



Rehabilitation and reintegration services within the social welfare system in the Republic of Albania for women survivors of violence

Albania, 2021



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Table of Contents

ACRONYMS	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
LEGAL FRAMEWORK REVIEW	4
METHODOLOGY.....	8
EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE SERVICE USERS IN RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM THE CENTERS FOR SOCIAL WORK	9
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT INTERVIEWED WOMEN SERVICE USERS	9
PROTECTION MEASURES AND SAFETY MEASURES OF WOMEN SERVICE USERS	10
ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SAFETY SITUATION OF WOMEN SERVICE USERS.....	11
INFORMATION ON SUPPORT SERVICES/ CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK'S SERVICE PLAN.....	11
ASSESSMENT OF TREATMENT OF THE WOMEN SERVICE USERS BY THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK.....	15
CURRENT REACTION OF THE CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK ON THE NEEDS OF WOMEN SERVICE USERS.....	16
CONCLUSIONS.....	17
EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE SERVICE USERS IN RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM THE WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION.....	17
CONCLUSIONS.....	19
REFERENCES.....	20



Acronyms

AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
CSW	Centre for Social work
GADC	Gender Alliance for Development Centre
GBV	Gender Based Violence
LDV	Law for Measures again Domestic Violence
MHSP	The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP)
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations

Acknowledgement

Gender Alliance for Development Centre would like to thank you 10 local organizations, AWEN members and the team of interviewers who gathered all the information through interviewing women service users. A special thanks goes to Esmeralda Hoxha and Megi Zylali, GADC team members who led the process of interviews and data gathering through google forms.

Introduction

Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC)¹ and Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN)² is implementing in Albania the regional project: “Institutionalizing Quality Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs for Violence Survivors”. The project is being implemented in 2019 in collaboration with a network of organizations working in Western Balkan countries against gender-based violence, led by the Autonomous Women’s Centre, Serbia.³

The project aims to improve the secondary legislation/programs and institutionalization of quality services for survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV). The project outcome will be an improved quality of rehabilitation and integration services for survivors of GBV in all Western Balkan Countries including Albania.

The project also has the following Outputs/expected results: 1) Women supported in leaving violent perpetrators and becoming more autonomous, 2) Quality evidence-based proposals for secondary legislation and programs for assisting survivors put forth, 3) Improved skills of service providers towards increased safety/security of survivors, 4) Strengthened regional network for addressing violence against women in line with EU standards.

In this context GADC and AWEN implemented the project methodology to understand the level of services provided to women and girls survivors of GBV. This report will serve as a baseline and will bring information in three aspects:

1. Women and girls’ survivors of GBV experience with women support centres in Albania
2. Women and girls’ survivors of GBV experience with NGOs service centres.
3. A map of support services for women victims of Domestic Violence in line with Istanbul Convention

The following report measures the experiences of women survivors of violence service users in receiving support from the centers for social work and the services delivered by the Women’s CSOs. This report brings information on the shelters and other services for women survivors from domestic violence during the last 12 months.

Legal Framework Review

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention⁴, was adopted on April 2011 and entered into force in 2014. Albania is one of the first signatories. The Istanbul Convention is based on the international recognition that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women. States parties are obliged to fully address all forms of violence against women, take measures to prevent it, protect its victims and

¹ www.gadc.org.al

² <https://awenetwork.org/?lang=en>

³ <https://www.womenngo.org.rs/en/about-us/ongoing-projects/1549-2019-2022-institutionalizing-quality-rehabilitation-and-integration-services-for-violence-survivors>

⁴ Council of Europe, 2011. Istanbul Convention. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046031c>



prosecute the perpetrators. While the ultimate aim of the Istanbul Convention is the prevention of violence, there are specific requirements to protect victims from further violence and offer support and assistance to overcome the impacts and rebuild their lives. There are widespread recognition the best support services are delivered by specialist non-governmental organizations (NGOs), often led and run by women, which are established to address the specific needs of victim-survivors.⁵ Public authorities can also provide services such as social services, health services, legal aid and victim support. There is also a responsibility on public authorities to identify victim-survivors and refer them into support.

Albania as the other Western Balkan countries have committed to implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which sets forth clear guidelines regarding prevention, protection, support, legal measures, and monitoring mechanisms.

According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics, during the year 2019 in Albania 3,372 women have reported domestic violence to police departments in the regions.⁶ In addition, during the year 2019, are registered 5,051 women injured due to criminal offences against them. From this number 315 are girls, while 18.7 % of them are victims of sexual crimes⁷.

Chapter IV of the Istanbul Convention aims at a multi-faceted, professional and victim-oriented support structure for any woman who has experienced any of the forms of violence covered by the Convention. To meet these requirements, Parties are required to provide specialist and general support services and ensure that victims can easily access or be referred to the right one. Further, this chapter emphasizes that a legislation and other supporting mechanisms are well established to ensure that all survivors have access to services towards recovery from violence. These services include: legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training and assistance in finding employment.

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) as the lead authority tasked with the duty to support and supervise the set-up of referral coordination mechanisms since the adoption of the Law for Measures against Domestic Violence (LDV) in 2006 and the establishment of the referral mechanisms based on the relevant executive decision of 2011.

The General obligations (Article 18), of the Istanbul Convention with reference in particular to multi-agency cooperation to address the complexity of violence against women requires establishing an intervention system which involves all relevant policy sectors, administrative levels and actors. Multi-sectoral and multi-agency interventions across the national and local levels are key to ensuring an effective and cohesive response to all forms of violence. In addition, effective co-ordination at local levels is particularly important in terms of ensuring that responses fit the community needs and of providing a “one stop-shop” of services to victims.

⁵ Liz Kelly. 2018. Mapping Support Services for victims of violence against women in line with the Istanbul Convention Standards. Retrieved from, <https://rm.coe.int/eng-mapping-support-services/16809981db>

⁶ INSTAT, 2020. Women and Men in Albania. Retrieved from <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2020/burrat-dhe-grat%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-2020/>

⁷ Ibid.



The duties and responsibilities left by Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) report⁸ for the Albanian authorities, in 2017 includes:

- Adopt the necessary measures, including legislative measures, to ensure that multiagency co-operation under the referral mechanisms extends to victims of all forms of violence against women;
- Pursue their efforts to equip all municipalities with a fully operational referral mechanism;
- Improve inter-institutional co-operation amongst all members of the referral mechanisms, including in particular judicial officials and both public and private bailiffs, by promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility as to the common goal of eradicating violence against women;
- Develop the ability of referral mechanisms to provide victims with a comprehensive package of services with the goal of empowering them;
- Ensure the structural and financial sustainability of referral mechanisms in the longterm and minimise the disruptions caused by frequent staff turnovers;
- Capitalise on lessons learnt by existing referral mechanisms, including by showcasing successful models of co-ordinated community response.

Law 121/2016 “on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania”⁹ defines the services social security that must be provided in order for every citizen in the Republic of Albania to realize his rights to social security and protection.

According to law 139/2015¹⁰, the municipality is the institution responsible for the establishment and administration of services social for groups in need (Article 54, Law 139/2015). State social service, collects and analyses data on service providers and beneficiaries from the social care system in the residential and community / day centers.

- Public social services are provided in residential institutions and day centers, which are funded from the state budget. These institutions provide services for children outside of parental care and with social problems, for people with disabilities, the elderly, victims of trafficking (women, girls, children and immigrants) or individuals with special needs.
- Non-public social services are provided by NGOs. These services that are provided in the community are scattered mainly in large cities. The non-public services are mainly funded by international donors.

Public social services are provided in 30 residential centers and 119 community / day centers,

⁸ GREVIO Baseline evaluation report Albania. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>

⁹ Law 121/2016 “on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania. Retrieved from <http://differentandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Ligi-nr-121-dt.-21.11.16.pdf>

¹⁰ Law for Local Self Government. Retrieved from https://www.ERRU.al/doc/Ligi_nr.139-2015_date_17.12.2015_Per_vetqeverisjen_vendore.pdf

while non-public social services are provided by NGOs or religious organizations in 86 community centers / day care centers and 41 residential centers, a total of 276 service centers.¹¹

Public and non-public services for women				
Districts	Residential		Community	
	Public	Non-Public	Public	Non-Public
1.Tiranë	2	2	5	
2.Durres				1
3.Gjirokastër				
4.Lezhë		1		
5. Berat				
6. Dibër				1
7. Elbasan		1	3	
8. Kukës				
9. Korçë		2		
10. Fier	1	1		1
11. Vlorë	1			3
12. Shkodër		1	1	
Total	4	8	9	6

Source: State Social Service, 2019

As it is clear from this table the services for women in need are very scarce, about 8% of the total number of services. In addition, single women with children as well as single pensioners are the most excluded groups in Albania followed by “individuals with disabilities” and “recipients of economic assistance”. Unemployed youth and women are also in critical conditions of exclusion.¹²

In addition to the law Law 121/2016 “on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania”, a bylaw no.518, date 2018, define the criteria and procedures for obtaining care services in community and residential institutions, by type of service and relevant category of beneficiary and the amount of personal expenses for the beneficiaries of the service.¹³

In addition, the National Social Protection Strategy 2015 - 2020¹⁴, addresses the Government of Albania responsibility in relation to (i) economic assistance and disability scheme, (ii) social care services existing and proposed ones and (iii) any other issues in the field of social protection. This

¹¹ State Social Service 2019. Assessment of the need for social services in 12 regions of Albania. Retrieved from <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/vleresimi-i-nevojies-per-sherbime-shoqerore-ne-12-qarqet-e-shqipe.html>

¹² State Social Service 2019. Assessment of the need for social services in 12 regions of Albania. Retrieved from <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/vleresimi-i-nevojies-per-sherbime-shoqerore-ne-12-qarqet-e-shqipe.html>

¹³ http://www.sherbimisocial.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/VKM-518_dt_04.09.2018.pdf

¹⁴ National Social Protection Strategy, 2016 – 2020. Retrieved from, https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Strategjia_Kombetare_per_Mbrojtjen_Sociale_2015-2020.pdf



strategy is drafted in accordance with Articles 70 and 99 of the Stabilization and Association Agreement Association, Partnership Document 2007 and fulfills the obligations arising from the National Plan for the European Integration 2014-2020.

One of the policies of the strategy is the development of social care services, based on the principles of decentralization and deinstitutionalization, for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in Social Protection programs and encourages full and effective participation in society.

The legal framework mentioned above is intertwined with law and other strategies. Based on this legal framework, Albania can provide a comprehensive protection system for women victims of domestic violence. However, Albania is still far from serving this vulnerable category.

Methodology

To measure the level of satisfaction of women and girls who survived violence in domestic relations with service centers for women or by the referral mechanism, about 91 women and girls from 10 different municipalities were interviewed. The women were contacted through AWEN member organizations as following:

1. Gender Alliance for Development centre
2. Vatra centre – Vlora
3. Jona association – Saranda
4. Woman to Woman – Shkoder
5. Une Gruaja – Pogradec
6. Agritra vision – Peshkopi
7. Counselling line for girls and women – Tirana
8. Forumi i Gruas – Elbasan
9. Women peace and security, Durres

The members of the organization were trained and discussed how to gather the information through conducting interviews. Purpose of the interviewing was to determine what type of needs women survivors of violence had and what type of information and support they have received in the centers for social work, as well as level of satisfaction of women service users with the provided support.

Interviewing was conducted by women councillors of the above-mentioned organizations, part of the Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN). The survey was led by the gender Alliance for Development Centre. The survey is standardized for all the organizations part of the project with twenty-eight (28) questions focusing on collecting following data:

- a) General information about women service users,
- b) Data on protection/safety measures requested and/or enforced by the centers for social work and other public institutions recognized as subjects of protection in relation to women service users;
- c) Data on services of support/plan of services of the centers for social work related to women service users, and
- d) Assessment of attitudes toward women service users in the centers for social work.

When conducting interviews, the interviewers explained to the women interviewees the purpose of data collection and that provided answers will be analyzed anonymously (without recording their name or sharing her specific response with any of the institutions, as well as that a woman can refuse to share information/experience.

The interviewers, interviewed in total 91 (ninety-one) women service users, and analysis of data and experiences provided are presented in this report following the structure of the standardized survey.

Findings of this report will be used by GADC and AWEN to prepare the CEDAW shadow report and the GREVIO or EC progress report for Albania. Also, the findings will be used to tailored educations of the professionals in the centers for social work toward improving services of support of the centers for social work to women survivors of violence. In addition the findings will be discussed in a round table with responsible institutions to improve the services for the women's survivors of domestic violence.

Experiences of women survivors of violence service users in receiving support from the centers for social work

General Information about interviewed women service users

The age of the women and girls interviewed ranged from 17 to 58 years old, 10 (ten) of them were 17 – 20 years old, 10 (nine) were 21-25 years old, 19 (nineteen) were 25-35 years old, 32 (thirty-two) were 35-45 years old and 20 (twenty) were 45 – 58 years old.

All respondents were Albanian citizens, 3 (three) of them Roma and 2 (two) Egyptian.

In relation to specific personal characteristics **7 (seven) of women and girls said they had a disability**, 2 (two) of whom are with a physical disability and 4 (four) of them had depressive disorder problems, one said she has a kidney failure due to the physical violence.

56 (fifty-six) women have minor children, 17 (seventeen) of them had minor and adults' children, 11 (eleven) had no children and 7 (seven) of them had adult children. Sixty-two (62) women interviewees identified themselves as **single mothers**, which according to the legislation in Albania they also called head of household, twenty-two (22) women interviewees did not identify themselves as single mothers, 7(seven) of them refused to answer this question.

In relation to the **employment status**, 45 (forty-five) of the interviewees are unemployed, 35 (thirty-five) stated that they are employed and 8 (eight) were working part-time. The latest said they work whenever they find a job. This mean that these women and the one unemployed do not have social security coverage. 2 (two) is attending high school, and 1 one) the university and it is a mother with minor children.

In relation to the housing, most of the women 37 (thirty-seven) live in their parents' or relatives' apartments, 38 (thirty-eight) live in rented houses, 16 (sixteen) have their own apartments.



Most of the women interviewed 76 (seventy-six) reported that they have suffered all forms of violence and cannot distinguish between forms, 12 (twelve) stated that suffered sexual violence and 3(three) declare they suffered psychological/emotional violence.

Responses of interviewed women service users indicate that majority of them **were exposed to a long-term violence**. 30 (thirty-eight) women declared that they were suffering violence against them from 1 to 2 years; 18 (eighteen) women stated that they were suffering violence from 3-6 years; 20 (twenty) women stated that they suffered from 7- 10 years and 22 (twenty-two) women suffered domestic violence for 0 – 20 years; only one woman suffered for 30 years under extreme violence.

In relation to the question **how many times violence happened during the** last twelve (12) months, 55 (fifty-five) women stated that violence happened several times during this period, 7(seven) stated that the violence have been continuous before reporting it, 5 (five) reported violence within the two months and their perpetrators are in jail and the rest 24 (twenty-four) stated that violence did not happen.

Protection measures and safety measures of women service users

Women interviewed stated that due to the occurrence of violence in the last 12 months, 14 (fourteen) women received Urgent Protection Order within 48 hours. None of women interviewed have a preliminary protection order (24 hours). All of them received extended protection order to 30 days and more.

According to the article 17/3 of the with the Law No. 966/2006 “On measures against violence in family relations” (the LDV)¹⁵ the court impose protection orders and decide about the: 1) Duration of the measure which starts from 30 days; 2) Notification to the perpetrator that the violation of the protection order constitutes a criminal offense as stipulates in the Article 320 of the Criminal Code; 3) The right to appeal within 15 days. In addition, according to the article 19/3 of the law¹⁶ the decision of the court includes the date of the hearing, which is within 20 days from the issuance of the court decision and the protection order.

Further the women service users were asked if the **emergency measures applied to the children** as well. 75 % of women responded yes while 25% responded no. The protection measures included 16 (sixteen) perpetrators in jail, 6 (six) in home arrest and order to not approach the woman or children, 5 (five) cases are in process in the court, however the perpetrator is ordered to leave the house; 6 (six) women and their children accommodated in the shelters for victims of domestic violence and were still there in the moment of the interview; 13 (thirteen) have an Urgent protection order. In the moment of the interview 6 (six) women reported that they have

¹⁵ Ligji pwr Masa ndaj dhunws nw marrwdhwniet familjare. Retrived from <https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20201020140600ligj%20nr.%20125%20dt.%2015.10.2020.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid.



been divorced or are in the process of divorce while the criminal proceedings for their perpetrators are continuing, 39 (thirty-nine) women have not responded. All women reported that they received Immediate Protection Order when they have reported the violence and all the measures applied to the children as well.

Assessment of current safety situation of women service users

In related to the women survivor's security 71 (seventy-one) stated that now after they reported they feel safe, for 12 (twelve) women the situation remained the same and for 8 (eight) it is deteriorated.

Some quotes from the women interviewed:

"I am calmer as my abuser is in jail"

"I feel safe next to my mother"

"I feel more relaxed and protected after being accommodated in the shelter"

"I left my abused father, and took refuge near the Vatra center. I feel safer after being placed in the shelter"

"My situation is calmer because my husband has been sentenced to prison but the fear remains because I think what will happen to me the moment my husband will be free as it is certain that he will take revenge on me"

"The ex-husband is ordered to not approach me or to my daughter"

A woman from Durres, 36 years old, is feeling threatened. She said that - her ex-husband sends threatening messages to her from the jail. He threatens to kill me and my parents.

Another woman 35-year-old stated that - her husband is getting mad because she reported him to the police.

Another woman 36-year-old stated that - her husband is getting mad because he does not have any more the right to see his children.

While in general although some women declare they are safe they still have fears and insecurity. Only one positive statement came from a woman 38 years old about her husband she said: I did not have any worries after the release of my husband from prison as he became aware and understood the damage he was doing to the family.

Information on support services/ center for social work's service plan

75 (seventy-five) interviewed women service users, asked for help/turned to the centers for social work during the past 12 months, while 12 (twelve) women service users did not request their serviced within this period. The respondents received services at the following women service centres located to the following municipalities: Shkoder, Durres, Tirana, Pogradec, Elbasan, Vlore, Sarande.

Regarding the question whether the Centre for Social Work (CSW) has made a personalized service plan for the woman and her children, from 91 (ninety- one) responses, 39 (thirty-nine) responded by saying that they did not have a plan and they do not know what is a plan, while



52(fifty-two) women service users said they have a plan and that they try to follow it with the help of CSW.

The ones who have a plan were asked if they agreed on the plan with the councillor or they received a plan prepared only by the CSW. 38 (thirty-eight) women responded that they agreed on the plan, while 14 (fourteen) are not sure probably the plan remain at the centre but they are sure they discussed on a plan.

Asked if she knows **what the plan is** and what to do with it and if this is well explained from the councillor was clear that the survivor didn't have much to say. This means that the plans are not properly drafted and does not fully support the women way out. The councillors and the managers of the CSW should improve this part of the work.

All 91 (ninety-one) women service users confirmed that when approaching to the centers for social work, professionals in the center examined needs she has, and the professionals in the center informed her about the rights she has as a victim of violence.

In 98% of cases women and their children **needed psychological and social support** however in not all the cases the councillor informed her how to receive such support. In 68 (sixty-eight) cases the women users of service said the professionals in the center for social work informed them about the possibility to receive psychological/social support, 23 (twenty-three) women said they were not informed about it. However, it is clear from the responses that 71 (seventy-one) women received support from the women's CSOs, 11 (eleven) from CSW, 9 (nine) women did not receive any services.

The respondents were asked if at the time of the report **they needed a safe place** and if the counsellor had provided this possibility. In 34 (thirty- four) cases women had no need for a safe place and 50 (fifty) women needed a safe place.

35 (thirty-five) women service users said they did not receive the information in the center for social work on possibility to get a secure place to reside, 45 (forty-five) women said they received this information in the center, while 11 (eleven) women service users said they are not sure if they received this information.

Sixteen respondents informed that they used the shelter offered by the CSW, while the rest used other alternatives such as parent houses, her house etc. 48 (forty-eight) women service users did use a secure place to reside, among which 40 (forty) were sheltered in the safe houses run by women's civil society organizations (Vlora-south, Shkodra north, Tirana, Elbasan), 8 (eight) to the National Center for the Treatment of Victims of Domestic Violence (Kamza municipality). The others 43 used apartments of their parents, or their own apartment.

46 (forty-six) of them stated that the children their children resided in a secure place together with them, while 34 (thirty-four) said no their children did not stayed with them because they are adults. 11 women did not have children.

39 (thirty-nine) women service users said **they needed to solve their residence issues/find an apartment to live**, 36 (thirty-six) women said they did not have this need, while 16 (sixteen) interviewed did answered the question.



35 women service users said the center for social work **did not inform them on possibility of getting assistance to solve** their residence issues, 42 (forty-two) women said they received such information, 14 (fourteen) women **were not sure if they received such information.**

Only 4 (four) women service users stated they **used a state assistance/service to solve** their residence issues. 87 (eighty-seven) women never used such assistance.

Asked if **she needed financial help**, the women service users stated yes in 78 (seventy-eight) cases and no in 13 (thirteen) cases.

65 (sixty-five) women service users said the center for social work informed them about the possibility of receiving financial aid, 17 (seventeen) stated they did not receive this information in the center for social work, while 9 (nine) women said they were not sure if they were informed on such possibility in the center.

3 (three) interviewed women service users **stated they used one-time financial aid**, and 47 (forty-seven) women service users said they are receiving continues financial aid and 6 are receiving child allowance. 35 (thirty-five) women said that since they are working, they did not receive financial aid.

58 (fifty-eight) interviewed women service users stated **they needed to find employment**, 31 (thirty-one) women service users said they do not need to find employment, while 2 (two) women have not responded.

52 (fifty-two) interviewed women service users stated that the **center for social work informed them about the possibility of getting assistance with finding employment**, 32 (thirty-two) women said they did not receive such information in the center for social work, while 8 (eight) didn't wanted to respond.

In most of the cases women received advice to find a job from the social worker, who informed them about the Labour office and the possibility to receive professional training for free. However, women did not used much this possibility, they faced different challenges to continue finding jobs through the offices. They also faced more challenges to continue a professional training because may of they did not have a possibility to leave the children Insafe place, while doing the training.

21 (twenty-one) out of 56 (fifty-six) women service users with underage/dependent children stated **they needed to put their children in temporary care** and determine a temporary plan for the children to see the (violent) father, 50 (fifty) women service users with children stated they did not have this need. 8 (eight) women were not sure what to do about this.

30 (thirty) women service users with underage/dependent children stated that the center for social work **informed them about the possibility** of getting temporary care and regulating how they will see their father, 44 (forty-four) women service users with underage/dependent children did not receive this information from the center for social work.



39 (thirty-nine) interviewed women service users with underage/dependent children **said that the center for social work recommended to the court to regulate temporary care and visitation**, while fifteen 38 (thirty-eight) women service users with underage/dependent children said the center for social work did not provide such recommendation to the court.

58 (fifty-eight) interviewed women service users with underage/dependent children stated **their children needed psychological/social support**, 12 (twelve) women service users with dependent/underage children think their children did not need psychological/social support, while 10 (ten) women service users said they were not sure if their children needed psychological/social support.

60 (sixty) women service users with underage/dependent **children stated they received information on the possibility of receiving psychological/social support** for their children in the center for social work, 20 (twenty) women service users with underage/dependent children stated the center for social work informed them about the possibility of receiving psychological/social support.

43 (forty-three) interviewed women service users with underage/dependent children stated the children **did use psychological/social support services**, by specialized nongovernmental organization, 2 (two) by a specialized mental health care institution. Only 1 received counselling on the marriage and family counselling, 16 (sixteen) stated their children did not use psychological/social support services.

35 (thirty five) women service users with underage/dependent children stated **they needed to have oversight measures** issued regarding the abuser and his parental behaviour, 17 (seventeen) women service users with underage/dependent children stated they did not need these measures, while nine 4 (four) women service users were not sure if they needed these measures.

35 (thirty-five) women service users with underage/dependent children stated the center for social work informed them about **the possibility of issuing oversight measures**, 17 (seventeen) women service users with underage/dependent children stated they did not receive such information in the center, while 4 (four) women service users stated they are not sure if they received such information.

33 (thirty-three) women service users with underage/dependent children **stated the center for social work-initiated proceedings to partially terminate the abuser's (father) parental rights**, in 2 (two) cases over mother; in 1 (one) case for both parents, while 20 (twenty) women service users with underage/dependent children stated the center for social work did not initiate such procedure. In the time of interview in 34 (thirty-four) cases the procedure is initiated by the CSW but it is completed partially and only in 4 (four) cases is fully completed.

10 (ten) women interviewed as service users shared, they had some **other needs for support and**



assistance of the center for social work. 1 (one) woman said that her son is drug addicted and she needs help for this issue. 4 (four) women said that need continuous psychological and social assistance.

Almost all women noticed that the **CSW redirected them to the women’s NGOs** to receive different types of assistance. In addition, all interviewed women service users stated they did not use any other service provided by the center for social work. They used free legal aid provided by women’s civil society organization in relation to protection of rights as a survivor of violence or in relation to divorce from abusive husband.

Assessment of treatment of the women service users by the center for social work

This section of the baseline report provides experiences of interviewed women service users in direct communication with the case managers/professionals of the centers for social work.

52 (fifty-two) interviewed women service users feel that **the case manager/professionals in the center for social work showed they understand**, trust and support them. While 20 (twenty) women service users stated **that they did not appreciate the contact and help from the manager of the centre**. 17 (seventeen) women service users feel that they received understanding and support only partially. 2 (two) women think that the communication was a disaster.

Women service users shared following examples of good practice by the professionals in the centers for social work:

- “a professional in the center for social work explained my rights and we prepared a plan”
- “professionals in the center for social work assisted me to be accommodated at a shelter,”
- “professionals in the center for social work gave me full understanding, compassion, and support,”
- “professionals in the center for social work assessed that me and my children are in safety risk of repeated violence.”

Women service users also shared negative examples of how/why they felt that the professionals in the center for social work had negative general attitude and/or did not understand them, trust them, and supported them:

- “I have not seen any manager when visiting the centre”.
- “What to say it was completely a disaster, I felt bad and neglected”
- “They didn’t follow my case and I was not aware of the steps to follow in court to receive the the economic aid”.

85 (eighty-five) women service users feel that the case manager/professionals in the center for social work **did not support abuser/violence by their comments or general attitude**, only 1 (one) of the women service users shared that such comments or general attitude were present, while 5(five) women service were not sure. Women service users which stated that the case managers/professionals in the center for social work did not support abuser/violence by their



comments or general attitude additionally commented that the professionals in the center for social work focused on providing information and support to them and children in relation to domestic violence they survived and did not justify violence or behavior of the abuser.

76 (seventy) interviewed women service users feel that the case manager/professionals in the center for social work **did not blame the victim for the violence by their comments or general attitude**. However, 4 (four) women service users shared that such comments or attitude were present partially and 7 (seven) women think these comments or attitude were present and exercised by some of the professionals in the centres.

Below are some comments from women on the attitude of the case manager:

- "I was expecting that the state CSW centre helped me but instead they send me to the women NGOs who really helped me and my children".
- "I did not receive the needed support from the CSW, no service plan was made for me"
- "They did not listen carefully when I spoke, I think they did not care"
- "The case manager sends me from an institution to another I was never properly helped by them.
- "I felt offended by the indifferent reception of staff of the centre, probably they didn't have enough power to help me"

Current reaction of the center for social work on the needs of women service users

12 (twelve) interviewed women service users (13.19%) rate current reaction of the center for social work to their needs as very unsatisfactory, 11 (eleven) or 12.09% rated unsatisfactory, followed by 17 (seventeen) or 18.68% somewhat satisfactory followed by 31 (thirty-one) women service users (34.07%) rate it as satisfactory and 20 (twenty) or 21.98% highly satisfactory.

The women service users' comments for the above-mentioned level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction includes the following statements:

Negative

- "I had no information about the services the centres provided"
- "The municipality does not give any help only except of the payment of around 30 USD, since I have Urgent protection Order".
- "I do not feel I had a support as a raped woman. I was expecting more"
- "I did not receive any help from the social service unit at the Municipality level"
- "I applied for a rent bonus, and I have never received it"
- "I still need financial support because my ex-husband does not provide alimony for my daughters"
- "Not at all satisfied"
- "I still have not received a rent bonus although I am under the Urgent Protection order"
- "Very disappointed by the Court which in its latest decision 2021 sentenced the perpetrator to 11 days in prison for non-payment of alimony".



Positive:

- “The behaviour was correct and non-discriminatory.”
- “I feel safe and calm. They listen to me for every need I have.”
- “They listened to me and I received many services and support for me and my children”.
- “I have been sheltered for several days in Vatra, I feel good in this center”
- “The manager of my case tried to give us solutions.”
- “I was satisfied by the services provided by the forum of Women in Elbasan, while not satisfied by the services given by the municipality.”

Conclusions

From the analysis of demographic data, it is clear that women survivors of domestic violence are accompanied by a difficult socio-economic situation. Many of them have underage children and have not completely solved their problems with the perpetrator. Many of them also have serious issues with housing and employment. In related to their safety, many women return to live with their families, parents or relatives, after they reported the violence and received protection orders, as the Albanian state does not ensure regularity in the accommodation of victims of domestic violence. From the analysis of how centres for social work deal with cases it is understood that the service it is not in compliance with international standards. From the analysis of the responses of women it is clear that the officials do not have their duties clear and do not perform properly to the women survivors. It is clear that the centers do not provide full coverage for all women's needs such as psychological and social support, safe place, job opportunities, temporary care for their children. Not all case managers or social workers establish a plan for women and follow it step by step. Most of the socio – psychological support is been given by the women's organizations. Almost all women noticed that the CSW redirected them to the women's NGOs to receive different types of assistance. Although the number of women satisfied with the with the services and assistance of the center for social work, still the unsatisfied women number is a significant and a call for change in better multiagency services and coordination for women survivors of domestic violence.

Experiences of women survivors of violence service users in receiving support from the women's organization.

The same group of women were interviewed about the satisfaction with the services provided by the women's NGOs. The NGOs assessed includes 8 women NGOs:

1. Coucelling line for Girls and Women
2. Shelter for Abused Women and Girls
3. Woman Forum in Elbasan (Elbasan)
4. Gruaja te Gruaja – Women to Women (Shkoder)



5. Psychosocial Center Vatra – Vlore
6. Jona association – Saranda
7. Une Gruaja – Pogradec
8. Agritra – vision - Diber

Women service users, asked to measure the satisfaction with women’s organizations services of **the SOS hotline for psychological / social support**. 49 (forty-nine) women stated that they feel very satisfied with the services, while 22 (twenty-two) are somehow satisfied, followed by 7 (seven) unsatisfied, while 13 women have not used the line.

Some positive statement that supports the evaluation:

- “I felt quiet and satisfied talking to the councillor”
- “Very good communication with the councillors”.
- “I have received more services in the office but when I communicated on the phone with the psychologist it helped me a lot, especially for the needs of children who have major psychological problems.”
- “I spoke several times by phone with the psychologist and received valuable councils.”
- “I communicate a lot with the psychologist and he has advised me several times over the phone when I have not been able to come to the office from the pandemic or from a distance. It has helped me a lot.”
- “Quite a good phone conversation, I was supported from the beginning”
- “Psychologists have supported me immensely and I have become aware of their advice through the telephone line”

Women service users, asked to measure the satisfaction with women’s organizations services of **SOS hotline for legal support**. This service it is not used by any women interviewed. They stated that they do not know any telephone number for this type of support.

Women service users, asked to measure the satisfaction with women’s organizations services of **One-on-one psychological / social counselling and in person**. 68 (sixty-eight) women stated that they feel very satisfied with the services, while 22 (twenty-two) are somehow satisfied, followed by 1 (one) unsatisfied.

Women service users, asked to measure the satisfaction with women’s organizations services of **One-on-one legal consultations and in person**. 67 (sixty-seven) women stated that they feel very satisfied with the services, while 17 (seventeen) are somehow satisfied, followed by 7 (seven) unsatisfied.

- “I received legal support with a lawyer from the association, they supported me with everything I needed”.
- “I am very satisfied. I received legal and psychological service for me and my children. The legal advisor helped with the divorce process. Everything is offered for free. Otherwise, I was not able to continue the processes”.
- “I have been constantly advised by the lawyer on the KEMP case”



- “We have received legal family services from the Center's lawyer and I am very satisfied.”
- “I am very pleased to have received free legal aid for the divorce and all legal procedures”

Conclusions

Women’s NGOs who have established sustainable hot line for psychosocial support and residential centres for women survivors of domestic violence. The Women’s NGOs also offer free legal aid service and socio-economic support to women. The women’s NGOs also coordinate the action for different cases with centres for social work. However, the number of women served is less than the total number of women who report domestic violence at the police station or the number of the women who receive Urgent Protection Order. Also, we do not have information on free legal aid hot lines. They use these hot lines but through women’s NGOs.

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