Gender Audit Report Study 2013 – 2023



Table of contents:

[Table of contents: 2](#_Toc153098319)

[Executive Summary 3](#_Toc153098320)

[Background and profile of Amaro-Drom organisations. 5](#_Toc153098321)

[Gender context in Albanian legislation and policy development. 7](#_Toc153098322)

[The importance of gender audit to civil society organisations 8](#_Toc153098323)

[Analysis of gender equality at the organisational level. 9](#_Toc153098324)

[- Programme implementation 11](#_Toc153098325)

[- Technical expertise 11](#_Toc153098326)

[- Monitoring and evaluation 12](#_Toc153098327)

[- Partner organisations 12](#_Toc153098328)

[Analysis of gender equity in organisational processes 13](#_Toc153098329)

[- Gender policy 13](#_Toc153098330)

[- Staffing 14](#_Toc153098331)

[- Human resources 14](#_Toc153098332)

[- Advocacy lobbying and communications 14](#_Toc153098333)

[- Financial resources 15](#_Toc153098334)

[- Organisational culture 17](#_Toc153098335)

[Analysis of gender equality at the Project level 19](#_Toc153098336)

[- Project No. 1 19](#_Toc153098337)

[- Project No. 2 19](#_Toc153098338)

[- Project No. 3 19](#_Toc153098339)

[Conclusion and suggestions 20](#_Toc153098340)

# **Executive Summary**

This gender audit document is designed to comprehensively assess and evaluate Amaro-Drom's perspective on gender equality and the level of its integration across organizational functionalities, programmatic levels, documents, and projects. It encompasses both internal and external gender audits. Through this audit, an examination has been conducted to gauge the extent of gender integration and the involvement of women and men in Amaro-Drom's policies, programs, projects, and services. The audit explores the processes affected by the gender dimension, the objectives influenced by gender, and the efforts undertaken by Amaro-Drom to address gender-related issues, amplify the voices of women and men, and enhance the position of Roma women and girls within the organization and its projects. Additionally, it scrutinizes whether gender norms are taken into consideration during fundraising, project design and implementation, and advocacy campaigns.

Furthermore, the audit evaluates the organization's work related to gender activities, policies, and interventions, along with its collaboration with other stakeholders and partner organizations, all viewed through the lens of gender equality as a vital component in achieving the overall objectives of Amaro-Drom. These objectives revolve around advancing the social and economic position of the Roma national minority in Albania, empowering Roma women as a prerequisite for societal welfare, and promoting and protecting the Roma identity and culture.

Amaro-Drom, established in 1996, holds the distinction of being the first Roma-led organization in Albania. From its inception, the organization has established robust internal governance and institutional structures to ensure persistent, transparent, and democratic operations. Over the years, Amaro-Drom has adhered to national and international standards, including those related to gender equality. With a substantial membership of up to 26,000, along with the general assembly, board members, and operational staff, the organization's level of operation is considered reliable, trustworthy, and consultative.

Aligned with its programmatic stance, Amaro-Drom consistently produces strategic documents derived from its mission, vision, objectives, and values. These include Strategic Planning Documents, Communication Strategies, and Gender Equality Policies, the most recent being for the period 2020-2024. During the same period, the organization has developed a fundraising strategy document to guide its mission and objectives.

These documents are not standalone; they result from ongoing need assessments and evaluations of the Roma community, particularly Roma women and girls. Amaro-Drom recognizes the significance of addressing gender equality-related issues to further its objectives in the face of challenges faced by the Roma minority in accessing welfare services, employment, education, self-employment, social housing programs, health, and justice. Acknowledging the intersectional discrimination faced by Roma women, Amaro-Drom emphasizes the integration of gender policies across all areas of intervention.

This Gender Audit document does not solely focus on the organizational structures, processes, and projects; it extends to the examination of the Strategic Planning and Gender Policy Document. The goal is to provide an all-encompassing evaluation, identify strengths, assess needs, and offer recommendations and insights to further enhance the integration of gender equality across all thematic and functional activities of Amaro-Drom.

Abbreviation

Amaro-Drom – The Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania

GE – Gender Equality

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

# **Background and profile of Amaro-Drom organisations.**

The Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania “Amaro-Drom” was established in 1996 as a non-profit Albanian membership-based organization. It works at the national level with the Head Office in Tirana and 32 local offices (formal and informal) around the country covering all regions of Albania. The vision statement of Amaro-Drom is sustainable development and integration of the Roma community abreast Albanian society with preserving Roma national identity. The Mission is focused on four major areas of the Union’s activities.

The first one, but not in a ranking order is the protection of the identity and rights of the Roma community in Albania. There are discussions around the approximate number of the Roma population in Albania. There being some reports from national and international studies and reports, the number varies from roughly 18,000 to 120,000. According to the previous Census held in 2011, the population is estimated at around 8,000 but massively contested by the Roma civil society organisations. While the recent data census is under analysis, civil society organisations, including Amaro-Drom work extensively, depending on projects however, on the protection of the identity of the Roma as a national minority recognized bylaw in 2017 and their rights as a vulnerable minority, at the same time as Albanian citizens in the Republic of Albania.

Second and most importantly, Amaro-Drom is a pioneer organisation advocating for the promotion of the training and education level of the Roma community having implemented several projects in this regard. Although education is one of the fields progressing more on national strategic documents, there are yet important aspects to be dealt with through advocacy and policy improvements such as more and better inclusion for Roma girls, particularly in rural areas, segregated settlements and at risk of early or arranged marriages.

Thirdly, improvement of social and economic conditions is another crucial aspect that correlates with education and training. Amaro-Drom's portfolio of work and intervention in this area stem geographically and in time. Through its projects in the field of skills and contributing to the development of agriculture, it has reached, taking into account participatory and inclusive processes, men and women, particularly in rural areas.

Last, but not by importance, the integration of the community, especially the new generation of Roma in Albanian society. To put a bit of context, the Roma in Albania encounters multiple discrimination, even structural ones. Roma women and girls and as twice discriminated against as compared to men. The integration into the majority of societal norms takes time and requires multi-level efforts. Hence, it is not an easy quest to carry ahead.

Theory of Gender Equality.

**Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, opportunities, and treatment of all individuals, regardless of their gender. It involves the removal of discrimination and biases based on gender, promoting fairness, and ensuring that both men and women have the same chances to participate in and benefit from social, economic, and political activities.

Gender equality is not only about levelling the playing field between men and women but also recognizing and addressing the diverse needs, experiences, and contributions of individuals of all gender identities. It strives to create a society where gender does not determine or limit one's access to resources, opportunities, or decision-making power.

**The Gender Mainstream Strategy** is a globally recognized approach that seeks to transform structures perpetuating inequality. It emphasizes sensitivity to the complementary and interdependent roles of men and women in society, acknowledging that achieving gender equality necessitates addressing gender issues across overall organizational structures and activities. Unlike a narrow focus on women, this strategy prioritizes cooperation between men and women, aligning with the integration process in the most effective manner. By fostering collaboration and understanding between genders, the Gender Mainstream Strategy aims to dismantle ingrained structures of inequality, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

# **Gender context in Albanian legislation and policy development.**

The Albanian legislation has adopted international standards on gender equality. For instance, the Istanbul Convention. On a national level, the Albanian government has issued the National Strategy on Gender Equality.

**Constitutional Provisions:** The Constitution of the Republic of Albania, amended in 2016, includes provisions related to gender equality and non-discrimination. It emphasizes the principle of equal rights for all citizens.

**Law on Gender Equality:** Albania has a Law on Gender Equality, which was adopted in 2010. This law aims to prevent and eliminate discrimination based on gender, promote equal opportunities, and ensure gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs.

**National Strategy for Gender Equality and Action Plan:** Albania has developed National Strategies for Gender Equality for specific periods, outlining the government's commitments to advancing gender equality. These strategies are typically accompanied by action plans that provide detailed steps for implementation.

**Institutional Framework:** The country has established institutions responsible for gender equality, such as the Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Office of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

**Domestic Violence Legislation:** Albania has legislation addressing domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women. The Law on Measures Against Violence in Family Relations was adopted in 2006, providing legal measures for the protection of victims.

**Labour Legislation:** Albania's labour laws include provisions related to gender equality in the workplace. These may cover issues such as equal pay for equal work, non-discrimination, and maternity leave.

**Women's Empowerment Initiatives:** The government may implement specific initiatives aimed at empowering women in various fields, including education, entrepreneurship, and political participation.

European Union Integration: Albania's pursuit of European Union integration involves aligning its legislation with EU standards, including those related to gender equality.

# **The importance of gender audit to civil society organisations**

A gender audit is a systematic assessment of how gender perspectives are integrated into the policies, programs, and practices of an organization. Gender audits help organizations identify existing gender gaps within their organization, ensuring that gender disparities are recognized and addressed. Also, by analysing equality in decision-making and assessing the composition of decision-making bodies, a gender audit can contribute to achieving a more balanced and equitable representation of men and women in leadership positions.

Gender audits evaluate the impact of organizational policies and practices on gender equality, promoting transparency and accountability. Organizations can use gender audits to ensure compliance with national and international standards. By understanding the diverse needs and perspectives of different genders, CSOs can design and implement more effective programs that address the specific needs of their target populations. A gender audit ensures that organizational initiatives are relevant and responsive to the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

Gender audits help strengthen internal culture by promoting inclusivity, employee morale, and productivity. They contribute to creating an inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and fosters an environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, feel valued and included. Organizations that prioritize gender equality tend to have higher employee morale and productivity.

Gender audits help organizations meet stakeholders' expectations. Many donors and funders emphasize gender mainstreaming, and if an organization demonstrates that it can fulfil these requirements, the likelihood of receiving funds is higher. Besides, organizations that demonstrate a commitment to gender equality are likely to enjoy a positive reputation, both among stakeholders and the broader community.

Gender audits can lead organizations to assess their legal compliance with anti-discrimination laws and rectify any practices that may violate anti-discrimination laws. Moreover, they aid in better strategic planning and informed decision-making by providing data and insights that enable CSOs to make informed decisions on resource allocation, programming, and capacity building.

In conclusion, gender audits in civil society organizations contribute to fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and effective organizational environment. They align with broader efforts to advance gender equality and social justice, ensuring that CSOs play a positive role in creating a more equitable world.

# **Analysis of gender equality at the organisational level.**

Amaro-Drom has meticulously crafted a Strategic Planning document for the period 2020-2024, drawing on the extensive experience gained in advocating for and protecting human rights. This plan is an amalgamation of insights derived from diverse avenues, including training sessions, seminars, roundtable discussions, research studies, case analyses, awareness campaigns, and advertising initiatives. These activities have been integral to Amaro-Drom's work over the years, contributing to the development of expertise and ensuring a tangible impact within the community. The objectives outlined in the Strategic Planning document stem from a profound analysis of the contexts in which Amaro-Drom operates, considering challenges and incorporating the perspectives of key stakeholders, staff members, and organizational management.

Amaro-Drom actively collaborates with members of the Roma community and leads a network of local organizations representing the Roma and Egyptian national minorities across various municipalities in the country. However, maintaining and fostering sustainable network cooperation poses significant challenges. The foremost among these challenges revolves around financial resources. Sustaining seamless operations, including conducting meetings, gatherings, capacity-building initiatives, and knowledge production, necessitates adequate funding. The second challenge lies in aligning the diverse organizational members, ensuring that they share a common vision while preserving their distinct identities. Amaro-Drom, being an organization founded by members of the Roma community, staunchly supports the preservation of their identity and ethnic values in all initiatives.

In addition to these challenges, Amaro-Drom has been actively working to incorporate a gender equality dimension into all its activities. This inclusive approach extends to initiatives aimed at promoting and preserving the culture and identity of the communities it serves. The organization recognizes the need to foster an environment where gender equality is embraced and transmitted widely, ensuring that its values resonate across both organizational structures and local communities.

Planning and design

As an organization that engages directly in the field, Amaro-Drom focal points in different regions of Albania have facilitated the reintegration of Roma and Egyptian children into the education system. In addition, Amaro-Drom activists have served to bridge the gap between educational staff and returnee Roma families, facilitating the identification of children and assisting Roma and Egyptian parents with the preparation of the required documentation for the children’s enrolment in the education system.

Furthermore, Amaro Drom is currently working in rural areas to provide sustainable economic development through supporting and capacity building of Roma farmers, youth and women towards employment and self-employment.

## **Programme implementation**

Amaro-Drom is currently implementing three primary strategies and policies: the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, Gender Policy, and the Strategic Communication Plan. Each of these initiatives represents a new orientation for organizational management, necessitating well-prepared and trained staff with the necessary capacities to effectively carry out their assigned duties and responsibilities.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 outlines the overarching goals and objectives that will guide Amaro-Drom's activities over the specified period. This plan requires a workforce equipped with the skills and knowledge to implement the outlined strategies, ensuring alignment with the organization's mission and vision.

The Gender Policy reflects Amaro-Drom's commitment to promoting gender equality in all aspects of its work. A staff well-versed in gender issues and equipped with the necessary capacities is crucial for the successful implementation of this policy. It involves fostering an inclusive environment that recognizes and addresses the diverse needs and perspectives of different genders.

The Strategic Communication Plan emphasizes the importance of effective communication for achieving organizational goals. A trained and skilled staff is essential for executing communication strategies that enhance the visibility of Amaro-Drom's work, engage stakeholders, and contribute to achieving its mission.

In summary, the successful implementation of these strategies and policies relies on having a well-prepared and trained staff with the requisite capacities. By investing in staff development, Amaro-Drom ensures that its workforce is equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by these strategic initiatives.

## **Technical expertise**

Amaro-Drom strategically outsources technical expertise on gender-related issues to enhance the capacities of its organizational staff. Sustaining a qualified workforce with comprehensive knowledge of gender equality presents an ongoing challenge. Therefore, continuous training and capacity-building initiatives on gender-related topics, legal considerations, and gender mainstreaming are imperative to ensure that the staff can adeptly align these aspects with the mission and objectives of the organization.

In its unwavering commitment to advancing a gender equality agenda, Amaro-Drom has formulated and implemented a Gender Policy Strategy for the period 2020-2024. As part of this strategy, the organization dedicates significant efforts to augmenting the capacities and skills of its staff in gender policy implementation. This is achieved through the engagement of specialized trainers in the field of gender equality, who are dedicated to sharing their knowledge and expertise with the Amaro-Drom staff. The emphasis is on equipping the workforce with the necessary tools to effectively integrate gender perspectives within the organization, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to its mission.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The organization recognizes the pivotal role of monitoring and evaluation in ensuring the alignment of project activities with its mission and objectives. To this end, Amaro-Drom employs diverse tools for monitoring and evaluation, including regular field visits and monitoring activities in the specific areas where projects are implemented. Periodic meetings with stakeholders and beneficiaries serve as a platform for collecting opinions and feedback, facilitating continuous improvement in the organization's approach and delivery.

An essential tool for data collection and feedback is the use of questionnaires, particularly with community members. These instruments keep the organization informed about the evolving needs and opinions of the Roma, including Roma women in rural areas. The data collected not only contributes to fundraising activities but also informs the organization's operations to better address the needs of the community.

Regular meetings with local coordinators and periodic conferences play a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating project outcomes. Local coordinators, being residents and workers in the targeted communities, provide firsthand information and serve as integral components of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Periodic conferences bring together diverse stakeholders, providing a valuable opportunity to review interventions made throughout the year and assess their alignment with objectives, outputs, and desired outcomes.

Despite the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation tools, the organization lacks a consolidated internal document that could undergo revisions to adapt to the dynamic reality. A standardized guiding document for monitoring and evaluation, applicable across projects, would enhance efficiency in line with Amaro-Drom's objectives. Monitoring tools are typically project-specific, but developing a unified guiding document could ensure a standardized mechanism.

However, the feedback from local coordinators may sometimes be questionable and biased due to their close connection with the local communities. As members of these communities, data and information might be emotionally driven and less fact-based. Continuous training and capacity-building initiatives are recommended for local coordinators, especially considering that many may not hold university degrees, leading to potential shortcomings in data collection and analysis skills. It is crucial to invest in training local coordinators on gender equality theory and practice, ensuring that their contributions align with the organization's commitment to gender equality.

## **Partner organisations**

Amaro-Drom works closely with members of the Roma community; however, a significant challenge lies in maintaining and creating sustainable networks and partnerships with them. As an organization developed by members of the Roma community, Amaro-Drom strongly supports their identity and ethnic values in all initiatives. Despite the organization's successful cooperation and partnerships with Roma community members, there is a need to deepen and develop fewer formal mechanisms to fully realize the potential impact on Roma families aligned with the organization's values, mission, and objectives.

The network with the Roma community, as outlined in Amaro-Drom's strategic planning for 2020-2024, tends to view the community as a homogenous entity. This perspective overlooks the rich diversity of groups constituting the Roma community at large. To enhance its effectiveness, Amaro-Drom should consider adopting a more nuanced and inclusive approach that accounts for the unique characteristics and needs of different segments within the broader Roma community. This refined strategy ensures that the organization can better address the varied challenges faced by different groups within the community and foster more meaningful connections.

Furthermore, the organization has established robust collaboration with both local and central government entities. Coordination and engagement with institutions are not merely a necessity but a voluntary commitment in line with the National Action Plan for the integration of the Roma and Egyptian National Minorities. This collaboration is deemed vital, especially considering the pivotal roles of the government and other stakeholders in advancing the Roma agenda across education, health, employment, housing, and social protection domains.

While acknowledging the significance of the existing collaboration, there is a recognized need for even stronger coordination with other local and national organizations. This is particularly pertinent in the case of engagement with the Egyptian community, as Amaro-Drom shares common concerns outlined in the National Action Plan for the Roma and Egyptians. Strengthening ties with these organizations is essential to foster a collective effort in addressing shared challenges and working collaboratively towards the successful implementation of the action plan. The aim is to create a more unified front that can leverage resources, share expertise, and amplify the impact of initiatives aimed at improving the lives of both the Roma and Egyptian communities.

# **Analysis of gender equity in organisational processes**

## **Gender policy**

Amaro-Drom has meticulously crafted a comprehensive set of documents and strategies to guide its operations, ensuring impactful results aligned with its mission and objectives. Central to these efforts is the Gender Policy document for the period 2020-2024, which underscores the organization's commitment to social and economic inclusion through a gender-sensitive approach. The policy addresses key areas crucial not only for enhancing the technical capacities of the staff but also for shaping the overall organizational climate, fostering cooperation, and developing networks with various stakeholders.

Preceded by a thorough situation analysis and needs assessment, particularly focusing on Roma women and girls in rural areas, the Gender Policy document seeks to address challenges across various domains such as access to welfare services, employment, self-employment, housing, and education. Emphasizing a gender-sensitive response in each activity, Amaro-Drom strives to meet the specific needs of the target group and achieve desirable outcomes.

However, there are certain areas that warrant closer scrutiny. While the policy document outlines interventions such as entrepreneurship and self-employment, the impact on Roma women and girls in rural areas remains a question. The document should provide stronger arguments and countermeasures to address challenges, ensuring that entrepreneurship empowerment yields the desired outcomes. Establishing a robust tracking mechanism is essential to guarantee the sustained impact of interventions in the community.

The next section of the document focuses on empowering women in decision-making and social inclusion. Recognizing the low participation of Roma women in decision-making, Amaro-Drom commits to raising community awareness, eliminating gender-based stereotypes, and creating opportunities for involvement. Leveraging its voice, agency, and network, the organization is well-positioned to advocate for the inclusion of Roma women.

Identifying crucial issues hindering empowerment, the document addresses the lack of information on resources and the barrier of limited access to formal education. To ensure sustainability, Amaro-Drom acknowledges the need for a formal networking structure, fostering continuous information flow and mutual motivation among Roma women.

Despite these commendable efforts, the analysis indicates a gap in the strategic advocacy campaign for the inclusion of Roma women from rural areas. While the organization highlights the need for structural inclusion during activities and stakeholder engagements, there is room for more strategic use of tools and instruments to persuade institutions to consider its recommendations. Strengthening the advocacy component can enhance the overall impact of Amaro-Drom's initiatives and contribute further to the inclusion of Roma women.

## **Staffing**

Amaro-Drom has historically maintained a professional and trained staff, consisting of highly educated individuals who share values aligned with the organization's missions, vision, and objectives. A committed and dedicated staff, equipped with the necessary capacities and up-to-date information, stands out as one of the organization's most crucial resources. Continuous professional training, motivation, and resource allocation are imperative to ensure successful performance and foster a positive organizational climate, especially considering the ever-changing working environment and societal dynamics.

Recognizing the importance of staff capacity development, Amaro-Drom emphasizes continuous training initiatives. These efforts aim to enhance the skills and knowledge of the personnel, enabling them to adapt to new challenges and contribute effectively to the organization's goals. The commitment to ongoing professional development reflects the organization's understanding of the dynamic nature of its work and the need for an agile and well-prepared workforce.

Moreover, the reorientation towards a new organizational model underscores Amaro-Drom's responsiveness to evolving circumstances. This shift in focus requires a workforce that is not only adaptable but also actively engaged in the organizational transformation. It demands a commitment to learning and embracing new approaches, ensuring that the staff remains well-prepared to navigate changes in the internal and external landscape.

In summary, Amaro-Drom's historical investment in a professional and trained staff is a testament to its recognition of human capital as a critical asset. The organization's commitment to continuous training and adaptation to new organizational models positions its staff as a dynamic force capable of steering the organization through various challenges and contributing to its long-term success.

## **Human resources**

Amaro-Drom has effectively incorporated gender equality principles into its human recruitment policy. From my assessment, Amaro-Drom maintains a human resources balance of two women to one man, indicating a preference for hiring more women in staff recruitment or outsourcing. The organization sees this approach as a direct contribution to inspiring women from Roma communities, emphasizing the link between education and enhanced job opportunities. Additionally, by exposing more educated Roma women and girls to the communities where the organization operates, Amaro-Drom aims to gradually shift societal mindsets. Although this strategy has proven effective in challenging existing patriarchal norms within Roma families, ongoing efforts are required to bring about sustained change.

A noteworthy practice that exemplifies the practical implementation of gender equality and promotes Roma women is the outsourcing of services from educated Roma individuals. This practice not only quantitatively and qualitatively advances gender equality but also serves as an advocacy tool, loudly conveying the message that Roma women and girls possess significant capabilities, many of them highly educated, and deserve opportunities in public administration to address the needs of their fellow Roma.

Despite the notable practices developed and refined by the organization over the years, there is a notable absence of a dedicated chapter on human resources recruitment and training in their strategic planning or gender policy documents. However, it is essential that human resources, whether internal or external, align their services with gender equality norms. In my professional opinion, gender equality should not merely exist as a standalone field of expertise; rather, it should seamlessly integrate into all aspects of the organization's operations and activities. Therefore, gender equality is not a standalone endeavour but an integral and organic component of every process the organization implements, from simple to complex.

## **Advocacy lobbying and communications**

Amaro-Drom has meticulously developed a Strategic Planning document for the period 2020-2024, drawing upon the extensive experience gained in advocating for and protecting human rights. This comprehensive plan integrates insights from various sources, including training sessions, seminars, roundtable discussions, research studies, case analyses, awareness campaigns, and advertising initiatives. These activities have played a crucial role in shaping Amaro-Drom's work over the years, contributing to the development of expertise and ensuring a tangible impact within the community. The objectives outlined in the Strategic Planning document are a result of a profound analysis of the contexts in which Amaro-Drom operates, taking into account challenges and incorporating the perspectives of key stakeholders, staff members, and organizational management.

Amaro-Drom actively engages with members of the Roma community, leading a network of local organizations representing the Roma and Egyptian national minorities across various municipalities in the country. However, maintaining and fostering sustainable network cooperation presents significant challenges. The primary challenge revolves around financial resources. Sustaining seamless operations, including conducting meetings, gatherings, capacity-building initiatives, and knowledge production, requires adequate funding. The second challenge lies in aligning the diverse organizational members, ensuring they share a common vision while preserving their distinct identities. Amaro-Drom, as an organization founded by members of the Roma community, staunchly supports the preservation of their identity and ethnic values in all initiatives.

In addition to these challenges, Amaro-Drom actively works to incorporate a gender equality dimension into all its activities. This inclusive approach extends to initiatives aimed at promoting and preserving the culture and identity of the communities it serves. The organization recognizes the need to foster an environment where gender equality is embraced and transmitted widely, ensuring that its values resonate across both organizational structures and local communities. The commitment to gender equality aligns seamlessly with Amaro-Drom's broader mission, creating a cohesive and impactful approach to community development.

Given the imminent vulnerable situation of the Roma national minority in the areas of employment, health, education, housing, and access to social protection services, advocacy should be an integral part of every project implemented by the organization. There should be a dedicated chapter on advocacy campaign efforts within each project. The objective is to influence the local and central governmental agenda, urging improvements in their actions through consultations with the organization's implemented projects and leveraging the best models available. This proactive advocacy approach ensures that the organization actively contributes to shaping policies and practices that address the specific needs and challenges faced by the Roma community.

## **Financial resources**

Most civil society organisations recognize the critical need to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy to ensure the seamless continuation of their operations through successful project implementation. Fundraising, at its core, is the essential process of generating funds, playing a pivotal role in sustaining an organisation's initiatives and objectives. The ability to secure funding becomes integral to an organisation's survival, often shaping its agenda and defining the scope of its operations.

Crafting an effective fundraising strategy is a multifaceted endeavour, offering various legal avenues for generating funds. This strategic approach not only ensures financial stability but also affords a certain degree of independence in setting organizational priorities. One versatile method within this strategy is the organization of crowdfunding events. These events provide organisations with the opportunity to appeal to a broad spectrum of benevolent donors, gathering support through events specifically designed for this purpose.

Crowdfunding, as part of a broader fundraising strategy, empowers civil society organisations to engage directly with the community and tap into a diverse pool of potential supporters. By leveraging digital platforms and social media, organisations can amplify their reach and connect with individuals who share a commitment to their cause. Crowdfunding events can take various forms, ranging from online campaigns to community-based initiatives, each tailored to resonate with the target audience.

Furthermore, a well-designed fundraising strategy allows organisations to diversify their funding sources, reducing dependency on a single channel. By exploring avenues such as grant applications, partnerships with businesses, and collaboration with governmental bodies, organisations can enhance their financial resilience and adaptability.

In summary, a thoughtfully crafted fundraising strategy is not merely a financial necessity but a strategic imperative for civil society organisations. It empowers them to navigate the complexities of funding acquisition, build a sustainable financial foundation, and maintain the autonomy to pursue their mission with determination and focus.

Amaro-Drom has taken significant strides in establishing a comprehensive document guideline for fundraising. This resource offers practical, step-by-step information on various fundraising approaches, the diverse forms it can take, and valuable tips on engaging with different donors. However, a critical examination reveals that the document falls short in providing a specific diagnosis of Amaro-Drom's fundraising landscape. While undeniably beneficial at a theoretical level, it remains somewhat detached from the unique needs and characteristics of Amaro-Drom organizations.

To address this gap, it is imperative for Amaro-Drom to develop an internal fundraising strategy document that is intricately tied to the organization's mission, vision, and objectives. This strategy should establish a direct link between the theoretical framework of fundraising and the strategic plan, delineating concrete steps that Amaro-Drom should undertake to effectively generate funds.

Over the past five years, Amaro-Drom has primarily relied on grant applications, with minimal emphasis on exploring its significant potential for crowdfunding. Despite being deeply involved in the agricultural sphere, and collaborating closely with Roma farmers, including a substantial number of Roma women and girls, Amaro-Drom has not fully capitalized on its capacity for crowdfunding events. Given its well-known tradition of organizing large agricultural fairs in rural areas of Albania, Amaro-Drom stands as a pioneer, dedicating extraordinary efforts to promote the work of Roma farmers and advocating for increased attention to this marginalized group at the local level.

Surprisingly, these agricultural events have not been recognized or leveraged as compelling opportunities for crowdfunding endeavours, each with a distinct objective, such as empowering more Roma women farmers on their challenging journey toward economic independence. By strategically aligning crowdfunding initiatives with these well-established agricultural fairs, Amaro-Drom can unlock a wealth of potential support, fostering economic empowerment for Roma women while amplifying the impact of its advocacy efforts at the local level.

## **Organisational culture**

The organisational culture of a civil society organisation is the bulk of shared values, beliefs, norms and practices that share the behaviour and interactions of individuals within the organisations and it encompasses the following key elements which are broken down and analysed in the lenses of the gender equality norms.

The mission and values of the Amaro-Drom organization represent the core principles it adheres to and its overarching purposes. It provides the guiding framework for decision-making and actions. Amaro-Drom, since the beginning of its existence, has established and reinforced strong and sustainable internal ruling structures such as the general assembly, board membership, and operational structures. In a nutshell, the mission of Amaro-Drom aims for the economic and social integration of the Roma national minority through education and capacity building of community members. The general assembly plays an important role in high decision-making of the organization by deciding on leadership and main themes. In terms of gender participation, the general assembly comprises almost equal representation of Roma women from various educational backgrounds and expertise. However, many lack educational background and out-of-the-box capacities and knowledge that would calibrate the boundaries of decision-making processes in the general assembly.

The leadership style at Amaro-Drom, which significantly affects its culture, leans more toward collaborative and participative. In the past five years, particularly during the ANTARC consortium, the organization proved itself as a driving force in empowering other organizations, especially local ones.

Communication contributes to organizational culture, its transparency, and fosters further trust. Amaro-Drom has fairly open communication channels, informing the general assembly and its board on matters of crucial importance and keeping its audience, including donors, informed. In the past, Amaro-Drom utilized printed brochures as an essential domain of communication to the public, providing key information on activities. More than half of the training targeted gender equality topics, while most of the activities tackle the gender equality dimension. Additionally, the organization tends to involve important stakeholders in most of its activities that have the modality for participation. Yet, in the past few years, recounting from 2017, the organization's communication through social media has considerably declined. Whether due to a lack of funds, technical expertise, or old-fashioned ways, Amaro-Drom has poorly promoted itself online on social media. Social media, in general, is a relevant and effective medium of communication that can reach a large audience in no time. Since the organization has regularly held gender equality training or meetings, but not exclusively, it could have reached more people and communicated messages broadly.

Amaro-Drom preaches and practices inclusivity and diversity as its core values, starting from its anatomy and throughout the process of project design and implementation. It has developed efficient instruments to bring together various stakeholders to the same discussion table and level their meaningful participation in the process, either decision-making or capacity building.

In terms of decision-making, Amaro-Drom encourages a participatory process but, at the same time, has in place a hierarchical decision-making structure that exercises consultations with relevant actors involved. Local coordinators play an important role in decision-making processes as they provide first-hand information from the field.

Amaro-Drom pays attention to cultivating an overall positive and supportive environment that can enhance productivity and shared values. Its structure, mission, and values stand firmly on non-discrimination practices despite ethnicity, race, colour, gender, age, and any other issues that create a foundation for disparities and discrimination.

Through many initiatives, Amaro-Drom contributes to promoting and advocating for gender equality and justice. It has established a functioning and efficient network of organizations led by Amaro-Drom. Also, Amaro-Drom is producing documents, manuals, and readings internally for public dissemination, particularly to reach other local and national partners such as the case of the organizations part of the network, to raise awareness and take action in the promotion of human rights and gender equality regardless of physical or intellectual features.

# **Analysis of gender equality at the Project level: Projects taken into consideration during the analysis of GE.**

* *Project No. 1*

**January 2014 – on-going**

**Project:** “*Sustainable improvement of livelihood of Roma communities in Albania*” Phase 1 and 2.

**Donor:** We Effect

**The project areas:** Grabian, Plug, Zhamë, Gramsh, Moravë, Fier.

## **Project No. 2**

**February 2018 – 2020**

**Project:** “*Empowering Civil Society Organizations for Roma Integration*”

Donor: EU Delegation to Albania

## **Project No. 3**

**May 2014 – June 2016**

**Project:** “*Closing the gaps between Roma and non-Roma children in early childhood development in Albania*”.

**Donor:** Roma Education Fund

**The project areas**: Levan/Fier, Grabian/Lushnje, Kuçova, Elbasan.

# **Conclusion and suggestions**

Amaro-Drom organization is characterized by sustainable internal structures that effectively propel the thematic and functional activities and procedures of the organization. Since its inception and in the current era, Amaro-Drom has competently operated in the CSO landscape by implementing impactful projects, giving due consideration to the gender dimension as a crucial part of its mission, objectives, and values.

The organization has produced significant strategic documents as tools to guide its work and operations in the field, involving stakeholders and managing projects. For example, Amaro-Drom has a comprehensive Strategic Planning for 2020-2024 that envisions the operational and programmatic framework of the organization. The document firmly outlines the principles of gender equality mainstreaming as vital to the development agenda of Amaro-Drom in its mission to advance the social and economic inclusion of the Roma national minority, particularly women and girls from rural areas.

Moreover, Amaro-Drom has developed an interesting and thought-provoking Gender Policy document for 2020-2024. The document outlines gender norms as an integral part of the organization’s mission, objectives, values, activities, and processes. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of incorporating gender in the operating and thematic structures of Amaro-Drom.

All in all, Amaro-Drom stands in a remarkable position when it comes to considering and integrating all stages of its operations, structures, a network of partners, and most importantly, the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, Amaro-Drom lacks some crucial aspects of integrating gender equality in a structural manner and meaningfully across all its structures and aspects.

First of all, the Gender Policy document needs to be broken down into concrete activities, processes, and steps to ensure an overarching implementation of gender equality in practice.

While the Gender Equality (GE) policy acknowledges the lack of a Roma women network, it does not specifically suggest its operations and sustainability. Therefore, it is important to foresee the integration of the Roma women network in the GE policy.

Amaro-Drom produced a thorough fundraising strategy document that provides insights and guidelines to run a fundraising campaign. However, it does not reflect concretely the needs of the organization. Thus, it is important to tailor a more tangible fundraising strategy that directly addresses GE's needs for interventions in the field.

Amaro-Drom should explicitly state in its human resource practices the implementation of the GE policy in recruitment.

Monitoring and evaluation are among the strongest aspects of the organization. However, it is advisable to come up with a standardized GE-sensitive and responsive approach to data collection and performance assessment.

Amaro-Drom should put more effort into providing capacity building to its staff members and local coordinators, as well as in a broader sense, their stakeholders and beneficiaries. To ensure the efficient participation of Roma women, the organization should invest in their knowledge production and capacities to enable them to provide coherent, reliable, and more comprehensive data.

Amaro-Drom should consider the long-term impact its projects have on Roma women and girls in rural areas. The process of building capacities and changing mindsets takes considerable time and effort.