



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN BEFORE IT HAPPENS, SUPPORTING VIOLENCE CASES IN COVID-19 TIMES

in Albania

EVALUATION **REPORT**



Preventing Violence against Women before it happens Supporting DV cases in covid-19 times

Findings and Recommendations Evaluation Report

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Edited by Ani Ruci

March 2021

**Preventing Violence against Women before it happens,
Supporting DV cases in post – corona – 19 times**

Findings and Recommendations Evaluation Report

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List of Acronyms

AU	Administrative Unit
CEMT	Center for Evaluation, Management and Training
CRM	Coordinated Referral Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DV	Domestic Violence
DCM	Decision of Council of Ministers
EPO	Emergency Protection Order
FLA	Free Legal Aid
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GoA	Government of Albania
IPO	Immediate Protection Order
IC	Istanbul Convention
LCDV & GEE	Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence & Gender Equity Employee
LGU	Local Government Unit
MoHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MTT	Multidisiplinary Technical Team
PO	Protection Order
PMEPO	Preliminary Measures of the Emergency Protection Order
REVALB	Recording Violence in Albania
SC	Steering Committee
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Over the years, Albania has made important progress to address DV & VAWG. Key improvements are achieved on its legal framework against violence specially in the last three years, 2017 – 2020. Thanks to these improvements Albania has already a new Law on Free Legal Aid, guaranteed by the state for women, victims of violence; it have special provisions on the Code of Criminal Procedures for interviewing women victims of sexual abuse: there is an improved Law “On measures against violence in family relations” and strengthened prevention and protection measures for domestic and intimate partner violence on this law are already in line with the standards of Istanbul Convention.

Albanians yet continue to consider DV & VAWG a private, family matter and a part of married and family life. Unfortunately they are explicitly or implicitly accept violence and it remains behind closed doors since for the local mentality it is very difficult to denounce or report DV & VAWG. Consequently it go often unpunished. Lack of information and awareness on facing violence legally, fear, shame, and stigmatization prevent an unknown number of women in Albania to speaking up on violence against them and receive support. Local Media that can play an important role in challenging social norms and behaviors that condone violence against women reinforces cultural and social norms about gender and directly or indirectly shift blame from male perpetrators of violence and assigns responsibility for violence to women or offers excuses for men’s violence in its reporting.

The global ongoing pandemic COVID - 19 has created in Albania as well a set of circumstances for women that have increased the risk of intensifying DV & VAWG and abuse behind closed doors. The “surge” of violence during the lockdown period March - May 2020 on one hand and the sharp drop of women denunciations of their cases on the other hand, have brought into light a “shadow pandemic” as DV & VAWG is indeed. Supporting victims of violence and providing them the available services, respecting at the same time the protection measures and restrictions against the Covid - 19 pandemic is more emergent than ever.

Refleksione Women Association is one of the most active civil society organization in Albania focused in women rights, gender equality, preventing and combating DV & VAWG. Supported by the German Embassy, Tirana, in partnership with CSO, CEMT, the Association implemented the project “Preventing Violence against Women before it happens - Supporting violence cases during the Covid - 19 times”

The intended audience of this evaluation report will be: Central Government Institutions and in particular the Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Justice; Local Government Institutions responsible for the functioning of Coordinated Referral mechanism to address DV & VAW; local CSOs, engaged in fighting DV & VAWG, International Donors Agencies interested in reducing DV & VAWG in Albania , both Refleksione Women Association and CEMT, its partner organization.

The main findings

- The project is implemented in 12 municipalities of Albania that constitutes a well – thought selection regarding geographical coverage. The target municipalities by the project belong to 10 (ten) important districts of Albania (Northern, Middle, Southern, South - West and South-East) including large municipalities with a population over 100,000 inhabitants (Shkodra, Berat, Vlora, Elbasan, Lezha, Fier, Korça); medium municipalities with a population of less than 90,000 inhabitants (Pogradec, Lushnja) and small municipalities with a population less than 40,000 inhabitants (Kavaja, Roskovec and Përmet)
- Multi - disciplinary CRMs at the local level, remain since their establishing the most important and dedicated institutional structure in protecting and supporting victims and survivors of DV & VAWG. During the duration of the project, “Preventing Violence Against Women before it happens. Supporting cases in COVID - 19 times,” in the target municipalities it is ascertained that the CRMs operate in different degrees of effectiveness. CRM as defined in DCM 334/2011 is composed of three inter-linked structures: (i) Steering Committees representing relevant institutions at local level led by mayor of LGU, (ii) Multidisciplinary Technical Teams (MTT), whose members are appointed by SCs and are technical representatives of SC member institutions and (iii) Local Coordinators for Domestic Violence (LCDV) and Gender Equality Employees (GEE), who lead and coordinate the work and services of MTTs to refer and respond to the cases of DV & VAWG at local level. Each CRM has its own individuality and develops its own profile based at the local context, supported from the mayor and senior municipal management, financial resources, capacity retention, service providers on site and inter-institutional cooperation.
- Capacity building activities with CRMs’ members in the project target municipalities have contributed to bring again to them once more the critical importance of coordination and cooperation among the local institutions, part of CRM, to fulfill their legal responsibilities in preventing and combating DV & VAWG.
- The awareness raising sessions with women and girls from rural and urban areas have given them the opportunity to listen to their voice and concerns on DV & VAWG issues and benefit from each-other experiences in facing the violence and become free from it.
- The legal education of women communities constitutes the project innovative approach. Acquiring knowledge on improved legal framework against violence and their rights has encouraged them to change the mentality on gender roles and face the violence legally.
- The psychological support to answer to the critical need of the violence cases in post lockdown period and ongoing pandemic Covid-19 to their recovery from feelings of confusion, depression, anxiety, hopelessness and panic attacks, combined with awareness rising activities, is an innovative approach highly appreciated by project beneficiaries and local partners.

- TV Talk Shows broadcasted at the National and local TVs stations have contributed for the society's information and awareness, as a precondition for an active stand of the citizens and their participation to a societal attitude with "0" tolerance to DW&VAWG.
- Social administrators have increased their capacities thanks to knowledge's strengthening on the improved legal framework against violence. The acquiring knowledge has increased their accountability to the rule of law in the performance of their duties.
- Building capacities of the new appointed social administrators after 2019 Local Elections in the AUs, in the targeted municipalities has contributed to better respond to the prevention and support of violence cases in their AUs due to knowing their legal rights and competencies.
- Leaders of religious communities, involved in the project activities, have contributed in conveying positive messages against the violence to the community members of living in peace and harmony the difficult times of stress and isolation from the ongoing Covid- 19 pandemic.
- Training with local journalists contributed in promoting women human rights and shift the victimizing and guilty approach to women through reporting violence cases in constructively one, considering women as agents of change, capable to live their life free of violence. It has provided to the local journalists the opportunity to better understand the journalistic ethics of respecting the confidentiality of all persons involved in a violence episode and most important without violating twice the victim.

Overall Evaluation

The project, "Preventing Violence against Women before it happens, Supporting DV cases in Covid- 19 times" has successfully implemented its activities planned in twelve target municipalities.

It's highly appreciated the management and organizational skills of Refleksione project implementation staff and its determination to carry out the activities in the ground, conduct meetings with women and girls from rural and urban communities in the difficult circumstances of ongoing Covid -19 pandemic, especially in the conditions of a serious increase of new infecting cases during September 2020 - February 2021. Thanks to strictly respecting the Government protective measures, rules and protocols and keeping social distance at the same time, the activities were successfully implemented and none from Refleksione implementing staff or local project partners have been infected during the course of the project.

The overall project goal: "Strengthening the prevention of Violence Against Women, before it happens, Supporting Violence cases in Covid - 19 times" was largely achieved. The project have given tangible results to improve the prevention and responding DV and VAW at the

local level. The project specific objectives to inform on women human rights and provide legal education to women communities and to all relevant stakeholders are achieved. It is confirmed by the impact of information & education materials prepared very carefully and qualitatively such as leaflets and brochures distributed widely in women communities and local public.

Local TV Talk shows and video spots, produced by the project addressed the general public and spread messages of non - acceptance of violence, its denunciation and facing it legally.

The psychological support, one of the main innovative activities of the project, provided to women and girls, who have experienced very difficult situations during the quarantine March-May 2020 to reduce and suppress the spread of corona virus by the government, have resulted very useful and on the right time, especially in recovering from trauma of isolation, being 24 hours with a violent husband / partner and loss of their jobs or their loved ones from Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time the psychological sessions increased their self-esteem and the courage to break the silence and reporting the violence. This was also clearly reflected in the significant increase of the number of woman denouncing DV & VAWG cases and asking for further psychological assistance after the quarantine.

Based on the data of the online system REVALB, which reports results at the national level (MoHSP), during the period July 2020 - February 2021, the number of cases reported is higher than the months during and after the quarantine in some of the project target municipalities where the project intervention was carried out. Specifically in seven out of 12 project target municipalities the reported DV & VAWG cases have been increased as follows: in Korça (45), Vlora (40) Fier (15), Berat (15), Elbasan (15), Kavaja (10), Lushnja (10) and Pogradec (5).

A very broad participation of project target groups in its activities is undoubtedly one of the characteristics of the project. A very positive approach is shown by the local government institutions regarding the inclusion of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in the work of CRMs more as very necessary and useful instrument in preventing and combating the DV&VAWG, rather than just presented in the framework of the project. Additionally, CRMs members have been informed and became more aware and sensitized on the obligations deriving from the Istanbul Convention in preventing violence. The information and refreshing of the knowledge by the project on the amendments of the law “On Measures Against Violence in Family relations” and as well on the amendments to the Criminal Code linked with the toughening of sentences for the violence against women and girls by perpetrators and abusers have been welcome and highly appreciated by the CRMs members. Another achievement of project is the information on the Protocol of Case Management, the newly approved document from the MoHSP.

The project has benefited from the synergy of all stakeholders involved in all activities including in particular the women communities and victims of DV & VAWG in the target municipalities, local public institutions, members of the CRMs., CSOs, local journalists, religious leaders, women from Roma and Egyptian minorities.

The design and implementation of the project activities have had an innovative approach

through the combination of information on women human rights with the importance and ways of changing the mindset to prevent violence against women before it happens, with the legal education to face legally the violence and psychological support to recover the post quarantine trauma and pandemic Covid-19 consequences on the women mental health. The psychological support for women and girls from rural and urban areas marked a concrete service from which the beneficiaries have shown a very high level of satisfaction. The main beneficiaries of the project, women and girls local communities, have considered very important for them the information on improvements of the legal framework against violence such as the Preliminary Measures of the Emergency Protection Order. They also welcomed new legal changes in favor of the abused women presented by the project, which obliges the perpetrator to leave the apartment / dwelling when the DV survivor is provided with a PO.

The project paid great proactive attention to increasing the knowledge of women and girls and raising awareness of the new service in the justice system such as the FLA thanks to Justice Reform.

Recommendations

1. Authorities of central and local government must give more attention to create opportunities for employment and empowerment of women economic status. Unemployment is considered from the project beneficiaries as one of the main factor to trigger the DV&VAWG and break the peace in the families, communities and society in large.
2. The improvement of the law "On measures against violence in family relations" needs the appropriated infrastructure to be implemented including human resources as well. There is a need to set up the infrastructure for the perpetrators who should return to normality and reintegrated into society after leaving the house due to the law enforcement when their wives /partners have a PO. The improved law "On measures against violence in family relations" has not foreseen the rehabilitation of perpetrators who due to law enforcement is obliged to leave the house / dwelling to women, violence survivors and their children.
3. Public awareness of CRM and adverse impact to DV & VAWG on the society during Covid - 19 pandemic continue to be key in raising CRMs visibility and importance. Mostly in the remote areas, increasing public awareness to DV &VAWG is a real contribution to preventing violence before it happens and as well against the social norms and stands that condone directly or indirect DV & VAWG.
4. Establishment of mobile teams composed by psychologists and social workers who must provide their services in remote areas where the infrastructure is lacked particularly during the isolation of Covid - 19 pandemic.
5. Ensuring the provision of free legal aid for cases of DV&VAWG mostly in the remote areas, through the functioning throughout Albania of mobile teams, certified to provide this service. Legal Education of the public remains a very important factor in preventing DV & VAWG. There is a critical lack of knowledge in general on the legal framework against violence and the legislation amendments, specially in the remote rural areas. When the information exists, it is limited and the denunciation of violence or facing it

legally is lacked. There are indispensable the meetings with poor, marginalized and unemployed women on preventing violence before it happens through information on their human rights, legal education and ways how to change the mindset.

6. Continuous and in-depth mentoring of local journalists in all municipalities, including practical approaches such as the production of a video spots on how the reporting of a violence case affects the persons' life when the privacy of the victims / survivors is not respected.

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the evaluation is assessing the effectiveness after the completion of the project set of activities designed to informing women on their human rights and raising awareness on their right to live a life free from the fear of violence and providing legal education of rural and urban women communities in 12 project target municipalities in the framework of the project: “Preventing Violence against Women before it happens, Supporting violence cases in covid-19 times,” supported by the German Embassy, Tirana, implemented by “Refleksione” Women Association, in partnership with CEMT.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was based on opinions from the project beneficiaries. A large number of interviews (see Annex 1) with women and girls from rural and urban local communities, beneficiaries, members of CRMs, local project coordinators, LCDV&GEEs, CSOs and also a limited number of DV victims in project target municipalities were conducted by the CEMT Monitoring & Evaluation expert, Refleksione partner organization

Four main specific issues were selected to be addressed in the interviews with above mentioned focus groups: (I) Local government perception on the project's impact and their commitment on the DV issues; (II) Level of information acquired by women and girls on their human rights and specially on their right to live a live free from fear of violence, (III) Knowledge on the legislation against the DV & VAWG through legal education sessions; (IV) Information obtained by project information materials and activities such as the brochure, leaflets, videos, TV talk shows; (V) Level of benefits by victims of violence from psychological sessions for mental health to overcome quarantine trauma and that from ongoing pandemic Covid-19; (VI) Level of awareness and confidence the women and girls have to the local governmental institutions to receive their services and to non-governmental organizations, which are part of the CRMs; (VII) Main priority issues for future interventions.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In order to ensure accuracy and quality of evaluation findings, in terms of a difficult situation created by the ongoing Covid -19 Pandemic a mixed - methods approach was used for

project evaluation. Data came from a variety sources and were collected through the following methods:

- Focus group discussions with identified stakeholders where it has been possible.
- Field visits and on site observations: categories of identified stakeholders were visited, interviewed and observed on site to obtain necessary information and evidence for data analysis have been realized.
- Phone semi-structured interviews with the identified categories of stakeholders. Interview Guides for identified stakeholders' categories were prepared. (Annex 1).

Support and Logistics

During the data collection process, the CEMT expert was supported by Refleksione project implementation staff and local coordinators to coordinate meetings and interviews with identified project beneficiaries and stakeholders.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Project goal

The project aimed to strengthen the prevention of VAWG, supporting DV cases in post quarantine and ongoing covid-19 times at the local level based on information and raising awareness on women rights and changing the mindset and gender stereotypes and acquiring knowledge on legal framework and law enforcement.

To this end, the project intended to contribute to the following specific objectives:

I. Raise awareness at local women communities and relevant stakeholders on women human rights;

II. Informing on legal framework and provide legal education, encouraging women to speak up and face VAWG legally;

III. Providing psychological support and mental health care to the DV cases during the Covid - 19 lockdown and ongoing pandemic and helping them to exit process from the trauma;

IV. Strengthening the capacities of CRM and Social Administrators to implement the amended legal framework and IC Article Nr. 13 in their work;

V. Building up alliance with local media to play its important role in preventing violence against women before it happens, promoting women human rights and shifting its approach from blaming women for males' violence to a positive approach to women.

Target groups

The project was focused on five sets of target groups:

I. Victims of domestic violence who continue to experience violent situations during the Covid-19 pandemic.;

II. Women and girls from local urban and rural communities, with particular attention to vulnerable ones who face more economic and social difficulties on the situation caused by the Covid-19, pandemic;

III. Members of the CRMs in target municipalities (Police, Municipality Unit and Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence & Gender Equity Employee, Regional Health Department, Regional Education Department, Social services, Employment services, District Courts, Attorneys and Bailiff's Office, local CSO, human rights activists, local media;

IV. Journalists of the local media in 12 project target municipalities including social media and portals.

V. Local communities in large including Leaders of religious communities.

Detailed Activities Implemented and testimonies/feedbacks

To achieve the project's goal and specific objectives the project implemented the following activities:

I. **Conducting a baseline assessment** with purpose to provide a view on the actual situation in the ground on women human rights, how much knowledge they have on the roots and causes of DV and VAWG and legal framework to prevent & face violence legally in 12 project target: Berat, Elbasan, Fier, Lezha, Lushnja, Përmet, Pogradec, Kavaja, Korça, Roskovec, Shkodra, Vlora.

II. **Preparing informative / educational materials on women human rights and raise awareness on their right to live life free from fear of violence.** One brochure and one type of leaflet are designed, produced and widely distributed. The leaflets have been the main tool to carry out the campaign "You are not alone! Together to fight violence against women and girls" addressed to victims/survivors of violence during quarantine and ongoing pandemic. The leaflets have provided concrete information and arguments on the reasons why it is indispensable to prevent the violence against women during the ongoing pandemic and indicated the local institutions to address for support and help. The brochure have advocated the prevention of violence before it happens by contributing in changing the mindset and gender stereotypes.

The informative materials have conveyed information on ways how to prevent violence against women during and after covid-19 pandemic quarantine and ongoing pandemic, improved legislation against DV & VAWG, measures to be undertaken when their home is not a safe place for them.

The project distributed widely **12,000** leaflets and **3,000** brochures to beneficiaries and project target groups and in various commercial and public facilities (supermarkets, drug stores, bus stations) in twelve target municipalities.

III. Providing psychological and mental health support to post – corona DV & VAWG cases, affected during the pandemic lockdown.

The project supported with psychological assistance more than 360 victims/ survivors of violence and vulnerable woman and girls affected during the pandemic lockdown in twelve target municipalities. (Graph 1 at annex 3 presents the specific data of DV cases per each municipality.)

During the project life in its activities participated more than 1,000 women and girls from local communities; more than 200 members of CMRs, more than 120 local journalists.

Women and girls victims and potential victims of DV&VAWG in target municipalities actively participated in the psychological sessions and increased their awareness of the importance of recovering the mental health and trauma caused during the quarantine and ongoing pandemic.

“Providing support to the victims of domestic violence by the dedicated psychologists of the project was really something new and very helpful and it was appreciated by the victims of violence and vulnerable women” said Xhensila Myrtezai, project coordinator and Social worker of VATRA Center, in Vlova Municipality.

During the sessions with the psychologist, abused women, who in most cases find it difficult to report and speak up on the violence against them found the strength to share their experience. This contributed positively in understanding they are not the only one in the difficult situation of confronting the violence and at the same time, felt psychologically liberated.

“My husband raped and humiliated me. There were moments I thought to suicide. The psychological support by Refleksione informed me how to protect my mental health and protect myself from the deep depression I have had deeply fallen during the quarantine,” said S. C, in Shkodra municipality

“I am violated by both, my son, who is a drug user and my husband. The session with Refleksione psychologist helped me to understand how to cope with the stress and trauma but i feel the need of more sessions like this,”said S.K, victim of domestic violence in the municipality of Pogradec

“There is a critical need for dedicated psychological assistance for abused women who are going through a difficult period during the prolonged pandemic Covid – 19”,said Tatjana Jahollari, Project local Coordinator in Korca Municipality.”

“There are many cases when women in rural areas do not report violence of any kind, whether it be. Psychological help is very necessary in pandemic situations and isolation,” said Arjana Papapano, Director of Social Department in Permet Municipality.”

IV. Table discussions with rural and urban women communities, local religious leaders, local media representatives and other relevant local actors contributed in raising awareness on women human rights, encourage them to be involved in the efforts to changing the discriminatory mindset, reporting violence and facing it legally.

The project organized **12** roundtable discussions with community members - with the participation of at least **360** women and girls from rural and urban areas representatives from religious communities, human rights activists to inform and discuss on the amendments of the Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations, issues addressed by the Istanbul Convention, in particular about the role that women and their communities can play in preventing and combating VAWG during the pandemic Covid-19.(More information about participants in each municipality is found at graph 3/ annex 3)

“The project implemented by Refleksione is very important one. There was a high interest to be informed of matters relevant to the legal framework, Istanbul Convention, and the responsibilities of the local institutions to support victims of violence”-said Nertila Pelivani, the DV Specialist in Roskoveci Municipality”

“Religion directly affects the civic community and its leaders participations in rounde tables discussions is very important All religions preach peace in the family and respect for the wife as the mother of children.They are our allies in preventing violence against women before it happens” said Medina Popaj, DV specialist in Municipality of Kavaja.

The round tables discussions on the legal changes of the law on measures against domestic violence brought into light the gaps at the legislation on the rehabilitation of the perpetrators:

“What will happen to the perpetrator who because of law enforcement must leave the house? Where he will go? The law doesn't provide anything for the perpetrator. He needs to be rehabilitated and returned to normal life. There is a total lack of infrastructure for the rehabilitation of the perpetrators” said Fabjola Islami, DV Specialist in Vlora Municipality.

The lack of centers not only for perpetrators' rehabilitation but also for sheltering the victims of violence, before the issuing of the PO by District Court was an issue discussed in the project activities with women communities and municipalities authorities.

“During the pandemic quarantine, March - May 2020, we faced an increase of VAW cases and difficulties in sheltering them. We don't have a rehabilitation center for victims of violence and sheltered them in the dormitories and in churches premises for 72 hours until we will find another opportunities” said Fatos Tushe, Mayor of Lushnja Municipality.

During the round tables women discussed on the difficulties to report different types of violence against them. The mentality continues to be a problem mainly in rural areas. In most cases, in addition to women being victims of violence, they are also prejudiced. Even the community itself is prejudiced, which affects the non-reporting of violence.

“The mindset that it is a shame to talk on the violence you are experiencing is deeply rooted in our families and communities. My husband has been violent since the beginning of our marriage. When I asked help to my parents they told me I had to be patient since it was a big shame to divorce him. But I found the courage to report in police, divorce him and now I live in peace with my children” said the nurse E.D, in Berati municipality.

Raising awareness sessions on women human rights brought to light their perception on how harmful the justification of VAW is.

“A violated woman means a violated family, community and society. Being informed and our human rights is very important for us” said Valbona Mustafaj, Vice Mayor in Kavaja Municipality.

Often it is reported only the physical violence and left aside the sexual, psychological and economic violence which to the same extent, aggravate psychologically an abused woman / girl. In addition women and girls in remote villages of project target municipalities continue to be in great need for information and psychological assistance. In most of such areas the infrastructure is limited and insufficient which makes the communication of the inhabitants with the municipality and CRMS very difficult almost impossible. VAW that happens in the remote areas, in the most of the cases, is not reported due to lack of information on legal framework and available services / support from the local institutions. There are still cases when the women who have POs, cohabit with the perpetrators. Due to the limited infrastructure, often it's difficult to monitor the execution of the PO by the police and the LCDV & GEE.

(V) Capacity building workshops to members of the CRMs and the Social Administrators to incorporate in their work the improved legal framework and IC Article 13, focused on specialized support to DV & VAWG cases, survived from the violence during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Twelve CRMs of target municipalities have been supported with technical assistance to incorporate the advanced provisions of the Istanbul Convention into their work as well as Case Management Protocol .

192 CRMs members have enhanced their knowledge on the amended legal framework against violence and preventing DV&VAWG in the circumstances of ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic through capacity building activities, which have effected positively at strengthening of accountability of public institutions to address DV & VAWG cases to provide available services.

Strengthening of coordination and cooperation among members of the CRM in Roskovec is associated with an increase in the number of denunciations after the project activities implementation. More precisely, on January 2021 in Roskovec Municipality are recorded 30% more reported cases than in the same period of the year 2019¹.

The case management protocol is a very important and helpful document which was addressed during the trainings with CRM members. This document is a guide that helps CRM members to better manage a case of violence by providing in time all the services that the victims need.

“The trainings with CRM members were valuable because were conducted with practical sessions. However, CRM needs continuous mentoring on its effective functioning and interaction among institutions” says Denada Shpuza, President of the women organization “Light Step” in Shkodra municipality

The discussions during the roundtables, women from local communities in project target municipalities mentioned out the importance of strengthening their economic status.

“Economic empowering of women is a key factor in preventing violence. Victims of violence don’t need only to be sheltered. They need to be employed and reintegrated to the society” says Oliana Morriseni, Vice Mayor, in Lezha municipality.

During the discussions in the round tables the participants presented fruitful initiatives to economic empower of victims of violence and vulnerable groups such as the opening of “Che Buono Pastry shop” where there are employed women, survivors of violence who produce and sell pastry and “Murialdo Center” where there are provided services for Roma and Egyptian women community.

“The round table discussions helped me a lot to be informed about new legal changes, about measures against domestic violence.. I have already learned that the law removes the abusive husband from the house and the abused woman must stay at home with her children. I am also informed on the free legal aid as well as the Preliminary Measures of the Emergency Protection Order which can be given by the police for 72 hours. These new measures make me feel safer in case of recurrence of violence because I understand that Korca Municipality and other institutions, part of our CRM will be closer to me and my children in case my husband violates me again.” said I. L. DV survivor in Korca Municipality.

VI. Local journalist of tradional and social media trainings.

Media Trainings to promote in their reporting women rights, contribute to VAWG prevention and have positive approach to women as agents capable of changing their own lives.

1 Data from REVALB system

The project successfully completed 8 training programs with participation of 90 journalists and local correspondents to promote in their reporting women rights, contribute to VAW prevention and have positive approach to women as agents capable of changing their own lives. (For more information about the number of journalist per each municipality see Annex 3/ graph 4).

The training programs were attended by journalists and local correspondents of local media from 8 out of the 12 targeted municipalities: Berat, Elbasan, Fier, Lushnja, Pogradec, Korca, Shkodra and Vlora. Due to Covid-19 Pandemic the local TV channel are not functioning in the rest of municipalities in the course of project implementation. The journalists represented the following local media: “TVSH Korca” in Korca Municipality, “Sot 7” in Pogradec Municipality, “One TV”, “Real TV” and “Vlora News” in Vlora Municipality, “TV Berat” “Report TV, “News 24” and “Syri” in Berat Municipality. “TV Kombi”, “Sot 7”, “Radio Lushnja”, “Klan TV”, in Lushnja Municipality, “TV Apollon”, “4+”, “AVN”, “Social Network, in Fier municipality, “Forum ALB 365”, “TV Rozafa”, “Star Plus”, “TV1”, “Klan TV”, “Radio Shkoder”, “Top Channel”, “e-times” portal in Shkodra municipality, “Desk Channel”, “TV Skampa”, “Info Elbasan” in Elbasan Municipality.

During the journalists’ training sessions there were addressed issues regarding the coverage of DV & VAWG cases and respecting of the journalistic ethics on privacy and confidentiality of the DV victims. The messages given to the local journalists was pretty clear. “When a case of violence is covered by the journalists, we must not victimized for the second time the victims. The confidentiality of the abused person and the accompanying children is a strict must and imperative”.

Journalists were much engaged in training program sessions and exchange their positive experiences on promoting in their reporting women rights, contributing to VAWG prevention and have a positive approach to women as agents capable of changing their own lives. The field interview highlighted the important role of journalists in covering VAW cases.

“The project training sessions with the journalists was very important and there was a lot of interest by the journalists, who generally are not very interested on DV issues and sometimes, even the media where they work, prevents them to attend such trainings. This is because the owners of local media think wrongly that such issues have no audience. But this time the level of engagement and interest was higher because the journalist has been earlier invited by project management to cover the project activities in their news editions. All journalists participated in discussions as well as contributed with ideas in all issues this training session addressed. Indeed there is a need for such activities to continue in the future as well,” said Xhensila Myrtezai social worker in VATRA Center, in Vlora Municipality.

VI. Programs on local TV stations to educate women communities and relevant local actors on the role they can play to prevent, face legally VAWG and contribute to breaking down the gender roles in the social mindset, which are the roots of the spurge of DV cases in the corona pandemic lockdown times.

Project organized 6 talk shows on National and Local TV channels which reached an audience of about 9,000 persons in all target municipalities. Their objective was to inform and educate communities, in particular, women and girls to be informed on where to find protection and receive support services and face violence legally. A particular attention was dedicated to psychological support to recover mental health from trauma during the quarantine and ongoing covid-19 pandemic. (More information about number of viewers per each municipality is at annex 3 /graph 2).

The talk shows had a huge effect at the wide public and local community members paying attention to informing the public on the amendments of the law, “Measures Against Violence in Family Relations” in favor of the DV & VAWG victims/survivors.

The project Manager, (Refleksione Executive Director), the project experts, member of CRMs representatives of the local State Police Stations and local CSOs in the respective municipalities have participated in all TV talk shows.

Police representatives have presented the real situation of DV & VAWG in their municipalities, the problems and difficulties they face because of mentality, lack of psychologists in in the police stations when women, victims of violence, go there to report their cases and are in serious psychological conditions.

The representative of CSOs raised the problem of a very poor and limited public transportation, serious women unemployment, increased violence during the period of isolation caused from the pandemic, the inability to shelter victims of violence and consequently leaving them in an apartment with the perpetrator.

Talk shows conveyed also direct messages to the following stakeholders:

- **State institutions** which were focused mostly on opportunities to improve infrastructure for better implementation of legal changes such as: the possibility of providing FLA to abused women in all municipalities of the country through setting up the “FLA Centers” the possibility of rehabilitation of the perpetrator / abuser when he, based on recent changes in the law, is forced to leave the house / dwelling.
- **Local media** focused mostly to increase professionalism and respecting of journalistic ethics in covering DV issues and cases. The importance of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons involved in a violence episode without violated the victim twice.
- **Citizens** who are informed on benefits of families, communities and whole society to live without VAW and encouraged to speak up and report the violence cases everywhere they occur.

The project produced 4 (four) TV spots with important messages to women, society, central and local state institutions. TV Spots have benn produced with the direct contribution

of project beneficiaries such victims of violence, local psychologists, journalists, representatives of the state police, members of CRMs, human rights activists, religious leaders.

TV Spots have been broadcasted in the local TV stations and Public TVSH during the 16 days of Global Activism against VAWG and published on the Refleksione website and social media.

The following are the main messages conveyed via TV spots:

1. *“Domestic Violence and gender-bases violence are violations of the human rights of women and girls. Stop violence, do not be afraid, denounce!” “Do not be silent! Speak up !”*
2. *“State Police in every municiplality is ready to protect women and girls from violence and abuse! Social Services provide support to the victims who denounce violence”*
3. *“Civil society, religion and media are your allies to live a life without violence and enjoy human rights”;*
4. *“Awareness rasing on women’s right is the first step for a society with zero tolerance to violence!”*

ANNEX 1 INTERVIEW GUIDES

1. Local Government Institutions

- What is the level of awareness of community on amendment of Law on Measures against violence in Family , IC, new forms of protections for victims of DV?
- Which are some of lessons learned of CRM well functioning in condition of Covid 19 pandemic?

CSOs involved with DV services

- What is your level of cooperation with Municipality and other CRM system members? How can CRM system work better with you?
- What needs to be done differently? Have you been supported/are you supported by the donors for services you provide? How are your organizational capacities for providing such services?

Community

- Are you aware of CRM system in your community and amendment on law on domestic violence and new services such as free legal aid and how did you learn about them?
- What do you think of CRM system’s work/functioning? Which institutions at local level are involved?
- Are there services in your community for victims of DV and who provides them (LGU shelters CSOs, counseling and legal services)?

- Do you know what to do in case you witness or are a victim of DV? Would you refer it and where?
- What should be done to address the issue of DV in your community during the Covid 19 pandemic? What are the needs?

CRM System (victims of DV)

- Are you aware of CRM system work in your community? Have you benefited of their services/support? What kind of support did you receive? Please specify
- What was your experience with services provided and how they helped you or did not help you?
- Please specify which services were more effective? How?
- What other services are needed/you needed in your case?
- What needs to be improved?
- Would you use these services again or advise others to use the in case of need?

ANNEX 2 LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Municipality	Position	Name/surname	Mobile phone
Berat	Project Local Coordinator	Migena	069 311 8269
Berat	LCDV&GEE	Fabiola Faja:	069 4747 347
Elbasan	LCDV&GEE	Marsida Sejdini	0697610791
Lushnja	Project local coordinator	Anila Cela	0695756121
Lushnja	LCDV&GEE	Juliana Pirra	069 48 83 933
Fier	LCDV&GEE	Natasha Dollaku	069 3648824
Kavaje	LCDV&GEE	Medina Popaj,	0692192342
Lezhë	Project local coordionator	Aferdita Gjoni.	0676099144
Vlorë	LCDV&GEE	Fabiola Islami	069 212 8127
Vlore	Social worker of VATRA	Xhensila Murati	0693346282
Korce	LCDV&GEE	Inelda Hasankolli	0692753 289
Korce	Local Project Coordinator	Tatiana Jahollari	06935430d40
Pogradec	Local Project coordinator	Klea Nasto	069 299 7662
Pogradec	LCDV&GEE	Arber Basho	0673810099

Permet	Local Project Coordinator	Suela Rizaj	0697834646
Permet	Social Service Director	Arjana Papapano	0692288617
Shkoder	LCDV&GEE	Lorena Bardelli:	068 437 6422
Shkoder	President of the association "Hapa te lehte"	Denada Shpuza	0674060021
Roskovec	LCDV&GEE	Nertila Pelivani	0682314530
Pogradec	DV victim	S.K	
Korce	DV victim	I.L	

ANNEX 3: GRAPHS







