such measurement is feasible at a reasonable cost.

PROBLEM AUDITS

A performance audit using a problem-oriented approach includes an examination by auditors to verify the causes of specific problems in the area, and to analyse the problems that have arisen and the deviations from the set criteria in gender equality aspects. Auditors carry out these activities to evaluate whether the expected results have been met. The application of this problem-oriented approach consists in focusing the audit work on a specific problem underlying an organization's failure to obtain expected results. Then, auditors collect adequate supporting documentation and carry out analyses to assess the importance of the problem and the causes of the problem. Often au-

ditors will become aware of a problem due to parliamentary or media attention. It could also be brought to the attention of auditors through submitted reports, audit requests, complaints or indications to the SAO or a review of issues brought to the attention of the ombudsman. For example, the problem identified may be the underrepresentation of women in a micro-financing development project in agriculture. Following the problem identification, auditors would then undertake procedures and activities to determine the causes of the problem, looking at the programme design or socio-cultural factors that may limit the participation rate of women in the specific area.

KCOMBINED SYSTEMS AND RESULTS AUDITS

Auditors should not expect to find pure "systems" or pure "results" audits of gender equality. Although the starting point for the auditor in a performance audit is usually results, audits of gender equality typically include some systems questions and procedures, particularly where gender equality results were found to be poor. The cause of the absence of gender equality

perspective may be linked to cultural traditions but also to systems or regulations that are not designed to address gender equality and/or that discourage or impede gender equality. A combined approach is advisable in situations where there are systems in place that directly affect the achievement of gender equality (such as staffing and promotions) and where gender equality results are measurable.

By using a combined approach, auditors can provide assurance on both systems and results or identify a reasonable solution to identified problems and tell a more complete story. This will increase the validity of audit conclusions and reduce the risk of reaching a conclusion that does not reflect the actual state of gender equality. For example, it could be that an organization's systems may not function as intended but it is nevertheless achieving gender equality. If the auditors concluded only against a system objective, their conclusion would be limited to the fact that systems are not functioning as planned, which would not inform the report's audience realistically and reliably about the actual situation and the results of applying the aspects of gender equality.

A similar situation can also happen if the performance audit of gender equality has only a results objective, that is, the audit is using the results-oriented approach. For instance, an organization could have poor systems and procedures but nonetheless achieving gender equality (note: in fact, these assumed risks are common in all types of audits that are oriented towards assessing the functioning of the organization's internal systems). In this case, the auditors, looking solely at results, would conclude only that the organization is achieving gender equality, leaving an incorrect impression on the interested parties that systems and procedures must be sound and that achievements are realistic and sustainable.

In problems audit of gender equality, the auditor should also take into account the possible risk of determining/not determining other issues that may negatively affect the specific programme outcomes.

Good practice: An audit approach that combines both systems and results audit objectives and procedures will reduce the risk of reaching an incorrect conclusion, provide better assurance, and enable auditors to tell a more complete story.

4. Objectives - How should auditors draft the objective(s) of a gender performance audit?

The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) – in ISSAI 300 - Fundamental Principles of Performance Auditing defines the requirement to determine the audit objective as the requirement that "auditors should set a clearly-defined audit objective that relates to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness".

These principles recognize three basic ways of setting or defining audit objectives: **descriptive**, **normative**, and **analytical**.

Descriptive audit objectives ask the question, "How is it?" How are the systems performing or what are the results? An example of a descriptive objective would be "to assess the progress made by the organization in implementing its gender equality programme."

Normative audit objectives ask the question, "Is it as it ought to be?" Are systems meeting expectations or best practices, or are results meeting expectations, performance targets, or best practices? An example of a normative objective would be "to determine whether a gender equity programme is meeting its stated objectives and targets".

Analytical audit objectives ask the question, "Why is it not as it ought to be?" Why are systems or results not meeting expectations? An example of an analytical objective would be "to determine why a gender equity programme has not delivered its expected outcomes."

INTOSAI standards state that normative and analytical audit objectives are more likely to add value than descriptive audit objectives.

Good practice: When drafting audit objectives for an audit of gender equality, auditors should adopt normative or analytical objectives whenever possible. Normative objectives lead to conclusions against clear expectations and so are more likely to add value to the audit than descriptive objectives.

Audit objectives need to be aligned with and related to the audit focus, or the subject of the audit. At this stage, auditors will have acquired knowledge and sufficient information about the subject of the audit and should be able to answer the following questions:

1. Has an organization implemented an initiative aimed at achieving gender equality?
2. Does the management of an organization or programme have general systems and practices that foster gender equality?
3. Are comparative gender equality benchmarks, baseline data, or key performance targets and indicators available?
4. Does management measure gender equality?
5. Could auditors measure gender equality?

Knowing the answer to these questions will help auditors to determine the audit focus and subsequently, the audit objectives. Table 2 presents generic examples of normative audit objectives related to different focus areas. In some cases, auditors will have the flexibility to select more than one type of objective.

For example, an audit team may be able to adopt three different objectives:

1. To determine whether management systems and practices that support the achievement of gender equality meet expectations or best practices.
2. To determine whether management systems and practices to measure and report on gender equality meet expectations or best practices.
3. To determine whether an organization's gender equality performance meets benchmarks, standards, or key performance targets.

In this case, the audit team could select one or more of the three objectives depending on available resources, significance, risk, or other relevant factors, which are directly related to the scope, duration and amount of the audit work.

TABLE 2. Examples of normatively set audit objectives with a specific focus

Focus Area	Normative Audit Objective
Gender equality policy or strategy	To determine whether the design and implementation of the gender equality policy/strategy meets expectations or best practices.
Systems and practices	To determine whether management systems and controls that support the achievement of gender equality meets expectations or best practices.
Measurement and reporting	To determine whether management systems and practices to measure and report on gender equality meet expectations or best practices.
Gender equality results	To determine whether an organization's (or a programme's) gender equality performance meets benchmarks, or key performance targets.

In other cases, this flexibility may not exist.

For example, if management does not measure gender equality and it is determined that it would not be possible or practical for auditors to measure gender equality themselves, then an audit objective related to gender equality results (effects, outputs, results) would not be possible.

The best approach in this case could be to have an objective on systems and practices to measure gender equality (note - setting analytical objectives).

Even when measurements of gender equality exist, the capacity to audit results will be limited if there are no benchmarks, baselines, or key performance targets available to provide a comparison.

5. Audit criteria - How to select the criteria for an audit of gender equality?

The requirements of ISSAI 300, item 29, and ISSAI 3000, items 45 – 51 direct the auditor to establish suitable audit criteria, which correspond to the audit objective(s) and audit questions and are related to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Audit criteria are the benchmarks that auditors use to evaluate the audit subject matter (note – in the case of audit of gender equality) and they have to be reasonable and measurable, evaluable and achievable. Audit criteria can be quantitative and qualitative.

Audit criteria represent the standards expected to be met by the organization being audited. Audit criteria are a key factor for conducting a successful audit with added value, an audit that will contribute and impact the improvement of gender equality in the field. Audit procedures focus on steps by which the auditor will determine whether the criteria are met or not, with what quantity and/or quality they are met, etc. Audit criteria should be clear, concise, relevant, reliable, neutral, understandable, and complete. If the audit criteria are irrelevant or incomplete, then the audit will likely be irrelevant and without added value, with erroneous conclusions and disputable evidence.

Finding suitable criteria is a challenge for any performance audit. There are a number of types of audit criteria for an audit of gender equality. The focus can range from assessing the entire government's policy approach to gender equality, to assessing how a particular programme achieves gender equality.

Therefore, in the selection of audit criteria for an audit of gender equality, there is no and there cannot be "one-size-fits-all" approach to criteria.

Generally, auditors attempt to locate appropriate audit criteria by:

- ▶ researching best practices, standards, and regulations in the area;
- ▶ identifying reliable benchmarks (objectives, outputs, measurements, etc.) in a given sector or using baseline data on an organization's past performance as benchmarks;
- ▶ reviewing prior audit files and published audit reports;
- ▶ contacting colleagues from other SAIs for the same or similar topics and areas; and
- ▶ consulting with academics, and subject matter experts.

The purpose of these Guidelines is not to provide a standard list of audit criteria because there are no universal audit criteria that would fit and be applicable in all audits of gender equality, that is, the purpose is to provide examples of potential audit criteria that will assist in the assessment of:

- ▶ management's systems and practices for achieving gender equality, and
- ▶ the level of gender equality achieved in relation to reliable benchmarks, performance targets, activities or baseline data

Below are examples of how to develop audit criteria related to an **audit of gender equality using the systems-oriented approach and the results-oriented approach**.

Developing criteria for an audit of gender equality using a systems-oriented approach.

The audit criteria should be based on good management practices and systems for achieving gender equality. Auditors may also want to select audit criteria related to the specific strategies the audited organization is using to achieve gender equality.

For example, if the organization has implemented gender equity initiatives to increase the participation of women in its programmes, criteria related to best practices for gender equity and compliance with the organization's gender equity policies may be included in the audit plan as audit criteria.

For example, criteria for an audit of gender equality that emphasizes systems of the audited organization can be based on management activities that foster gender equality in public sector organizations and they will be audit criteria for an audit of gender equality applying a systems-oriented approach.

Studies have shown that a number of conditions (or success factors) must be present to enable organisations to achieve gender equality:

1. Leadership at senior levels
2. A strong enabling environment and organizational culture (policies, plans, resources and accountability)
3. Capacity building and expertise (internal resources, external experts, awareness, technical training)
4. Monitoring and reporting
5. Continuous improvement

Developing audit criteria for an audit of gender equality by applying the results-oriented approach is possible under the following conditions:

- ▶ Performance information is available;
- ▶ Benchmarks, baselines, or performance targets are available; and
- ▶ Management has conducted a gender-based analysis or the audit team could conduct it.

In general, the objective of an audit with an emphasis on results will be to assess the level of gender equality achieved in relation to benchmarks, a baseline, or performance targets. The audit objective could also emphasize the outcomes resulting from a gender-targeted initiative or a gender equity initiative.

Accordingly, criteria and sub-criteria that would support a results objective could relate to:

- ▶ The reliability and other characteristics (such as timeliness, relevance, and completeness) of information produced by the audited organization. For example: "the organization uses timely, relevant, reliable, and complete information to assess its gender equality policies, measures, tools and decisions" or "the organization uses reliable and valid measures of programme performance to assess and report results of its gender equity initiative."
- ▶ The benchmarking processes used by an organization and the choice of appropriate benchmarks. For example: "the organization has selected relevant and reasonable benchmarks to assess its gender equality performance" or "the organization uses reasonable and relevant benchmarks to assess the results of its gender-focused initiative."
- ▶ The comparison of an organization's gender equality performance with benchmarks, baselines, or performance targets. For example: "the organization (or programme, activity, initiative) meets the gender equality targets set out in its strategic plan" or "the organization (or programme, activity, initiative) meets recognized sectoral gender equality standards."
- ▶ The conclusions drawn by an organization on its gender equality performance. For example: "the organization draws appropriate conclusions on its gender equality performance based on performance data and benchmarks, baselines, or performance targets."

When auditors will rely on the organization's performance and benchmarking information, they will need to test the reliability of the data made available to them.

If such information is not available in the organization, auditors may decide to conduct their own benchmarking exercise. In such cases, auditors should consult with subject matter experts to identify appropriate benchmarks.

Annex 3 of these Guidelines presents an example of the content of an audit programme for an audit of gender equality topics/sub-topics used in the first audit conducted by the SAO related to gender equality on the topic **"Effectiveness of Government measures for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives"**.

2.3.2. CONDUCTING PHASE

The phase of conducting a performance audit of gender equality (and its combination with a compliance audit) is the collection and analysis of data and information that will provide appropriate and sufficient audit evidence for auditors to formulate findings, draw appropriate conclusions in response to the set audit objectives and questions, as well as to give applicable recommendations to overcome the determined situations wherever appropriate.

The phase of conducting an audit of gender equality follows and applies the methodological procedures defined for this phase in the Performance Audit Handbook, adopted and applied by the SAO since 2022.

The conducting phase begins after the approval of the Audit Programme document, and in order to achieve the defined tasks through the application of audit methodology and audit techniques, auditors collect sufficient relevant evidence to draw conclusions about the degree of the 3 Es in the use of public funds to achieve the gender equality goals. **Annex 3** to these Guidelines provides an example of the content of an audit programme for audit of gender equality from a performance audit conducted by the SAO in 2021.

The purpose of the conducting phase is to collect and analyse information on the basis of which findings and conclusions will be formulated for the set/defined audit questions.

- ▶ The audit team should be familiar with a variety of data collection and analysis techniques, such as **gender-based analysis**, benchmarking, surveys, **statistical analysis**, and root cause analysis.
- ▶ In an audit of gender equality that emphasizes **systems and controls**, the audit procedures may involve **tests of controls, process mapping, document reviews, physical observation, and interviews**.
- ▶ Auditors may also need to **compare the audited organization to other organizations (at national and international level)** to determine if there are weaknesses, what are the reasons for the differences, and how to overcome the determined situation.

While audits of gender equality will include evidence, data and information collection and analysis techniques common to all performance audits, the selection of audit procedures will also require some special considerations.

The auditor and the audit team should develop skills in applying data collection and analysis techniques such as the following:

- ▶ Gender-based analysis;
- ▶ Benchmarking;
- ▶ Surveys;
- ▶ Statistical analysis;
- ▶ Root causes analysis;
- ▶ Questionnaires (see **Annex 4.1-4.4** to these Guidelines).

For example, if the organization has implemented gender equity programmes, the auditor should compare the organization's gender equity programmes with best practices for gender equity implementation.

In an audit of gender equality that emphasizes results, the auditor will need to conduct audit procedures that focus on measuring gender equality and on assessing the reliability and completeness of gender equality information and benchmarks. When examining results and outcomes, auditors should consider the "attribution" question: is there a reasonable causal relationship between an organization's actions and the observed changes in gender equality? Identifying this reasonable causal relationship can be especially challenging for outcomes, because public sector organizations are often working toward longer-term outcomes where various external factors may affect the final achievement of desired results. In such instances, audited organizations may have only a contributory effect on the outcomes being sought. Subject matter experts may be able to help auditors deal with the attribution question.

Benchmarks

Benchmarks or baseline figures are measures against which the current level of gender equality in an organization, economic sector or population can be compared. Benchmarks may represent best practices or a desired level of gender equality, whereas baselines usually represent a previous level of performance achieved by an organization, sector or population. (Subject matter experts may know good sources of benchmarks.) Equipped with current and reliable benchmarks or baselines, auditors can determine to what extent selected organizations, programmes, or processes are achieving gender equality compared with best practices, or determine whether an organization has improved gender equality over time.

This comparison exercise may pose important challenges to auditors. For example, auditors should be aware that benchmarks or baselines need to be calculated using similar variables, otherwise they will not be easily comparable. In cases where the calculations were not made in an identical or similar manner, auditors will likely need to make adjustments to either the auditee's data or the benchmarks and baselines in order to ensure comparability.

Comparability of data may also be problematic when the only benchmarks available come from international organizations or from the practice of other more or less developed countries. Because international organizations may have different policies, cultural priorities, and objectives than national governments, it may not be fair or appropriate to use an international benchmark to assess the gender equality of a specific public institution, entity, or public service.

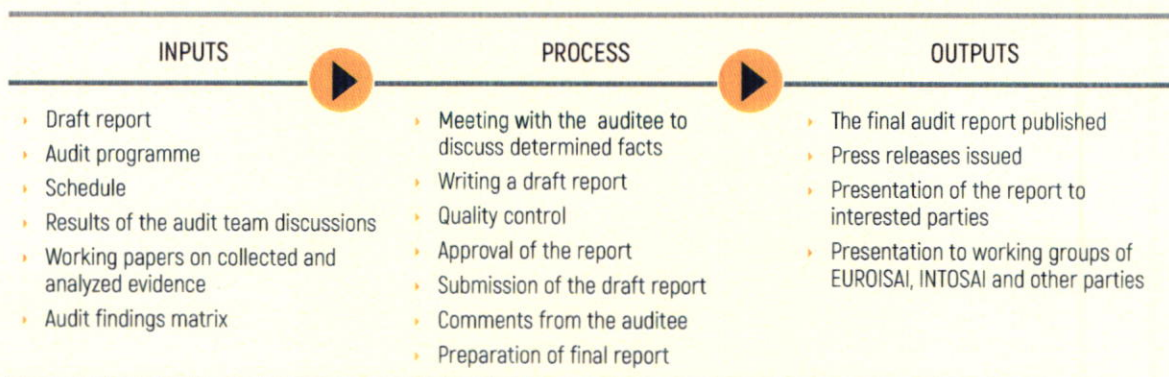
Indirect ways of assessing gender equality

Auditors may use other ways of assessing gender equality to complement their main audit procedures: **surveys of service users, focus groups, and interviews** with various stakeholders will help auditors identify areas where gender equality exists or does not exist (at-risk areas) and where further audit procedures could be directed (by developing audit sub-questions and criteria).

Surveys and interviews may also provide auditors with useful information on potential solutions that could be further examined during the audit. Survey techniques, including focus groups, can be used to assess gender equality within organizations in terms of job quality, compensation, and promotional opportunities.

2.3.3. REPORTING PHASE

The reporting phase presents the audit results by producing a performance audit report. The report should allow readers to understand why and how the audit was conducted and offer practical recommendations that will trigger beneficial changes in policies and advancement of gender equality in government entities, programmes and activities. **The steps of this phase are explained in item 4 of the SAO Performance Audit Handbook adopted in 2022.**



Although the format and writing style of performance audits conform to the requirements of INTOSAI principles and standards, there are a number of different ways, tools and techniques that can be used to increase the impact of audit reports. These techniques are applied in all cases, including performance audits of gender equality issues.

Some key considerations for auditors include:

- ▶ Managing reporting risks by confirming findings and assumptions with experts on gender equality issues;
- ▶ Providing clear messages in audit reports and media communications (e.g. press releases) that will show whether a higher degree of gender equality has been achieved or should be achieved with the same resources or whether improvements require changes to a specific programme, activity, initiatives by the competent entity, and
- ▶ Use of data visualization techniques (infographics, tables, charts and images) and explanatory text that can be used to communicate audit findings in a concise and impactful way.

The reports of these audits of gender equality will also be subject to quality control by the assistant auditor general - responsible for the audit, as well as by the expert body for quality assessment of auditor reports, in order to maintain and ensure the quality of the audit reports, i.e. ensure that the evidence collected is accurate and indisputable and that audit reporting standards are followed and maintained.

2.3.4. FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Follow-up of audit recommendations is part of the audit process. It is an important tool to strengthen an audit's impact. The priority of follow-up tasks is determined by the strategic planning of SAO audits.

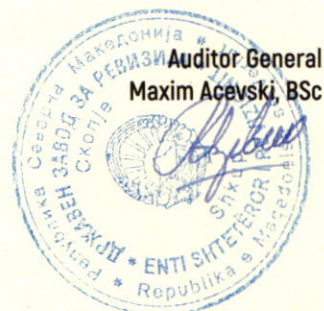
Sufficient time should be allowed for audited organizations to implement action plans, but it should be taken into consideration that resources would be required for conducting the follow-up audit.

Many SAI have a policy of using review-level assurance for follow-up engagements. In a gender equality audit, this would imply restricting the audit to the findings and recommendations of the original audit, updating quantitative information on performance with limited audit tests.

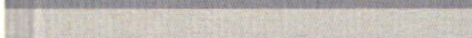
The phase and steps for the follow-up of implementation of recommendations are described in detail in the Handbook for follow-up of recommendations of the SAO (October 2016).

Skopje, No.
Date

01-1486/2
26.12.2022



ANNEXES



ANNEX 1. Characteristics of gender audits

CHARACTERISTICS	GENDER ASPECTS IN PERFORMANCE AUDITS	GENDER ASPECTS IN COMPLIANCE AUDITS
Objectives	<p>To assess whether government initiatives, programmes, sub-programmes, activities, actions respect the principles of equality and equal opportunities within the broader audit topics</p> <p>The main objective of performance auditing of gender aspects is to promote the effective and efficient management of government policies and programmes, taking into consideration that programmes have a different impact on men and women and must be designed to alleviate gender inequalities and contribute to the advancement of gender equality.</p> <p>Performance audit certainly contributes to accountability and transparency. (ISSAI 300/12)</p>	<p>To assess whether the activities of public sector entities are in accordance with the norms that regulate gender equality (the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men).</p> <p>Gender equality legislation can include rules, laws and regulations, budgetary resolutions, policies, established codes, agreed terms, or the general principles governing sound public-sector financial management and the conduct of public servants in the public sector.</p>
Subject matter	<p>The subject matter of performance audit is defined by the audit objectives and audit questions. The subject matter of an audit may be specific programmes, entities or funds, or certain activities (with their outputs, outcomes and impacts), existing situation (including causes and consequences), as well as non-financial or financial information about any of these elements. The auditor measures or evaluates the subject matter to assess the extent to which the established criteria have or have not been met. (ISSAI 100/30)</p>	<p>The subject matter of a compliance audit is defined by the scope of the audit. It may be activities, financial transactions or information. For attestation engagements on compliance it is more relevant to focus on the subject matter information, which may be a statement of compliance in accordance with an established and standardised reporting framework. (ISSAI 100/30)</p>
Required qualifications of auditors	<p>In addition to basic qualifications, auditors must have completed training in gender aspects of policies and budgets</p>	<p>Economic and legal sciences.</p>
Approach and methodology	<p>Differs, depending on the audit, audited organizations and subject matter of the audit.</p>	<p>Standardized or different depending on whether the audit is performed separately or together with the audit of financial statements.</p>
Evidence	<p>Various types of evidence, however, it is recommended evidence to be based on gender-disaggregated statistics.</p>	<p>Conclusions/opinion, which usually meet standardized requirements.</p> <p>The evidence is corroborative in character.</p>
Reporting	<p>Performance audits are usually direct reporting engagements. (ISSAI 100/30)</p> <p>In attestation engagements the responsible party measures the subject matter against the criteria and presents the subject matter information. The outcome of measuring the subject matter against the criteria is presented in the audit report in the form of findings, conclusions, recommendations or an opinion. (ISSAI 100/29)</p> <p>Reports are not periodic.</p>	<p>Compliance audits may be attestation or direct reporting engagements, or both at once. (ISSAI 100/30).</p> <p>Standardized content, including an opinion on compliance with laws, regulations and rules.</p>

ANNEX 2. List of questions for assessing gender aspects in the preliminary phase of a performance audit on a general topic

GUIDELINES FOR AUDITORS IN THE PRELIMINARY PHASE OF A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF GENDER EQUALITY

SITUATION ANALYSIS

- ▶ In the situation analysis, including in assessments and research, general categories such as "people", "citizens", "beneficiaries" do not differentiate between men and women. The conclusions of such analyses, assessments and research may be partial. Research that does not refer directly to the "population" but to laws and policies, still have end beneficiaries - men and women with different needs and aspirations. Therefore, at this phase of the audit, the question is whether, what and how the institution has done to overcome the differences in society and encourage development taking into account the needs of different categories of citizens, especially women and men?
- ▶ Before taking any measures and activities, did the institution conduct an analysis of the situation of men and women in the sector of operation or in the relevant area?
- ▶ Is this analysis based on gender-disaggregated statistical data and does it identify the difficulties faced by different groups of citizens, men and women, in the specific sector or sectors of operation in the case of horizontal programmes?
- ▶ Is there a broader socio-economic analysis that takes into account the disparities that occur, rural - urban areas, planning regions, education, employment and unemployment rates, active population, investments, and all this in relation to the gender variable, i.e. the situation of men and women?
- ▶ Has an assessment of the beneficiaries - men and women (ex ante assessment of policy or regulation) and their needs in relation to the field of action of the policy/programme/plan been made in the process of analysis of the situation?

GOALS, MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES

- ▶ What are the goals and what are the objectives and priorities of the audited programme/sub-programme?
- ▶ Are the selected strategic and programme goals and priorities based on empirical data? Are these empirical data gender-disaggregated?
- ▶ Are there any gender-specific goals in the formulation of the strategic and programme goals?
- ▶ What measures and activities did the institution take? What was the ultimate goal that the programme/sub-programme or initiative was intended to achieve?
- ▶ Does the strategy, programme, sub-programme, action plan include specific measures aimed at supporting women?
- ▶ Who are the key beneficiaries of the measures or activities (men/women ratio)?

BUDGET/FUNDING/SOURCES

- ▶ What is the ratio in the distribution of financial resources?
- ▶ Are the allocated funds spent as planned or are there any deviations or problems?
- ▶ Are there any specific costs in the budget intended to support women?

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- ▶ How does the institution measure the effects of the measures taken?
- ▶ Who will benefit from the initiatives undertaken and in what way? Assess what the benefits are for men and women, bearing in mind that interests and priorities may differ. What are the desired results expected to be achieved with the measures and activities? Did these measures and activities lead to the desired results?
- ▶ What are the implications of these results on various categories of citizens, especially on women? In what way have these measures and activities improved the situation of men and women in the sector?
- ▶ Do the institution's reports contain data disaggregated by gender for the beneficiaries of the measures?
- ▶ Can we conclude that the institution has taken into account the situation of men and women to create fairer measures?

CONSULTATIONS

- ▶ Who was consulted in the process? Did women participate in the consultations?
- ▶ How were the measures evaluated by the beneficiaries? Which instruments were used to measure citizens' satisfaction with the measures? Are there any gender-disaggregated statistics?

NORMATIVE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Are the laws or by-laws that prescribe requirements that have implications on the measures discriminatory?
- ▶ Do the instruments used by the institutions to implement the measures (grants, subsidies, loans, training, and other forms of support) contain data disaggregated by gender, and are they regularly processed?

**Annex 3. Questionnaire sample –Audit Programme contents sample
– Gender Equality Audit (from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)⁵**

AUDIT PROGRAMME

The topic of the performance audit is “Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives”.

The purpose of the performance audit is to determine: “Do the activities undertaken by the competent institutions at the central level provide conditions for the promotion of gender equality”.

DETERMINED RISKS BY AREA

Area 1 – Strategic and legal framework for implementation and achievement of gender equality goals;

- ▶ Risk – Incomplete and/or inadequate implementation of the laws, as well as non-adoption or untimely adoption of by-laws;
- ▶ Risk – Untimely and incomplete fulfilment of strategic priorities and goals, as well as their unclear and inadequate formulation;

Area 2 – Competent authorities and institutions for the implementation of gender equality goals;

- ▶ Risk – A clearly defined organizational and personnel structure with clearly defined competencies, roles and responsibilities of competent institutions and authorities has not been established;
- ▶ Risk – Communication, coordination and cooperation between competent authorities, institutions and other involved stakeholders are not adequate and effective and do not ensure timely and quality promotion of gender equality.

Area 3 – Monitoring the degree of achievement of goals, evaluation and reporting on gender-responsive budgeting;

- ▶ Risk – The methodology for gender-responsive budgeting is not implemented at the expected pace;
- ▶ Risk – Insufficient and incomplete monitoring of the implementation of goals;
- ▶ Risk – Incomplete and insufficient reporting on the degree of implementation of goals;
- ▶ Risk – Gender-responsive budget initiatives are not implemented in a way that will contribute to equality between women and men.

⁵ “Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives”

CONTENT OF THE AUDIT PROGRAMME BY AREAS

The audit programme for each defined area includes: **significant risks, defining issues/tasks that will be audited, criteria, scope, techniques that will be used to obtain audit evidence, determining the limiting factors for the audit and the expected results.**

Area 1 - Strategic and legal framework for implementation and achievement of gender equality goals;

Questions/tasks

- ▶ Has a Gender Equality Strategy been adopted?
- ▶ Are the planned activities implemented in accordance with the Gender Equality Strategy?
- ▶ Are there measurable indicators in place to monitor the progress in the achievement of results and in the fulfilment of the objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy?
- ▶ Have the by-laws been passed in accordance with the Law on Gender Equality?
- ▶ Has a new Law on Gender Equality been adopted?
- ▶ Has a legal representative been appointed by the MLSP to conduct the procedure for determining the unequal treatment of women and men?
- ▶ Have the measures planned in the annual work programmes of the Government of the RNM related to gender equality been fully implemented?
- ▶ Is there an awareness of the importance of achieving gender equality in society?
- ▶ Do the reports of the European Commission on the RNM for the period 2018-2020 define the situation that the RNM has achieved in the area of gender equality?
- ▶ Do the reports of the European Commission on the RNM for the period 2018-2020 determine the situation related to the achievement of gender equality?

Criteria

- ▶ Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020;
- ▶ National action plans for gender equality, for the period 2013 - 2016 and for the period 2018 - 2020; Operational plans for gender equality for 2013, 2015 and 2018;
- ▶ Strategy for Gender-responsive Budgeting 2012-2017;
- ▶ Annual Work Programme of the Government of the RNM for 2018, 2019 and 2020;
- ▶ Annual Work Programme of the Government of the RNM for the period 2020 - 2024;
- ▶ Law on Gender Equality;
- ▶ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- ▶ The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention);

Scope

- ▶ Government of the RNM;
- ▶ General Secretariat of the Government of the RNM;
- ▶ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
- ▶ Commission for equal opportunities for women and men in the Assembly of the RNM;
- ▶ Intersectoral advisory and consultative group on equal opportunities for women and men
- ▶ Political parties;
- ▶ Ministry of Defence;
- ▶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- ▶ Ministry of Education and Science;
- ▶ Ministry of Economy;
- ▶ Ministry of Finance
- ▶ Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning;
- ▶ Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
- ▶ Agency for Youth and Sports;
- ▶ State Statistical Office.

Data/evidence collection and analysis techniques

- ▶ Examination of documentation - files;
- ▶ Comparative analyses;
- ▶ Verification of documentation;
- ▶ Research of professional literature;
- ▶ Interviews;
- ▶ Data analysis;
- ▶ Physical observation/taking photographs.

Limiting factors: None

Expected results

The implementation of the activities foreseen by the strategic and legal acts will contribute to increased efficiency in the achievement of gender equality and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting in the RNM.

Area 2 – Competent authorities and institutions for the implementation of gender equality goals;

Questions/tasks

- ▶ Does the staffing of the MLSP Department of Gender Equality ensure efficiency in the achievement of gender equality?
- ▶ Has the Government of the RNM appointed a coordinator and deputy coordinator for equal opportunities?
- ▶ Do the coordinators and deputy coordinators for gender equality regularly report on their activities to the MLSP?
- ▶ Does the Government of the RNM collect data on the participation of women and men in the composition of its working bodies and delegations, consultative and coordinating bodies and in the appointment of representatives in the management boards of public enterprises and institutions?
- ▶ What is the function of the Intersectoral consultative and advisory group for equal opportunities for women and men?
- ▶ Are the allocated financial resources for the process of achievement of gender equality sufficient and in the function of achieving gender equality?
- ▶ What is the level of cooperation and coordination between the competent institutions involved in the process of achieving gender equality?
- ▶ Has an analysis been carried out of the activities undertaken and the progress achieved in the establishing of equal opportunities for women and men in the RNM?
- ▶ What progress has been achieved in gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting in the country?
- ▶ Are the positions of coordinators and deputy coordinators for gender equality included in the job classification?
- ▶ Has the Resource Centre for gender-responsive policy-making and budgeting been put into operation?
- ▶ Have training courses been conducted for the institutions' management and employees involved in the process of implementing gender equality to improve the situation in the area under their competence?
- ▶ What is the function of the Commission for equal opportunities for women and men as a permanent working body, established by the Assembly of the RNM?
- ▶ Does the Assembly of the RNM, in line with its competencies, work on the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination and improvement of the social status of women and does it integrate the principle of equal opportunities for women and men in legal initiatives, policies and programmes?
- ▶ Does it review the draft laws and other regulations adopted by the Assembly in all areas of social life, as well as other draft laws and other regulations from the aspect of the integration of gender perspective in them?
- ▶ Does it review the draft budget of the RNM, from the aspect of the integration of gender perspective, and does it review gender budget initiatives?
- ▶ Has the draft Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 been reviewed?
- ▶ Are the adoption and application of basic and specific measures for establishing equal opportunities for women and men monitored in all areas of the public and private sector?
- ▶ Is the system of measures for eliminating the unequal treatment of women and men monitored?
- ▶ How is the adoption and amendment of laws and other regulations related to the equal opportunities for women and men monitored?
- ▶ How does it ensure the consistent implementation of the provisions of this law and other laws related to equal opportunities for women and men and non-discrimination?
- ▶ In what way does it encourage cooperation between competent authorities on issues related to equal opportunities for women and men?
- ▶ Does it launch initiatives and activities against the application of gender stereotypes and prejudices in public life?
- ▶ Does it, and in what way does it submit regular information to the Assembly on all issues related to equal opportunities for women and men?
- ▶ Does it, and in what way does it cooperate with the commissions for equal opportunities for women and men in the local self-government units?

- ▶ Does it, and in what way does it cooperate with employers' associations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and associations active in the field of equal opportunities?
- ▶ Does it cooperate with the respective commissions of other countries and in what way?
- ▶ List of persons by gender (women and men), nominated for mayors and members of the Council in the municipalities and the City of Skopje for the local elections held in 2017 and 2021?
- ▶ Are the methods and measures for promoting the equal participation of women and men in the parties' bodies regulated in the acts of the political parties?
- ▶ Are positive measures taken to give priority to persons of the underrepresented gender under equal conditions, until equal representation of women and men is achieved?
- ▶ Do the political parties collect, record and process statistical data, and present them by gender and regularly deliver them to the State Statistical Office?
- ▶ Do at least 40% of the candidates on the submitted list of candidates for Members of Parliament and for members of the Council of the municipality and the City of Skopje belong to the underrepresented sex, as follows: at least one out of every three places to be reserved for the underrepresented sex, with at least one additional place out of every ten places?
- ▶ List of persons by gender (women and men), nominated for Members of Parliament in the parliamentary elections held in 2016 and 2020.
- ▶ List of persons by gender (women and men), nominated for mayors and members of the Council of the municipality and the City of Skopje in the local elections held in 2017 and 2021.

Criteria

- ▶ Annual report on the activities undertaken and the progress achieved in the establishing of equal opportunities for women and men in the RNM for 2018, 2019, 2020;
- ▶ Rulebook on job classification and organization in institutions;
- ▶ Decision on the establishment of the Intersectoral group;
- ▶ Financial resources allocated for gender equality.

Scope

- ▶ Government of the RNM;
- ▶ General Secretariat of the Government of the RNM;
- ▶ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;
- ▶ Commission for equal opportunities for women and men in the Assembly of the RNM;
- ▶ Intersectoral advisory and consultative group on equal opportunities for women and men
- ▶ Political parties;
- ▶ Ministry of Defence;
- ▶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- ▶ Ministry of Education and Science;
- ▶ Ministry of Economy;
- ▶ Ministry of Finance
- ▶ Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning;
- ▶ Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
- ▶ Agency for Youth and Sports;
- ▶ State Statistical Office.

Data/evidence collection and analysis techniques

- ▶ Examination of documentation - files;
- ▶ Comparative analyses;
- ▶ Verification of documentation;
- ▶ Research of professional literature;
- ▶ Interviews;
- ▶ Data analysis;
- ▶ Physical observation/taking photographs;
- ▶ Analysis of the submitted annual progress reports on equal opportunities for women and men of the state administration bodies;
- ▶ Analysis of the submitted annual progress reports on equal opportunities for women and men of local self-government units.

Limiting factors: **None**

Expected results

The correct institutional setting, organization and competencies of the institutions in charge of gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting will contribute to increased efficiency in the process of implementing gender equality in the RNM.

The provision of human, financial, material and technical capacities will increase the efficiency in the process of implementation of gender equality in the RNM.

Questions/tasks

- ▶ Has a methodology been developed for gender-responsive budgeting of the state administration bodies at the central level?
- ▶ What is the situation in relation to men and women in the sector/area covered by the programme?
- ▶ What are their problems, needs, and priorities?
- ▶ What are the conditions and reasons that can make it difficult for men and women to access the opportunities and benefits offered by the programme? (cultural barriers, social and economic, psychological, technological limitations, etc.)
- ▶ Are there any mechanisms in place that allow women and men to express their needs and participate in the definition of priorities in this sector/area?
- ▶ If there is an absence of such mechanisms, does it have a negative impact on gender equality in the area/sector?
- ▶ What are the expected benefits of the programme for men and for women? Will they have equal access to the resources and opportunities offered by the programme?
- ▶ What measures should be taken under the selected programme to improve the situation of equal opportunities for women and men?
- ▶ Are sufficient resources allocated to overcome unequal opportunities, inequalities and limitations that may result from traditional gender roles that create cultural barriers, social and economic, psychological limitations, etc.?
- ▶ Can other programmes and activities contribute to the advancement of gender equality and achieving the expected results of the programme that includes gender-responsive budgeting?
- ▶ Is there continuity in the gender-responsive budgeting process?
- ▶ Has a system been established to monitor the effects of the process of implementation of gender equality in the country?
- ▶ Does the Ministry of Finance keep records of the received gender budget initiatives for the programmes of budget users at the central level?
- ▶ What are the amendments to the Law on Budgets related to the advancement of gender equality?
- ▶ What types of improvements in relation to gender equality are expected with the adoption of the new Law on Budgets?
- ▶ As regards the system for monitoring gender budget initiatives, has an Agreement for monitoring budget initiatives between the MF and UN Women been signed?
- ▶ How it is planned to ensure transparency of budget programmes for which gender budget initiatives have been submitted?
- ▶ Has the MF established a practice of keeping budget requests submitted in electronic form?

Criteria

- ▶ Methodology for gender-responsive budgeting of the state administration bodies at the central level;
- ▶ Gender budget statements;
- ▶ Review of financial resources for the implementation of the programme;
- ▶ Programmes, reports, minutes of meetings, letters, correspondence, and decisions related to gender equality.

Scope

- ▶ Ministry of Defence;
- ▶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- ▶ Ministry of Education and Science;
- ▶ Ministry of Economy;
- ▶ Ministry of Finance
- ▶ Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning;
- ▶ Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
- ▶ Agency for Youth and Sports;
- ▶ State Statistical Office.

Data/evidence collection and analysis techniques

- ▶ Examination of documentation - files;
- ▶ Comparative analyses;
- ▶ Verification of documentation;
- ▶ Research of professional literature;
- ▶ Interviews;
- ▶ Data analysis;
- ▶ Physical observation/taking photographs;
- ▶ Developing questionnaires on the situation with gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting.

Limiting factors **None**

Expected results

Implementation of programmes for gender-responsive budgeting in state administration bodies aimed at improving the overall situation of gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting in the RNM.

Annex 4.1. Questionnaire sample –Budget Statement
(from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)⁶

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEASURES OF
 THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA
 FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND CORRESPONDING GENDER BUDGET INITIATIVES**

QUESTION	ANSWER YES/NO	EXPLANATION
1. When did you start the implementation of the Programme which included gender analysis in the period 2018-2020?		
2. How are the conditions and criteria set for the implementation of the programme in the period 2017 - 2020 and have any changes been made over the years after the completed gender analyses?		
3. Have consultations been carried out with stakeholders in the institution and with other relevant entities that have competencies or interests in the implementation of the programme, as early as in the phase before the preparation of the gender budget statement?		
4. Have detailed analyses been made of the situation, issues, or problems that are related to or cause gender inequality during the preparation of the programme, or detailed analyses have not been made of the situation in the sector, the area to which the programme refers in relation to women and men, their problems, needs and priorities, and the factors that contribute to gender inequality?		
5. Have interventions been proposed to overcome any shortcomings in relation to the situation of women and men, and have the results that should be achieved during the implementation period of the programmes been described in practical steps?		
6. Are the indicators for the programmes defined in a way that will measure the achievements in gender equality?		
7. What amount of funds is allocated for the programme for a period of three years?		
8. Is there a record/overview of gender-disaggregated data of the programme results (allocation of funds for men and women)		
9. Was a final report drawn up at the end of the third year which summarizes the previous annual reports, the achieved results and the progress determined during the monitoring of the programme in relation to equal opportunities for women and men?		
10. Are the programmes continuously monitored to allow decisions to be made on the further course of the programme, learn from the process, and take corrective actions in relation to the activities to be implemented?		
11. List the main problems your institution faces in the implementation of gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting.		

⁶ "Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives"

Annex 4.2. Questionnaire sample – Political Party
(from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)⁷

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SITUATION AND MEASURES TAKEN TO PROMOTE
 THE EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN BY POLITICAL PARTIES**

QUESTION	ANSWER YES/NO	EXPLANATION
Statute of the political party		
Programme of the political party		
1. Do the acts of the political party foresee/include the principle of equal participation of women and men in its bodies?		
2. List of persons by gender (women and men) in the bodies of the political party.		
3. Are positive measures taken to give priority to persons of the underrepresented sex under equal conditions, until equal representation of women and men is achieved?		
4. Do the political parties collect, record, and process statistical data and present them by gender and regularly deliver them to the State Statistical Office?		
5. Do at least 40% of the candidates on the submitted list of candidates for Members of Parliament and for members of the Council of the municipality and the City of Skopje belong to the underrepresented sex, as follows: at least one out of every three places to be reserved for the underrepresented sex, with at least one additional place out of every ten places?		
6. List of persons by gender (women and men), nominated for Members of Parliament in the parliamentary elections held in 2016 and 2020.		
7. List of persons by gender (women and men), nominated for mayors and members of the Council of the municipality and the City of Skopje in the local elections held in 2017 and 2021.		
8. List the main problems faced by the political party in promoting the equal participation of women and men.		

⁷ "Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives"

**Annex 4.3. Questionnaire sample – the Budget
(from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)⁸**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEASURES OF
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA
FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND CORRESPONDING GENDER BUDGET INITIATIVES**

QUESTION	ANSWER YES/NO	EXPLANATION
1. Does the Ministry of Finance keep records of the received gender budget initiatives for the programmes of budget users at the central level?		
2. What are the amendments to the Law on Budgets related to the advancement of gender equality?		
3. What types of improvements in relation to gender equality are expected with the adoption of the new Law on Budgets?		
4. How it is planned to ensure transparency of budget programmes for which gender budget initiatives have been submitted?		
5. How it is planned to ensure transparency of budget programmes for which gender budget initiatives have been submitted?		
6. According to the instructions in the Budget Circular from the Ministry of Finance, budget requests are submitted in two ways: in electronic form through the E-circular application and in printed form. The entry of all forms in the electronic application is mandatory, but the Ministry of Finance has not established a practice of keeping budget requests submitted in electronic form. Has this situation changed?		
7. List the main problems your institution faces in the implementation of gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting.		

⁸ "Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives"

Annex 4.4. Questionnaire sample –the Assembly
(from conducted performance audit by SAO in 2021)⁹

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEASURES OF
 THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA
 FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND CORRESPONDING GENDER BUDGET INITIATIVES**

QUESTION	ANSWER YES/NO	EXPLANATION
1. Does the Assembly of the RNM, in line with its competencies, work on the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination and improvement on the social status of women and does it integrate the principle of equal opportunities for women and men in legal initiatives, policies and programmes, organize public debates and discussions on issues related to equal opportunities for women and men; analyse and give opinion on the impact of legal provisions on the status of women and men, request reports and documentation from competent institutions related to its sphere of work and prepare and publish reports on its work?		
2. Does it review the draft laws and other regulations adopted by the Assembly in all areas of social life, as well as other draft laws and other regulations from the aspect of the integration of gender perspective in them?		
3. Does it review the draft budget of the RNM, from the aspect of the integration of gender perspective, and does it review the gender budget initiatives?		
4. Has the draft Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 been reviewed?		
5. Are the adoption and application of basic and specific measures for establishing equal opportunities for women and men monitored in all areas of the public and private sector?		
6. Is the system of measures for eliminating the unequal treatment of women and men monitored?		
7. How are the adoption and amendment of laws and other regulations in the area of equal opportunities for women and men monitored?		
8. How does it ensure the consistent implementation of the provisions of this law and other laws related to equal opportunities for women and men and non-discrimination?		
9. In what way does it encourage cooperation between competent authorities on issues related to equal opportunities for women and men?		
10. Does it launch initiatives and activities against the application of gender stereotypes and prejudices in public life?		
11. Does it, and in what way does it submit regular information to the Assembly on all issues related to equal opportunities for women and men?		
12. Does it, and in what way does it cooperate with the commissions for equal opportunities for women and men in the local self-government units?		
13. Does it, and in what way does it cooperate with employers' associations, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and associations active in the field of equal opportunities?		
14. Does it cooperate with the respective commissions of other countries and in what way?		
15. Does the Assembly respect the principle of equal participation of women and men when determining the composition of its working bodies and when determining the composition of its delegations for cooperation with international organizations, and when implementing activities for cooperation with the parliaments of other countries?		
16. List the main problems you face in the implementation of gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting.		

⁹ "Effectiveness of the measures of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for gender equality and corresponding gender budget initiatives"

Annex 5. Example of integration of gender perspective in the audit of the policy for balanced regional development with special emphasis on demography

BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON DEMOGRAPHY

The policy for balanced regional development aims to reduce economic, social and territorial differences between regions, by supporting job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development.

Promoting gender equality is an important issue for reducing regional economic and social disparities and for ensuring long-term development of regions. This is also one of the key goals of the EU's cohesion policy.

The main arguments of the EU regarding the regional and cohesion policy say that infrastructure is not sufficient to overcome economic and social disparities. Promoting economic development and empowering women through for example employment on the labour market, higher education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship are also essential elements of regional development.

Failure to recognize gender differences in policies means that development goals related to growth, competitiveness and employment cannot be fully achieved. The economy today points out that gender equality is essential for utilizing the entire human potential in economic development and the development of society as a whole.

For example, investments affect women and men differently, according to their different positions and roles in society. This applies to 'hard' infrastructure investments in facilities such as roads, water supply systems and railways, as well as to 'soft' investments in development of skills for the labour market and education. For example, if the EU invests strongly in sectors such as the automotive sector, aeronautics, engineering, space, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, there is a high risk that gender gaps will widen, as women workers make up only 20% of the workforce in these sectors and tend to work in lower skilled and lower paid jobs. However, if the investments take into account the gender perspective (for example, investing also in vocational training for women, promoting innovation, supporting job creation, increasing employment rates of women and men and supporting the development of the labour market with higher level of qualification, childcare infrastructure, etc.), it is considered that they will contribute to greater equality and increase their effectiveness in terms of inclusive growth.

Hence, an audit of balanced regional development in relation to gender issues could include and require the following aspects:

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- ▶ Review of the current situation in the regions based on statistical data, activity rate, unemployment, employment, investments and leading production sectors in the eight planning regions - Skopje, Vardar, East, South-West, South-East, Pelagonia, Polog and North-East planning regions. These data should be disaggregated by gender as a basis for future government interventions.
- ▶ If it is considered that the disparities we observe are not present only at the regional level, but are also present in the form of population stratification, poverty in underdeveloped regions and the enormously developed Skopje region, which has been extremely affected by urban development, the situation analysis should take into account the underlying reasons.
- ▶ When adopting strategic and planning documents, do they include a description of the socio-economic aspects of men and women in the situation analysis section in all eight planning regions?
- ▶ Do the data used in the presentation of the situation in the eight planning regions include statistics, tables, charts, etc. that include gender variables?
- ▶ Is there a gender gap in wages between planning regions?
- ▶ What is the structure by gender in relation to the outflow of young people, including brain drain?
- ▶ Beneficiaries of social assistance are mentioned. Has an assessment been made of the social assistance beneficiaries by gender?

NORMATIVE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Does the policy for stimulating balanced regional development, including some of the instruments and measures, recognize the economic and social disparities between men and women?
- ▶ Has an analysis been made of the trends in the eight planning regions related to the position of men and women and including demographic data, the labour market, sectors, and activities in which women or men are predominantly involved?
- ▶ If the model for balanced and sustainable development is based on the model of polycentric regional development, similar to the one in the EU, and is based on greater labour force movement, infrastructure development and investment in innovation, the question is whether the policy recognizes the workforce based on gender-disaggregated data, that is, presents the sectors and activities in which women and men mostly participate?
- ▶ If one of the objectives to be achieved with this model is to reduce the disparity between regions at all levels and prevent demographic, economic and infrastructural concentration in one region, the question is whether the strategies to overcome these problems recognize the different needs and interests of women and men?
- ▶ Polycentric development policies should also stimulate and be based on bottom-up initiatives and cooperation practices. Regional diversity from geographical and economic aspect should be among the key points for establishing links and cooperation. These strategies and policies present the sectors on which the economy was mostly based. Hence, the question is in which sectors and activities are women most represented, and in which men, considering that they make up a significant part of the inactive population?
- ▶ Part of the programmes for regional economic development of the planning regions are aimed at the development of the business community and the opportunities for starting new businesses and business projects. These programmes plan economic measures and strategic objectives to support small and medium-sized enterprises, industry, employment, tourism, and innovation, and are based on loans and types of funding provided by banks, private savings banks, IPA and IPARD funds to support the economy. The key question is who are the beneficiaries of these programmes and measures? How many men and women are supported by the programme, in which sectors, activities, and with what amounts of funding?
- ▶ The programmes that contribute the least to the economy, such as art, entertainment and service activities, should also be considered from the perspective of the users and the owners of these activities, men or women.
- ▶ If the measures and instruments for balanced regional development refer to beneficiaries, people, or citizens, were gender issues also covered by the analysis?
- ▶ Are the adopted strategic, planning, and programme documents based on evidence?
- ▶ Are the implications of the implemented measures and instruments for balanced regional development related to different categories of citizens (including men and women) sufficiently clearly elaborated and used as a basis for taking interventions in line with the relevant policy?

FUNDING

Regarding the actual situation, the following should be examined:

- ▶ Out of the total implemented xxx projects in the amount of xx million euro, what were the funds spent for in terms of beneficiaries (business owners - men, women; sectors or areas of activity, etc.).
- ▶ Which activities or sectors were covered by the implementation of these projects?
- ▶ In the case of infrastructure projects, how were the priorities determined - were any consultations held with groups of beneficiaries, particularly women?
- ▶ This is an important question in terms of whether infrastructure projects are only related to roads or also include kindergartens, schools, health facilities, etc.?
- ▶ Has an analysis been made of the end beneficiaries (men, women) and their needs for long-term investments in the regions?
- ▶ When allocating funds to projects, were there any specific projects intended for women?

- ▶ When evaluating the results of the strategy, in addition to GDP, other indicators and rankings are also taken into consideration, such as: Development Index, Competitiveness, Ease of Doing Business, Human Development Index and others, which show the extent to which the poorer regions actually improved in terms of productivity, employment, quality of life, education level and value added per employee. All these indicators allow a deeper qualitative perspective of living and working conditions in individual regions.
- ▶ However, these index measurements and surveys use general categories such as "people", "citizens", or "beneficiaries", and do not differentiate between men and women. The conclusions of such surveys may be partial. Surveys that do not refer directly to the "population" but to laws and policies, in the end still have end beneficiaries - men and women with different needs and aspirations. So the question is, what can we do further to overcome the differences and encourage balanced regional development taking into account the needs of women and men?
- ▶ How does the Government measure the effects of the measures taken?
- ▶ In what way did these measures improve the situation in terms of employment or retaining employment of men and women in any sector?
- ▶ How were the measures evaluated by the beneficiaries? Which instruments were used to measure citizens' satisfaction with the measures? Are there any gender-disaggregated statistics available?

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Strategy for gender equality for the period 2022-2027;**
- ▶ **The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men¹⁰** was first adopted in 2006 and was amended in 2012. This Law provides the main legal framework that regulates gender equality issues. It regulates the basic and specific measures for establishing equal opportunities for women and men, as well as the competencies, tasks and obligations of the entities responsible for establishing equal opportunities, the procedure for determining unequal treatment of women and men, and the rights and duties of the representative for equal opportunities for women and men. At the time of preparation of these Guidelines, a new **Law on Gender Equality** is being drafted, which strives for greater compliance with international standards, requirements and directives;
- ▶ In 2020 a new **Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination¹¹** was adopted, which is considered as an important instrument for addressing multiple and intersectional discrimination faced by women;
- ▶ In 2019 a new **Law on Social Protection¹²** was adopted, which reforms the entire system of social protection to more effectively meet the needs of all citizens, with a particular focus on women and girls of vulnerable categories;
- ▶ In 2021 a new **Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence¹³** was adopted, which expands the system of prevention and protection against all forms of gender-based and domestic violence, in accordance with the standards of the Istanbul Convention;
- ▶ **The Law on Family¹⁴** regulates the minimum age for marriage, parental rights and obligations, rights to dissolution of marriage etc.;
- ▶ **The Law on Budgets¹⁵** foresees the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting. Namely, the section for budget principles includes the principle of gender equality, which implies gender-responsive budgeting, that is, taking into consideration gender equality in the planning and execution of budget inflows and outflows.
- ▶ The amendments to the **Electoral Code** of 2015¹⁶ introduced a quota of at least 40% representation of the underrepresented sex on the lists of party candidates, as follows: at least one out of every three places shall be reserved for the underrepresented sex, with at least one additional place out of every ten places.
- ▶ The amendments to the **Law on Labour Relations** from 2015¹⁷ regulate equal pay for women and men and equal treatment in relation to employment, working hours, working conditions, occupational social security schemes and absence from work. At the time of preparation of these Guidelines, a **new Law on Labour Relations** is being drafted, which will be harmonized with the EU Directive on parental rights¹⁸ and will introduce parental leave for men;

¹⁰ "Official Gazette of the RM" No. 6 of 13.1.2012

¹¹ "Official Gazette of the RNM" No. 258 of 30.10.2020

¹² "Official Gazette of the RNM" No. 104 of 23.5.2019

¹³ "Official Gazette of the RNM" No. 24 of 29.1.2021

¹⁴ "Official Gazette of the RM" No. 80/92, 9/96, 38/2004, 33/2006, 84/2008, 67/2010, 156/2010, 39/2012, 44/2012, 38/2014, 115/2014, 104/2015 and 150/2015.

¹⁵ "Official Gazette of the RNM" No. 203/2022

¹⁶ Law amending the Electoral Code ("Official Gazette of the RM" No. 196 of 10.11.2015)

¹⁷ "Official Gazette of the RM" No. 74 of 8.5.2015

¹⁸ Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC.

- ▶ With the adoption of the **Law on Minimum Salary**¹⁹ in 2017 the gender pay gap was reduced equalizing the minimum salary for workers in the garment, leather and footwear industries, where the majority of employees are women;
- ▶ The **Law on Protection from Harassment at the Workplace**,²⁰ which is being amended at the time of preparation of these Guidelines, aims at “prevention and protection from psychological and sexual harassment at the workplace [...] and ensuring a healthy working environment”.
- ▶ In 2019, a new **Law on Termination of Pregnancy**²¹ was adopted, which is a great achievement in the area of reproductive rights and a postulate of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. In addition, the **Law on Health Care**²² guarantees access to health care for all women;
- ▶ The new **Law on Free Legal Aid**,²³ within the scope of primary legal aid, among others, covers victims of gender-based and domestic violence, assistance in the procedure for registration in the birth register, acquisition of personal identification and citizenship documents, social protection procedure and protection of children’s rights, pension, disability and health insurance etc.;
- ▶ The new **Law on Primary Education**²⁴ was adopted in 2019 and prohibits any type of direct and indirect discrimination in primary education, provides affirmative measures for addressing discrimination and promotes equality;
- ▶ In 2018, amendments were adopted to the **Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education**²⁵ in order to further regulate and specify the procedures for publishing and providing textbooks in schools with the aim of ensuring better quality teaching materials that will be free from discriminatory and stereotyping content;
- ▶ The **Law on Audio and Audio-visual Services**²⁶ pays special attention to fair gender and ethnic representation in the media decision-making bodies. With the amendments of 2018, the Law prevents, among other things, discrimination in the media based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and belonging to a marginalized group;
- ▶ The **Criminal Code**²⁷ classifies as criminal offences punishable by imprisonment and other measures offences such as domestic violence, rape, and other types of gender-based violence. At the time of preparation of these Guidelines, activities are underway to amend the Criminal Code to harmonize it with the Istanbul Convention by regulating new incriminations in relation to violence against women.

¹⁹ “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 11/2012, 30/2014, 180/2014, 81/2015, 129/2015 and 132/2017

²⁰ “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 79 of 31.5.2013

²¹ “Official Gazette of the RNM” No. 101 of 22.5.2019

²² “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 37/2016, consolidated text.

²³ “Official Gazette of the RNM” No. 101 of 22.5.2019.

²⁴ “Official Gazette of the RNM” No. 161 of 5.8.2019

²⁵ “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 98/2008, 99/2009, 83/2010, 36/2011, 135/2011, 46/2012, 24/2013, 120/2013, 29/2014, 146/2015, 217/2015, 30/2016 and 21/2018.

²⁶ “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 184/13 and 13/14, 44/14, 101/14, 132/14, 142/16, 132/17, 168/18, 248/18, 27/19 and “Official Gazette of the RNM” No. 42/20.

²⁷ “Official Gazette of the RM” No. 80/99, 4/2002, 43/2003, 19/2004, 81/2005, 60/06, 73/06, 7/08, 139/08, 114/09, 51/11, 135/11, 185/11, 142/12, 166/12, 55/13, 14/14, 27/14, 28/14, 115/14 and 132/14.

