



Issue paper

**REINTEGRATION OF
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
SURVIVORS**

2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

Gender-Based Violence against women and girls addresses a worldwide crisis. All over the world, almost one third of women experience physical violence and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner or sexual violence from non-partners during their lifetime (WHO, 2021)¹. This violence is endemic in all regions of the world, even in the most economically developed countries.

In Albania, 1 in 2 women, or 52,9% of women admit to having experienced violence from their partner at least one time during their lifetime and 36,6% of women confirm that they are currently experiencing violence. Violence against women and girls continues to be kept secret and it is reinforced by social norms. In the “Violence against women and girls in Albania” survey INSTAT (2020) found that 46,5% of members in the communities where abused women live believe that domestic violence should be tolerated to keep the family united. At the same time, the physical abuse endured by women in their families is regarded in part as their fault and going public with the abuse outside of the close family circle is considered shameful (INSTAT, 2020)².

Albania is a source, transit and destination country for trafficking in human beings, but it still primarily remains a source country for human trafficking (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), 2016, Report on the implementation of the Convention of European Council for action against human trafficking from Albania)³. The motives that drive human trafficking in Albania are broad, various and overlapping. Several vulnerability factors play their role in human trafficking in Albania, including detrimental social and gender norms, poverty, low levels of education, mental health issues, arrangement of forced marriages and limited opportunities for safe and legal migration⁴.

Legislative developments for the protection of women and girls from trafficking in human beings and violence have made considerable progress. There have been many improvements in the context of trafficking and violence against women, with the developments dating back to 1993, when Albania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as its

1 WHO. (2021). Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/violence-against-women-prevalence-estimates>

2 INSTAT. (2020). Men and women in Albania.

3 Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), 2016, Report on the implementation of the Convention of European Council for action against human trafficking from Albania;

4 Bedfordshire University and the International Organization for Migration. (IOM), 2019, “Between two fires”: Understanding the vulnerabilities and support needs of people from Albania, Vietnam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking in the UK’.

optional protocol in 2003. The legal framework related to the protection of women in Albania has been constantly improved through the years due to the ratification of several conventions, treaties, amendments and important international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Beijing Platform for Action, Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, the Istanbul Convention and many more.⁵

Women and girls survivors of gender-based violence have to opportunity to address several institutions at the central and local level. The first level of services includes the Directorates of Social Service in the Municipality, the Regional Directorates of the State Social Service, the State Police Stations, various national and local organizations, as well as several other central and local institutions⁶. At the local level, the availability and type of multidisciplinary services continues to be limited and underfunded, except for the individual efforts made by some municipalities to improve their network of services on the ground in terms of emergency shelters, long-term housing and women's economic empowerment (MoHSP & UNDP, 2019)⁷.

The political documents that address the reintegration issue of gender-based violence survivors are ambitious in terms of what is offered for the beneficiary, in particular from the local government. The representatives of public institutions are willing to address the need for reintegration of survivors of gender-based violence, but the resources and capacities are not in a fair share ratio with their will and responsibility⁸.

The current document aims to emphasize the importance of a coordinated response based on previous and existing practices in the country by integrating services that allow women and girls to return to their normal lives and facilitate their reintegration in the community. The document will serve as an important tool to advocate to important actors at the central and local level with the aim to support the reintegration model and increase their support and engagement to reintegrate gender-based violence survivors.

5 Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors

6 Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors

7 MoHSP & UNDP (2019). Final Report: Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania Government of Sweden, UN Women and UNFPA

8 Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors

II. ACRONYMS

MoHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
CEDAW Women	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
VoT	Victim of Trafficking
PVoT	Potential Victim of Trafficking
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
DV	Domestic violence
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
NRM	Coordinated Referral Mechanism for cases of domestic violence
ITT	Interdisciplinary Technical Team
CTG	Cross-sectorial Technical Group
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
SOP	Standard Operation Procedures
REO	Regional Employment Office
LCDV	Local Coordinator of Domestic Violence
GEO	Gender Equality Officer
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills

III DEFINITIONS

Violence - according to Law 9669/2006 "Law No 9669 "On measures against violence in family relations," as amended with law 47/2018, article 3 is defined as: "Any act or failure to act by a person directed at another person and resulting in a threat to physical, moral, psychological, sexual, social, economic integrity"

Domestic violence - any act of violence taking place within the family or residence, and perpetrated between family members who are or have been in domestic relations, regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim. (Albanian law "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", as amended in 2018)

Gender-Based Violence⁹- "Violence directed at a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately". It constitutes a violation of the fundamental right to life, freedom, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity.

Victims of violence - are all the persons, groups of persons or families that are victims and/or potential victims of violence, including domestic violence or abuse, according to the legislation in force. (Law No. 121/2016, "On Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania")

"Victim of trafficking"- is the natural person who is the subject of trafficking in human beings according to the definition in paragraph "e" of article 4 of the law no. 9642, dated 20.11.2006, "On the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings." (Law No. 121/2016, "On Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania")

"Potential victim of trafficking" - is any person on whom the responsible agencies/ institutions for initial identification, given the hints/indicators/in light of specific circumstances of the case deem that at least three or more elements constitute reasonable doubt that the person may have been trafficked. (Standard Operating Procedures for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking and Potential Victims of Trafficking)

The Coordinated Referral Mechanism of cases of domestic violence - means the organized network of local level institutions responsible for the prevention and

⁹ MoHSP & UNDP. 2020. What should we know about sexual violence and gender-based violence

protection, support and rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence. (Albanian law "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", as amended in 2018)

Local Coordinator on the Referral of Cases of Violence in Family Relations - the employee at the local self-government unit responsible for the referral of domestic violence and violence against women case management (Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021)¹⁰

Management of cases of domestic violence and violence against women, - effective activity that guarantees to help and support people who have endured violence from family relations with the aim to protect and guarantee their rights and their rehabilitation (Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021)

Social care services - an integrated and organized benefit and facilitation system, which are provided by public or private subject professionals of the relevant fields aiming at guaranteeing well-being, independence and social inclusion of individuals and families in need of social care. (Law No. 121/2016, "On Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania")

Service package - all services provided by the local unit for immediate and long-term victim protection (Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021)

Interdisciplinary Technical Team - is composed of the technical representatives of the institutions represented in the Steering Committee, representatives of the respective prefecture, representatives of Probation Services, representatives of the Child Protection Unit and local gender equality employees at the local self-government unit, as well freelance professionals in social services, psychology, advocacy, health service, legal medicine, probation services and free legal aid services. (Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021)

The Cross-sectorial Technical Group - is composed of, representative of police structures; representatives of social service structures, representatives of local educational institutions for pre-university education, representatives of health structures, representatives of justice structures, representatives of non-profit organizations and any other specialist aware of the child's situation or who may contribute in taking and implementing measures for the protection of the child. (_Law_18_2017_23.02.2017_Për_të_drejtat_dhe_mbrojtjen_e_fëmijës)

¹⁰ Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021 "On the Work Coordination Mechanism among Responsible Authorities for the Referral of Cases of Domestic Violence and Relevant Proceedings, for purposes of Supporting Violence Victims Rehabilitation"

IV. REINTEGRATION SERVICES FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

- Housing
- Psychological and social support
- Health and mental health services
- Legal aid
- Education and training
- Employment and economic empowerment
- Assistance and services for children of GBV victims
- Information and referral

HOUSING

Service description

Victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence and human trafficking are entitled to a number of benefits, one of which is housing, as provided for in the 2016 Law on Social Care Services; priority for social housing based on the 2018 Law on Social Housing¹¹.

“Housing” operates as a specialized support service in Albania based on several national standards. There are approved standards for: domestic violence shelters providing long-term services¹², shelters for victims/potential victims of human trafficking¹³, short-term (emergency) shelters for domestic violence victims¹⁴ as well as for emergency crisis centers for victims of sexual violence.

11 Law No. 22/2018 “On Social Housing” is published in the Official Journal No. 79, dated 30 May 2018.

12 . DCM No. 505 dated 13.07.2011 “On adopting social care service standards for domestic violence victims in public and non-public residential centers”, and Regulation No. 13 dated 17.12.2012 “On the implementation of social care service standards for domestic violence victims in public and non-public residential centers”.

13 DCM No. 195, dated 11.04.2007 “On adopting social care services standards in residential centers for trafficked persons or persons at risk of being trafficked”

14 Instruction No. 774 dated 15.11.2019 “On adopting minimum social care service standards for gender based violence and domestic violence victims/survivors in public and nonpublic emergency (short term) residential centers (emergency shelters)”.

Residential centers provide short-term housing for violence survivors, such as reception centers, whereas reintegration centers provide long-term support for reintegration for a longer time period. In addition to state residential centers, which are few in number and most of which lack capacity, non-profit organizations such as "Different & Equal," "Vatra," and "Tjeter Vizion," among others, are also an option to provide housing opportunities and the necessary services in apartments, either semi-independent apartments or completely independent apartments¹⁵.

Law No. 22/2018 "On social housing" established rules, procedures and administrative modalities for the planning, equipment, distribution and management of housing for social groups in need of housing. The specialized housing program, which was regulated for the first time by the dispositions of this draft law, will be beneficial for vulnerable groups, such as mothers, domestic violence victims, and trafficking victims. Pursuant to Law No. 22/2018 "On social housing", social housing programs include: a) the program for rented social housing; b) the program for improving existing housing conditions, until a new construction is made; c) follow-up of the low-cost housing program, ç) the program for the development of the area for housing; d) the program for the establishment of temporary housing; dh) the program for specialized housing. Article 16 of the law "On the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries", determines that priority is given to survivors of domestic violence and victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking.

Challenges

- The number of victims of violence/trafficking benefiting social housing or rental bonuses is still low. By 2018, none of them had ever benefited by social housing schemes.¹⁶
- In most of the cases housing services are provided by non-governmental organizations, which besides being the only entities providing certain services are also faced with issues in regard to continuous and sustainable financial support¹⁷.
- The social housing programs create uncertainty for women and girls VoT/PVoT and the number of beneficiaries is relatively low (UK & IOM, 2016, pp.19, 20).¹⁸ According to the MoHSP and UNDP (2019), procedures from the implementation to the adoption of social housing programs are relatively long and last several months which in turn create difficulties in the provision of services.
- Some municipalities lack long-term housing alternatives for victims of domestic violence.

¹⁵ Different & Equal. Study on "Reintegration model for survivors of gender based violence"

¹⁶ Ombudsperson. (2020). alternative report on the implementation of the CEDAW convention in Albania 2016 - 2020

¹⁷ Different & Equal. Study on "Reintegration model for survivors of gender based violence"

¹⁸ UK & IOM. (2016). Action Plan on Social and Economic Reintegration of Women and Girls Victims of Trafficking;

- The concerns expressed by the participants in the study regarding housing include rent default, uncertainly regarding rent support, and distance from the workplace. Information on social housing was scarce and some individuals from institutions do not know how to introduce social housing services¹⁹.
- Many trafficking victims do not have their own home, which means that after being trafficked they return to their family or go back to living with their spouse or parents. However, this opportunity is not granted to all and a lot of the victims can't go back home, since their families won't take them back after they have been trafficked.

Housing and accommodation needs

Victims who return home with children or victims that have given birth as a result of trafficking may not be welcome in their families, which force them to find and pay for their own accommodation. Finding a suitable alternative as a single mother is difficult and less probable²⁰.

It was impossible for me to go back living with my family. They don't know I am pregnant. They blame me for what happened...if they find out about the pregnancy, I am finished (female victim of trafficking who got pregnant during trafficking).²¹

Victims live in rented accommodations and do not own them. One of the problems encountered in housing is the lack of cheap housing that can be bought or rented. According to one of the informants, ***"People don't sell or rent houses because the new road has made the journey easier, so people are keeping their houses in Kukës"***²²

Good practices

With the support of NGOs, reception centers and emergency shelters for victims of GBV have been set up to provide housing and other services for abused women and girls. Some also provide long-term services for victims of violence (e.g. rent payment after leaving the center)²³

19 Different & Equal. The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

20 Surtees, R., M. Meshi, S. Tanellari, A. Lila, O. Hinaj and B. Meçaj (2022) Supporting the children of trafficking victims. Reintegration guidelines for professionals. Tirana: Different & Equal and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute.

21 Surtees, R., M. Meshi, S. Tanellari, A. Lila, O. Hinaj and B. Meçaj (2022) Supporting the children of trafficking victims. Reintegration guidelines for professionals. Tirana: Different & Equal and Washington, D.C.: NEXUS Institute.

22 Different & Equal. The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

23 Ombudsperson. (2020). (2016). alternative report on the implementation of the CEDAW convention in Albania 2016 - 2020

There are also some municipalities that have taken initiatives to guarantee victims of violence the benefit of the social rent bonus for housing by facilitating the application procedure and assisting victims of violence to benefit from it.

To survive the extreme violence from her husband, Eda took her two children and left her house. She finds herself on the street and after getting in touch with an institution, she is referred to the organization. She is immediately provided with housing for herself and her children. The organization supported her financially with rent payments for several months, but at the same time they supported her with the preparation of documents for the benefit of the rent bonus offered by the Municipality. She benefited of a year's rent from the municipality. After a year had passed, the beneficiary was able to gather the necessary paperwork for reapplying for a bonus herself and was again proclaimed a winner. She now lives independently with her two children in a rented apartment.

During this time, Eda and her children were supported with all other services they needed to recover and be empowered to live independently.

This example shows the importance of housing programs in municipalities as an immediate aid for cases of domestic violence after the mother and children escape the violence.

Recommendations

- Drafting of the legislation on social housing should go along with budget increase and improvement of central government support for local governments with social housing projects.
- Municipalities should increase planned expenses for the inclusion of GBV and trafficking victims in social housing programs.
- They should provide direct assistance in filling in the documentation for rent bonuses/social housing.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Service description

The provision of quality social care services constitutes one of the essential components of a coordinated multi-sectoral response against domestic violence and gender-based violence. Social care services include a wide range of services that are critical to supporting the rights, safety and well-being of women and

girls, as well as any other individuals in the family that has experienced violence, including information in a situation of crisis, helplines, safe housing, psychological and social counselling, information and counselling on their rights, among others.

Social care services are essential in helping women recover from violence, empower them, prevent recurrence of violence and, in some cases, and work with certain sections of society or the community to change attitudes and perceptions about violence. They include, but are not limited to: provision of psychological and social counselling, information in case of a crisis, safe housing, legal and advocating services, housing support and employment assistance etc., for women and girls who have experienced violence, etc.

Social care services for victims of violence include services provided by, or funded by, the government or services provided by civil society and community actors, including civil society organizations and faith-based organizations.

According to law 139/2015 "On local governance", the municipality is the institution responsible for the establishment and administration of social services for groups in need (article 54, law 139/2015).

Pursuant to Law No. 121/2016, "On Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania": "Social care services" include an integrated and organized benefit and facilitation system, which are provided by public or private subject professionals of the relevant fields aiming at guaranteeing the well-being, independence and social inclusion of individuals and families in need of social care. DCM No. 518 dated 4.9.2018 "On community and residential social care services, criteria, procedures to benefit from these services and personal expenses amount for organized service beneficiaries" establishes that social care services are categorized in:

- Pre-social services: information and counseling, early intervention, online counseling;
- Community service: service in families, alternative services, multifunctional services, full-day and half-day services, 72 hour emergency service, homeless protection service.
- Long-term residential services and specialized services.

Law No. 9669, dated 18.12. 2006 "On measures against violence in family relations" as amended provides in article 6, point i) provides for the coordination and monitoring of the establishment and operation of social care services for victims of domestic violence, which will to be offered near local self-government units.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) ²⁴for social care workers allow a clear and detailed description of the daily activities of social care service providers,

²⁴ Order No. 100, dated 21.2.2020 "On adopting standard operating procedures (SOP) for handling cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence by health services employees, in framework of cooperation as members of the coordinated referral mechanism"

henceforth referred to as social care workers, who can provide assistance and services to victims of DV/GBV.

All women who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse need psychological and emotional support. It is very important that all women are respectfully heard and that they are not judged when they chose to speak of their experiences. Specialized psychological and social counseling can greatly improve emotional and health wellbeing for victims increase and develop internal capacity to cope with situations, which then consequently leads to improved access to education and employment.

In order to provide psychological services, the police officer and LCDV should contact psychologists of the municipality, the National Counseling Line for Women and Girls on the green line 116117, members of the NRM specialized in providing such service, other organizations licensed to provide free psychological and social services, or the Psychologist's Order, the Social Worker's Order to provide the required service.

A professional psychologist should participate in the consultations on the development and implementation of the Reintegration Plan. Counselling sessions should be specific and in accordance with the objectives detailed in the plan. The support of both parties will enable setting the goals for the counselling sessions. The goals that guide the psychological counseling sessions mainly consist of: stabilizing the emotional state; techniques for increasing self-confidence / self-esteem, dealing with traumatic life episodes and acknowledging the emotions that permeate these episodes; acknowledging and being aware of the cycle of violence; highlighting strengths; creating healthy interpersonal relationships; plans for the future; practical life skills; communication issues; decision-making / decision-making orientation; stability in work relations (increasing responsibility, punctuality, understanding of the need to work), etc.

Challenges

- In some of the municipalities, organizations have had to meet the needs for services the municipalities should provide to address domestic violence. These services are categorized by volatility due to lack of funds and a shift in priorities according to the guidelines of the donators and they only extend to certain areas.
- Professionals regard the lack of services at the local level as one of the biggest challenges. In several cases lack of services is believed to be the reason why women who experience violence do not look for alternative support opportunities to escape the situation they are in.
- The psychological and social support for the victims is also weakened by the

- lack of staff and the workload in social services at the municipality²⁵
- Domestic violence survivors don't have any information on the importance of psychological and emotional support. According to a 2021 study²⁶, in 98% of the cases the women and their children needed psychological and social support, but the counsellor had not always advised them on how to receive such support.
 - The professionals in these institutions do not always account for the impact of cultural norms in the victims and as a result there is a halt in the provision of services since they are not in accordance with the pace of violence victims and the goals set in advance for them.

Good practices

The Municipality of Tirana²⁷ reports that they manage and assist trafficking and domestic violence cases by providing them with information, protection, housing, psychological and legal counselling through coordination with all civil society actors that are engaged in the fight against gender-based violence at the interest of the victims. The Municipality of Tirana funds 6 community centers whose primary function is counselling and psychological treatment of identified cases in need and whose attendees also include women survivors of gender-based violence. Cooperation with non-profit organizations is considered fundamental in managing assistance and reintegration of trafficking and gender-based violence cases. Depending on the case the Municipality of Tirana is cooperating with several organizations, such as the Center for Legal Civic Initiatives, Different & Equal organization, Arsis Initiative, Plan & Go, etc. The Municipality of Tirana has established the network of local domestic violence coordinators who meet periodically to discuss cases, challenges, needs and good practices. The Municipality of Tirana cooperates with every municipality with the purpose of following and monitoring cases even when they are displaced or when they return to their cities of origin.

25 "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

26 AGJZH (2021). Rehabilitation and reintegration services within the social welfare system in the Republic of Albania for violence survivors

27 Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors.

S., victim of intimate partner violence is referred at the organization. She is the mother of more than 3 children and she is currently expecting another. Some of the children have been conceived and born as a result of sexual violence. Her partner has been jailed after she reported the violence. When S. was initially referred she was aware that she had been physically and sexually abused, but she still had feelings for her partner and she hoped that he would change and that they could live together after he got out of jail. She exhibited high levels of stress, anxiety and hypervigilance in various situations. After completing counselling sessions with the psychologists and case manager she acknowledged the cycle of violence and became aware of the situation she was in. As a result, after some time, she cut contact with her partner and his family and took the initiative to move into a rented house with her children. Her stress and anxiety levels reduced considerably and she found strength and a life motive in her children, who are her greatest strength.

The organization's lawyer in cooperation with the child protection worker registered the children in the civil registry and drafted the documents for the Protection Order.

Counseling sessions with the psychologist are still underway....

Recommendations

- Local level service mapping and survivor referrals of domestic violence in social services is based on identified needs;
- Identification of psychological assistance sources and orientation and support to receive the psychological evaluation and free psychological aid services²⁸;
- Needs assessment for domestic violence survivors, their children and families and planning local social programs for the provision of services and their funding.
- Follow-up of domestic violence survivors during access in social and psychological services to ensure they benefit and progress in addressing their needs.
- Building the capacities of institution employees for recognizing the impact of culture (values, norms, rituals, language, traditions) on the victims and the adaptation of these phenomena in relation to their empowerment.
- Provision of psychological and social services through community center professionals.

²⁸ "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Service description

The health system and the employees of the health services play an important role in terms of identification, assessment, treatment, intervention in crisis situations, documentation, referral and follow-up of DM/GBV cases. Women and girls often seek health services for their injuries even if they do not report the violence or abuse associated with these injuries.

If the GBV survivor has health injuries from the perpetrated violence, she must go to the local health care unit or the nearest hospital to get the health services she needs. The case carries out the visit in local health care units or the nearest hospital where receives the necessary medical treatment, psychological support and is provided with the medical report, which is an important evidence during the process of seeking the issuance of protection orders.

The assessment of physical health should be part of the assessment of each case. It must be done by the medical staff and based on this assessment, the necessary medical visits, analyzes and treatments are carried out. It is important that health services providers to be aware of the women health problems that can be caused and deteriorated further by violence.

Law No. 9669, dated 18. 12. 2006 "On measures against violence in family relations" as amended, Article 7 foresees that responsible ministry for health provides medical assistance in the family, in the emergency services, of the family doctor and in the health centers near the units of local self-government: a) to provide medical, social and psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence at any time; b) to perform the necessary examinations at the relevant public health institutions at any time; c) to record cases of domestic violence in the relevant medical documentation approved by the Ministry of Health; ç) to provide the victim with the relevant medical report; d) to refer and orient the victim to other support and protection services from domestic violence.

Health care for women and reproductive health constitute one of the main chapters of the Basic Primary Healthcare Service Package²⁹, reviewed and approved by DCM. 101 dated 04.02.2015. This package is offered by the primary health care services extended across the country. Integrated health care for women in health care centers covers services in the aspect of prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation. The management of violence and abuse against women, domestic violence is also included in these services. This package provides that the family doctor and nurse must be able to identify and refer cases of the domestic violence

²⁹ www.shendetesia.gov.al/ëp-content/uploads/2018/02/Paketa_e_rishikuar_e_miratuar.pdf

to the relevant institutions.

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)³⁰ for health service workers for handling cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence describe the set of essential actions and steps that must be planned, coordinated, implemented, monitored and evaluated regularly, for providing appropriate care and assistance in situations of domestic violence and/or gender-based violence.

Many women who are subject to intimate partner violence or sexual violence as a result will have emotional or mental health problems. As time passes after experiencing violence, including sexual abuse or similar situations, these emotional problems are likely to improve. Most of the women recover. There are specific ways health care providers can help women through various techniques to reduce stress and promote healing. However, some women may suffer more than others. It is important that health workers are able to recognize these women and help them to receive the necessary care³¹.

Challenges

- Municipalities report lack of specialized services for the management and treatment of the DV survivors that are suffering or are diagnosed with mental health problems. The treatment of DV survivors and the DV perpetrators who suffer from mental health problems is one of the biggest challenges as they are often accommodated and treated temporarily in regional hospitals and then discharged due to the lack of a specialized treatment center in regional or national level ending up back in the vicious circle of DV or becoming potential victim of trafficking.³²
- At the local level, there is a wide lack of specialized services for people with mental health problems, survivors of violence, counseling services for men and boys as perpetrators of domestic violence, as well as other support services for abused families.
- The lack of identification of domestic violence cases by health workers continues to be reported. Health workers constitute an important link in the chain of all actors. The lack of involvement of these actors affects the non-

³⁰ Order No. 101, dated 21.2.2020 On adopting standard operating procedures (SOP) for handling cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence by health services employees, in framework of cooperation as members of the coordinated referral mechanism

³¹ Order No. 101, dated 21.2.2020 On adopting standard operating procedures (SOP) for handling cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence by health services employees, in framework of cooperation as members of the coordinated referral mechanism

³² UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA (2019). Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania

- early identification and non-addressing of cases of domestic violence.
- There is a stigma in population to accept the mental health problems and to seek the support services.
 - The study “Violence against Women and Girls in Albania” reports that much fewer women have sought help from official networks such as the police (4.4%), lawyers (3.4%), doctors/health workers (3, 1%), judges (2.8%), some social service agency (1.6%), and from some women’s and girls’ shelter (0.4%)³³.
 - Victims’ lack of trust in receiving free health care if they are not accompanied by an institution employee.
 - Difficulty in managing and helping people with mental health problems because there is a lack of support services for them, as well as difficulty in keeping a job when they integrate into the labor market.

Seeking help in the health sector is often delayed or neglected due to the victim’s disbelief that he will not be able to benefit from the health service for free and equally to others due to the family situation and difficult economic conditions. In continuation of the case described above, the children did not receive any health services and were not provided with the relevant vaccines and as a result they could not even be part of the education system. The organization’s doctor, in cooperation with the child protection worker, informed the mother about her and the children’s rights to health care and accompanied her to the health center of the area where she lived to receive the necessary services. After the case got to know the health system and established trust in this system, she continues to receive all health services independently for herself and children.

Good practices

Health and mental health services are a necessity for survivors of GBV, but they are not always covered by health institutions, often different NGOs meet these needs, providing easier access for beneficiaries. The Kennedy Foundation in the city of Korça informs that there is a clinic that helps with wound healing, medications, and physiotherapy. Korça has a community mental health center, the attendance of which has been increasing. The study reports that the family situation becomes much worse despite the help given to the survivor in cases where there is a person with mental health problems in the closer family. It is very important to support other family members with whom the survivor lives, reducing the risks from which the survivor can be threatened³⁴.

³³ Study report - Violence against Women and Girls in Albania

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/al/Raport-Studimor-Dhuna-ndaj-Grave-dhe-Vajzave-ne-Shqiperi.pdf>

³⁴ Different & Equal (2022). The study on “Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat”

Recommendations

- Advocacy, awareness and improvement of knowledge on domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, as well as NRM services aimed at professionals who deal with these forms of violence (police, health centers, schools, employment offices and media, etc.) for their prevention and addressing.
- Health workers should increase their capacity to recognize risk factors, signs, problems or conditions that they appear, including coercive controlling behavior patterns associated with domestic abuse, and facilitate the process of information sharing in family by survivor of domestic violence.
- Establishing easily accessible mental health services near community centers in every municipality.
- Taking administrative measures against health workers who do not respect the legal obligation defined by the law for the identification, treatment and reporting of cases of GBV.

LEGAL AID

Service description

Many victims may have limited knowledge about their rights and the range of options that are available to them. Accurate and timely information on issues such as marriage dissolution/marriage laws, child custody, migration status and assistance in finding justice and police responses are important to protect the safety of women and girls in particular.

In recent years, within the framework of the justice reform, there has been an improvement in the legislation in terms of increasing access to justice for categories in need, including victims of violence, victims of trafficking and in general for victims of criminal offence. As the most important legal act in this regard, the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (amendments to law no. 35/2017) and the new law no. 111/2017 "On state guaranteed legal aid"³⁵.

Law No. 111/2017 "On state guaranteed legal aid" has provided that the among the special categories that benefit from free legal services regardless of whether or not they meet the criterion of insufficient income are also victims of trafficking, victims of domestic violence, victims of sexual abuse, minor victims and in conflict with the law³⁶. The law provides for three forms/types of assistance: Primary legal aid; Secondary legal aid; Exemption from payment of court fees and court costs. Primary legal aid is delivered from: Primary legal aid service centers that are offices set up for the purpose of providing free legal advice and guidance; Legal Clinics

³⁵Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors.

³⁶ Article 11 of Law

established at higher education institutions which are offices set up near faculties for the purpose of providing counseling and providing free legal guidance; Non-profit organizations (NGOs) that provide free legal aid services in compliance with the authorization approved by the Ministry of Justice.

While most women's rights CSOs provide free legal aid services and counseling to survivors of DV, in recent years, specialized CSOs on providing legal aid have provided primary and secondary legal aid services to vulnerable groups of the population in six pilot centers established near District Courts of Lezha, Durrës, Tirana, Fier, Shkodër and Dibër. The NRMs in these municipalities report that they cooperate with these centers to help DV survivors with legal counseling, court representation in divorce and child custody matters³⁷

Challenges

- Despite legal improvements, what remains an unresolved challenge is the access to justice and the provision of legal aid to victims of trafficking. Established system by Law no. 111/2017 "On legal aid guaranteed by state" even though is an important development from practical view it does not provide aid and effective legal protection for trafficking victims. The NGOs authorized for the delivery of primary legal aid will benefit from the state scheme only for the provision of primary legal aid and not for the secondary aid (representation in court) that a trafficking victim needs most³⁸.
- A good part of victims of gender-based violence (GBV) did not know about and did not use free legal aid³⁹.
- Women are not always informed about the rights they have and the institutions they should turn to.
- Domestic violence survivors often lack information about their rights as per the law and how the protection order system works – although the law stipulates that they must receive information from law enforcement authorities about their legal status as victims, as well as for the various services they are entitled to receive⁴⁰.
- It happens that employees in the justice field show contemptuous and humiliating attitudes towards domestic violence victims⁴¹

37 UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA (2019). Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania

38 Different & Equal, (2020). Reintegration of the gender-based violence survivors.

39 Different & Equal (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

40 UNDP, 2018. Study on access to justice in Albania

41 UNDP, 2018. Study on access to justice in Albania

Good practices

Law "On Legal Aid Guaranteed by State"

Law no.111/2017 "On Legal Aid Guaranteed by State" entered into force on June 1, 2018. This law sanctions the procedures for obtaining free and state-guaranteed legal aid.

Legal aid is delivered in three main forms:

- a) primary legal aid;
- b) secondary legal aid;
- c) exemption from payment of court fees and court costs and exemption from the obligation to prepay the fee for initiating execution of the execution order.

Primary aid is of exceptional importance, not only for guaranteeing the citizen's right to information about his rights related to access to public services and public institutions, but also his education with the resolution of issues in other ways of pre-trial mediation.

Primary legal aid can be delivered in the form of:

1. Information regarding the legal system of the Republic of Albania, the normative acts in force, the rights and obligations of subjects of law and the methods of enforcing and exercising these rights both in judicial and extrajudicial proceedings,
2. Legal counselling
3. Advice on the procedures of mediation and the alternative means of dispute resolutions,
4. The delivery of assistance in drafting and establishing of documentation to put in motion the state administration or for requesting secondary legal aid
5. Representation before administration bodies,
6. Other forms of necessary legal support not constituting secondary legal aid.

The help and support offered to the beneficiaries consisted of: opening an account in E-Albania and applying to provide various documents on this page; assistance for the registration of the child in civil status (providing a birth certificate with an apostille stamp from a foreign country), information about the protection order, economic assistance as a victim of violence, the exercise of parental responsibility, violation of the protection order, rent bonus and completion of the documentation, recognition of the foreign court decision, information about the rights of the victim in the criminal process, the execution of the maintenance obligation, the status of the orphan, etc.

Primary legal aid is delivered from:

- a) specially trained employees;
- b) authorized not-for-profit organizations;
- c) from legal clinics near higher education institutions.

First, **specially trained employees**, an employee who is graduated from a second cycle of studies in law, as defined in the legislation in force on higher education and who has undergone a special training developed by Free Legal Aid Directorate in cooperation with the Public Administration Training Center. This employee provides primary legal aid in a primary legal aid service centers or in other relevant premises.

Even **authorized not-for-profit organizations** and registered in accordance with the legislation in force, which have as the scope of their activity provided for in the statute of the organization, the provision of legal aid services, may offer primary legal aid.

Legal clinics near higher education institutions are also important providers of primary legal aid. These institutions must ensure that primary legal aid is provided only by students who been trained according to approved training by the Free Legal Aid Directorate.

Informing beneficiaries about free legal aid is very important as it increases access to justice and empowers victims.

Case M. (Kukës) is a victim of violence with a protection order. She signed the list of rights when she filed a criminal charge to the Police, but the rights were not explained to her in a simple and comprehensible language.

For the dissolution of the marriage She contacted a private lawyer in the country where the marriage concluded, whom she paid for the service provided.

After starting the process for the dissolution of marriage, M. was referred to the organization's program "Different & Equal", where she was informed by the organization's lawyer that she benefits the court for the dissolution of marriage for free because she is a victim of domestic violence.

It was impossible to return the payment she had made to the private lawyer (he had prepared a petition for dissolution of marriage), **the beneficiary was helped in preparing the request for exemption from taxes and court expenses (specifically for the expenses of the psychological expert).**

M. was never informed about the right to have the lawyer for free and exemption from payment of court fees and court costs. Therefore, the victim paid to receive a service that is offered free of charge by the state, she paid the transportation costs, the lawsuit tax (3,000 ALL), deteriorating her economic situation, who was also unemployed.

This example shows how important it is for the victim to be informed about the rights they have, including free legal assistance.

Recommendations

- Providing support and direct access as quickly as possible to victims of domestic violence by providing accurate information on free legal aid in order to avoid unnecessary costs and stress⁴².
- Announcing free legal aid contacts in visible places, collecting and analyzing information on referred and received aid as well as cooperation with civil society organizations that provide legal aid⁴³.
- To increase the legal knowledge of the population, especially women and other marginalized groups, to increase access to the services provided by the justice system.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Service description

Education and training is essential for the successful reintegration of women and girls who have not been able to complete their full education and have been forced to discontinue it. Having a certain level of education is mainly a prerequisite for finding employment.

Education is a human right and that equal access to education, training and technology empowers women and girls. Education is one of the most important tools for empowering women with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to participate fully in the development process. To empower girls and women, steps must be taken to eliminate inequalities between men and women by developing appropriate interventions to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations, achieve economic self-sufficiency and ensure access to equality of women in the labor market. The education increase women employment opportunities and the socio-economic status. Women's empowerment reduces the unequal power relationship between women and men, which has been identified as the main cause of the gender-based violence.

Civil society organizations have supported women and girls through education classes and trainings on life skills, career education in order for them to increase the possibilities for integration into labor market and create a stable income for themselves and their families. The assessment process of the educational level of domestic violence survivors and the information given by professionals on the

42 Different & Equal. (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

43 Different & Equal. (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

importance of education helps women and girls to become aware and to engage to attend school, training or various courses in order to build an independent life and secure for themselves and their children.

Challenges

- Survivors of gender-based violence are usually reported to lack basic education, and as a result they have less opportunity to find a job.
- NGOs report that survivors face employment difficulties, due to their low level of education.

Good practices

Non-profit organizations such as Different & Equal, Other Vision and Vatra intermediate and facilitate registration in their school. These NGOs carry out preliminary assessment of the educational level of women and girls survivor and identify their educational needs. Through cooperation with schools, Education Offices or Regional Education Directorates and other relevant entities, the resumption of education continues to be enabled.

Recommendations

- Supporting women to complete their interrupted education where possible as this will help them find a job is for a successful reintegration process.
- Providing training on topics on gender equality, gender-based violence, the right of women and girls in order to raise awareness among young people, women and girls about social norms, traditions and unequal gender roles.
- Providing opportunities for continuing professional courses for survivors of gender based violence regardless of the criteria required for pursuing a certain level of education. Attending professional courses should also be accompanied by a basic education program in order for women and girls to have the opportunity to integrate into the labor market in a sustainable manner.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Service description

Girls and women affected by violence may have special needs which may affect the job search and the type of work that is suitable for the situation in which they find themselves. Domestic violence can have a negative impact on the confidence of girls and women and focus on job search. Exposure to domestic abuse can create barriers to future employment, because women lose the ability to live independently, they can become isolated and are less likely to engage in positive learning experiences.

The economic empowerment of women and girls and their employment is an essential factor in handling main and possible causes of violence, poverty and lack of economic resources. According to the Convention of Istanbul, victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence must have access to services that enable their recovery from the violence, including legal and psychological counseling, financial assistance, housing, education, vocational training and help to find a job. (Article 20)

Law 57/2019 "On social assistance in the Republic of Albania" recognizes as beneficiaries of economic aid specifically the victims of trafficking, after leaving the social care institutions till their employment and victims of violence in family relations, for the duration of the protection order or the emergency protection order, which are not handled in social care institutions.

Law No. 15/2019 "On employment promotion" and subordinate legal acts for its implementation have offered programs for abet of employment that can facilitate the program of re/integration. Important are: Employment promotion programs through employment, on-the-job training and professional practices" - DCM No. 17 dated 15.01.2020; Incentive programs through self-employment" -DCM No. 348, dated 29.4.2020; The public works program in the community - DCM No. 535 dated 08.07.2020⁴⁴.

Survivors have the opportunity to benefit from two other supportive schemes as Small Business Support and the Social Business Scheme, which aim to enable these women to take responsibility and reintegrate.⁴⁵

Victims of trafficking benefit from an exemption from vocational training course fees, provided that they are registered as unemployed. Vocational training courses are usually made available to women through cooperation with the Regional Employment Office (REO) of NAES.

Under the Law No. 65/2016, "On Social Enterprises in the Republic of Albania", Social Enterprises are also recognized in Albania as non-profit organizations aimed at hiring people disadvantaged in the labor market, such as: persons handled with social assistance, persons with disabilities, orphans, women victims of violence and trafficking etc. Pursuant to this law, it was approved DCM No. 56, dated 31.01.2018 "On defining concrete disadvantaged groups categories". In its 1st article it is stipulated that social enterprises contribute to social protection and support the persons and disadvantaged groups through employment and facilitating access to the labor market. This DCM is stipulated as one of the disadvantaged groups, woman and girls who are victims/possible victims of trafficking, exploitation and domestic violence.

44 Different & Equal. Reintegration model for survivors of gender-based violence"

45 Different & Equal. Study on "Reintegration model for survivors of gender based violence"

Challenges

- NRMs strive to provide reintegration services for survivors of DV, especially with a focus on vocational training and employment. While the registration in the professional training courses is easy because of the good cooperation with the Regional Employment Office (ERO), employment of DV survivors continues to be a challenge, with all the efforts and coordination between REOs, LCDVs+GEOs municipalities and local businesses⁴⁶.
- DV survivors often turn down employment opportunities offered by local businesses, preferring economic assistance which is less in monetary value but secure and allows them to stay at home and take care of the children⁴⁷. There are cases that this is also related to the great fear they have of the abuser and uncertainty that they may be abused again even in the workplace.
- The lack of accessible public services such as safe public transport, nurseries, kindergarten and schools close to home prevents DV survivors from accepting employment offers.
- Many municipalities lack financial incentives for the economic empowerment of women in need, where survivors of DV can be a beneficiary category.
- Employment of DV survivors in rural areas is more difficult due of lack of opportunities and self-employment in agriculture, where the land is owned by the husband or men of the family.⁴⁸
- Official information on jobs is not always published and this limits the opportunities for NAESs offices or other aid institutions to support the employment of victims⁴⁹;
- According to the victims, the concern is the lack of suitable employment for cases with disability allowance, cases where the woman are highly educated, another concern is the excessively long hours of employment in businesses⁵⁰.
- The protection of the labor rights of employed victims of gender-based violence is also a concern. Although there may be dissatisfaction with wages, working hours, unfair dismissal, etc., in addition to the reluctance to claim rights, there is also a lack of information on where employees should go and the distance from inspection authorities⁵¹.
- Victims of domestic violence are not used to work, since most of the time they were housewives; they lack the right psycho-social support to start

46 UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA (2019). Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania

47 UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA (2019). Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania

48 UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA (2019). Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence Cases at Local Level in Albania

49 "Different & Equal", (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

50 "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

51 "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

work. Even in cases where they are employed, it is difficult for them to keep their jobs.

Good practices

Some of the municipalities have introduced positive measures to directly encourage the employment of the DV survivors and the employment of women in need at the local level. There are also some positive models that are encountered mainly in municipalities where local organizations provide vocational training services to facilitate the employment of vulnerable woman, including survivors of DV. Survivors of Gender-Bases Violence are supported step by step in their efforts to enter the labor market, through employment counseling and carrier development. In individual and group sections are taught practical skills on how to write a CV, a letter of interest, and how to prepare for a job interview. It is important that the support continues until they find sustainable employment, conducting a paid internship or start their own business.

M. was only 16 years old when she had to start her life from the beginning. She had a difficult life in her hometown, experienced physical and psychological violence from her father and was a victim of sexual abuse.

Three years ago she started a new life in Tirana together with her sick mother. She became part of the organization's reintegration program and was supported to start a professional cooking course. After completing the course, she began a paid internship as a assistant/cook near a business.

M. says that this was a dream of hers since she was little, when she helped her mother in the preparation of home cooking and meals, but now this dream turned into a profession.

I am so happy because now I have a profession and I work in a well-known and respectable business. I feel really good and safe in the workplace. With the revenues that I earn, I help myself and my family to have a better life.

And all this, thanks to the support given to me at the right time!

M. beneficiary of the D&E
reintegration program

Recommendations

- Informing women and girls about employment opportunities available in the community.
- Providing contemporary professional courses that increase the employment opportunity of woman and girls in the labor market.
- Transportation payment for woman and girls from rural areas attending

- professional courses in urban centers of municipalities/districts.
- Drawing up individual career development and employability plans and providing support for finding a job and integrating into the labor market.
- Raising awareness and organize ongoing meetings with local business and institutions to increase awareness of the employment of woman and girls who came from situations of domestic violence and gender-based violence.
- Registration of children of gender-based violence survivors in nurseries and kindergartens in order for mothers to be able to integrate into the labor market.
- Establishing Care Alternatives for children of mothers who work extended hours that exceed the hours of nurseries, kindergartens and public schools.
- Adaptation of employment programs according to the needs of vulnerable groups in order to increase access and inclusion in these programs.

ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN OF GBV VICTIMS

Service description

Living in a violent home can have long-term effects on children. Some children are affected more than others. But, all children tend to be affected from by violence situations they see in the family and often they adapt adult's behavior in their family. The effect of trauma from violence, either directly or indirectly, can have a devastating impact on children. Children have the right to access services that are age-appropriate, sensitive and child-friendly.

Supportive resources for mothers and children who are facing with this problem and are leaving abusive relationship are essential (woman's emergency shelters; financial housing and assistance; childcare assistance; advocacy and legal services; supportive counselling; health services; educational services for the child, etc.)

Children exposed to the abuse of domestic violence should be helped from professionals working in the health, mental health, social services and education sectors. Psychological and emotional support for the child should be provided in all cases because this would help in understanding the situation that the family is going through. It is also highly significant to work with the mother and the rest of the family on how to support the child and understand his/her needs.

Istanbul Convention includes some provisions addressing this case. It requires that all the protective measure take into consideration the relations between victims, the perpetrator, children and their broader social environment. The purpose is to avoid a situation where the victims and their needs are addressed separately or without acknowledging their social reality (article 18, paragraph 3). Istanbul Convention also requires specialized support for children in this situation (articles 22, 23 and

26) based on their needs. Prosecutors and judges must provide special protection to the child victims and child witnesses at all stages of investigations and court procedures (article 56). The best child interest should be the instructional principle when children come into contact with the justice system as a result of violence against women, including domestic violence.

Pursuant to Law No. 18/2017 For the child rights and protection the municipalities are responsible for the establishment of the respective child protection structures at municipality and administrative unit level under their subordination, to implement standards, and, through these, an integrated system of child protection. The child protection unit in the municipality is set up and function as a special unit within the responsible structure for social services at the municipality level, and is tasked, in a special way, with the prevention, identification, assessment, protection and follow-up of cases of child at risk and/or in need for protection.

Decision No. 327, dated 2.06.2021 On the mechanism of work coordination between the authorities responsible for the referral of cases of domestic violence, as well as its procedure for the support and rehabilitation of violence victims, it provides that the cross-disciplinary technical team (CTT), in cooperation with the cross-sectoral technical group for children's rights (CTG), organize joint meetings case by case, when domestic violence and violence against woman is also accompanied with violence against child or when children are involved as witnesses of domestic violence. Minor victims are treated in cooperation with the Child Protection Unit at the relevant local unit by assessing their needs and providing the necessary services.

Violated individuals and their children should be provided with educational and education services. Psychologists and social workers of schools where children of domestic violence's survivors study should be informed to keep them under surveillance and offer consultations. In cooperation with the municipality and NGO, the children of survivors of domestic violence are helped with packages and school items, as well as some municipalities help them with nurseries/kindergarten payment.

Challenges

- Exposure of children to violence, changes in domicile, school, distance from relatives, school and neighborhood bullying, loss of friends, clothing, food, doing well in lessons, realizing their talents are needs that must be prioritized in the training of Survivors of Gender-Based Violence because it directly affect their safety and well-being. Addressing the needs of children should be done in close cooperation with child protection structures in the municipality⁵².
- Domestic violence survivors report that strong stress factors were: children's safety - fear that the abuser threatens, abuses, manipulates the children; giving access to the abuser from third parties, especially from the school; inability - lack of incomes to buy food and clothing for children; the inability to afford

⁵² "Different & Equal". Reintegration model for survivors of gender-based violence"

the books purchase and school supplies for children; anxiety for children who live alone during the time that victims are at work; the inability to place children in courses to help them with school results.⁵³

- Fear that the spouse may take the children. Pressure from relatives to give the children to the violent husband. Constant anxiety for children-the effect of violence, manipulation of children from the abuser; the threat that will take the house;⁵⁴
- Fear of losing custody of children. Woman may fear that their children will be taken away.

Good practices

"Grandma's Home or My Other Home"

"Grandma's Home or My Other Home" is an alternative child care service provided by professionals in an environment resembling our home while parents are away working overtime or on Saturdays.

The purpose is the children care and the prevention of the social situations and employment of mothers that might effect negatively in the increase and development of children and to help the mothers to totally play their role at the family.

The offered services and opportunities in alternative child care "Grandma's Home ore My Other Home" include:

- Children care and supervision from a responsible adult
- Hygiene and health
- Food and nutrition
- School/homework support
- Emotional support and learning positive social behavior
- Child play
- Informing mothers and consulting with them regarding child care
- Observing child behavior and reporting suspicions of neglect, abuse or exposure to violence
- Psychological evaluation and support
- Medical evaluation and support

Some services and opportunities are provided outside the center including the care **needs and planning assessment, the transport to..., free time walks, mother and children referral for the required assessment and treatment and parenting support.**

Source: Different & Equal (2019) "Grandma's Home/My Other Home", Tirana: Different & Equal

⁵³ "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

⁵⁴ "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

Recommendations

- Taking actions that take into consideration and support not only the needs but also the interests and hobbies of the victims and their children. Such can be the inclusion in the reintegrated package of: financial support for children's talent courses (foreign languages; ballet, football, etc.)⁵⁵;
- Increased cooperation between local coordinator of violence and the child protection worker to immediately address the needs of the child.
- The staff of the psycho-social service in kindergartens and schools must provide continuous support for these children and monitor their ongoing behavior and needs.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Service description

Informing victims of domestic and gender-based violence about human rights, the range and nature of services that are available is a necessity and must be ongoing. Information should be provided in such a way as to enable victims to consider the range of services and alternatives available to them to make their own choices. Information should be made available to victims who experience violence, as well as families, friends, colleagues, the police and health services, who can play a role in helping victims to receive these services in safely way, when they choose to do so. Informing women and girls about gender-based violence, supportive services are a very important step in their empowerment.

The Istanbul Convention calls on States to ensure that victims have certain rights: Adequate, timely information about available supportive services and legal options in a language they understand (Article 19).

Law no. 9669, dated 18. 12. 2006 "On measures against violence in family relations" amended in Article 8 provides that the responsible authorities use reasonable means to protect the victim and to prevent the continuation of violence by: informing the victim or her companion about the measures that will be taken according to the law in force and about the institutions to which it should be addressed; informing the victim or her companion about the existing social services and accompanying them to the relevant centers and institutions.

Survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence have certain rights and should be informed about those rights. Survivors need to be well informed in order to make their own decisions about participating in all stages of the criminal justice process, to understand all the rights they have. It is not recommended to simply

⁵⁵ "Different & Equal" (2022). The study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

read a list of survivor rights. It is more effective to have a conversation with the survivor, about her obligations and rights, which would allow her to ask questions. Such conversations should take place as early as possible. A good practice is to explain her rights to the survivor in person and provide written materials for the survivor to refer to, later.

Challenges

- Some victims, especially in the first stages of assistance, do not have detailed information on the rights, time of assistance, elements, criteria, etc., and this increases their uncertainty⁵⁶;
- Due to the lack of exposure to various institutions and services, they find it difficult at first to seek access to services and they lack information on how to apply, benefit.

Good practices

Organizations inform victims about their rights in a simple and understandable language and about the procedures they must follow to receive certain services. Information from non-profit organizations is realized through:

1. Information sessions for:

- A. Beneficiaries of the organization (survivors of gender-based violence) and the community in general (information about the phenomenon of gender-based violence, where they can be referred and the services offered by institutions and organizations, as well as being informed about their rights).
- B. Institutions that are responsible for the protection of survivors of gender-based violence regarding the legal basis for the protection of victims of violence (legal changes).

2. Trainings with the employees of the institutions for information on rights and access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence.

3. Information on victims' rights with leaflets describing victims' rights and where they can go for help and support.

Recommendations

- Improving the process of providing, quality and quantity of information given to the victim that guarantees continuous information and clarification regarding rights, time of help, elements, criteria, etc⁵⁷;

⁵⁶ "Different & Equal" (2022). Study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

⁵⁷ "Different & Equal" (2022). Study on "Opportunities to develop successful reintegration plans for victims of gender-based violence in the municipalities of Kukës, Dibër, Korçë and Berat"

- To work with the community to raise awareness of the rights of victims of gender-based violence;
- Development of communication strategies that target the specific information needs for women and girls and other vulnerable groups;
- Increasing awareness, in urban and rural communities, for the national legal framework and International Conventions, providing gender awareness training for institutions responsible for law enforcement.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The reintegration of women victims of violence who have left the violent environment is a key process that completes the system of protection against gender-based and domestic violence. Reintegration and opportunities to access services make it easier to make the decision to leave, but also to secure housing and employment, as well as recovery from violence. The long-term goal of reintegration is the life without the risk of future violence and without the risk of poverty.

Women and girls that survived gender-based violence have the opportunity to address to a number of institutions at the central and local level. The first circle of services includes the Directorates of Social Service in the Municipality, the Regional Directorates of the State Social Service and the State Police Stations, as well as a number of other central and local institutions.

These institutions have the obligation to inform, support and provide services such as: medical assistance, psycho-social counseling, legal assistance, accommodation in emergency shelters, providing information and assistance for obtaining protection orders (UM), referral to further services etc. Long-term services, such as employment support, social assistance, housing, legal advice and help with divorce proceedings, counseling and psychotherapy, child protection. In the absence of meeting the needs with services from local institutions, there are non-governmental organizations that offer various reintegration services for victims of gender-based violence.

Municipalities should increase services and increase their quality for the reintegration of survivors of gender-based violence. Some of the most priority interventions are:

- The need for structured and multidimensional long-term support and services for survivors of GBV, and the application of approaches that ensure reintegration and prevent further abuse.
- Construction of cross-sectorial reintegration plans by the Municipalities for the support for the reintegration of the victims of GBV and forecasting of the necessary resources to implement these plans.
- Increasing the planned budgets by local institutions in relation to the inclusion in social housing programs of victims of GBV and victims of trafficking

- Informing women and girls and offering contemporary professional courses that increase employment opportunities for women and girls in the labor market.
- Compiling individual career development and employability plans and providing support for finding a job and integrating into the labor market.
- Raising awareness and organizing continuous meetings with local businesses and institutions to increase sensitivity for the employment of women and girls that come from situations of domestic and gender-based violence.
- Registration of children of survivors of gender-based violence in nurseries and kindergartens in order the mothers can be able to integrate into the labor market.
- Follow-up of survivors of domestic violence while accessing social and psychological services to ensure that they are benefiting and making progress in addressing their needs
- Increasing cooperation between the local violence coordinator and the child protection worker to immediately address the needs of the child.
- Providing support and monitoring the needs of children by the psycho-social service staff in kindergartens, schools for integration and adaptation even in cases where you have to change educational institutions.
- Advocacy, raising awareness and improving knowledge on domestic violence, gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, as well as the services of MKR aimed at professionals that deal with these forms of violence (police, health centers, schools, employment offices and media, etc.) for their prevention and addressing.
- Increasing the capacity of health workers in recognizing risk factors, signs, problems or presenting conditions, including coercive or controlling behavior patterns associated with domestic abuse, and facilitate the process of information sharing by survivors of violence in family.
- Establishing easily accessible mental health services near community centers in every municipality.
- Increasing legal knowledge and access to these services of the population, especially women and other marginalized groups, to increase access to services provided by the system of justice.
- Providing training on gender equality topics, gender-based violence, women's and girls' rights in order to raise awareness among young people, women and girls about social norms, traditions and unequal gender roles.
- Developing of communication strategies that target the specific information needs for women and girls and other vulnerable groups.
- At the time of issuing the PO (Protection Order), the court should inform the victim of gender-based violence to contact the local domestic violence coordinator in the municipality in order to receive the necessary services.
- Providing supervision for the staff that provide services for different

categories in order to reduce stress, professional consumption, but also discussion of difficult cases faced by professionals.

- Harmonization of all registers (national electronic register, REVALB, etc.) for all actors is important in order to avoid cases where there is an overlap of services and the municipality can receive information about cases that have been helped by NGOs, information that the municipal employees have not always have.

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