

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

Second Edition

**Gender Alliance for Development Centre
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Acronyms

AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Centre for Social Work
GADC	Gender Alliance for Development Centre
GBV	Gender Based Violence
LDV	Law for Measures against Domestic Violence
MHS	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
PO	Protection Order

Acknowledgement

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Disclaimer

The content of this report is the sole responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of Austrian Development Agency.

Introduction

Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC)¹ and Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN)² implemented in Albania the regional project: “Institutionalizing Quality Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs for Violence Survivors”. The project was implemented from 2019 to 2022 in collaboration with a network of organizations working in Western Balkan countries against gender-based violence, led by the Autonomous Women’s Centre, Serbia³ with financial support from Austrian Development Agency. The project aimed 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 during 2021 implemented the project methodology to understand the level of services provided to women and girls survivors of GBV. This report served as a baseline and brought information in three aspects:

1. Women and girls’ survivors of GBV experience with women’s 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 the Istanbul Convention

The first report⁴ with the above methodology was published in 2021 and reflected and measured the experiences of women survivors of violence, users of services in receiving support from the Centre for Social Work and services provided by women's CSOs. It also featured information on shelters and other services for women survivors of domestic violence during the past 12 months.

To analyse the situation and to compare it with last year’s baseline report, the Gender Alliance for Development Centre followed the same methodology by producing this second report which, among other things, reflects the work of the social centres of the municipality of Tirana, which were monitored during 2022

¹Official Webpage of Gender Alliance for Development Centre www.gadc.org.al

²Official Webpage of AWEN <https://awenetwork.org/?lang=en>

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

⁴ Report: Rehabilitation and reintegration services within the social welfare system in the Republic of Albania for women survivors of violence (First Edition) . Online: https://gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/Final%20report_GADC_V2.pdf

General Overview of Social Services in Albania 2022

Situation of Domestic Violence in Albania

According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics⁵, during 2020 in Albania 3,333 women have reported domestic violence to police departments in the regions. In addition, during 2020, 4,056 women are registered as injured due to criminal offences against them. From this number 270 are girls, while 20.7 % of them are victims of sexual crimes.⁶

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Law 121/2016 “on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania”⁷ defines the Social Insurance Services that must be provided in order for every citizen in the Republic of Albania to realize their rights to social security and protection. According to law 139/2015⁸, the municipality is the institution responsible for the establishment and administration of social services for groups in need (Article 54, Law 139/2015). The state social service collects and analyses data on service providers and beneficiaries from the social care system in the residential and community / day centres.

- Public social services are provided in residential institutions and day centres, 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.

According to the official data received from the State Social Service for the year 2022 we have a total of:

- ✓ 1 Public Residential Centre
- ✓ 16 Public NON - Residential Centres
- ✓ 9 non-public Residential Centres
- ✓ 14 non-public Non-residential Centres

⁵INSTAT, 2021. Men and Women. Online: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

⁶IBID

⁷Law 121/2016 “on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania”. Retrieved from <http://differentandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Ligj-nr-121-dt.-21.11.16.pdf>

⁸Law for Local Self Government. Retrieved from https://www.erru.al/doc/Ligj_nr.139-2015_date_17.12.2015_Per_vetqeverisjen_vendore.pdf

The tables below show all the centres (residential and non-residential) by 12 regions of Albania.

Table 1: Public Centres. Source: State Social Services 2022

No.	DESIGNATION	Total	Type of centers	
			Residential	Non-residential
	a	1	2	3
I	Total number of centres	17	1	16
1	Berat	0	0	0
2	Dibër	0	0	0
3	Durrës	0	0	0
4	Elbasan	1	0	1
5	Fier	0	0	0
6	Gjirokaštër	1	0	1
7	Korçë	0	0	0
8	Kukës	0	0	0
9	Lezhë	0	0	0
10	Shkodër	10	0	10
11	Tiranë	5	1	4
12	Vlorë	0	0	0

Table 2: Non-Public Centres. Source: State Social Services 2022

No.	DESIGNATION	Total	Type of centers	
			Residential	Non-residential
	a	1	2	3
II	Total number of centres	19	9	14
1	Berat	0	0	0
2	Dibër	0	0	0
3	Durrës	3	0	3
4	Elbasan*	4	1	4
5	Fier	0	0	0
6	Gjirokaštër	0	0	0
7	Korçë	0	0	0
8	Kukës	0	0	0
9	Lezhë	1	1	0
10	Shkodër*	4	2	4
11	Tiranë	3	3	0
12	Vlorë*	4	2	3

Table 3: Public and Non-Public Centres in Albania. Source: State Social Service 2022

No.	DESIGNATION	Total	Type of centers	
			residential	non-residential
	a	1	2	3
	Total number of centres	36	10	30
1	Berat	0	0	0
2	Dibër	0	0	0
3	Durrës	3	0	3
4	Elbasan	5	1	5
5	Fier	0	0	0
6	Gjirokastër	1	0	1
7	Korçë	0	0	0
8	Kukës	0	0	0
9	Lezhë	1	1	0
10	Shkodër	14	2	14
11	Tiranë	8	4	4
12	Vlorë	4	2	3

Methodology

To measure the level of satisfaction of women and girls who survived violence in domestic relations with service centres for women or by the referral mechanism, about 80 women and girls from 12 different municipalities were interviewed.

Municipalities:

1. Belsh	7. Peshkopi
2. Durres	8. Pogradec
3. Elbasan	9. Sarande
4. Gramsh	10. Tirane
5. Lirazhd	11. Shkoder
6. Peqin	12. Vlore

The women were contacted through AWEN member organizations as following:

1. Psychosocial Center "Vatra" – Vlora	5. Agrita Vizion – Dibër
2. Jona Association – Saranda	6. Counselling Line for Girls and Women – Tirana
3. Women to Women – Shkoder	7. Women's Forum – Elbasan
4. Me, the Woman – Pogradec	8. Women, Gender, Peace and Security – Durres

The members of the mentioned organizations who had been trained a year ago also received a repetition of the training and discussed how to collect information through conducting interviews. The purpose of the interview was to follow up the needs of women survivors of violence and what information and support they had received from social service centres, as well as the level of satisfaction of women, users of services, with the support provided.

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 the following data:

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

While conducting the interviews, the interviewers explained to the women interviewed the purpose of data collection and that the answers given will be analysed anonymously (without recording their names or sharing their specific answers with any of the institutions), as well as the woman may refuse to share information or her experience.

The interviewers interviewed a total of 81 (eighty-one) women, service users, and the analysis of data and experiences is presented in this report following the structure of the standardized study.

The findings of this report will be used to advocate for continued training of professionals in social service **centres** to improve the **centres'** support services for women survivors of violence. Furthermore, the findings will be brought into a comparative analysis with the previous year's report.

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

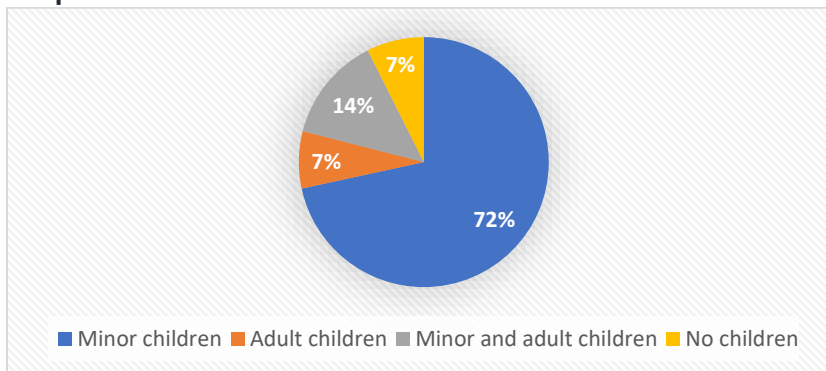
General Information about interviewed women service users

The age of the women interviewed varies from 18 to 66 years, 4 (four) of them were in the age group of 18 - 20 years, three (3) were 21-25 years old, 28 (twenty-eight) were 25-35 years old, 41 (forty-one) were 35-45 years old, 4 (four) were 46-55 years old and 3 were between 56 and 66 years old.

All respondents were Albanian citizens, 3 (three) of them Egyptian and 3 (three) Roma. Regarding specific personal characteristics, **14 (fourteen) women and girls said they had a disability**, 9 (nine) of whom had a physical disability and 5 (five) of whom had a mental disability. From the above, 5 of the interviewees were treated with a disability pension approved by the Medical Commission for Determining Work Capability.

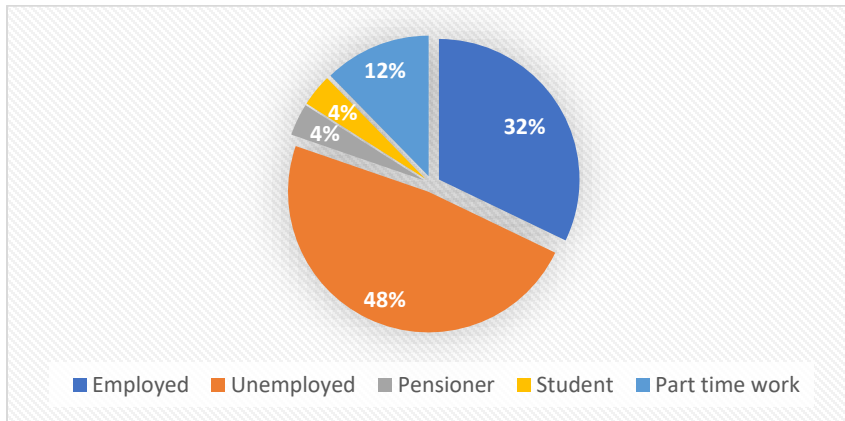
58 (fifty-eight) women have minor children, 11 (eleven) of them had both minor and adult children, 6 (six) had no children and 6 (six) of them had adult children. Fifty-seven (57) interviewed women identified themselves as single mothers, who according to the legislation in Albania are also called heads of households, twenty-nine (29) interviewed women did not identify themselves as single mothers.

Graph 1. The number of children of survivors of domestic violence



Regarding the employment status, 39 (thirty-nine) of the interviewees are unemployed, 26 (twenty-six) stated that they are employed and 10 (ten) were working part-time. The latter said that they work whenever they find a job. This means that these women and the unemployed do not have social security coverage. 3 (three) interviewees were pensioners and 3 (three) were students, where one of them was a single mother with a minor child and lived with her parents.

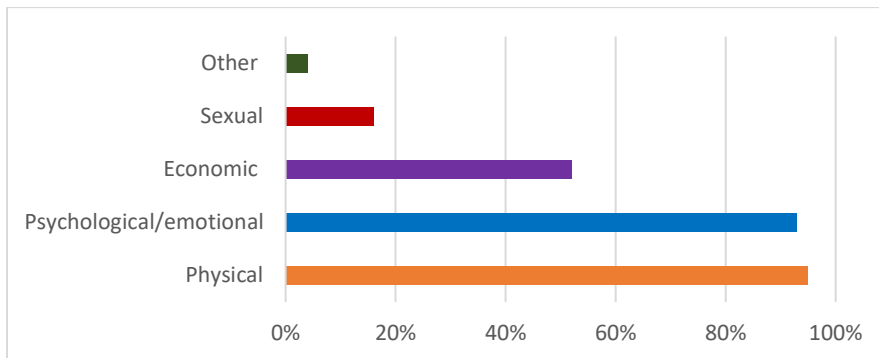
Graph 2. Employment Status



In relation to the housing, 27 (twenty-seven) interviewed women live in their parents' or relatives' apartments, 16 (sixteen) have their own apartments. While 30 (thirty) of the interviewed women lived in temporary rented accommodation. **Compared to a year ago, there are 10 fewer women who had the opportunity to stay with their parents or other relatives.**

Most of the interviewed women, 77 (seventy-seven), reported that they have suffered different types of violence where physical violence prevails, 13 (thirteen) have stated that they have suffered sexual violence and 75 (seventy-five) state that they have suffered psychological/emotional violence and 42 of the interviewees affirm that they have also suffered economic violence. In this report, **if we compare it with a year ago, the violence caused also includes economic violence, preventing these women from being financially independent.**

Graph 3. The type of violence that survivors of violence have experienced

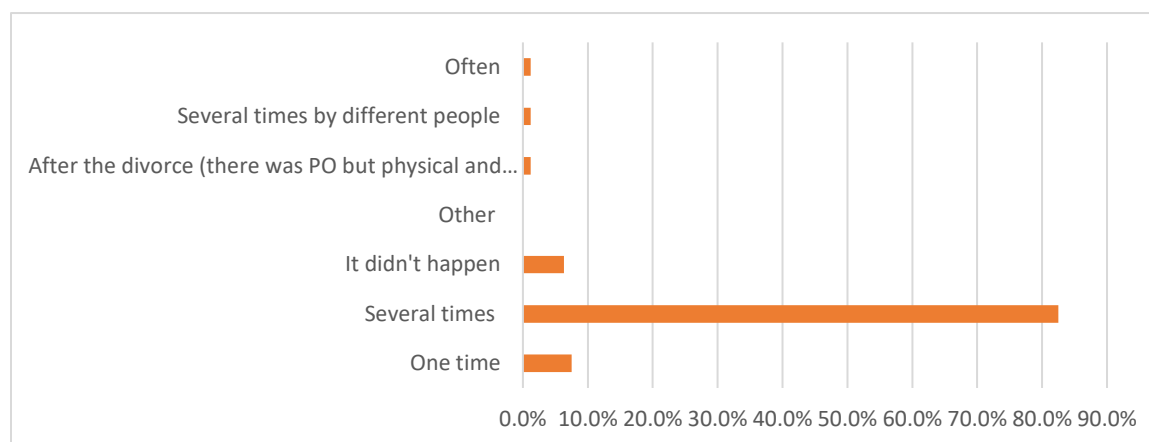


The responses of the interviewed women, service users, show that most of them **were exposed to long-term violence**. 13 (thirteen) women declared that they suffered violence against them from 1 to 2 years; 27 (twenty-seven) women declared that they suffered violence from 3-6 years; 17 (seventeen) women stated that they suffered from 7-10 years and 14 (fourteen) women suffered domestic violence for 10-20 years; one woman stated that she had suffered extreme violence for 30 years. In the conducted interviews, there were also women whose cycle of violence had started in the last year, where three of them had suffered violence for between 6-9 months.

Regarding the number of women who suffer violence according to periods, there is no substantial change from a year before. It seems that the cycle of violence continues in the same way for survivors of domestic violence.

Regarding the question of **how many times violence has occurred during the last twelve (12) months**, 66 (sixty-six) women have stated that violence has occurred several times during this period, 6 (six) have stated that the violence has been continuous before they reported it. There is an **increase of about 20%** compared to a year ago, of women who have experienced frequent violence during the last 12 months.

Graph 4. Frequency of violence experienced



Protection measures and safety measures of women service users

The women interviewed said that due to violence in the last 12 months, 39 (thirty-nine) women received an Immediate Protection Order within 48 hours. **None of the women interviewed has a preliminary protection order** (24 hours). Likewise, 39 (thirty-nine) received extended protection orders for 30 days or more.

According to the article 17/3 of the Law No. 966/2006 *“On measures against violence in family relations”*⁹ the courts 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 stipulated 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 law¹⁰, 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.

Furthermore, women were asked if the **emergency measures applied to children as well**. 62% of women answered yes while the rest denied this fact. All the women interviewed have a protection order that prevents the perpetrator from approaching the home or workplace or any other place where the survivors of violence are. 11% of women in their order also have the

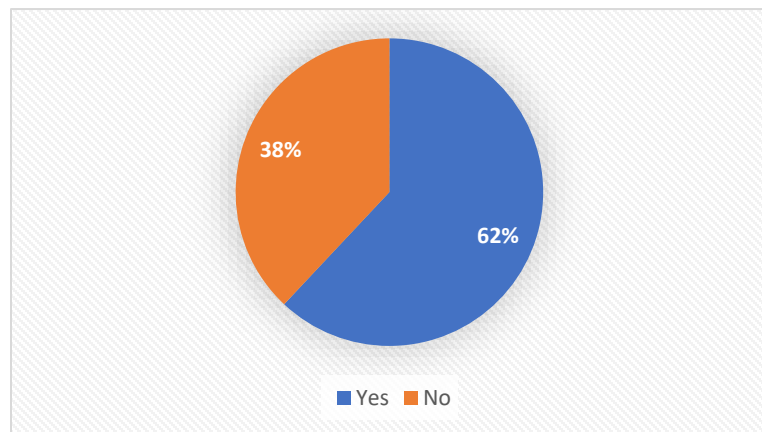
⁹Law on Measures against violence in family relationships. Retrieved from <https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20201020140600ligj%20nr.%20125%20dt.%2015.10.2020.pdf>

¹⁰Ibid

measure of displacement from the shared apartment, while 35% of PO predict that the perpetrator should leave the house. **62% of the interviewed women claim that all measures have been applied to their children as well.**

Compared to a year ago, there is a decrease of about 10% of women, survivors of domestic violence, who claim that emergency measures are also applied to children.

Graph 5. Implementation of emergency measures for children



At the time of the interview, 32% of women claimed that criminal proceedings are ongoing whereas the cases of 2% of them have not been opened, there are no criminal proceedings; 8% of them report that the procedure has ended. 13% of the interviewees were provided with the Immediate Protection Order (IPO), 17% of them were provided with the Protection Order (PO). **About 14% of the perpetrators have been detained and are serving their prison sentence**, 5% of the perpetrators have completed their sentence and one of them is again under investigation by the police as he has again committed violence against the woman, while 6% of the cases are still in process.

Assessment of current safety situation of women service users

Regarding the safety of surviving women, 58 (fifty-eight) stated that they feel safe after reporting, for 17 (seventeen) women the situation remained the same and for 4 (four) of them the situation has worsened. **There are about 22% of women who, compared to a year ago, do not feel safe even though they have reported.**

Quotes from women:

*"After receiving the Protection Order, he (the perpetrator) has calmed down and now I feel safer
"I currently live with my parents, which makes me feel safer. I have started work and I am totally committed to raising the child."*

"Now I feel better, but I'm still afraid."

"He (the perpetrator) stays away from us; we received a lot of help from the Women's Forum."

"The perpetrator has become more aggressive."

"The perpetrator has left the country and is abroad."

"The husband is in prison."
"Even though I have left the home and I live with my parents, I am still afraid because he (the perpetrator) threatens me from time to time."
"He has become more violent and threatens to kill me."
"The current situation is better because he is a prisoner."

A woman interviewed from Saranda (37 years old) said that she feels threatened all the time. She said that the situation has worsened as the perpetrator finds different ways to contact and threaten her all the time.

Another 35-year-old woman from Durres stated: *"Now that my husband has been arrested and is away from us, I feel calmer and safer. However, the fear of him getting out of prison and violating us again exists."*

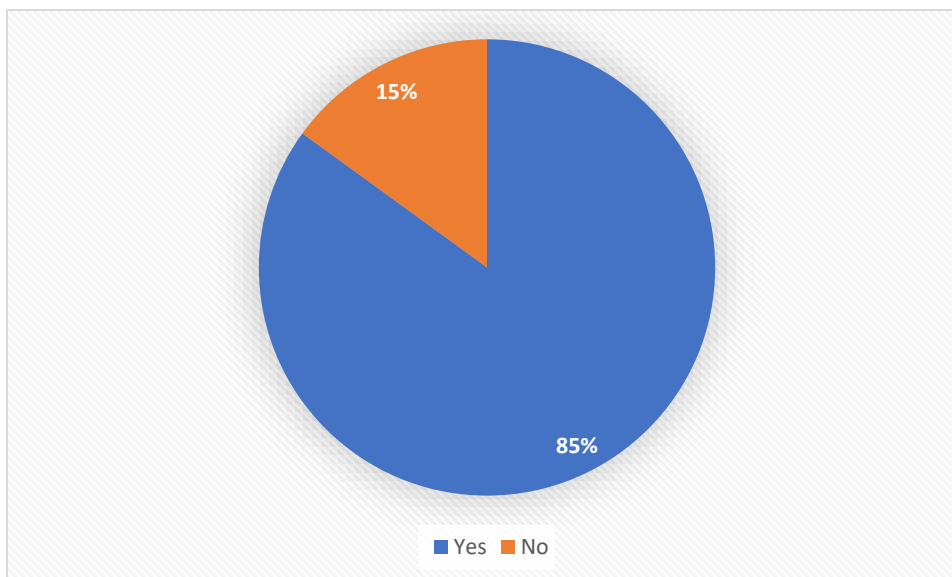
"I am calmer and take I can take care of my children. They (the children) have calmed down as they were shocked by the previous situation we had at home" - 23-year-old survivor of violence from Pogradec.

However, there are also interviewed women who affirm that the perpetrators did not violate the PO or abuse them afterwards. **In fact, this is a rather low percentage**, but it seems as if the perpetrators are beginning to understand **the importance of respecting the PO measures**.

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

68 (sixty-eight) interviewed women, service users, asked for help / turned to social service centers during the last 12 months, while 12 (twelve) women did not seek their services within this period. The respondents received services at the following women's service centres located in the following municipalities: Shkodër, Durrës, Tirana, Pogradec, Elbasan, Vlorë, Sarandë.

Graph 6. Request for help at social service centers



Regarding the question whether the Centre for Social Work (CSW) has made a personalized service plan for the woman and her children, out of 76 (seventy-six) responses, 11 (eleven) answered saying that they did not have a plan and that they do not know what the plan is, while 38 (thirty-eight) women service users said that they have a plan and that they try to follow it with the help of CSW. However, there are also 27 women interviewed who were not sure if the CSWs had made any service plans for them. **Here is a good finding compared to a year ago, since the number of women who had no information regarding these plans has decreased by about 80%**

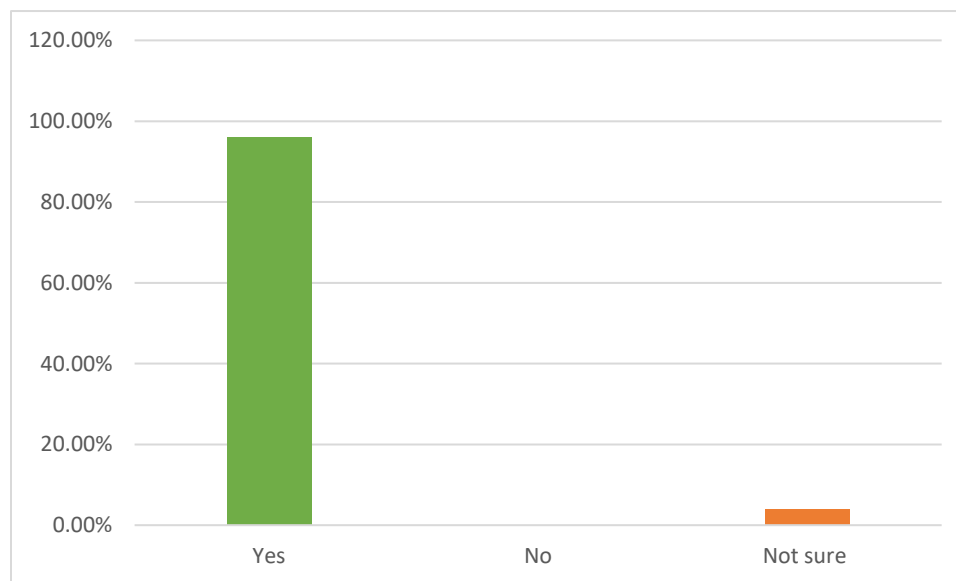
The ones who have a plan were asked whether they had agreed on the plan with the counsellor or had received a plan prepared only by the CSW. **Only 31 (thirty-one) women responded that they agreed on the plan, and 17 (seventeen) of them had received a copy of the plan.**

The situation looks almost the same compared to a year ago, not all women had received a plan from the centre.

Out of the 81 women interviewed, 61 of them, service users, confirmed that when they approached the centres for social services, the professionals had examined their needs, and had informed them about the rights they have as victims of violence. **While only 58 of them were asked what they needed.** Although there is a slight positive change, even this year, compared to last year, the plans are not properly drafted and do not fully support the women way out. **The councillors and the managers of the CSW should improve this part of the work.**

In 96% of cases, women and their children **needed psychological and social support**, but not in all cases the counsellor had informed them how to get such support.

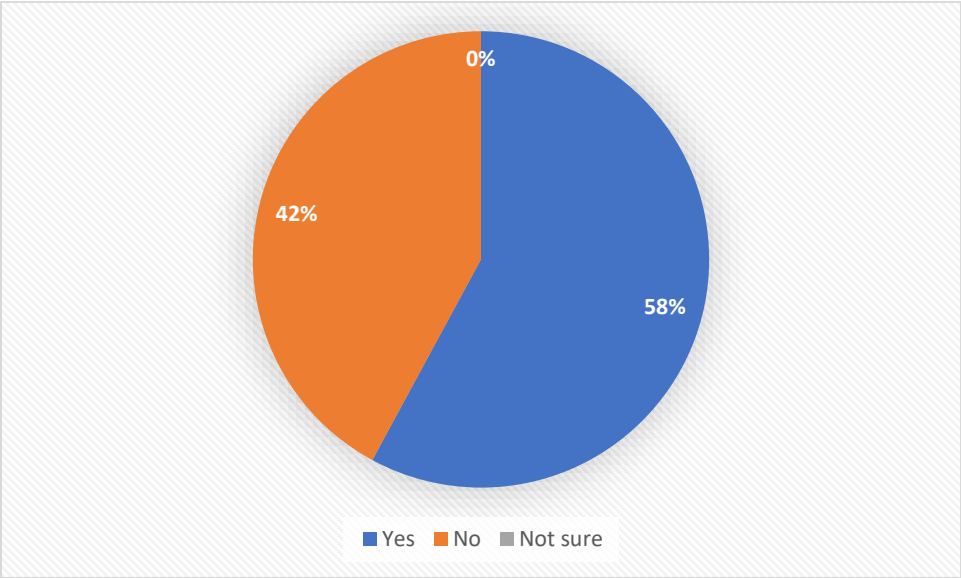
Graph 7. The need for psychological support



In 60 (sixty) cases, women users of the service said that professionals at the social services center had informed them about the possibility of receiving psychological / social support, 11 (eleven) women said that they were not informed about this. **However, it is clear from the responses that almost all women receive most of the services from CSOs.**

Respondents were asked if **they needed a safe place** at the time of the report and if the counsellor had provided them with this opportunity. In 32 (thirty-two) cases, women did not need a safe place, while 44 (forty-four) women needed a safe place.

Graph 8. Need for a safe place



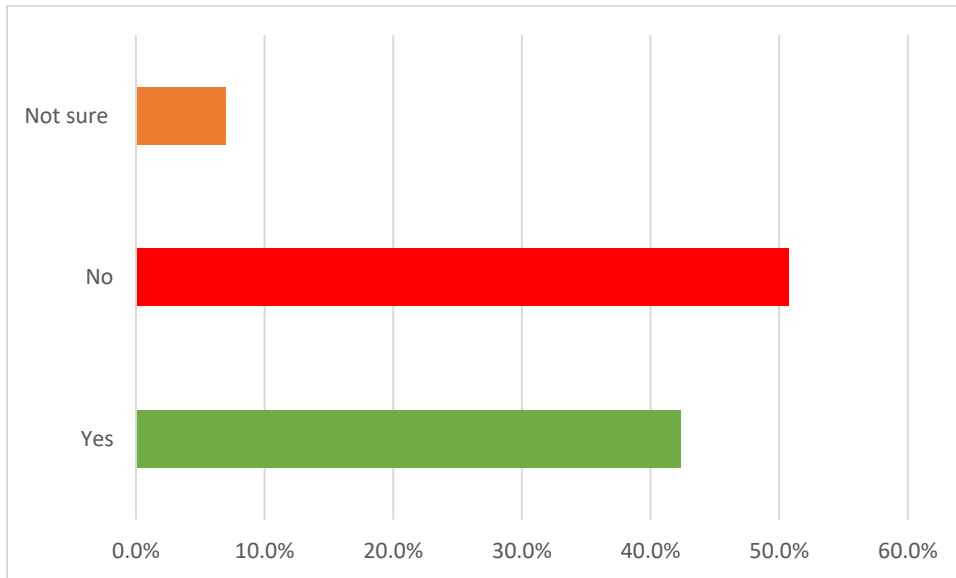
30 (thirty) women users of services said that they had not received the information at social service centres on the possibility to get a secure place to live, 36 (thirty-six) women said that they received this information at the centre, while 3 (three) women service users said they were not sure if they had received this information. **In this aspect, we have a decline of women who received this information from centres for social services.**

Eighteen respondents informed that they had used the shelter, 3 (three) had used “Mother’s Home” (*the state provides shelters for mothers with minor children*) while the rest had used other alternatives, such as parental houses, their own homes, etc. 9 (nine) of the interviewees lived in the apartment of their parents or relatives, 10 (ten) of the women in rented apartments, facilitated by civil society organizations and/or with the help of the rent bonus allocated by the local government. Eleven of the women interviewed continued to live in the house they were in, the apartment they shared with the perpetrator, after he left.

43 (forty-three) of them said that their children lived in a safe place with them, while 12 (twelve) said that their children had not stayed with them because they were adults.

37 (thirty-seven) women users of the services said that **they needed to solve their housing problem / find an apartment to live in**, 25 (twenty-five) women said that they did not have this need, while 7 (seven) of interviewees were not very sure and the rest of the interviewees did not want to answer this question. **Even this year there is no significant change compared to the previous year.**

Graph 9. The personal solution for their housing

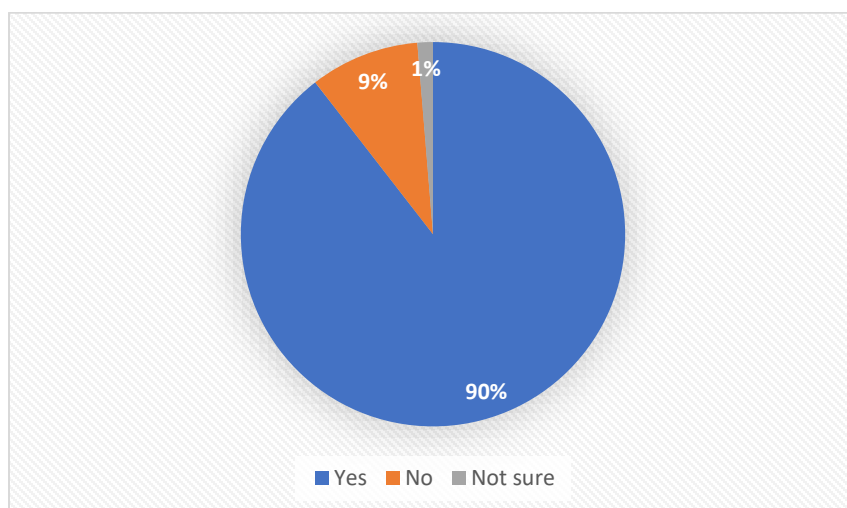


25 (twenty-five) women users of services said that the social services center **had not informed them about the possibility of receiving help to solve their housing problem**, 37 (thirty seven) women said that they had received this information, 7 (seven) women **were not sure if they had received such information or not**. Compared to a year ago, the situation remains almost the same in general, **but with 5 women less** who had received information about the possibility of receiving help to solve their housing problem.

Only 14 (fourteen) women service users stated that they used a state assistance/service to solve their residence issues. 4 (four) of them received financial assistance every month to pay the rent of the apartment. While for 46 of them, they declared that they either returned to their parents **or received housing assistance from civil society organizations**. **Although compared to a year ago, the number of women who have received help from the state has increased slightly, again their total percentage continues to be very low.**

When asked **if they needed financial help**, women users of services said "yes" in 68 (sixty-eight) cases and "no" in 7 (seven) cases, while one of the women who answered this question was not sure about her situation in that period. **The situation remains almost the same**, with women survivors of violence who need financial support.

Graph 20. The need for financial support



57 (fifty-seven) women users of services said that the social work centre had informed them about the possibility of receiving financial assistance, 12 (twelve) said that they had not received this information from the social work centre, while 5 (five) women said they were not sure if they had been informed of such an opportunity at the centre or not. Even in this case, compared to a year ago, **there is a decrease of 12% of women** who were informed for the possibility of receiving financial assistance.

6 (six) women users of services interviewed stated that they had used financial assistance once, while **44 (forty-four) women** users of services said that they are receiving continuous financial assistance, while 2 are receiving additional assistance for children. **45 (forty-five)** interviewed women, service users, said that they need to find a job, 31 (thirty-one) service users said that they do not need to find a job.

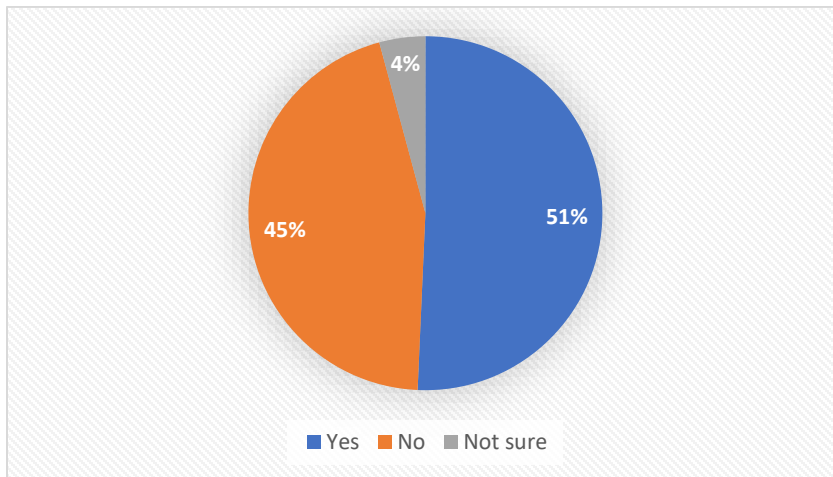
45 (forty-five) interviewed women service users stated that the **social services centre had informed them about the possibility of receiving help to find a job**. 23 (twenty-two) women said that they had not received such information at the centre, while 2 (two) did not want to answer. Even in this case, compared to a year ago, **there is a decrease of 19% of women** who were informed **about the possibility of receiving help to find a job**.

In most of the cases women received advice to find a job from the social worker, who informed them about the National Labour Office and the possibility to receive professional training for free. However, women did not use much this possibility. **Three of them used the opportunity to train**, 5 (five) to improve their qualification, 10 (ten) used this service to find a job according to their current qualification. Nine of the women interviewed used this service to find a job, but could not find it because it did not match their qualifications. **The women who did not accept this service had different reasons, such as the lack of a place to leave their children while they work, living in an administrative unit far from the city, sick children or their physical disability**.

36 (thirty-six) out of 69 (sixty-nine) women service users with minor/dependent children **stated that they should place their children in temporary care** and establish a temporary plan for

children to meet their (violent) father, 32 (thirty-two) women users of services with children declared that they did not have this need. 3 (three) women were not sure what to do about this.

Graph 31. Placement of children in temporary care

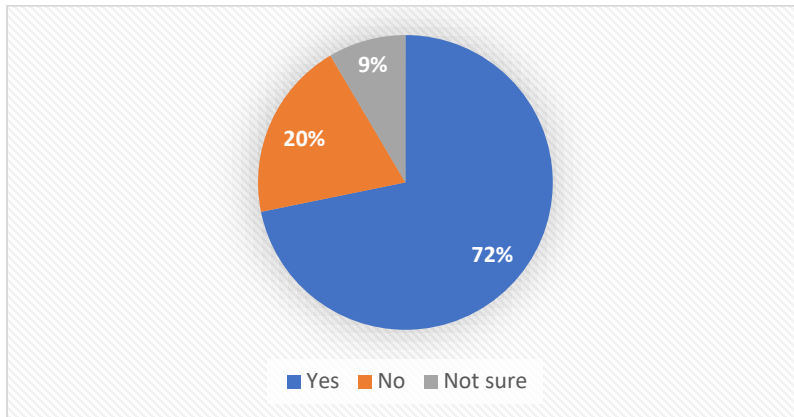


30 (thirty) women users of services with minor/dependent children, stated that the social services centre had informed them about the possibility of receiving temporary care and how they could meet their father, 30 (thirty) women users of services with minor / dependent children had not received this information from the centre and about 7 (seven) of the interviewees were not sure. **The situation remains the same compared to the previous year.**

31 (thirty-one) interviewed women users of services with minor/dependent children stated that **the social services centre had recommended to the court to take measures for temporary care and visits**, while 34 (thirty-four) women users of services with minor/dependent children stated that the centre had not given such a recommendation to the court.

51 (fifty one) interviewed women, users of services, with minor/dependent children stated that **their children needed psychological / social support**, 14 (fourteen) women users of services with minor/dependent children think that their children did not need psychological / social support, while 6 (six) women service users said they were not sure if their children needed psychological / social support. **Compared to the last year, there is a decrease by 12% of women who thought that their children needed psychological or social support.**

Graph 42. The need of children of survivors of violence for psychological/social support

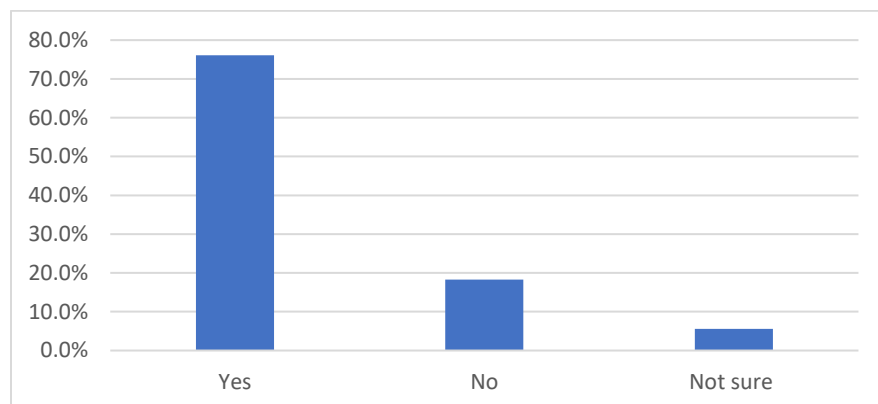


47 (forty-seven) women users of services **with minor/dependent children**, stated that they had received information on the possibility of receiving psychological / social support for their children at the social services center. Almost all women users of services with minor/dependent children stated that the center had informed them about the possibility of receiving psychological / social support from the center itself or **with references to civil society organizations** or other institutions, **such as 2 (two) who needed more specialized help from the Psychiatric Hospital.**

28 (twenty-eight) interviewed women, users of services, **with minor/dependent children**, stated that the children had used psychological / social support services from specialized non-governmental organizations, 3 (three) from an institutional mental care specialist, 3 (three) of the children have received developmental counselling at the local hospital. **8 (eight) women interviewed said that their children did not use psychological / social support services, due to distance or health problems that prevent movement.**

54 (fifty-four) women users of services **with minor/dependent children** said they needed supervision measures issued in relation to the abuser and his parenting behaviour, 13 (thirteen) women users of services with minor/dependent children declared that they did not need these measures, while 4 (four) women service users were not sure if they needed these measures. **This year there is an increase of 54% of women who requested this support, compared to a year ago.**

Graph 53. The need for supervision measures regarding the abuser and their parenting behaviour



42 (forty-two) women users of services **with minor / dependent children** stated that the social services centre had informed them about the possibility of **issuing oversight measures**, 20 (twenty) women users of services with minor / dependent children declared that they had not received such information at the centre, while 9 (nine) women users of the services stated that they were not sure if they had received such information. **This year there is an increase of 20% of women who received this information, compared to a year ago.**

40 (forty) women users of services with minor/dependent **children stated that the social services centre had initiated the procedures for the partial termination of the parental rights of the abuser (father)**, while in 5 (five) cases the procedures for complete termination of the parental rights of the abuser (father). However, 21 (twenty-one) women stated that the CSW did not inform them about the possibility of terminating the abuser's parental rights. Even in this case there is an improvement related to the procedure compared to the last year.

23 (twenty-three) women interviewed as service users expressed that they had **some other needs for support and help from the social services centre**. 1 (one) woman said that she needed medications that she takes because of a chronic disease she has, but that the difficult economic situation does not allow her to buy them. 3 (three) of the interviewed women needed specialized medical services for various children's illnesses. Most of the women interviewed with children registered in school, asked for additional help regarding the purchase of tools for the children's progress in school. **And, about 80% of them insist on financial support that would make the process a little easier**. 7 (seven) of them required ongoing psychological and emotional therapy support.

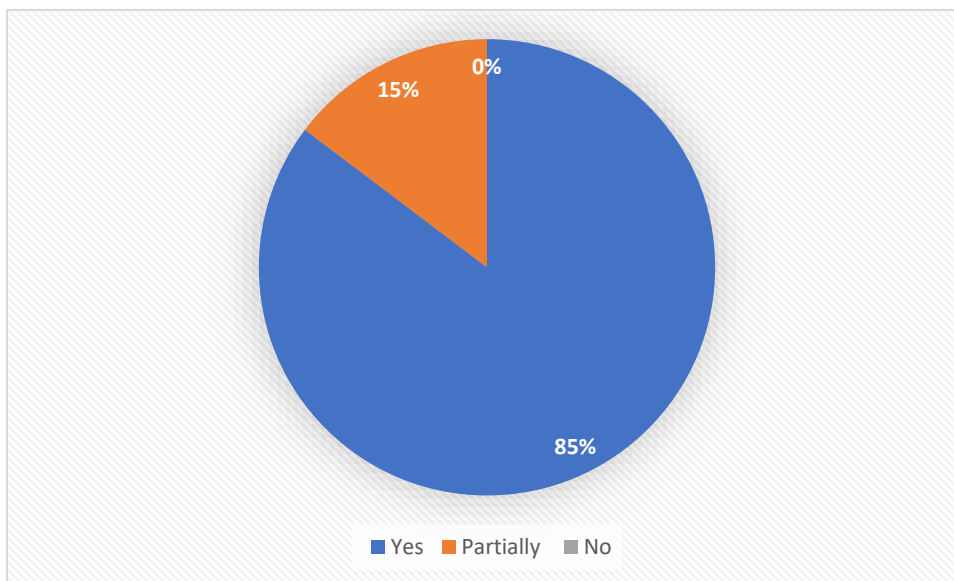
Almost all women noted that the **CSW had referred them to women's NGOs** to receive various types of services. Moreover, all service users who were interviewed stated that they had not used any other service provided by the social service centre. They had used the free legal aid provided by the women's civil society organization in relation to the protection of rights as survivors of violence or in relation to divorce from an 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.

64 (sixty-four) women service users who were interviewed felt that the **case manager/professional at the social service center had demonstrated that they understood, trusted and supported them**. 11 (eleven) women users of the services think that they had only partial understanding and support. **Compared to a year ago, there is an increase (23%) in the understanding of the case manager for survivors of violence.**

Graph 64. Behaviour of the case manager towards the survivor of violence



Service users gave these examples of good practice from professionals in the social service centers:

- "They trusted and helped us with what we needed"*
- "Professionals at the social service center helped me to be accommodated in a shelter,"*
- "The professionals patiently explained the procedures to me"*
- "The case manager behaved very well and did not make me feel uneasy"*

Service users also gave negative examples of how/why they felt that professionals in the social service center had a generally negative attitude and/or did not understand, trust or support them:

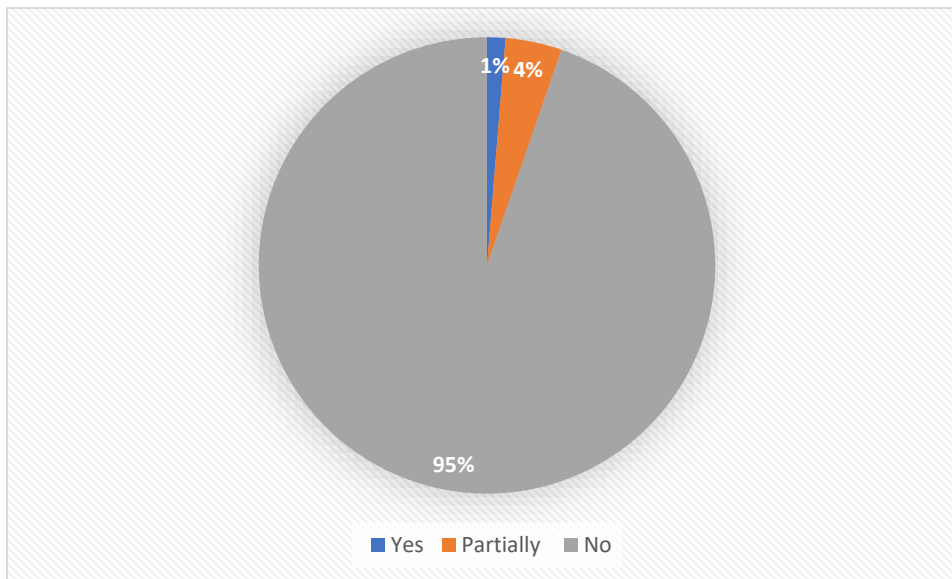
- *"She trusted me, but I didn't solve the problem"*
- *"Not enough time was dedicated to me"*
- *"The support was only verbal, but when it came to concrete support, I was told that they didn't have financial opportunities."*

- *"The need for the continuity of services was very big and their interruption caused us to return to the same difficult social, economic and psychological situation."*

71 (seventy-one) 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**, while 3(three) of the women service users shared that such comments or general attitude were present. 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 their children in relation to the domestic violence they survived and did not justify the violence or behavior of the abuser.

74 (seventy-four) women service users interviewed think that the case manager/professionals at the social service **centre did not blame the victim for the violence by their comments or their general attitude**. However, 2 (two) women users of the services stated that there were partially such comments or attitudes. **The situation is almost the same compared to the previous year survey.**

Graph 75. Blaming of the survivor of violence



The following are some comments from women about the case manager's attitude:

- *"They were unable to offer me the services I needed"*
- *"I did not receive the necessary support from the social service center, they did not create a service plan for me"*
- *"They couldn't help me, but they referred me to the Counseling Line for Women and Girls"*
- *"The case manager referred me to civil society organizations, maybe that is all they can do"*

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

2 (two) of the interviewed women users of the services, rate the current response of the social services centre to their needs as **very unsatisfactory**, 4 (four) evaluate it as **unsatisfactory**, out of 13 (thirteen) women who evaluate it somewhat **satisfactory** (17%), followed by 22 (twenty-two) women service users (29%) who rate it as satisfactory and 15 (fifteen) or **20% as very satisfactory**. **There is a slight decrease compared to a year ago, in women's satisfaction regarding this question**

The comments of the service users on the aforementioned level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction include the following statements:

Negative

- *"Not all procedures were completed in time."*
- *"The situation is still unresolved because my partner continues to threaten me."*
- *"I received the greatest support from organizations, not from centers for social services"*
 - *"They didn't offer me any of the services I wanted"*
 - *"There should be more support services"*
- *"I was not informed about my rights as a woman victim of domestic violence and with a Protection Order"*
 - *"My problem has not been solved, the court procedures are taking too long"*

Positive:

- "I am grateful for the services and behaviour towards me"*
 - "Very satisfying because they did everything possible for me and my children. "*
 - "They were welcoming and listened to me without prejudice"*
 - "The social service enabled me to reconcile with the children"*
 - "They helped me take advantage of the rent bonus"*
-

Conclusions

Even in this second report, from the analysis of demographic data, it continues to be clear that women who have survived domestic violence are accompanied by a difficult socio-economic situation. Many of them have minor children and have not fully resolved their problems with the abuser, there are survivors who are still threatened by the abuser. **But, unlike a year ago, it seems as if some of the perpetrators have accepted the help and are receiving it in special programs regarding their rehabilitation.** Many of the women have serious problems with housing and employment, even in the conducted interviews, it seems that the informal housing rental market is also a major problem. The owners of these houses do not make regular rental contracts, thus making it very difficult to benefit from the rental bonus due to the lack of a

contract. Meanwhile, employment continues to remain a big wound in addition to violence. Surviving women often have health problems that limit them in the work process, making independent economic living impossible. In many cases, the workplaces are far from their place of residence, or there are no employment opportunities related to their qualifications. Regarding their safety, many women return to live with their families, parents or relatives, after reporting the violence and after obtaining protection orders, as the Albanian state does not provide regular housing for victims of domestic violence. From the analysis of how the social service centers handled the cases, it is understood that the service is not in accordance with international standards and in many cases the services that the women need are missing.

From the analysis of the women's answers, it seems that there is an improvement from a year ago in the understanding of the tasks by the professionals of these centers. But not all case managers or social workers create a plan for women and follow it step by step. Most of the social-psychological support is provided by women's organizations. Almost all women noted that the CSW had referred them to women's NGOs to receive various types of assistance. Despite the increased number of women satisfied with the services and assistance of the social services center, the number of dissatisfied women is still considerable. This year, the innovation was also the provision of free legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence, who have rated this service as good, although there is a significant number of them who are still in protracted processes or have not closed the procedures yet. With the recent changes in the Law on Measures against Domestic Violence, where by order of the court the abuser is forced to leave the house, it seems to have taken place in some of the cases treated according to the women's interviews.

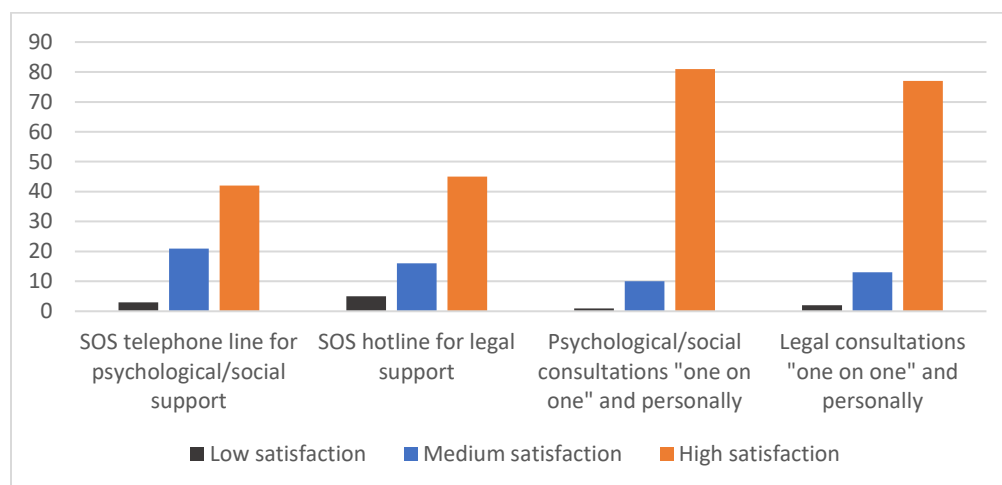
Experiences of women survivors of violence service users in receiving support from the women's organizations.

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

1. Agrita Vizion – Dibër
2. Counselling Line for Girls and Women – Tirana
3. Jona Association – Saranda
4. Me, the Woman – Pogradec
5. Psychosocial Center “Vatra” – Vlora
6. Women to Women – Shkoder
7. Women, Gender, Peace and Security – Durres
8. Women's Forum – Elbasan

Service users were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the women's organizations' services of the **SOS help lines for psychological/social support**. 42 (forty-two) women stated that they feel very satisfied with the services, while 21 (twenty-one) are somewhat satisfied, followed by 3 (three) with low satisfaction with the services of SOS lines for psycho/social support from the lines. **Compared to a year ago, the situation remains the same without significant changes.**

Graph 86. Evaluation of the operation of SOS helplines



Statements supporting the assessment:

- *"They answered me and explained to me regarding my needs"*
- *"The psychologists were clear and I spoke quite freely with them."*
- *"Every time I called, the NGOs representatives answered me and gave me information and good advice about the problems I had"*
- *"For every phone call, even outside of working hours, I have received answers to my problems."*
- *"I don't really like talking on the phone, but I have received counselling using face-to-face meetings"*
- *"At any time and for anything, the psychologist did not leave me without answers"*
- *"I was very emotionally burdened. Their help was immediate and calmed me a lot, considering that I had thought of carrying out actions that would have had a tragic end."*

Service users were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the services of women's organizations on the **SOS helplines for legal support**. 45 (forty-five) of the women declared that they had a high satisfaction with this service, 16 (sixteen) of them declared a medium satisfaction and 5 (five) of them rated the satisfaction with this service as low. **This is a new service, unlike a year before when the service users had not received this service and had no information about it.**

Statements supporting the assessment:

- *"The lawyer is understanding and willing to give me legal information and explanations."*
- *"At the first meeting, the lawyer gave me general legal information about divorce and then we met in the office to further clarify the problems and questions I had"*

- *"The counselor made me feel good with her warm voice. She invited me to an in-person meeting and also gave me information about support for abused women. I was very satisfied"*
 - *"I am satisfied because thanks to the support of the organization I am here today. I was in a state of depression due to extreme poverty and violence. With continuous counseling, I began to calm down and receive support from other organizations and the municipality. My children managed to escape from that situation"*
 - *"I called only a few times about the legal service, because I preferred to have direct contact and I met her (lawyer) in the office"*
 - *"The legal explanation was in an understandable form despite the difficulty to understand and know all the legal procedures that I had never had to deal with."*
 - *"I asked for information about the children's pension that I had not received for three months. The lawyer invited me to meet her at the organization and she helped me a lot. I am very satisfied with the service"*
-

Women service users were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with women's organizations services of **One-on-one psychological / social counselling and in person**. 70 (seventy-one) women stated that they feel very satisfied with the services, while 10 (ten) are somewhat satisfied, followed by 1 (one) with low satisfaction with the services of SOS lines for psycho-social support from the lines.

Women service users were 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 13 (thirteen) are somewhat satisfied, followed by 1 (one) unsatisfied.

Quotes from survivors of domestic violence – service users

- *"Very satisfied, they supported me in the divorce process"*
 - *"The lawyer explained to me the legal paths I had to follow for the Protection Order and for the divorce process"*
 - *"The lawyer took great care of me and my daughters during the divorce"*
 - *"I was offered help with the preparation of documentation, counselling as well as undertaking to represent me"*
 - *"The legal consultations were very good, but I liked more the defence that the lawyer gave me in court"*
 - *"Legal consultations are helping me a lot to get my share of the joint property"*
 - *"The lawyer helped me draft all the necessary documents for the court proceedings, as well as to benefit from the municipality's programs for subsidizing my monthly rent. He assisted me in every moment I needed."*
-

Conclusions

Even this year, in this second report, women's organizations continue to be the stable line for psychosocial support and residential centres for women who survive domestic violence. Women's NGOs also provide free legal aid services and socio-economic support for women. Women's NGOs also coordinate actions for different cases with social service centres. However, the number of women receiving services is less than the total number of women reporting domestic violence to police stations or the number of women receiving Immediate Protection Orders. The innovation in this report was the use of the SOS helpline for legal assistance, which has been very well evaluated by women survivors of violence, who have been supported by lawyers and women's civil society organizations for the entire process up to their divorce representation.

Analysis of the monitoring of Social Centres near the municipality of Tirana

During 2021, the "Gender Alliance for Development" Centre monitored the Social Centres which are within the territory of the municipality of Tirana and are managed by it, offering rehabilitation services for women survivors of domestic violence. Tirana Municipality has 6 Social Centres, but GADC monitored only 4 of them, because they were the only centres that offered rehabilitation services for women survivors of domestic violence.

Monitoring consisted of:

- Operation and legal basis
- Objectives and services provided
- Information on the current number of survivors of violence and the services they currently receive

Monitored Centres:

- Community Centre "Gonxhe Bojaxhi"
- Multidisciplinary Social Centre
- Community Centre Shkoze
- Social Centre "Let's stay together"

Community Centre "Gonxhe Bojaxhi"

The centre operates based on the Decision of the Municipal Council no. 111 dated 27.09.2018 as one of the pilot centers of the Municipality of Tirana as well as based on the regulation approved by decision no. 40385 dated 30.10. 2018 for the "Approval of the Regulation for the Organization and Operation of the Community Center "Gonxhe Bojaxhi", an institution under the Municipality of Tirana.

The services offered in this center include programs designed to meet the needs and interests of service beneficiaries as well as referrals or support to use services provided by other specialized structures with which the "Gonxhe Bojaxhi" Community Center cooperates.

Related to women, survivors of domestic violence:

- About 20 abused women have been treated at the center since 2019
- Women receive individual psychological counseling 1-2 times per week
- Lunch and afternoon meals are offered every day
- Activities are offered for the children of these women at the center
- Currently 2 women are under a protection order

Business hours: 08:00 – 20:00

The women are supported by: 4 Social Workers; 3 psychologists and 1 lawyer.

Multidisciplinary Social Centre

The centre has a wide extension, so it handles cases for several administrative units. It provides food and hygiene packages. It develops a program for strengthening the family through cooperation with various organizations; orients mothers towards employment. Some of the women have been given the opportunity to work at the centre.

The cases were presented for different issues and the presence of violence was identified during the interviews and follow-up of further cases. **6 women have been referred since January 2022** for various issues and domestic violence. For each case, the multidisciplinary group meets and draws up an individual support and empowerment plan. The cases are followed up to the moment when they have created independence and are empowered, but the cases are mainly treated in a long-term way.

Business hours: 08:00 – 20:00

The women are supported by: 4 Social Workers; 4 psychologists

Community Centre Shkoze

There are 8 cases of women survivors of domestic violence, with protection orders, that the center has followed throughout the process of divorce. The center accompanies these women to the police station to obtain the protection order, as well as refers them to law firms to receive free legal assistance. The period of treatment of the case depends on the dynamics and needs of the case and how quickly it can reach empowerment. The case is followed for 1-1.5 years but sometimes even longer. **5 women** have been given the opportunity to work at the center.

Business hours: 08:00 – 20:00

The women are supported by: 5 Social Workers; 3 psychologists

Social Centre “Let's stay together”

The Social Centre “Let’s Stay Together” due to its heterogeneity, aims to improve the quality of life of the community, through the provision of multidisciplinary services for all the categories in need that this area carries, the awareness of families, children and the community, identification of needs, advice on legal procedures, family planning, child welfare, primary education, etc.

Currently, at the premises of this center, **11 cases of women and girls survivors of domestic violence** are being managed, who have been or are equipped with a protection order. From

January 2022, 5 new cases were referred. For the cases that are referred and attend the center based on the evaluation by the multidisciplinary group, a 1-year work plan is implemented. Based on the assessment of the situation, they attend **once a week** to carry out individual counseling therapy (cases that are more specific can be presented more often), every day to consume the meal at lunch and in all social-cultural activities which are carried out to have more social interaction.

Business hours: 08:00 – 20:00

The women are supported by: 5 Social Workers; 3 psychologists

Conclusions

Tirana Municipality has the largest number of services it offers through social or multidisciplinary centers for different categories of the population. The above information was made possible after monitoring sessions by GADC and in-depth interviews with managers or employees of these centers. The focus of this monitoring was only on women and girls, survivors of domestic violence, however, the centers also offer services for other target groups in need. During the monitoring, a positive approach of the employees of the centers towards the users of the services was noticed.

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