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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION - MAKING PROCESSES REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Abstract: According to the European Commission, environment protection is an area in which Serbia will have to make maximum efforts to fully meet European standards and requirements of sustainable development in the future. Problems of waste management is especially serious, and in the environmental protection system, it requires immediate attention of wider scientific circles and experts, but also participation and partnership of all members of our community. Starting from the guidelines and recommendations of a number of policy documents that promote partnership and gender equality as a prerequisite for future-oriented development and broader participation of women in decision-making regarding environmental protection, research interests of the authors of this paper are directed towards the problems of women's participation in waste management. The starting point of the study is a hypothesis that women are not sufficiently involved in the decision-making process relating to waste management issues. Within the descriptive research method, methods of primary and secondary source analysis, a comparative analysis and a non-standardized interview were used. The research sample consisted of employees of Public Utility Companies in the Region of Nis, which is included in the Regional Waste Management Plan. The research results indicate a need for women to organize themselves more effectively and efficiently in order to get access to positions that will allow them more power, and therefore become more influential in decision-making in all spheres of social and public life as well as in the field of waste management and environmental protection.

Key words: environmental protection, waste management, women, decision-making, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

A civilizational perspective indicates that social justice in the form of equality between men and women is not easily achieved. However, in modern circumstances, precisely a partnership based on equality between women and men is a necessary condition for the future-oriented development.[10]

The Third UN World Conference on Women (Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, Nairobi, 1985), United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the All-Russian Congress of Nature Protection (Moscow, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Amsterdam Treaty and other numerous legal and strategic regulations that define women's participation in decision-making regarding issues related to the environment and achieving sustainable development, were the turning points in the perception of women's role in environmental protection and a general relation of gender-environment-development. [6]

According to the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women in terms of improving the status of women, adopted in Nairobi in 1985, it is necessary to remove all obstacles that stand in the way of active women's participation in all spheres of public and private life, by providing their full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making process. This would mean that the principle of equality and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, at the workplace, in the local community and in the wider national and international community. (Ibid)

Considering the gender aspects of environmental protection, some Russian authors suggest that environmental awareness includes not only genetic and phenomenological, but also the gender aspect that reflects differences in how men and women assess environmental problems and determine the ways of solving them [9],[7].

A famous Czech psychologist Černoušek M., came to the results that indicate the existence of differences in the games of boys and girls relating to the organization and use of space, ie. Environment. [5]

Extrapolating these results on adults, the author comes to the conclusion that men exhibit a tendency to master the environment, are more explosive and that explosiveness affects their activities in the environment, while women tend to organize the interior space, beautify it, and are more interested in other people, their problems, and are more sensitive in social contacts etc. (Ibid)

According to Berdyaev (1989), Solovyov (1991) and Rozanov (1990), the formation of ecological consciousness, which in its natural basis implies the unity of male and female principles, ie. interconnection between gender values, is only possible on the way to a culture that combines the feminine and masculine values (diversity of approach to life and its values), which, in fact, by merging and complementing one another, form a single social organism as part of a unique organism - the environment.[4][11][12]

In a number of relevant documents of international and European organizations, conferences, institutions and initiatives, the link between sustainable development, economic empowerment of women and implementation of the principle of gender equality and equal opportunities, is clearly promoted [2].

In addition to the Amsterdam Treaty, the European Charter on Gender Equality, which was adopted in most municipalities in Serbia, is also credited for promotion of gender equality within the EU.

At the global level, great progress has been achieved in the field of gender equality as evidenced by numerous examples of official recognition of gender equality. Have such developments been achieved in the Serbian economic practice or everything has remained at the level of mere theory? This issue was a special challenge for the authors of this paper to investigate and report the results that give a realistic picture of the situation in relation to women's participation in decision-making related to environmental protection in a local community of the Republic of Serbia.

Local authorities, as authorities closest to the community, are the most appropriate basis for partnership, equality and fight against proliferation of inequality.[14]

Local authorities and institutions are in a position, through their competence and cooperation with local community stakeholders, to take concrete steps towards achieving equality between women and men, especially when it comes to decision-making processes in the field of environmental management and sustainable development.

WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Women and the poor make up the majority of the world population, while at least half of the electorate in most countries belongs to women. They have been given the right to vote and to perform functions in almost all member states of the United Nations.

Serbia, as a country that is on the road to joining the EU, in accordance with the EU Gender Equality Law, is obliged to provide participation of 30% of women in all bodies involved in the decision-making process. [15] These statutory provisions require participation of women in this percentage also in the bodies dealing with waste management and environmental protection on the local government territory or in a region, as well as in all structures within public companies.

However, in Serbia there are still stereotypes of male and female jobs, which are traditionally passed on to all government and political structures. As a consequence, it is evident that there is smaller participation of women in governance bodies and decision-making processes. Women traditionally have restricted access to the positions of power, such as bodies of political parties, public companies, managerial organizations...

Participation of women at the local level is particularly important, because there lies the beginning of making decisions, policies and programs development that directly affects the fulfillment of basic human needs. In order to ensure women's equal participation in the programs and processes of environmental protection and sustainable development in practice, it is essential that they participate actively in decision-making processes as relevant factors in their bodies and at management positions.

The National Strategy for Women Empowerment defines increasing women's participation in decision-making processes as one of the six goals.[2]

Men and women have different priorities in almost all areas, different roles in the family, in the society, at the workplace, and different perceptions of existing problems. Characteristics of gender differences often cause some different priorities and different possibilities regarding environmental protection, especially at the local level. Of course, this does not mean that men or women have natural predispositions for environmental protection. Under the influence of the social ambient, as well as peculiar customary norms, adopted values, codes of conduct and social stereotypes, men and women treat certain issues and problems of environmental protection differently.

In underdeveloped or developing countries, women's participation in decision-making frequently causes doubt. This raises the question, what is actually the goal of improving the current condition in the field of environmental protection.

Developing countries are often faced with poverty, and poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated. The consequence of poverty of a country is environmental degradation, and a major cause of continued deterioration of the environment lies in the unsustainable way of consumption and production, which further increases the imbalance in the environment.

The imbalance of the environment undermines the already fragile ecosystems, which further results in alienation of communities, especially women, from

productive activities, and for that reason a progressive impact on environmental quality occurs. In the traditional perception, women are the ones who prepare food in the household, go shopping, take care of hygiene in the household and the local community planning, but in addition they also deal with waste management at the household level, without any financial compensation. Women are the ones who carry out the first steps in the field of waste management, selecting household waste. Insufficient awareness of women on waste management and their insufficient participation, directly affect the increase in environmental pollution [4].

Let us just recall that all international documents that consider environmental issues insist on equal representation of women in the decision-making process, in the institutions and bodies at all levels that deal with the issue of sustainable development and environmental protection. Twenty years after the UN Conference on Sustainable Development was held, there was a new conference held in June 2012 entitled RIO+20 which summarized the achieved results, and among other things the Declaration entitled "Future We Want" was adopted then. Articles 44 and 45 are to be specifically noted as they emphasize a prominent role of women in environmental protection and achieving sustainable development.

Article 44: "We appreciate the role of civil society and importance of active participation of all members of the society in achieving sustainable development"

Article 45: "We underline that women play a vital role in achieving sustainable development. We appreciate the leadership role of women and we are committed to promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in order to ensure their full participation in policy-making for sustainable development". [17]

As a confirmation thereof, it is stated that women are more inclined to care about waste and recycling, that virtually the entire waste management process starts right in the household, and that women are those who perform waste selection before disposing it, in a higher percentage than men. Traditional values and status condition the situation where men have a more relaxed attitude towards the environment.[3]

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Professional waste management in communal waste and recycling companies, facilities for waste treatment and decision making in the process of waste management is usually awarded to men. Hence the subject of this study is precisely directed to determination of women's participation in bodies that deal with waste management at the local or regional level. The main starting hypothesis for the authors of this paper is to present that the status of women's participation in decision-making processes in waste management is not in compliance with the existing legislation which defines gender equality in decision-

making in various fields of human activities and operations [15]

Within the descriptive research method, methods of primary and secondary source analysis, a comparative analysis and a non-standardized interview were used. The research sample consisted of employees of Public Utility Companies in the Region of Nis included in the Regional Waste Management Plan.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN WASTE MANAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Institutional framework for waste management at the local level

Pursuant to the Law on Waste Management of the Republic of Serbia, any substance or object contained in the List of Waste (Q-List) which the holder discards or intends or is required to discard, is classified as waste.[16]

By place and source of generation, there are four types of waste which include household waste, generated in residential buildings, official premises (facilities, offices), stores. This waste is mainly the waste from food procession and consumption (remains of plant and animal origin), while other household waste generated in the process of maintaining hygiene in the home may contain combustible components (cardboard, paper, plastics, textiles, rubber, leather, furniture) and noncombustible components (glass, cans, appliances, etc.), as well as chemicals used in the household, so that they can affect both the health of women and the environment, and fall into the category of hazardous substances that have to be relocated within short deadlines to the place of final disposition.[16]

Waste management is the implementation of measures prescribed for treatment of waste within the collection, transport, storage, treatment and disposal of waste, including the supervision of such activities and taking care of waste management facilities.[16]

Inadequate waste management is one of the biggest problems from the aspect of environmental protection of the Republic of Serbia and solely the result of inadequate attitude of the society towards waste. Institutions that are relevant for waste management at the local level: local government, utility companies, bodies of public utilities, urban planning, environmental development and protection. These institutions carry out waste management pursuant to the Law on Waste Management of the Republic of Serbia, the National Waste Management Strategy, regional and local waste management plans. The Regional Waste Management Plan defines the orientation of waste management for the next period based on the development of economic and industry conditions; primary orientation of waste management based on the strategic plans of the EU; determination of the hierarchy of possible waste management options;

identification of responsibility for waste, harmonization of regulations in this field, etc.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN WASTE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES IN THE REGION OF NIŠ

The region of Nis, formed for joint waste management, consists of seven municipalities and the City of Nis. In this region, 400,328 residents gravitate in 133,776 households. The level of coverage of the regional waste management plan is 65%, because in many rural areas, there is no organized collection and treatment of waste. [8]

The level of coverage of the regional waste management plan is 65%, because in many rural areas, there is no organized collection and treatment of waste. [8]

In the region of Nis within which regional waste management is being implemented, there are seven Public Utility Companies (PUC) that deal with waste management, based on regional and local waste management plans. Examining the data of these Public Utility Companies on the structure and number of employees (Public Utility Company "Mediana" in Nis; Public Utility Company "Doljevac" from Doljevac; Public Utility Company "Komunalac" from Ražanj; Public Utility Company "Directorate for Construction of Merošina municipality" from Merosina; Public Utility-Housing company "Svrljig" from Svrljig; Public Utility Company "Utility Services" from Aleksinac; Public Utility Company "Napredak" from Sokobanja and Public Utility Company "Directorate for Construction and Utilities" from Gadzin Han), the following conclusions can be made that will be explained later in this paper. The number of employees in public utilities in the region, according to the insight into the number of employees, amounts to a total of 1,437, while 590 workers are employed in the waste management sector.

Table 1. *The total number of employees in PUCs in the region of Nis*

Public Utility Company	T1	N1	N2
PUC "Medijana" Nis	925	5	0
PUC "Napredak" Sokobanja	112	1	1
PUC "Svrljig" Svrljig	46	0	0
PUC "Directorate for Construction and Utilities" Gadzin Han	38	3	1
PUC Aleksinac	88	25	2
PUC "Komunalac" Ražanj	18	4	0
PUC "Doljevac" Doljevac	73	7	1

T1 - Total number of employees

N1 - Number of women employed in the waste management sector

N2 - Number of women employed at management positions

In developing countries, it is almost a common practice of inadequate waste management. In Serbia and other developing countries, according to unwritten rules, this field belongs to men, all under the pretext of protecting women from difficult and extremely demanding jobs. The results presented in the Tables below indicate that there is such a situation in the waste management system in the region of Nis.

Table 2. *Number of employees in the waste management sector*

Public Utility Company	T1	N3
PUC "Medijana" Nis	925	256
PUC "Napredak" Sokobanja	112	No sector formed
PUC "Svrljig" Svrljig	46	-
PUC "Directorate for Construction and Utilities" Gadzin Han	38	-
PUC Aleksinac	88	-
PUC "Komunalac" Ražanj	18	-
PUC "Doljevac" Doljevac	73	-

N3 - Number of employees in the waste management sector

On the basis of the number of workers in the PUCs shown in Table 3, one can draw the conclusion that the percentage of women employed in the Waste Management sector in the region of Nis is less than one percent. (See Table 3)

Table 3. *Percentage of women employed in the PUCs in the Region of Nis*

Public Utility Company	T1	N4	N5
PUC "Medijana" Nis	100	0,54	0
PUC "Napredak" Sokobanja	100	17,86	0,89
PUC "Svrljig" Svrljig	100	0	0
PUC "Directorate for Construction and Utilities" Gadzin Han	100	7,89	2,63
PUC Aleksinac	100	28,41	2,27
PUC "Komunalac" Ražanj	100	22,22	0
PUC "Doljevac" Doljevac	100	9,59	1,37

N4 - Number of women employed

N5 - Number of women employed at management positions

According to the survey conducted by the Gender Equality Directorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2012, it can be concluded that also at the national level, the number of women at leadership positions in this sector is very small. Namely, the participation percentage is in favor of men. Women are directors in 275 public companies out of 810, but in this case preschool and school institutions are included. In this regard, if we take into consideration only public utility institutions, proportional representation of women directors is far less than men directors. The ratio is 16% women and 84% men. [2].

These results largely question the implementation of legal measures that require the presence (participation) of at least 30% of women in all bodies at the local, regional or national level.

Based on all the data presented in the above tables, we can also draw the conclusion that the situation is more or less the same in all companies providing services in the field of waste management, i.e. in public utility companies in the region of Nis women's participation is less than 30%, and even in some parts of the region, i.e. in public companies, the percentage is between 1% and 10%.

Considering that the City of Nis adopted the European charter for equality of women and men in December 2013, these results raise many questions and doubts regarding women's participation in decision-making related to environmental protection.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the guidelines and recommendations of the European Union regarding environmental protection, a number of legal and strategic documents, as well as relevant literature sources that study gender environmental aspects, encouraged the authors of this paper to look at the problems of decision-making, partnership in environmental protection and achieving sustainable development, from a new, under-researched discourse.

Literature sources indicate that there is a kind of link between the society attitudes towards nature and the society attitude towards women.[1]

In a society that has an exploitative attitude towards nature, there is a large percentage of women engaged in hard physical labor and they have a low socio-economic and political status. Hence, alienation of the society from nature could be viewed as alienation of women and men and their inherent masculine and feminine nature. This alienation culminates in a society that is characterized by expansion of the ecological crisis, aggression, wars, development of social pathology.

A way to overcome the existing problems should be sought in partnership and gender equality and equal participation in all aspects of human activity and operations, especially when it comes to environmental protection and sustainable development in the future.

In this study, we did a research on the partnership, i.e. existence or absence of equality between men and women in waste management as an important segment of environmental protection in a local community. The results of the empirical study have confirmed our hypothesis about insufficient women's participation in decision-making related to environmental protection at the local level.

From all the data presented in this paper, it can be concluded that only one PUC in the region of Nis has created a sector for waste management (Table 2). This sector is in the PUC "Mediana" and it consists of three

departments. In all other PUCs Waste Management is implemented by mixed services of the PUC, more precisely, none of the above six companies has established a sector for waste management. Seen from the point of view of the user, it can be said that the quality of services in the field of waste management is reduced in this way.

By further review of the data on participation of women and men in the PUCs, it can be concluded that the number of women employed in PUCs in the region in of Nis is very low. In most of the PUCs, the number of employed women is under ten, which is less than the legally required minimum stake of 30% of the total number of employees.

The data presented in the above Tables show that in the region of Niš, women in general are less employed in utility companies, especially at positions dealing with waste disposal and transportation. From the review of the data on participation of women and men in decision-making positions within the Region of Nis, or local public companies dealing with waste management, we can draw the conclusion that women do not participate in decision-making in the field of waste management. Women's participation in the above-mentioned public companies at management positions, has not been implemented sufficiently, it can even be described as insignificant. So few women at leadership positions in the field of waste management question the attitude towards the environment and towards the development of services in the field of waste management. Women and men have different gender roles and related activities, as well as different attitudes towards public health, the environment and education related to these fields.

Especially at the local (regional) level, these and other gender-related differences shape types of services that are required by all residents. For this reason, it is important to ensure women's participation in decision-making related to the field of waste management at the local or regional level. Women are the ones who already in the household begin activities related to waste management and who can influence the creation of environmental awareness and ecological culture of the younger generation with their own behavior and beliefs. In addition to sanctioning such behavior of factors responsible for this situation in the region of Nis, it is necessary to work on raising public awareness on gender equality, on the attitude changes to the relationship between men and women, as well as on the attitude changes towards waste and the importance of environmental protection. Gender partnership and equal participation of women and men in addressing environmental problems and sustainable development require numerous regulations and strategic documents, but a broader and more comprehensive action entails development of public awareness and continuous education of all members of the community about issues of sustainable development in the future.

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BIOGRAPHY

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PARTICIPACIJA ŽENA U PROCESIMA DONOŠENJA ODLUKA O ZAŠTITI ŽIVOTNE SREDINE

Vesna Nikolić, Sanja Stojanović

Rezime: Prema mišljenju Evropske komisije, zaštita životne sredine je oblast u kojoj će Srbija morati da uloži najviše napora za potpuno postizanje evropskih standarda i zahteva održivog razvoja u budućnosti. Posebno su ozbiljni problemi upravljanja otpadom koji, u sistemu zaštite životne sredine, zahtevaju neodložnu pažnju šire naučne i stručne javnosti, ali i participaciju i partnerstvo svih članova naše društvene zajednice.

Polazeći od smernica i preporuka brojnih strateških dokumenata koje promovišu partnerstvo polova kao uslov za razvoj okrenut budućnosti i šire učešće žena u procesima donošenja odluka u zaštiti životne sredine, istraživačka interesovanja autora usmerena su ka problemima participacije žena u upravljanju otpadom. U istraživanje se poslo sa hipotezom da žene nisu dovoljno uključene u proces donošenja odluka koje se odnose na probleme upravljanja otpadom. U okviru deskriptivne istraživačke metode, korišćeni su postupci analize primarnih i sekundarnih izvora, komparativne analize i nestandardizovano intervjuisanje. Istraživački uzorak su činili zaposleni javno komunalnih preduzeća Regiona Niš, koji je obuhvaćen Regionalnim planom upravljanja otpadom. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na potrebu da žene efektivnijim i efikasnijim organizovanjem obezbede sebi pozicije koje će im omogućiti veći pristup putevima moći, a samim tim i veći uticaj u donošenju odluka u svim sferama društvenog i javnog života pa tako i u području upravljanja otpadom i zaštite životne sredine.

Ključne reči: zaštita životne sredine, upravljanje otpadom, žene, donošenje odluka, održivi razvoj.

