

DIKTAS II

Implementation of the strategic action program (SAP) of the Dinaric karst aquifer system:
improving groundwater governance and sustainability of related ecosystems.



2nd in-person EXPERT MEETING

10-11 November 2025

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Gender Assessment of Albania's Water Sector

Presenter: Irena Topalli
Gender expert (AL)





Integrating Gender Equality in Water Governance under DIKTAS II

Objective: Understand how **gender roles, policies, and institutions** shape access to and management of water in Albania.

Focus area: Cemi aquifer / Malësia e Madhe
(transboundary zone with Montenegro).

Data sources: national statistics, UNECE 2024, EC 2025, UN Women, INSTAT, and desk review; field KIIs & FGDs
→ pending.

Why Gender and Water Matter

- **SDG 5 + SDG 6** → Gender equality and safe water are interconnected.
- Women manage domestic water, men dominate technical and governance roles.
- Water policies can **either reinforce inequalities or drive change**.
- Gender-responsive water management equals smarter, fairer, and more sustainable development.

Albania's context

– A SNAPSHOT

- Population as of 2023 is 2.4 million (↓ 14 % since 2011); ageing and out-migration.
- 50.4 % female; women's education levels surpass men's, yet labor participation 62 % vs 78 %.
- Over 50 % of employed women work in agriculture and are often unpaid or informal.
- Male out-migration has increased; → rural women have more farm & water duties.
- **Cemi region:** mountainous, sparse infrastructure → heavy water-collection burden for women.

Legal and Policy Framework

- **CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, Law on Gender Equality (2008), Law on Protection from Discrimination (2010).**
- **National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030** is inter-sectoral but implementation remains uneven.
- **Water Supply and Sewerage Strategy 2023–2030** targets rural equity but not yet gender-specific.
- **Institutions:** MHSP (Gender Equality Dept.), MIE (Water policy), AKUM, ERRU, local Gender Equality Officers.
- **Positive signs:** gender expert in **National Water Council; Gender Agenda for Water Utilities 2019-2030.**



Water as an Asset

– Employment and Control

- Women: constitute between 10 - 40 % of utility staff and mostly in admin/finance positions. (GIZ-Gender Agenda)
- Few women engineers or managers which means less influence on decisions. (REC,GAAPWUA)
- Despite legal equality, only 8% of Albanian women own land, which limits their access to resource control and irrigation rights. (UN Women, 2018)

Water as a Service

-Access and Burden

When we talk about ‘water as a service’ we mean not just having a tap, but *how reliably, how conveniently, and how affordably* the water is delivered.

- In urban Albania, roughly **9 of every 10 people have access to piped water**. However, in rural areas that figure drops to just under 6 out of 10.
- This gap of about 30 % translates into many households lacking home-connections
- Even where piped connections exist, service continuity is weak: the national average in many utilities is around 12 hours per day. That means many people have limited access.

Water as a Social Space

– Decision Making

- Decision-making bodies (boards & committees) in water utilities are largely male.
- Technical and management roles show similarly low female presence.
- Cultural norms impede meaningful inclusion of women in governance.

Source: Gender Agenda (2020) pages 4–5; Identifying Opportunities for Women in the Western Balkan Water Sector (2021) page 24.

Root Causes & Cross-Cutting Issues

- **Policy-practice gap:** laws exist, implementation is weak!
- **Data deficit:** few sex-disaggregated indicators in utilities or projects.
- **Institutional fragmentation:** gender & water bodies work in silos.
- **Social norms:** technical jobs still seen as “male.”
- **Intersectionality:** rural, Roma/Egyptian, elderly, disabled women most affected.

Opportunities and Good Practices

- **Younger generation** more open to gender equality.
- Rising number of female **STEM** graduates.
- **EU accession** = leverage for gender mainstreaming in infrastructure.
- **Donor programs** (UNDP, World Bank, GIZ etc) support gender action plans for utilities.

Recommendations

Strategic:

- Integrate gender targets (≥ 30 % women in governance bodies).
- Formal Gender & Water Task Force between MHSP and MIE.
- Apply Gender-Responsive Budgeting to water programs.
- Adopt UNECE & WWAP gender indicators.

Institutional:

- Strengthen gender focal points in utilities & agencies.
- Mandatory gender training for staff.
- Mentorship & internships for female engineers.

Operational (Cemi focus):

- To be concluded after the analysis of KIIs and FDGs

Next Steps & Way Forward

Field phase: 10–15 Key Informant Interviews + FGDs in Cemi (Malësia e Madhe).

Focus: validate gaps, collect gender-specific data, identify local examples.

Final output: Consolidated Gender Analysis & Action Plan for Albania Water Sector.

Water is life, economy, and power and gender equality ensures it flows fairly for all.

Albania has the laws, the talent, and the opportunity. Now is the moment to turn commitments into results.

Thank you

ira.topalli@gmail.com

